

You are all gathered here today because in some way Edward James Lees, or as I like to call him 'my dad', has somehow touched your lives.

It is an impossible job to condense into a five minute speech, or even a five hour speech, a life as full as dads.

Most of you will be familiar with Dads life story. You will be aware that he was brought up in the Argentine, went to Dollar Academy, lost his own dear dad at aged 14, his years as a prisoner of war, through his career at English Electric and then rising as Deputy Managing Director in Renold, through to his retirement with the small firms department and onto his eventual death last Tuesday 19 April.

But what of the private man?

Dad, although an only child himself, was essentially a family man. He loved myself and Jean and our children, his grandchildren, and had a close relationship with us all. He was always there to help and share with us all life's good and bad times. He was also close to all his in-laws and their immediate families.

In addition, he had a huge number of very close friends, not only in this country but also throughout the world. We know of at least 5-6 of you here today who, indeed considered him to be their best friend, and their loss will probably be as deep as our own.

We are all aware of his other characteristics, his intelligence, he could speak four languages fluently and could get by in several others. Indeed, his grandchildren will testify for the fact he was always keen to speak to them in Spanish. Maybe he had things to say that he didn't want their parents to hear!

He was keen to keep his mind sharp and always tried to stretch it daily by doing the Times crossword. In fact, this was the first page he would turn to in the newspaper. Also, he was a master at the board game Scrabble and knew all the numerous tricks to enhance his score! Even up to a few weeks ago he was the champion in our family. Because of the amount of times he consistently won, we were always suspicious that he may have cheated but were never able to prove it!

He always was an avid reader and a lover of classical music, particularly opera. His favourite books were usually autobiographies, often of a political nature. He had his favourites and his dislikes. He loved politicians with conviction and even if he didn't agree with them he preferred those that spoke their mind. To dad, things were usually black or white – he couldn't tolerate today's politics of spin and deception. There was one politician he particularly detested, although political correctness prevails me from mentioning his name, I will give you a clue by pointing out that this particular person was not only the possessor of a handy right hook but also the owner of three Jaguars! To engage Dad in a political discussion was always a joy and an enlightening experience. There were other world leaders of whom he held strong opinions but we better not get into that now or we'll be here all day!

Dad could talk on most subjects and his knowledge never ceased to amaze me, even while he was battling with a terminal illness.

What other qualities did he possess? We all know of his polite good manners and charm. At heart, he was a showman, not a show off, and could always attract an audience at a social function. He could communicate with anyone, regardless of age, race or class. He used to say you must judge people as you find them. Form your own judgements and don't be influenced by others. He had impeccable manners, almost in an old fashioned, quaint way. He always thanked people for things they had given or done for him. He chose his words carefully and never intentionally meant to cause offence.

He was a man with an infectious sense of humour, which, thankfully, he has passed on to all his family members. He used to say you have to learn to laugh at yourself "son". Don't take yourself too seriously because no-one else will. His was the Northern type of humour, subtle and not too obvious. He loved the classic comedy situations such as Dads Army and Open All Hours. He often used to quote the one liners at me such as the famous Captain Mainwaring remark when Private Pike was

asked his name by the captured U Boat Commander “Don’t tell him Pike!” Even the mention of it would send tears rolling down his cheeks.

He was also a great lover of sport, and his favourite sports were cricket, rugby, golf and latterly snooker. I used to often ring him up from work when the Test Match was on to find out the score. Often the reply came back 45-5 – he didn’t need to say who was batting, I knew it was England! I also guessed what his next comment would be; “Why they persevere with that Fletcher I’ll never know, when there are all these good young batsmen about”.

Unfortunately, his attention span with snooker was not as great. I remember talking to him once and him recalling that he had fallen asleep watching the previous night’s match between Steve Davies and Ray Reardon, those two great cures for insomniacs, only to be woken at 3.30pm to the tune of a loud buzzing sound in his ear.

He was an immaculate time-keeper, unlike other members of our family, myself included but particularly my dear departed mum who always happened to be on the last minute. Jean and I often recall the weekly trip to the Presbyterian church in Heaton Chapel, Dad would bundle us both into the car and start “honking the horn” whilst mum hurriedly exited the house, making last minute adjustments to her hair, hat or dress.

On that subject, you are all aware that he was a deeply religious man, attending the local church here in Llandudno often twice on a Sunday. He was also actively involved in the management of the church as an Elder and from this source he has gained a great number of friends. Although not wishing to offend anybody, one in particular deserves a special mention and that is our organist today, Mrs Beryl Brown. We, as a family, owe Beryl so much. She allowed Dad to maintain his independence from us, to continue to live on his own in North Wales and to avoid the indignity of him being forced to go into a Nursing Home. Her cheerful disposition, good humour and general helpfulness kept Dad a young man until he was diagnosed with a terminal illness last December. Indeed, Beryl alerted us to his condition and allowed us to take some corrective action. It was fitting therefore, that Beryl was there along with his immediate family when Dad departed this world and hopefully eased his passage to the next. In the end, his death was a mercy, he would not have wished to be revived to be forced to live out his final days in a dependant state. He was at peace when he died and mum took him to live with all his departed friends and relatives for Eternity. He was convinced that there was an afterlife and this life was merely preparing him for that day when he would live in peace and love forever. Although we will always miss him desperately, we must respect that wish and all take pride and pleasure in being able to know such a special and lovely man. His passing has made the world a poorer place.