

Copy of the eulogy given by Eddie Widnall at the funeral service for JIM CUNNINGHAM

JIM WAS BORN ON 2ND MAY 1942 IN WIMBLEDON AND WAS CHRISTENED JAMES BUT WAS ALWAYS KNOWN AS JIM OR JAY.

HE ALSO HAD A YOUNGER SISTER CALLED JENNY, WHO HE WAS VERY CLOSE TOO.

JIM SPENT MOST OF HIS CHILDHOOD IN OR AROUND LONDON AND AT ONE TIME THE FAMILY LIVED ON A THAMES SAILING BARGE.

DURING THAT TIME HE JOINED THE SEA CADETS WHICH RAISED HIS INTEREST IN THE ROYAL NAVY, AT 17 YEARS OF AGE HE JOINED AS A SEAMAN AND SUBSEQUENTLY TRANSFERRED TO THE REGULATING BRANCH.

JUST FOR INFORMATION NO ONE CAN JOIN THE NAVY INTO THE REGULATING BRANCH, AS THEY ONLY RECRUIT FROM THOSE IN THE SERVICE. THE BRANCH WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL DISCIPLINARY MATTERS ON SHORE AND AT SEA. PLUS A NUMBER OF ADMINISTRATION TASKS.

JIM WAS A DILIGENT WORKER AND WANTED TO GET ON IN HIS NEW BRANCH AND BY HARD WORK AND COMMITMENT HE ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS, LEADING PATROLMAN TO RPO AND MASTER AT ARMS UNTIL HE ACHIEVED HIS AMBITION AND WAS COMMISSIONED AS A SUB LIEUTENANT.

JIM WAS A TALL MAN IN EXCESS OF 6FT WITH WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN A STERN EXPRESSION, ADDED TO THAT AND THE BRANCH HE WAS IN. HE COULD SEEM A FORMIDABLE FIGURE.

BUT THAT WAS NOT THE REAL JIM

IN FACT HE WAS AN AFFABLE PERSON WITH A KEEN SENSE OF HUMOUR WHO COULD SEE THE FUNNY SIDE OF THINGS AND WAS NOT ABOVE JOINING IN THE FUN. HE ALSO HAD STRONG SENSE OF LOYALTY TO HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

ALL OF WHICH MADE HIM A VERY PLEASANT AND AMUSING PERSON TO SPEND TIME WITH.

WHILE SERVING IN HMS DRYAD AS AN RPO HE MET A LOVELY LADY CALL SHIRLEY, WORKING IN THE NAAFI. AND AS THEY SAY IN ALL THE GOOD BOOKS ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER AND THEY WERE MARRIED.

THIS CAUSED A BIT OF A STIR IN SHIRLEY'S FAMILY AS HER FATHER WAS A RETIRED PETTY OFFICER STOCKER AND HER BROTHER BARRY WAS A SERVING IN THE ELECTRICAL BRANCH AND SHIRLEY HAD BROUGHT HOME A REGULATOR.

EVENTUALLY THE FAMILY GREW AS THEY TOOK ON TWO BABY BOYS CARL AND CRAIG.

SERVING IN DRYAD WITH JIM WAS ANOTHER RPO CALL DAVID MOUNCE.

DAVID RETIRED FROM THE NAVY AS A WARRANT OFFICER MASTER AT ARMS.

HE HAS MANY MEMORIES OF VERY HAPPY TIMES WITH JIM AND THEY BECAME FIRM FRIENDS AND BUDDIES.

HE WAS JIMS BEST MAN WHEN HE MARRIED SHIRLEY AND JIM RETURNED THE FAVOUR WHEN DAVID MARRIED MARGRET.

AND THAT FRIENDSHIP STILL ENDURES TODAY.

HE RECALLS WHEN THE OFFICE HAD A WIN ON THE POOLS JIM WAS SENT WITH THE CHEQUE MARKED "LITTLEWOODS POOLS" TO CASH AND OFF HE WENT TO THE BANK.

ALSO AT THE TIME THERE HAD BEEN ANOTHER WINNER IN PORTSMOUTH, WHO HAD MADE THE NEWS PAPERS. ON ARRIVING AT THE COUNTER HE ASKED THE YOUNG LADY IF SHE HAD HEARD OF THE POOLS WIN SHE SAID YES, IT WAS IN THE PAPERS. WELL SAID JIM, HANDING OVER THE CHEQUE, I WANT IT ALL IN CASH.

SHE LOOKED AT THE CHEQUE IN ASTONISHMENT AND WENT A BIT PALE BUT SHE READ IT AND SAW IT WAS FOR £3.50 AND SHE HANDED OVER THE MONEY WITH RELIEF. THAT WAS JIM.

DAVID AND MARGRET WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER JIMS INHERENT THOUGHTFULNESS AND KINDNESS WHICH WAS SO TYPICAL OF THE MAN.

I FIRST MET JIM WHEN HE JOINED THE REG SCHOOL JUST AFTER HE WAS COMMISSIONED TO AWAIT HIS FIRST JOB AS AN OFFICER.

WHICH MOST OF THE NEW OFFICERS DID AT THAT TIME, I ALWAYS FELT A BIT SORRY FOR THEM AS THEY WERE NEITHER FISH NOR FOWL, AND THEN TO BE TOLD TO MAKE THEMSELVES USEFUL.

NOW THE REG SCHOOL WAS A CLOSE KNIT COMMUNITY, ALL THE STAFF WERE REASONABLY SENIOR AND EXPERIENCED. KNEW THEIR TASK AND GOT ON WITH IT. SO A NEW S/LT TRYING TO MAKE HIMSELF USEFUL WASN'T VIEWED WITH MUCH FUN.

AND THEY ON THEIR PART FOUND THE EXPERIENCE DAUNTING.

JIM, HOWEVER, CARRIED IT OF WITH APLOMB AND IN NO TIME AT ALL HE WAS PART OF THE TEAM.

I LEFT THE SCHOOL ON DRAFT BEFORE JIM BUT I THINK HE WENT TO CHATHAM AS NPM.

I NEXT MET HIM AGAIN WHEN I WAS AGAIN IN THE REG SCHOOL AS A WARRANT OFFICER AND HE JOINED TO RELIEVE THE TRAINING OFFICER.

WE SOON ESTABLISHED AN EXCELLENT WORKING RELATIONSHIP AND A FIRM FRIENDSHIP FOLLOWED.

ONE OF MY ABIDING MEMORIES WAS PLAYING UCKERS WITH HIM IN THE STAFF RESTROOM DURING THE LUNCH HOUR. NOW TO THOSE WHO ARE NOT SURE WHAT UCKERS IS, IT'S THE CHILDREN'S BOARD GAME LUDO, BUT NAVALISED.

WE PLAYED IN TRADITIONAL NAVAL FASHION, QUITE AGGRESSIVELY, LOTS OF SHOUTING, BANGING ON THE TABLE AND ACCUSATIONS OF CHEATING ETC.

ON ONE OCCASION WE WERE IN FULL FLOW AND JIM LOOKED ROUND AND ALL THE OTHER STAFF HAD GONE. SO WE JUST CARRIED ON WITH THE GAME.

WHEN I ENQUIRED LATER WHY HAD THEY ALL LEFT? I WAS TOLD NO ONE WANTED TO BE AROUND WHEN THE TRAINING OFFICER AND WO CAME TO BLOWS.

I'M SORRY TO EMBARRASS YOU IN FRONT OF ALL THESE PEOPLE JIM BUT YOU ARE A RUBBISH UCKERS PLAYER.

EVENTUALLY JIM LEFT FOR A NEW APPOINTMENT AND IN 1988 I RETIRED.

WHILE LIVING IN SCOTLAND WILLIE DICK INTRODUCED ME IN TO FREEMASONRY AND WHEN I MOVED BACK TO THE SOUTHAMPTON AREA HE ASKED PETER ROBERTSON AND JOE PETTINGER.

NOW THERE ARE TWO NAMES TO CONJURE WITH.

TO TAKE ME AS A GUEST TO THEIR ENGLISH LODGE, WHICH I LATER JOINED.

AND THERE WAS JIM A MEMBER OF THAT LODGE AND OUR ASSOCIATION BEGAN AGAIN AS DID THE SOCIAL EVENINGS ETC.

I THINK HAVE ALWAYS SEE DEATH A BIT DIFFERENTLY TO SOME PEOPLE TO ME IT'S JUST A CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCES A BIT LIKE THE OLD POEM ABOUT JUST GOING INTO ANOTHER ROOM

THE ONLY CHANGE IS YOU JUST CAN'T GO AND SEE THEM AGAIN.

BUT THEY ARE STILL THERE IN OUR MEMORIES.

AND FOR ME JIM HAS JOINED THAT CROWD WHOM I REMEMBER AND SMILE ABOUT.

IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS OUR LODGE MEETS AGAIN AND AS I GO IN I WILL STILL SAY "GOOD EVENING JIM".

Eddie Widnall