

Leonard Arthur Evans

Born 17-07-1929 - Died 09-07-2020

Leonard Arthur Evans was born on the 17th of July 1929 in St Olave, Bermondsey in Greater London. To his parents Alice Harriet Spilling and George Charles Evans. Alice and Charles had 14 children. Rose, George Charles who died in infancy, Sid, Ted, John, Alice, Ivy, William, Josie, Olive, Eileen, Richard, Leonard and Frank. Len and Richard were twins and as you come into the church you will see a photo table with a lovely photo of the twins often known fondly as the "terrible twins" we are not sure who arrived into the world first.

We have found a list of some childhood memories sent to Len by his younger brother Frank. Frank remembers street parties and parades in the village square, he remembers horses and carts selling salt and ice. there were visits to their elder brother Ted at Christmas and birthdays, where they were given chocolate figures. Maybe, this is where Len developed his love of chocolate, he always had a few bars or boxes of chocolate and chocolate chip biscuits available. In fact recently during lockdown Len phoned me and told me he had run out of chocolate and biscuits and could I get some and bring them over to the Manor please, he was desperate for his chocolate fix.

Len loved the Tower of London and has several paintings of it. Frank reminded Len that their Father George would take them along the River Thames, near the Tower of London and people in the ships sailing along the river would throw coins to them.

Frank remembers the local pie shop where they would go as children and buy peas pudding and mash as a special treat. Even while living in Australia Len loved his English food, Bacon and Egg, baked beans, porridge, rice pudding, treacle tart and a good old roast.

Each week they would be given a farthing (perhaps worth about 10 cent today) and be allowed to visit the corner store in the square for sweets.

At the Coronation there were street parties and a horse drawn roundabout they gave the owner a jar of jam for a ride.

During the war London was not a safe place, the children were often put in the wardrobe during an air raid if they couldn't get across to the basement of Cross and Blackwell's factory quickly enough or to the local church of St Mary Magdalene. In the morning they would wake to find roofs on fire.

Len and the younger siblings were evacuated in 1939, to the seaside town of Worthing where they were looked after very well by a Mrs Ida. Their parents would go and visit them each weekend. They went back to London in 1940 and were moved to Blackpool where they initially stayed with two elderly spinsters and they would toast bread over an electric fire. Len and Richard the "terrible twins" gave these dear ladies a challenging time. Later they were given a small house with an outside toilet at the end of the garden.

Len's Soldier Service and Pay book tells us that he enlisted at Preston in Lancashire in August 1947 at the age of 18. He is listed as having grey eyes and brown hair and his trade before enlisting was a Newspaper Roundsman.

After an initial 6 week training in Nissan huts Len was posted to Colchester to train as a firefighter, he says he had to carry a person on his shoulder down a ladder which he didn't find very easy.

In 1948 Len was posted to Egypt where they lived in tents and he was part of the fire crew.

During that time he was promoted to Corporal. Len was thankful that he was only called out to one fire in the desert.

Len went back to Blackpool in 1949 to the family home, the family had been moved to a larger house which had an inside bathroom which was quite special at the time.

Len and his brother Richard used to go to the big band dances at the Tower Ballroom and Len enjoyed dancing and playing the Banjo.

Len worked for a Newsagent for 18 months until the owners a Bert Crossley and his wife, who had befriended Len, said they were selling up to emigrate to Australia. They invited Len to join them and he decided to take that adventurous step.

In 1951 at the age of 22 Len set off on the HMS Strathneaver for Melbourne Australia.

Len lived for several years with Bert and his wife while he established himself in Melbourne.

A few years later Bert Crossley was Len and Vivienne's best man at their wedding.

As Len enjoyed dancing, he attended a dance at the Box Hill Town Hall famous for dances. There he met a very pretty young lady named Vivienne, they enjoyed each others company and developed a friendship which lasted 64 years. Len and Vivienne were married on the 21st January 1956 at St Peters church in Box Hill and what a handsome couple they were, Vivienne was given away by Oswald Turner her Uncle. We have a photo of the handsome couple on the table.

Len and Vivienne were both Clerks at the time of marriage but later they went on to operate a Milk Bar in Follett Rd Cheltenham and later still the Delicatessen at 336 Charman Road ,Cheltenham where they remained until 1972.

As a couple they joined St Matthews Church in Cheltenham. Len was baptised and confirmed in this church and Vivienne was confirmed with Len in 1969.

This led to a life time of friendships and dedicated activity, raising funds for charities, community work and for Len great involvement in the Anglican Men's society. Thank you to Warren and Ivan from the Anglican Men's society for being with us today.

I know Len would like to thank Dell and Derek for their support and friendship throughout the years and to Dell for her listening ear in recent years.

During this period Len studied accountancy with The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and in 1972 Len and Vivienne sold the Delicatessen and went to live in Mentone.

Len found a position in the Victorian Government Dental Service in the administration side of this service. The Dental Service had mobile units which travelled to all State Schools in Victoria. Len remained with the Dental service until retirement. During that time they were able to buy their home in Dingley Village where they lived for 38 years.

Travel and holidays were important to Len and Vivienne, there are diaries that tell us about a number of holidays on ships and to various different countries. They also enjoyed camping in both Australia and Northern Europe.

There were three significant trips overseas where they reconnected with Len and Vivienne's families. In 1992 Len and Vivienne went back to England for a combined 63rd birthday with Richard, Lens twin. It was known in the family as a 'great do, a good old Evans knees up'

The family in England have always remained important to Len and Vivienne and they have kept in close contact over the years. Len was very happy when one of his Great Nephews, Greg, with this wife Caitlin came to settle in Melbourne and Len very much enjoyed being part of their family and watching Taio and Ella grow.

One of Lens great hobbies was gardening, he belonged to the African Violet Society and led the U3A garden group in Mordialloc for many years.

I have been fortunate to be a neighbour of Len and Vivienne's for many years and was often the recipient of beautiful tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, plums, beans to name a few.

Len was an avid cricket fan and enjoyed watching the games he also enjoyed watching the tennis and got used to the Australian game "footy"

Our neighbour Bernadette had a cat named Bella who liked to visit Len and Viv' and as Vivienne was so fond of Bella and fed her regularly she eventually made 445 Lower Dandenong Road her home. There are also two magpies who were very well fed several times a day by Len and Viv'

Len was a gentleman in the true sense of the word, he was kind, caring, well liked and a very positive person always with a welcoming smile and an interest in you as a person. Len gave wonderful support to Vivienne particularly in the last few years of his life.

We will all miss him but we know that he has gone to be with his Heavenly Father who he loved and served and he is at peace.

