

## Ralph Penniston Taylor: 1923 - 2001

*Funeral address given by Graham Clifford on 17th December, 2001*

How do you summarize a life?

Ralph was a lot of different things to a lot of people. To me he was a good friend for over 40 years.

**Born:-** Sandiacre in Derbyshire in January, 1923, but lived and was raised in Stapleford in Nottinghamshire, attending Arthur Mee Boys' School in the village.

**Work:-** He left school and joined Taylor Brothers railway engineers in Sandiacre where he stayed until National Service beckoned.

**National Service:-** He joined the army being stationed in Newquay, Cornwall. Later service saw him in the East Yorks Regiment at Beverley, Humberside: a regiment he always had a great regard for. In later years Ralph attended memorial services in Beverley on numerous occasions and was a Friend of Beverley Minster.

He also saw service with the Argyle and Sutherland Regiment, reaching the rank of lance corporal and serving in France, Belgium and Germany at the end of the war.

**Post War:-** After leaving the services Ralph returned to Taylor Brothers before joining Carr Fastener in Stapleford in the production control department, whilst looking after his mother, his father having died in July of 1954. He had by that time added his mother's family name of Pennistone to his name. He was for a while engaged to be married, but as both parties were looking after ailing mothers there were insurmountable difficulties and they agreed to part. It was at Carr Fastener that I first met Ralph, when I left college and started as a junior in the same office as him. Whereas many of the staff were at first aloof and distant Ralph was friendly, always helpful and took me under his wing. I stayed at Carr Fastener for four years before leaving for pastures new. By that time, however, we were firm friends and kept in touch.

Alas, Ralph's mother died in August, 1968, but he could now spend even more time at Wymondham, after acquiring the cottages in 1962.

Ralph attended our wedding in 1969 and then became a regular fortnightly visitor to our home, transforming my garden with his expert knowledge.

Things, however, were not going well at work and when Carr Fastener were taken over it was the beginning of a new phase for Ralph's life.

Although at first he was moved to premises not far from his home, the necessity of further moves to Ilkeston and a proposed move to Worksop made up Ralph's mind to retire to Wymondham, the area of his ancestors.

Instead of visiting Wymondham just for weekends he eventually sold his Stapleford home and moved in permanently in 1974.

He was very critical of people who move into villages and take no interest in community life. He was determined to take part and during his life here he had been:-

Parochial church treasurer and secretary

Clerk to the Parish Council

Parish Councillor

Bell ringer and treasurer to the bell fund

Treasurer of Garthorpe church

Trustee to the Sir John Sedley Education Foundation

Author of several books about the locality and Stapleford, Notts.

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Finally, a couple of stories about Ralph.

We all know how much he loved his garden here in Wymondham. He liked nothing more than to take his meals down to the garden and relax. When he had his health, Ralph spent hours there, particularly in the summer.

One such summer's day he had enlisted his friends Bernard and Trish to help.

Having decided that ice creams were the order of the day he walked to the village shop and fetched his favourite: a Cornetto. He then set up his director's folding chair on the lawn. However, all was not right, as when he sat down the chair toppled backwards and deposited him into a gap in the hedge.

"Help!" he cried to his friends, who couldn't see him anywhere.

"Help!" again was the cry and, following the sound, all that could be seen was an arm coming out of the hedge clutching the Cornetto, just like Excalibur out of the lake. After being extracted from the hedge he was asked why he hadn't dropped the ice cream to save himself.

"What, after paying £1.30? Not likely!"

After Ralph moved to Wymondham, my wife Janet and I visited him as often as we could, family commitments allowing, usually at least once a month. During these visits we would talk and Ralph would chunter about there being nothing to watch on TV at night.

"When there is, there's usually something on another channel at the same time."

"Buy a video," I would say.

"I don't want one of those contraptions," he would reply.

This went on for several years until he finally rang me up one day and said: "I've decided to buy a video, can you get one for me?"

Then followed a regular Sunday morning phone call at 11am for a good number of years. We would chat and he would give me a list of films to tape off Sky TV movie channels. These we would take to him on the next visit, just like the mobile library, collecting the ones he had watched.

Actually, the phone rang at the same time on the Sunday after Ralph's passing, and a shiver ran down my spine. If that's Ralph, I thought, he'll have to get his own videos for the time being!

As many of you know, Ralph was very adept at writing short verses ("witty ditties" he used to call them). This was actually the last one he wrote, in October of this year:

*Osama Bin Laden  
Fell down in the garden.  
They jumped on his head.  
Now he's dead.*

God bless you Ralph you were a lovely, lovely man. A good friend, we will all miss you!

Rest in Peace.

I'm sure Ralph would want to thank Stella and Trish for all their help and comfort during his last few weeks.

*Graham Clifford*