

The funeral ceremony is officiated by
Sasha Hutchinson
of the
British Humanist Association



Geoffrey Joseph Bond

7 January 1911 to 28 September 1997

[ENTRY MUSIC /TAPE(1) *Family first -Coffin follows* **Fade music** when all seated]

SASHA

On behalf of his family I welcome you all here today to celebrate, and to remember, the life of Geoffrey Joseph Bond.

My name is Sasha, and in accordance with Geoff's beliefs, this is not a religious ceremony, instead an occasion to share the same concern, and respect, for the loss of another human being.

Although this type of funeral is likely to be unfamiliar to most of you, I hope that you will put aside any prejudices you may have, and accept it as being fitting to Geoff's beliefs, and what his family have arranged for him.

This then is your tribute and farewell to Geoffrey Joseph Bond.

Death is as natural as life: only nature is permanent. All that has life has its beginning, and end ... and life exists in the time span between birth and death.

For those of us who do not have a religious faith, and who believe that death brings the end of individual existence, life's significance lies in the experiences and satisfactions we achieve in that span of time; its permanence lies in the memories of those who knew us and in any influence we have left behind.

Geoff lived a long and healthy life. He married when he was thirty-one and became proud father to Geoffrey junior and Vanessa. Many years later he became grandfather to Joanne, Jamie, and Imogen. And more recently great grandfather to Alexander.

During the war Geoff was a flight lieutenant in the RAF. Because of his expertise and science degree in electronics he was inducted into the highly secret department dealing with radar installations.

When the war in Europe came to an end he was stationed in India. Soon after Hiroshima he was demobilised and returned to England where he continued his teaching career.

In the early sixty's he was appointed headmaster to the first comprehensive school in London. It was a super sized school which served as a showpiece and precursor to those which followed.

Having worked as a teacher for forty-two years, Geoff finally retired twenty-one years ago. Having always enjoyed travelling his retirement afforded even more opportunity to do so.

He loved walking and would usually cover fifteen to twenty miles a day, until May, when, as Geoff junior pointed out, his zimmer frame slowed him down somewhat!

You should all have a song-sheet at hand in case you don't know the words to the next song you are asked to sing. Please stand.

[ORGANIST-Play Jerusalem]

Jerusalem

Words by William Blake
Music by C. Hubert H. Parry

And did those feet in ancient times,
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy lamb of god
On England's pleasant pastures seen?
And did the countenance divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among those dark satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold.
Bring me my arrows of desire.
Bring me my spear, oh clouds unfold.
Bring me my chariot of fire.
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
'Til we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

Please sit down as Geoff junior now talks about his father.

Geoff Junior Talks

GEOFF BOND JUNIOR

We are here today to celebrate the life of my father. It is my heavy responsibility to speak on behalf of everybody who knew him.

To set the tone I will start by reading some of the tributes that we have received. Then I will try to sum up the thoughts, including my own, of all those who have known Dad and communicated their feelings to me.

John Gregory writes:

“When somebody you know says ‘goodbye’ to you for the last time, they always leave you with a varying number of memories. With Geoffrey Bond I will always remember his knowledge and engaging conversation on a great many subjects; his obvious fair mindedness, but above all I shall remember a man who represented the absolute meaning of the word ‘decency’. It was my privilege to know such a *decent* man”.

Simon Gregory writes:

Mr. Bond’s knowledge of London was infinite, and his generosity in sharing that knowledge was invaluable to a young researcher. Spending time going across London with me to point out things he’d noticed over the years and always giving me a warm welcome whenever I was in London or staying with Vanessa. He will be sadly missed.

Stephen Howe writes:

Geoff was an independent man, taking responsibility for his own happiness and trusting his own good judgement.

He was very unselfish and giving - with never a hint of bitterness.

Although a creature of habit, nonetheless very forward thinking with an intuitive understanding of human nature and, with his gift of imparting knowledge. He was one of life’s Teachers.

Jamie said:

Big Geoff in the past few years had a big influence on my life. He came along and helped me out at a critical time. It is largely thanks to him that I got the encouragement to make a success of my Degree. I learned to respect him deeply. His passing has left a hole in my life which will be impossible to fill.

Pauline Bennett - a former pupil and friend writes:Mr Bond was incredibly instrumental in my all-round education as a child and teenager. Although Wesley Secondary School was not in the most literate part of London, he always gave of his best - and more - to all the pupils.

The History teacher, Mr Sheppard, who also would like his condolences offered, says that Geoffrey Bond was by far the best teacher that Wesley had ever had. He was wasted there and would have made an excellent university lecturer.

Geoffrey Bond gave a lot more time than just at school. Thanks to him, I learned to love Dance and the Theatre. He introduced me to the wide, outside world of travel, culture and languages. I will never forget the wonderful school trips that sometimes included Vanessa and Geoffrey jnr too.

These experiences gave me the goals at which to aim throughout my adult life.

Geoffrey Bond gave me something that my parents were not in a position to offer, and I have never lost sight of this in all the years that have elapsed. I thank him sincerely for all the effort that made this possible.

John Garlick (former pupil)

In the early sixties, I was a pupil in Wesley Rd school, Harlesden where Mr Bond was first a teacher and subsequently headmaster. When I first met him I felt apprehensive about approaching him for advice. However I soon found out that he was more of a tutor than a teacher. He took an interest in the individual rather than the class as a whole. He took classes of up to 38 children and managed to become a friend as well as a teacher to all of us - which was an achievement in an area like Harlesden.

It was obvious that Mr Bond thoroughly enjoyed the job of teaching. He took us abroad and introduced us to Europe. He even invited groups of us to his own home for unpaid tuition. He made us all feel part of a team and made the learning process fun.

I met Mr Bond several times in later years and he always had a welcome smile and time for a chat. I meant to say thank you to him for his help as a teacher and friend all those years ago. Sadly I never got round to doing that. So... if you are listening Mr. Bond... 'THANK YOU'.

[Pause]

That is the end of the tributes. I will now speak my own appreciation of my father.

My Dad spent his career in the teaching profession. It is an extraordinary fact that he didn't miss one day's work in all the 42 years of service. This speaks volumes, not just about his cast-iron health, but also about his dedication and sense of responsibility.

Everyone who came into contact with Dad speaks of his great ability to impart knowledge. He didn't just fill you up with knowledge, rather, he had a great capacity to give you a love of learning. As the Chinese say, instead of feeding you fish, rather, he taught you how to catch fish so that you could feed yourself.

I can certainly attest to it in my own case. One of my earliest memories as a small boy is of my father taking me round to find the best libraries in the neighborhood, and the best book-shops in London. Even today, when I arrive in a new city, I am uneasy until I have located, and frequented, the local libraries and book-shops!

There are, of course, hundreds of similar instances. Dad was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, the learned body that sent expeditions to all parts of the world. I remember even now with great clarity how inspired I was by the lectures given by great explorers - notably Edmund Hillary on his return from the first ascent of Everest, and David Attenborough returning from the Jungles of Borneo. David and Richard Attenborough incidentally were old school friends of his.

Dad enjoyed the process of travel. Not for him the tour-guide package tour. When he set off, it was with a rucksack, a railway timetable and a set of maps at 6 inches to the mile. He poked around and found the good, cheap but overlooked hostelry. He was a practical geographer who walked everywhere and gathered material, from all sorts of odd corners, for his classes. Hundreds of youngsters witnessed, and experienced this at first hand, on his famous school journeys to the Continent.

Anyone who came into contact with Dad in this way couldn't fail to be imbued with itchy feet and the love of travel.

Dad has been described as 'decent'. He was born in an age, and into circles, where decency, courtesy and niceness were common currency. It was an environment where it was unseemly to ask for help or to express your needs. You didn't need to. The people around you tuned into the little signals and silently and without fuss accommodated your needs.

It was a world where you never had to raise your voice or push yourself forward. It was a world of modesty and consideration for others.

You didn't look for gratitude or glory. You bore your disappointments uncomplainingly. It was a world of courteous *reciprocity*.

Dad had a quiet pride in embodying these values - the values as he saw it of an English Gentleman.

As time went by the world changed around him. It became more brash and hard-edged. To get heard, you had to raise your voice; to get on, you had to be political. Above all it became a world which was oblivious to the subtleties and signals of his earlier, chivalrous, age.

It is then that Dad showed his greatest inner strength. He refused to compromise on his principles. There must have been many a time when he felt that no-one was listening, that his decency was being taken for granted, that his considerateness was not reciprocated. But he never complained and he never showed any bitterness.

Right to the end Dad was reluctant to ask for help - even though it was now a matter of life and death. And right to the end he was considerate of others and solicitous of their needs. He took pride in never giving *offense*.

Even when he was in the final stages of invalidity, he was apologetic to his carers (be they family, friends or professionals) for the trouble he was causing them. Dad didn't want to be a trouble or burden to anyone. He took pride in being an "English Gentleman" to the last! Dad lived a life free of religion. Right to the end he rejected any notion of an afterlife or the supernatural. He believed that this life is all that there is - and that you have to live it to the best of your ability.

I asked him just a few weeks ago if he had any regrets. 'Not really' he said 'it's just that I never did get to Peru - but the altitude wouldn't have been good for someone my age!'

This was a good example of Dad's dry sense of humour. More seriously he went on to say,

'No, I have no regrets. I have lived a good life - and a long one!'

(pause)

'No, I have no regrets. I have lived a good life - and a long one!'

Dad, I can think of no better epitaph for you!

(long pause).....

Dad spent part of his wartime service devising and running the first radar station at Dover.

To commemorate his pride in this phase of his life, Vanessa is now going to sing the old Vera Lynn song, - "The White Cliffs of Dover".

White Cliffs of Dover

Sung by Vanessa Bond

**I'll never forget the people I met
Braving those angry skies.
I remember well as the shadows fell
The light of hope in their eyes.
And though I'm far away
I still hear them say:
"Thumbs up!"
For when the dawn comes up.....**

**There'll be bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover
Tomorrow, just you wait and see.
There'll be love and laughter
And peace ever after,
Tomorrow, when the world is free.
The shepherd will tend his sheep
The valley will bloom again,
And Jimmy will go to sleep
In his own little room again.
There'll be bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover
Tomorrow
Just you wait and see.....**

SASHA

Your sadness for Geoffrey's departure is quite natural, but death is inevitable for all of us, and, eventually you will stop grieving and think of him and smile.

Geoffrey Joseph Bond, born on the 7th January 1911, died on the 28th September 1997.

I have been asked to read some final words entitled 'For those who touch our lives', written by Flavia.

**Some people come into our lives
and quickly go....
Like an ocean wave
When it touches the shore...
Or a cloud that is there-
And then gone.**

**Some people stay for a while
and, although we may be unaware,
They are touching our lives in a special way.**

**When they are gone,
It is then that we understand...
They have left footprints on our hearts
And we will never, ever be the same.**

**That is when we know...
Blessed are we.....**

On behalf of Geoff's family I thank you all for being here today and invite you all to join them at number 3, Sydney Grove.

-Thank you. MUSIC/TAPE (1)

Post-Funeral Tribute from Dennis Wilsden (96 years old)

Wishart House
53, High Street
Old Portsmouth
Hampshire PO1 2LU

3rd October 1997

Dear Vanessa,

Your letter telling us of Geoffrey's death came as a great shock to Phyllis and me, as it must have, I am sure, to Geoffrey's widow and to you. We have searched the newspapers for some announcement but have so far found no note in the press, hence this letter.

Geoffrey could, I feel sure, be described as a scholar and a gentleman and his death will bring a great gap in the field of public education.

One facet of his character and personality was his great skill in bringing peace in matters which might easily develop into serious controversy. I often think of him as the great peacemaker in the somewhat turbulent waters of public education. There will now be a great gap in those fields fighting for higher standards,

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dennis Wilsden', with a small horizontal line to the right.

(Dennis Wilsden, cousin)