

John Murphy 30 January 1934 – 20 October 2014

John was born in 1934 in Liverpool, near Scotland Road. He had two older sisters, Mary and Margaret, and a late addition, his younger sister, Josie. The family, like many others in Liverpool in 1941, were bombed out and evacuated to North Wales. His own father (also called John) died in 1943, at the age of 42, when John was only 7. He would often say that, as long as he lived beyond 42, anything else was a bonus.

When the family returned to Liverpool, he had no school to go to, so the bombsites in Liverpool became his new playground for a while, before he got a place at SFX, where the Jesuits there found him a handful.

In 1952 he left school and joined the army, the Light Infantry to start with, and then the Parachute Regiment. All of his life, he was justifiably proud to have been a Para and served all over the Middle East during his tour with them, in conflict zones like Palestine, Jordan and Cyprus. On a training jump he had a unique accident; breaking his ankle 500ft above the ground. After jumping, he and a mate got tangled up; his ankle broke on his mate's head and his buddy was knocked out. John managed to land both of them safely, on one leg. He was always tough and always resourceful, especially in a crisis.

He left the army in 1955, and met Beryl later the same year. They were part of a close knit community, and had known each other as kids. Nevertheless, when he noticed her again, he was completely bowled over and he continued to love her passionately, throughout his life.

Things changed in 1967, when he switched career and joined the Royal Observer Corps. The family moved to Bedford, the first of many "foreign" postings for us. We learned to adapt and be resourceful, and Dad taught us to map read and passed on his knowledge of the countryside, as we drove around East Anglia, clearing out old ROC posts. He still has many friends in 7 Group, where he started, and many others in the ROC, whose lives he touched, and who he helped and nurtured during his career in Lincoln, Bentley Priory, Dundee, and back to Bentley Priory, where he eventually became the senior full-time officer, with the rank of Observer Captain. It was a huge part of his life until he retired; his proudest career moment was in 1991 when he accompanied the Queen at the royal review at Bentley Priory. His second proudest was when he was awarded the OBE in 1992 – he was especially thrilled that Beryl could share in the moment and also be acknowledged for her huge contribution in supporting him.

His retirement brought a revived interest in golf and a new interest: grandchildren, eight of whom arrived in rapid succession from 1993 onwards. He took great pleasure in spending time with them, in a way that perhaps he felt he'd missed out on with his own kids, because of the demands of his career.

He loved his golf, and was a founder member and captain at Batchworth Park, where he played regularly until his health started deteriorating. Over the last ten years he became increasingly familiar with hospitals and consultants, and a litany of ailments that embarrassed him and took their toll on his larger than life personality, as they wore him down.

He will be remembered as a man who brought his passion, energy and generosity of spirit into many other people's lives and the world is a smaller place without him.

Tony Murphy