

James Robin (Rob) Hendry (Armstrong 1951 – 1955)

Eulogy:

I have to confess that 4 weeks ago, when I spoke about my mom's "dash", the thought did go through my mind of what would I be saying about my dad. What I never expected was to be speaking so soon! I was closer to my mom, but preparing this for my dad has been way harder. Well today we'll travel along the dash of Rob Hendry 25 March 1938 – 4 May 2011.

As most of you who got to know my dad would agree, he was a lot more complex than my mom. Dad was not a natural communicator and at the end of his life I found that I knew very little of who he was. In the last 4 days, however, I have learned a lot that has made me understand him more. I'd like to share just a little of what I've learned with you now. Before we start, I'd like to explain why I'm standing here before you at the Kenton Bowling Club with a laptop in front of me. I'm not reading this Eulogy (as maybe I should be), but I have two special people who are listening all the way from Ontario, Canada by means of Skype. Jean Savage is Rob's younger sister and Sarah Lavoie is his niece and God-daughter – I hope you can both hear me okay.

Dad was born, James Robin Hendry, at home at no 15 Chester Road, Parkwood in Johannesburg on Friday the 25th March 1938 to Eben (Ben) Alec and Mary Athalie (nee Bate) Hendry. Jeannie was born 2 years later and a further 2 years after that, his father Ben was killed in the war (Dec 1941) whilst clearing minefields in North Africa (he earned the military cross for his bravery). So at the ripe old age of 4 years old, dad became the 'man' of the house and as such he was required to look after his little sister. They became really close and spent some great time together growing up. Jeannie has asked me to read a [message](#) to her brother, so let me do so now:

A FAREWELL TO ROB

If I were able, this is what I would say to Robbles.

"My brother, my best friend,

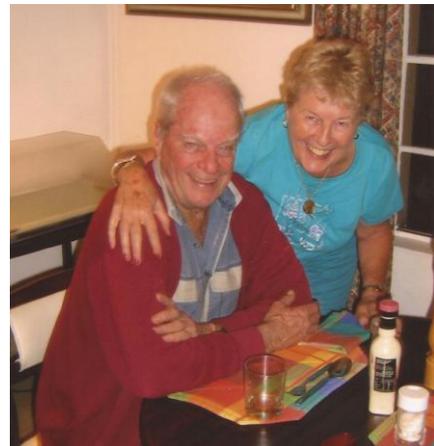
When we were small we played and squabbled and played and squabbled, but you wouldn't let anybody else fight with me and you tried very hard not to let anything or anyone hurt me. When I failed, you were always there to console and pick up the pieces.

On our many camping weekends, we learned to water-ski together, first on two skis, then on one and then - not too successfully - in a pyramid. You taught me to drive and didn't even lose it when I drove up on the pavement.

We went to the same parties, some of your friends became my boyfriends and some of my friends became your girlfriends. We spent hours practising our rock and roll and twist routines until we were stars!!

I didn't see you all that often over the later years, but I did know you would show up, usually unannounced, to greet me when I arrived from Canada.

One of the things you did not share with many people was how often you were in excruciating pain as a result of one of your leaky lungs popping another hole - something that started when you were



in your early teens, which earned you a place in medical history, and continued right throughout your life. Sadly, it also prevented you from playing rugby (which you loved) along with cricket; tennis and squash, all of had a major detrimental effect on your quality of life.

You were always my cheering section and I will miss you, my big brother, forever.

Jeannie”

Dad started school at the Ridge in Westcliff (where he met Ollie Davis, whom he connected with again many years later back here in Kenton) and in 1951 he went to boarding school at St Andrews in Grahamstown (I know there are a number of you here today that were also at College with him). It was at about this time that his mom, Athalie, met and married Howard Lewis on 4th August 1950. They had a daughter together, Helen, who was born on 30th April 1951, while my dad was at boarding school.

This was a particularly difficult time for dad – can you imagine, for 8 years he was the ‘man of the house’ and then all of a sudden, he goes off to school and comes back to a family where there is a new baby that was now the centre of all attention and he is no longer in charge. He rebelled, started smoking and never really connected with Howard or Helen – even to this day. I remember a time when we would do something and he had this saying: “Don’t ask me, I’m not your father, I’m just your mother’s husband”. It took me a while to realise why he said this. It was difficult for him not having a father when he became a father himself because he didn’t know how to act as a father and as a result he became passive and reactive. It was something that took me a long time to recognise myself and with the help of Sonja, I managed to work through this and connected again with dad about 4 years ago. I fear if I hadn’t I would also have struggled to connect as a father when I began raising my own children.

After school, Dad studied accounting through UNISA and passed his Public Accountants Board exam in June 1963 – no mean feat. He was then admitted as a Member of the Transvaal Society of Accountants on the 16th January 1970 and received his CA designation. Later, when he had relocated to Port Elizabeth, he registered as an Auditor (17 October 1986). He was well respected by his peers in the accounting world and when I was considering becoming an accountant after school, I’ll remember the praise that Dave Campbell (among others) had for my dad’s abilities (funnily enough he never encouraged me to become an accountant – if anything he discouraged it). After his articles, I remember dad working for Philips (a loyalty that he kept his whole life – I must have found 10 old Philishave razors in his possessions), before he was transferred to Port Elizabeth at the end of 1980. In 1981, we bought our holiday house in Kenton and during my matric year in 1985, my parents moved to Kenton for good. My dad always used to say that for him, the next stop had to be Salem, which is a fraction of the size of Kenton (I guess he is in Salem now!). He was not a big traveller and used to enjoy the fact that all his Joburg mates would come on holiday to Kenton, meaning he didn’t have to travel. He called Kenton “The Centre of the Universe” and that became the name of our house in Kenton.

Dad enjoyed his time at St Andrews and was a fiercely loyal Old Andrian, even wearing his Old Andrian tie to my wedding (and in a number of old photos of him I see him wearing his tie). When it came time for us to go to high school, I was dead set on going to St Albans in Pretoria, but he wouldn’t have it – my choice was St Andrews (he had planned this way before as I found out in budgets he had drawn up in the mid 70’s for the schooling of the 3 of us). As it turned out this was much better because we moved to Port Elizabeth that year and my parents were a short drive away. Dad attended his 30 year reunion in 1985 while I was still in matric and I can remember attending some of the functions with him – a proud moment for him, I’m sure. When I look through the list of attendees at that reunion, I’m amazed to see so many names that were also at school with me. Mirelle (who was the angel

with my mom at the end) told me how her husband, Peter (McPhee), always used to like to stay close to my dad at OA functions because dad always knew everyone. I'm sure that on Remembrance Day in November, there will be a few people remembering dad.

Dad was a fierce supporter of the St Andrews rugby team, driven by the pride of their "number 8", my brother Derek. I don't think Derek knows just how proud he was, but I can remember how he would recount in detail the way Derek had played. He was by far the biggest of Derek's supporters (followed closely by Brian), watching every game that Border played on TV. When on occasion he was invited to watch a match in East London, he couldn't stop bragging about how well the Captain had played (pushing out his chest as he told everyone). Any article of Border clothing that Derek passed "up" was worn with purpose – even tight up to the end!

One of dad's other passions was his love for the game of bowls. And that is why it is more than appropriate that we are having this memorial today at the Bowls Club. Dad was introduced to bowls by his late friend from motor racing days, Francis Tucker, who tried to get him involved in bowls while living in Johannesburg. It was, however, only when Dad moved to Kenton that he took it up (he was admitted as a full member to the club on 12 December 1988 and his tab number was 26). And when he got into it, he did so with great gusto – as I'm sure a lot of you here today will attest to. He learned well and was eventually moved to the position of 'Skip', which I believe is the leader of the team. Dad was very particular about learning the rules and applying them correctly. In going through his possessions, I found countless photocopied notes, manuals, rule books on how to play correctly. Dad was a student of the game and I believe in his prime about 10 years ago, he was pretty good too. It is fitting that at the end of this service, we will be hanging up his tab on the board by the door.

One thing that really resonated with me about my dad was his sense of honesty and integrity. There was no bending the rules with him. I found a letter written to the President of the Bowls Club in 2007, where he was umpiring a match and one member had acted unbecomingly and I quote: *"I am of the opinion that this behaviour is contrary to The Etiquette and Courtesy of the Game of Bowls (Second Edition 1998), in particular section 2.8, which reads 'Do not carry a running commentary as each bow makes its way to the head. This can be most irritating for your opponents.'"*

Years earlier, he had applied this same sense of honour to his own family. His sister, Jeannie, had been living in Canada for many years and he wanted her back in South Africa, so he arranged with his step-father, Howard that Jean's husband Brian would come and work for Howard with the view of eventually taking over Howard's business, which Dad had been doing the accounting books for. When Howard went back on his word, Dad shut him out and refused to talk about him again. Unfortunately, he also shut out his half sister Helen, refusing to talk to her (a few years ago, when he heard that Helen's daughter Angela had passed her Board Exam, coming 1st overall, he showed some sense of pride, but never followed up on it).

As I mentioned 4 weeks ago in my mom's Eulogy, my parents met when Trish Hall (now Reid) was invited to Pete Simpkins flat for drinks. Trish corrected me that it was not Pete that invited her, but my dad. And as we know, Trish brought my mom along with her. And, my mom strung him out before marrying her by taking a trip around the USA (among other things) with Jeannie in a VW Beetle. They started this journey by travelling trans-Canada from Toronto to Vancouver by train – something I learned my dad was rather jealous of. Anyhow in 1992, I was supposed to attend the Rowing World Champs in Montreal and mom, dad and Brian planned to go and support me. I got dropped last minute, but they went anyway. One of the things they did was to take the trans-Canada train, much to my dad's thrill. He had been given a video camera, which he used to record this and we then had to watch it afterwards.

Who here can remember that video camera? For many years, dad was stuck to his camera. Every year, he would video our Christmas celebration and we would start by watching the previous year. Well, there is a thing for nudity in our family – me excluded of course. The rest just cannot seem to keep their clothes on (Brian likes to sleep in the bath after a night out, both mom & dad used to wander around going to the toilet at night and in the morning would go and make their cup of tea). Well it started with Derek getting lost after a big night out and ending up on the bed in my room (I wasn't there) and getting found there with the door open. Well imagine his surprise when we watched the Christmas video that year (and Derek doesn't like surprises one little bit!!). So the next year, Derek snuck in on Dad having one of his afternoon naps – you can just imagine what followed.

As you will know, Dad had a wicked and dry sense of humour. This came out in the naming of our dogs, starting with our bull-matian (cross between a bull terrier and a Dalmatian – a bit like a larger staffy) who was called Peculiar (and shortened to Pecky). Then came Stripe, the Dalmatian, who had white stripes. Things went a bit array when Megan Walters left us her Dalmatian, Rosie. When Rosie passed away, mom said that she didn't want any more dogs (it was too traumatic when they went). Just in case she changed her mind, Dad decided that the next two would be called Dotty and Ditto. Well, you can see who triumphed here. I have really felt for both Dotty and Ditto these last few days because they really miss mom and particularly dad. Fortunately they have Brian looking after them and he really loves the dogs – as does Lindsay.

A lasting memory of my dad that I have is from my mom's 40th birthday party, which was held at our home in Saxonwold in 1980. Both of them loved Neil Diamond and the one song, Crackling Rosie, came on and my dad got up and proceeded to do a strip dance taking off his shirt – much to my mom's embarrassment. How the tables turned later.

Dad really did love my mom a lot. Unfortunately, he was not at all good at verbalising his love. When he brought her back to Kenton from hospital in East London in Feb, in the car he said to her: *"I'm really quite fond on you."* She was unsure of how to react, but on hearing this, my translation would be something like: *"I really love you so much!"* A few years ago, I left him a copy of Dr Gary Chapman's *The 5 Love Languages*, hoping he would read it and apply some of the wisdom. I found the book in his room a few days ago, but don't know if he ever read it.

My dad's love really showed in the last few months of my mom's life when he did whatever he could to make her well. He was until the end optimistic that together they could beat the cancer. When he heard that mom had cancer (on 1 November 2010), his words were something like: "Well we are going to fight and beat it!" And did they both fight in their own ways.

I only understood a few days ago when I read a letter that dad had written me 3 ½ years ago for my 40th birthday. An extract goes as follows: *"Cancer is very topical, not only in the family, but here in Kenton as well. Every second person here seems to have it. Cancer is a mutation of normal body cells into abnormal malignant cells. What causes this to happen is not known to medical science, but the so-called experts still try to treat it with chemotherapy and radiation. All this does is kill the malignant cells, not the cause of the malignancy and at the same time causes extreme discomfort. There are many documented "miraculous" instances of cancer curing itself. Some years ago we had one here in Kenton – a woman who had not responded well to chemotherapy. Was given literally hours to live by doctors, when almost overnight, the cancer disappeared entirely. To this day, she is living a normal healthy life. I believe that this was due to positive thinking, in other words, being able to exercise the enormous power of the brain to heal the body and suppress the cause of the disease."* When my dad learned about the Rife Resonator he set out with a purpose that I haven't seen in him for a long time, using the machine on my mom and himself.

Unfortunately, I believe that we started too late with my mom, although it definitely did relieve a lot of her pain, but my dad made some remarkable progress with his emphysema and his high blood pressure.

I was impressed at how compassionate dad could be in tough times. A few days before mom died, there was an incident that hurt all the immediate family, but particularly dad (and mom). I'm still struggling to deal with it, but it amazed me how dad was willing to forgive those involved, forget what had happened and move on. He truly showed great compassion and although his efforts were not acknowledged I believe he did what was right.

Dad had a number of passions, with a definite first being his love of Formula 1 Grand Prix racing. In his youth dad took part in rally driving as a navigator (where he met a number of friends such as Francis Tucker and Mike Reid (my Godfather)). He was a member of the Sports Car Club who were responsible for organising the F1 GP at Kyalami. I can remember going to the Sports Car Club box (which was situated on the finish line) and watching Mike, the clerk of the course, waving the chequered flag as well as going from pit to pit afterwards meeting all the drivers. In those days (70's) the race was on a Saturday and the Prize Giving was the Sunday at Joan and Francis Tucker's house (no 23 Sutherland Ave, Craighall Park). Mom and Dad were always there helping with the arrangements and for us as young kids it was such a thing running around getting autographs of the drivers (I remember also that Nicky Lauder never used to come – even when he won in 76 and 77). Dad got to watch his last Grand Prix, the 2011 Chinese Grand Prix, together with Brian at the Busman's Bar & Grill because there was no electricity in Kenton. He enjoyed going out so much, they stayed on for lunch there too (it was a morning GP).

Another passion from earlier days was his collecting stamps. I'm sorry that he stopped actively collecting when we moved to PE because he has one of the most well laid out and meticulous collections I've seen. Everything was done according to philatelic guidelines. Dad also used to be very keen on his wood-working, a passion that I have inherited from him (and probably why I chose Civil Engineering over Accounting). The last project he undertook was to build the "Centre of the Universe" pub in about 88. I was fortunate to be there to help him and was in awe of how he designed the joints for the wooden framework. Dad was really practical in what he build and one of his first projects was this incredible workbench that was designed for a space constrained garage. I was always under the impression that he had got the idea from a Reader's Digest book, but he told me that he had designed it himself. Dad reputedly built the first lounge suite (and a number of other articles of furniture) for their home after he'd married mom.

Dad was definitely in the best physical shape he had been in at least 5 years. The day after mom's funeral, dad upgraded his bowling membership to active again (after a period of 18 months not bowling) and had his first game that Wednesday. Today, I've spoken to a number of people that saw him on either Saturday or Monday when he was playing bowls (he was so happy that Brian joined him on Monday – and I believe Brian has a bowling club application form to fill in!!!). All of you have mentioned how well he was looking and how contented he was – what a great memory to hold onto. I was so happy that during the times that Bridget, Lindsay and I were down in Kenton that Dad really bonded with Lindsay and he was so proud and happy to tell people about his granddaughter. We even got him to come onto the beach with us when Lindsay went to dig in the sand.

I need to remind myself that at these times my grief at my loss is not the only grief. There are so many of you that have lost either a brother, a sister, an uncle, an aunt, a godparent, a grandparent, an in-law and a good friend. You too are grieving and I want to say that I'm so sorry for your loss. In putting this together I went through a number of photographs and I was struck by what I great smile my dad and mom had. Pick one of your favourite smiles and remember them looking like that.

Rev John Davis has asked to say a prayer for Dad today, so I'm going to hand over to John:

Rob Hendry – a Prayer at his Wake

12 Noon 9th May 2011

Lord of Creation, Lord of Life and Death, and life beyond death,

We thank you for your son Rob.

Thank you for his life, his family and the work he did in this community and bowling club.

Lord, Rob now is in your nearer presence.

Thank you that you have taken him to yourself.

We pray that you will have mercy on him, and on us, as we continue to live out the lives you have entrusted to us.

Lord, comfort and bless Rob's loved ones; may they know your supernatural presence surrounding them, and your peace.

So bless us now in this Wake. Thank you for your gift of friendship, laughter, recreation and joy. Give us perspective on our lives;

Give each one, please, the gift of faith, that we may reach out to you,

And may we all come, at the end, to experience that which you have prepared for all who love you.

We offer this prayer, Heavenly Father, for the sake of your eternal Son, Jesus the Messiah, the Saviour, the Lord of Life and Death and Life beyond Death – Jesus our King.

Amen

- John Davis

John was a great source of comfort for Mom during her last days, coming around often to visit and pray for her and us. He visited Dad a few days before his passing and they prayed together.

And now the three sons will hang up Dad's bowling tab on the board by the front door – Brian will you do the honours.

Finally, Nicky (Derek's wife) would like to say a few words of thank you to everyone who has been of such great support to our family over the last few months. Without your support, we would really have struggled. To Dave Slater and the Kenton Bowls Club, thank you again for hosting another Hendry Wake.

Now, please have a drink to (and on) Rob Hendry, your good friend.

Thank you

Ian Hendry