

JOHN FRANK FROST 4th June 1935 - 21st May 2015

John was born at Barley Mow Lane (now Maltings Lane) in Grundisburgh, and later moved to Stoney Road. He was fourth in line of an eventual family of ten, 5 girls and 5 boys. At the age of three, he started going to Sunday School, and he would remember the Anniversaries in July each year when the Chapel would always be full of children, and he would give a recitation or read a lesson. Growing up in Grundisburgh during the war, John would often see planes flying over the village and he recalled one coming down in a field nearby. He spent a lot of his childhood playing down in Town Lane meadows, known locally as 'Tay Lay' meadows. This, he said, was his "most favourite place in the world" and he would spend many happy hours playing in the streams and fields.

He was educated at Grundisburgh School until the age of eleven when he gained a scholarship to Ipswich Grammar School. While at school, he excelled at sport, especially rugby and cricket, and became part of school folklore when he took 7 wickets in 7 balls against St, Josephs College. This feat was recorded in the local press and also the Eagle comic which was quite new and very popular at the time. Although he was not known for his prowess at actually learning the subjects of the day, he passed 3 G.C.E. O levels in his final year before leaving school at the age of sixteen. This was not through lack of ambition but the need for him to obtain an occupation which would bring in much needed revenue to the home and an ever increasing family.

He was never out of work and in addition to two years National Service at the age of eighteen in the army, he held administrative positions at well known companies in the Ipswich area, including Ransome & Rapier, Ransome, Sims & Jeffries and Delta Manganeese Bronze., He worked at Delta for over 25 years where he and a colleague would eventually go on to help run the 25 Year Club for long serving staff members.

John married his wife, June, in October 1963 and they moved into an old school house in Church Lane, Swilland, where they would stay and bring up their two children, Alison and Ian. He joined the Territorial Army in 1977 and became a Corporal in the Royal Signals, spending time in Colchester and Brentwood barracks. His group would go on manoeuvres in Germany every year or so and he enjoyed spending a couple of weeks in a different country, learning a new language.

During his time at Delta, where he worked as a progress clerk, he wrote and performed songs and sketches for their works Christmas shows. One of his acts would be to team up with his workmate, Colin Chaston, to become the country and western duo 'Jumpin' John Jehosophat and Chimney Stack Chas'. Following on from this he then became one of the founder members of Grundisburgh Amateur Dramatics Society.

GADS would play a big role in John's life over the next 28 years as he loved performing onstage. He'd had a bit of experience of this in his twenties when he used to sing in local dance bands. He'd already been an extra in a film, 'The Angry Silence', some of which was filmed at Reavells factory in Ipswich in 1960, which featured Richard Attenborough. John had also featured in a BBC Play for Today, recorded in 1980, entitled 'The Imitation Game', a play about women who were code breakers during WW2 and starred Brenda Blethyn.

John played many varied roles in GADS productions as well as writing, directing and being on the committee. He took great pride in his performances and would hate it if he ever needed a prompt! He's probably best remembered as being an outrageous Dame in many pantomimes, although his favourite roles were Fagin in 'Oliver', Scrooge in 'Humbug' and Jeeves in 'Come On, Jeeves'.

When his health prevented him from carrying on onstage with GADS, he would still go along to watch the occasional rehearsal and would always be in the front row to watch plays and pantos, staying afterwards to have a good old yarn with his friends! Although he missed performing onstage himself, he got the same enjoyment from seeing everyone else performing onstage.

His love of sport led him to play football for Charsfield and he sustained a nasty injury in 1969 when he suffered a badly broken ankle. This had to be fixed with a bolt, which was never taken out. He helped run Witnesham Football Club during the eighties and nineties. He was treasurer for a long while and would also mark out the pitch and referee games when required. He was manager of the reserve team for a time, leading them to promotion in 1991 when they won Division 11 of the Sunday Morning League. He also managed the Witnesham Wasps youth team which was very successful in the early eighties.

John took early retirement in 1997 and during this time would often go back to Tay Lay meadows, the place he loved so much as a child. He developed a keen interest in rearing bantams and chickens, regularly driving over to Campsea Ashe market, with his great friend Brian Reynolds, to buy and sell his stock. John and June also played carpet bowls in Hadleigh. Amongst other interests, John enjoyed listening to country music, especially Glen Campbell and Crystal Gayle. He also liked to read books by Henry Williamson.

John enjoyed a gamble and Saturday tea times would find him checking the football results to see whether or not he'd had any luck on his pools coupon. The usual outcome was the remark, 'carry on working? Up until fairly recently, on Saturday mornings, you would find John in Woodbridge, making his way through the Thoroughfare to have his weekly bet on the horses. He didn't win very often but as he rarely staked more than £1, it wasn't a great loss' The staff in the bookies would give John a cup of coffee in return for the eggs he used to take to them!

As John moved into his seventies, his diabetes became more of a problem and affected his ability to walk. He eventually had to stop driving as his eyesight began to suffer. In March this year, his health took a turn for the worse and he had to go into hospital, where complications led to his left leg having to be amputated. After a few more weeks convalescing in hospital, his condition suddenly deteriorated and sadly, for all his family and friends, he died peacefully in Ipswich Hospital on May 21st, aged 79.

It was lovely to see so many people paying their respects to John at his funeral a couple of weeks later. He will be greatly missed by all of his family and friends. He was a real character, a proper 'Suffolk boy', and Grundisburgh was where he loved to be, and where a part of him always will be.

Ian Frost & Terry Frost