

WARNING ... PERSONAL BLOG ...

4<sup>th</sup> May 2013

In my English language GCSE I chose to do the question that asked me to write about "A person I admired" - I was part of the cohort who were examined in the first year of GCSEs, which gives away my age and so the fact that I remember this specific question and my response is quite astonishing.

I chose to write about my father. At the time he was 64 years old and had, lived quite a life. Born in Yugoslavia, involved in WWII, settled in South Wales, work, wife and ultimately 4 children – the last of which (me!) was born after a 17 year gap. Having an "older than my mates" dad was something that I was always conscious of and it wasn't until I hit my teens did the embarrassment become pride.

I remember writing about his journey from his home in Cetina, at the age of 14, fighting with the allies at Monte Casino, and how he ultimately ended up in a displaced persons camp just outside Newport. My little exam essay I am sure didn't do him justice, but it gained me an A (they didn't do A\*s in those days!).

Since then he has become a grandfather to 10 and the great grand children just keep on coming – something he is immensely proud of. He has coped with living on his own for the last 15 years after my mam was killed in a hit and run, health issues and 12 months ago he lost a son, and I a brother in a motorbike accident. He has had to deal with persecution in his neighbourhood, having lived there for 60 odd years and in recent years his health has been affected by an evil disease.

The disease is one, that nobody likes to speak about because it could end up being "us" .... Dementia – and that's the reason why I am now sat by his hospital bed listening to his "not so" rhythmic breathing. In the last few days we have had ranting in English; then in Serbo Croat – which for the family is heartbreaking as we don't understand the language and now we have nothing. Just his breathing and I am holding onto those sounds with my every part of my body.

So maybe recalling this exam paper isn't so astonishing, given that my dad remains my hero, and one I am not yet prepared to let go.

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