

**Speech for Dad at Memorial Service on 23 April 2008
Great Hall, University of Sydney**

About a year ago, in a speech in this very room, the Vice-Chancellor likened my father to “a hunting ferret”. The quality he was getting at, I think, was Dad’s enormous enthusiasm. Things—big and small—would grab him; he would develop a deep interest in them; he would learn about them, be influenced by them, come to understand them: become *impassioned* by them... Of all those passions, my mother was his greatest, most nourishing, most life-transforming. In an early love letter, Dad extolled her many virtues. His passion reached its apotheosis when he came to my mother’s beauty, and unaware that his description may be problematic, he congratulated her on being “so pleasantly plump”... Perhaps, unlike Venus, the Kim we celebrate tonight was not born fully-formed; but, without doubt, Mum had some wonderful raw material to work with.

Classical music, another passion, was always so important: it could lift his spirits, reinvigorate him at 5 in the morning when he was wrestling with a difficult judgment. He would also derive calm from its gentle rhythms, in the repetition and subtle transformation of a musical phrase.

In a moment, we will listen to Bach. This is especially poignant. The *Well-Tempered Clavier* was the musical accompaniment to Dad’s illness. Right until the end, Dad’s mind was as active and strong as ever. The treatment, however, took an enormous toll on his body and he was well-aware of the dire prognosis. And yet, Dad remained positive, strong and brave. In the evenings, Dad would seem utterly exhausted. We sometimes wondered how he could regain the strength to wake up. He would go to sleep to the strains of Bach, and somehow overnight he would revive. The next morning, he would be alert, propped up in bed. Turning to one of us, he would produce a pen from somewhere among the bedsheets and begin: “*Now, if you can just take a note...*”.

Notes. My father lived a much-annotated life. Some of our best conversations were heavily annotated. These are the times when Dad would dispense with the conventions of normal conversation to bounce rapidly, and without segue, between disparate topics, pausing only to savour some particularly *cringe*-inducing pun. We wouldn’t even notice Dad scribbling furiously as we talked, but, years later, between the leaves of a book, we might find a small souvenir: a cryptic reference, in Dad’s familiar hand, to family, justice, cats and the importance of goulash soup.

Dad read voraciously, and always *actively*: scrawling in the margins, entering a kind of conversation with the author. And then, he would be bursting to share the discovery. He would bring over the book or article, saying excitedly: “Read this, Eddles! It’s *very* interesting. I won’t give you my thoughts yet. We can talk about it later.” I would thumb my way past the marmalade-and-strudel-scented pages to the bit he wanted me to read. The author’s monologue would be festooned with Dad’s interjections: “*But what about such-and-such?*”, and then a little later on, “*That’s an excellent point!*”... Very occasionally, Dad would lose interest and so, among the annotations, could sometimes be found the beginnings of a judgment on charitable trusts...

In 1996, Dad came across *Memoir in Two Voices*, Elie Wiesel's account of his conversations with Francois Mitterrand, as the French President was dying of cancer. After running out of space in the book's margins, Dad collected his thoughts in an essay. Dad wrote:

“It is as though Mitterrand's life was like a series of untidy rooms left behind, each door carefully shut. He moves from room to room repeating the process till finally he reaches the last room. There he now sits, with his friend, knowing he is dying, as they engage in that gentle, searching retrospection... Mitterrand wants admiration, not absolution. His friend ... tells him the price. But Mitterrand knows the price is too high. He must open all those rooms and let the light in. He will not. He says, in effect, what is the point of travelling so far, if now I must retrace my steps, looking into the dark closed places of those re-entered rooms? Surely the edifice of a life's achievements over that long journey is all that counts!”

In the ten long-but-short weeks of his illness, we all—singly and together—sat with Dad, sharing anecdotes (big and small) and reflecting on the things that were important to him. Unlike Mitterrand, the doors to the rooms of Dad's life were always open; he encouraged light and breeze and took pleasure in revisiting old themes. Though his achievements were immense, Dad never sought an edifice to mark them.

In the less-than-two-weeks since Dad died, our family has received such glowing tributes to Dad. We will never grow tired of hearing what a wonderful man he was, and how, through his public actions, he has touched so many. He was also a wonderful, quirky, eccentric, forgetful-but-memorious, loving, playful-but-serious father. Already, we miss him terribly.

Edward Santow