

Eulogy.

Roland Lionel Whitehead

I thought I would share a little information with you about my life.

I was born in Halifax Street, Blackpool, on 28th February 1936, son of the late Irene and Leslie Whitehead and brother of Dianne. I went to Marton Secondary School, Blackpool, and left there when my father decided to move down to Kent after coming out of the Army in 1946. I finished my education at Sandwich Secondary School leaving at the age of 14 years to help with the household expenses, my father didn't earn a lot of money and my mother was not a well person. IN those days ladies did not go to work, so I had an early start in life.

I took to work with the local joiner and coach builder, a Mr Robert (Bob) Revell, a hard taskmaster, but very good at his profession. I started a 7 year apprenticeship, going to school every Thursday at Dover College for 7 years. I gained my City and Guilds Intermediate and finals exams in Coach Building, Cabinet Making, Wheelwright and in those days undertaking. I am most grateful to the gentleman for he taught me all the basic things I needed to know, to be honest, punctual and work to the best of your ability. This has stood me in good stead all my working life, through everything I have done, from shoeing steel tyres on the farm wheels we made, working on the farms in the summer time, helping with the harvesting and being on hand in case any of the machinery broke down. I have often thought how much I miss the countryside of Kent. We stayed in Kent for about 8 years and then returned to St. Annes where we have lived ever since.

Coming back here in 1954, I started work at J & A Porter of Ansdell, Funeral Directors and Joiners. I had not been back in St. Annes long when I had a wonderful encounter with a young lady, who was to become my lovely wife, her name "Ivonne". In those days she was working in what was Montaque Burtons on the corner of Clifton Drive South. She was a dental technician, she was to become the "light of my life". We started going out together, walks along the promenade, the pictures and finally we became engaged in 1957. Shortly after that I got my call up papers for National Service, in fact it was March 10th 1958, the date the new Lytham Crematorium opened.

I went into the Royal Army Medical Corp, which I had requested, did my basic training at Crookham in Hampshire for 16 weeks (which one does not forget) it was very intense. I missed my posting to Singapore as I had to come home for the funeral of Ivonnes' Grandma. I was finally posted to 15 company RAMC, Military hospital, Moira, County Down, Northern Ireland. It was a lovely place and a wonderful experience. I changed from a boy to man, I learned responsibility, how to survive and how to take care of yourself. Apart from the Camp Comandant I was in charge of all that went on in the camp, from the Guard Room to the cleaning and painting of the hospital wards, the firefighting, first aid station and the Guard House. I ran a course in the evenings for woodwork and we built our own canoes that we could sail at the bottom of the camp on the local river. It was all good fun and the best of it all was I could have married quarters and have Ivonne with me.

Time moved on and I was demobbed from it all. We came back to St. Annes and had a lovely baby daughter whom we called Dawn and she was born very early in the morning of 25th February 1962. I eventually started back at my old firm J & A Porter at Ansdell and all was well until 2nd September 1991 when Ivonne was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. Our world turned upside down over night. I took seven and a half months off work to take care of her, but sadly she slipped peacefully away on the 9th August 1992. A devastating time for Dawn and I and also Ivonnes' sisters Silvia and Eileen. I went back to work but my old firm had been taken over by a multi-national company and things were not the same. It was at this time it was suggested by my daughter Dawn that I should go on my own. I opened in Wrea Green for two years before coming back to St. Annes and taking over the Old Lifeboat Station, built in 1880, the rest is history. It's the best thing I have ever done!!

I have a great team of men and an exceptional right-hand man in Eddie Jacobs. My daughter Dawn has now joined me and life couldn't be better. I am exceptionally proud of her and I know she will carry my work on with the greatest of respect and dignity for future generations. I have made so many friends of the families I have looked after, I have two beautiful grand-children, Olivia Myra and Eleanor Louisa, a wonderful daughter Dawn and a great son-in-law in Edward. I have a lovely family and some very great friends.

I have enjoyed my time in Rotary, inducted in 1984 on the word of a very dear friend the Rev Derek Welch, I have been made a Paul Harris fellow, but I have never been able to attain the 60% mark, I hope Derek will forgive me for that. What I am trying to say is I have had a good life I've been very fortunate, my only regret is that Ivonne was not able to share in the later part of my life, with the comfort of working for myself, and the rewards that this brings. But she will be looking down and I hope she is as proud of me as I am of her.

So its "business as usual"
"A job well done, I hope"
Keep Smiling
God Bless Roland L.....