

My Dad was not religious. At all!

The day before he passed, Christine and I were sitting at his hospital bedside discussing various things to fill the space of time, when Dad lifted his hand to Christine and said "Ssshhhh, I am talking to the big fella", Christine and I looked at each other and I said, "well it can't be god as he's talking to a man" and we both started laughing, then Dad Shushed us both with a frown. At the time and shortly after he passed, we discussed what negotiations he was making with the "Big Fella" and we both laughed a lot about this. I believe that even though he had no chosen faith during his life, he was a public servant for most of it and the almighty being, whoever they are, listened to Dad's negotiations and granted him some of the wishes, one which is why we are here on the 1st day of decreased restrictions with more than 10 people in attendance. So, I'd like to say thanks to the "Big Fella" and Dad for making sure you could all come today.

There are the 3 words I'd use to describe my Dad - Adventurous, Competitive and Funny. Dad gifted Allan and I with a great childhood, we had adventurous caravanning holidays, a tree house, a pool. He spent a lot of time teaching us to fish, swim and run (well, one of us loved to run and the other took after her Mum).

We have a game called "Tipped you last". There is only one rule, Don't lose. As Children whenever we separated from Dad, whether it was to go to the Corner store or for a bike ride, there would be an all out war of tipped you last that often resulted in a lot of fun and occasionally some minor injuries. I very rarely won, I actually believe Dad and Allan built their running skills due to this game. Sometimes as adults, the visit with Dad was shorter than the game took as we were leaving. I remember during one of Allan's many injuries, when tipped you last became defective due to his injury, but due to the Keys competitive natures, this is when "Saw your face last" and "Heard your voice last" were created. Over the years this game continued, with many eye roles from my Mum and then later from Christine, sometimes by them both at the same time. This game was shared as Dad's family grew and the Berle's learned the game and grandchildren learned the only rule, Don't Lose. Neighbours and friends were often seen looking out windows trying to decide whether to call the police or join in the fun.

Around 10 years ago, I think it may have been our last serious game before Dad's health started to decline, I was waiting for the bus about a kilometre from Padstow station. I could see the bus coming in the very far distance one way and Dad running towards me from the station from the other way. Even from a distance I could see the glint of intention in his eyes. I watched the bus and Dad getting closer and realised it was going to be a close call. As I jumped on the bus Dad leaned in and tipped me softly yelling "tipped you last" as he ran off. The Bus was about a 3rd full and everyone looked shocked. The bus driver grabbed my arm and asked if I was ok. He sat me down on the seat behind him then asked me if I wanted him to call the police. I was laughing so hard that he thought I was crying at first. I had the attention of the whole bus. Once I caught my breath, I was able to tell the people on the bus that it was just my Dad and then I had to explain the game to ALL of them. I am sure there were a few new families joining the fun of this game after that bus journey. I never realised till then that what we saw as the highlight of the day, others may have assumed was domestic abuse, but that didn't stop us playing.

I said Goodbye to Dad when they put him in hospital for what we both thought was the last time, we agreed to end the game in a tie, so we gave each other a fist bump on parting. Lucky for me, I was able to attend the hospital despite the covid restrictions, but we didn't play the game. Dad passed while listening to Christine and I reminiscing on his life's achievements to the hospital pastor and as I was leaving his room for the last time, I know I could feel him say "I Heard your voice last" so I turned at the door and said "I Saw your face last" After 50 years, the game ended in a tie.

Love you Dad, thanks for the adventures.