

A TIME TO REMEMBER - Michael Ian Douglas Sturrock
Saturday 20 October 2007 – 10.45 for 11 am
at Mayfield Salisbury Parish Church, Edinburgh

Tribute by John Hunter, Anne's brother

My first recollection of meeting Mike was in the mid 1970s when he and Anne were involved in Cornerstone, although we later established that we had in fact both been members of Edinburgh Wanderers rugby club in the late 60s.

When Anne and Mike started seeing more of each other we as a family naturally saw more of him.

Anne and Mike planned to marry in 1979 but to everyone's regret the wedding didn't take place then and it wasn't till 2000 that, at last, they did marry. So, although they were husband and wife for a relatively short time, they had shared much together over many years.

My early memories are of a kind and courteous person; perhaps a little shy; bright dancing eyes; totally dependable. And a conscientiously hard worker. Always poring over files and papers not, it seemed, to further any self interest but to help others – clients who often became friends or friends who then became clients.

His focus on work got the better of him on one occasion, a story he told against himself. At that time he was in a flat in Saxe Coburg Street, rushing one morning to get to the office early as usual....quick tea and toast... .thinking of what the day would involve when he got there.....grabbed the briefcase and some files, then set off outside to load up the bikea couple of odd looks in his direction, and he glanced down to see that it wasn't his briefcase he was carrying but the recently boiled kettle!

Mike's qualities were numerous (as we have already heard) and he was perhaps too modest to realise how gifted he was. He had the ability to listen, and to identify and bring out the best in people: his interest in others was not superficial and merely out of politeness but a genuine feeling and caring for others.

A simple illustration of that came in one of the very many letters Anne has received in the following amusing but telling extract:

"...the pudding went wrong, but Mike said he loved it and asked for more; this was his gift – so sensitive to how others were feeling"

He eventually retired at the beginning of 2004 – after a couple of false starts when he said he was retiring but it didn't happen. To celebrate this and encourage him to take life a bit more easily, Fiona and I took him for a game of golf on his very first day. A beautiful sunny day, if a little cold. Anne reminded me that it was Valentine's Day.

Mike arrived with an ancient but perfectly serviceable golf bag (it was his late father's bag and there was quite a lot of string holding it all together!). He had even older, random, clubs....but boy could he use them. He hadn't played for years but on that memorable day he started with a par and played wonderfully well. You could immediately see what a gifted player he was.

This all seemed to say a lot about Mike: the exterior was anything but flashy and the tools appeared basic but underneath there was something very special: an ability or skill with which he was comfortable and could put to work. That day, he of course modestly called it "beginner's luck" but it wasn't.

He took up tennis again (having mastered e-bay to buy a graphite racquet): he bought a new set of golf clubs; he cycled for pleasure instead of to the office; he spent time working in the garden and revelled in the preparation of healthy meals (including the very best salads I have tasted, made with home-grown leaves and herbs). He spent time catching up with friends.....there was much to look forward to.

Sadly, it was less than one year into his retirement before the health problem emerged. Investigations, treatment: then the first operation: more investigations, more treatment; then a second operation and in March this year significant surgery which confined him to a wheel-chair. But he faced all this with quite incredible courage and optimism which he maintained throughout. No hint of bitterness or self-pity (that just wasn't Mike). Always totally appreciative of everything that was being done – by the medical teams and others - to try to help him.

Friends and family supported as best they could. Anne was steadfastly at his side and quite simply could not have done any more than she did: it was from both of them a humbling demonstration of love, caring and support.

As a result of the last operation it was no longer appropriate for Mike to keep the tennis racquet, fishing gear, new golf clubs or his treasured bicycle. But with much careful thought, they went to people who would use and enjoy them. (I'm not sure what happened to the rugby boots, but knowing Mike I wouldn't be at all surprised if they moved flats with him several times and are still lurking in the back of a cupboard somewhere!)

In the final weeks he got great pleasure from being at home, in the sunny conservatory, looking out onto the garden while he dealt with correspondence and papers – making sure everything was tidy and in order. But there was no gloom: whenever I saw him there was always a smile or chuckle, and a real interest in what was happening elsewhere.

You have heard in this and the other reminiscences today confirmation of Mike's selflessness, sensitivity and concern for others, dislike of injustices, his modesty, thrift and generosity, his courage, optimism, sense of humour, patience and dedication....and much more. At Mike's funeral, Rev Norman Shanks said that he didn't think he'd known anyone of greater integrity.

At his core what mattered to Mike was his Faith (which was very strong, right up to the end); Family (as a loving and devoted son, brother, husband, uncle, cousin, in-law); and – in its widest sense – Fellowship (through which he touched a great many people).

It is a remarkable tribute to Mike – and, I'm sure, a huge support to Anne, and to Frances, and to Mike's wider family - that so many of those who knew him have come today (some from quite a distance) to remember him as a Friend.