

Phil passed away unexpectedly on 11-Jan-2009. Unbelievably, due to a heart-attack. Below is a wonderful eulogy by Phil's best and oldest friend, Andrew "Mac" Corrie. Here is the eulogy:

_____ [eulogy by Andrew "Mac" Corrie] _____

Philip Turner (1950-2009)

Phil Turner – son, brother, husband, dad, father-in-law, brother-in-law, uncle, cousin, nephew, friend, business colleague, cycling buddy, neighbour. He was at least one of those to everyone here today. He was a very special person. And though our hearts are filled with much sadness on this day, our message is one not of despair, but of hope, and love, and celebration.

Son. Born on 19th November 1950 in Salford to Doug and Mary. Their first child, and a son of whom they were, quite rightly, very proud. Proud not only of his numerous achievements, and what he did, but of what he was. He did give them several nasty moments too – such as when he told his dad we were going to buy an Bedford Minibus and drive overland to Morocco in it, and would dad help us to fix it and get it roadworthy! Or when his mum, enquiring whether he had got a suit sorted for his wedding, was told (and you have to remember that this was in the “hippy” seventies) “yes I’ve got one from Sexy Rexies”, (a clothes shop in Liverpool near to where he was working!) But there was a closeness and a bond between Phil and his mum and dad that transcended distance. In recent years particularly after his dad died Phil and his mum communicated so keenly that they really knew each other and what was going on in each others lives. They would have regular long phone conversations, usually on a Sunday evening, as indeed they did on the night that he died. His Auntie Dorothy, who spent much time with him when he was little, described him as the son that she never had. There must be many parents who wish they had a son like Phil.

Brother. A loyal, caring, steadfast and supportive loving brother for Julie. They had a particular party piece which they developed as children which involved one of the lying on the floor with their legs up and the other one lying on top of them and then they rolled along the floor like a caterpillar track. Julie’s only recently stopped doing it, handing the mantle on to her more agile daughter. At Phil’s 21st birthday weekend which coincided with the annual Scout dinner dance he was invited to lead the first dance – his favourite – the cha cha. Julie stood in as his dance partner and he lead her around the dance floor to great acclaim.

Husband. An absolutely passionately devoted husband for Mary whom he met whilst he was at University in Cambridge and she was in Saffron Walden training to be a teacher. How did they meet? Well Mary and two friends saw an advert from one of the Cambridge colleges for a Mathematicians’ Party – they thought it would be full of dull, grey students but there was nothing else on that night so they decided to go. All 3 of them immediately noticed Phil – it was obvious he had come straight from a rugby match but he was the only one who looked any fun. They quickly discovered that as he was Captain of Rugby he was entitled to student accommodation with two rooms – and therefore floor space for the inevitable temporary overnight accommodation. Whilst her two friends were tossing a coin to see which one of them was going to ask him for a floor for the night Mary beat them to it. She was impressed that Phil had a car (not many students in Cambridge did in those days; she didn’t realised he had borrowed his dad’s to get home for the Christmas vacation!) The following day he drove her back to Saffron Walden but not until he had taken her to

the Fitzwilliam Museum to see all the paintings by Turner. He picked her up again on the Sunday and they visited Ely Cathedral, spending most of the time investigating the unique heating system there! So not for Phil the clichéd old wining and dining and taking to the pictures to woo a lady off her feet! Anyway Phil returned to Bramhall for Christmas with Mary thinking that was probably it. Imagine her surprise when one day a young Scout from Bramhall who was visiting his grandma who lived in Tenterden arrived at her doorstep with a Christmas present for her from Phil. He had swept her off her feet by his inventiveness, resourcefulness, and caring. She met Phil's dad at the start of the next time. During the vacation Phil had told his mum and dad that he was going to marry Mary (Mary didn't know he was!) so Phil's dad thought he better pop down to check her out! They were married in Tenterden on 4th August 1973, and so began one of THE most devoted and committed partnerships. I can't think of any other couple whose lives were more intertwined. If you were asked to think of an iconic object that symbolised Phil and Mary most people would probably say a tandem. Not just because it was one of their favourite leisure-time activities but because of what a tandem represents – two people working together (usually in harmony!) to achieve a goal, and to travel on a journey. The work often needing vast amounts of energy. The journey with its ups and downs. Always moving forward – energetic, unknown, challenging, exciting, exhilarating and rewarding. And above all, fun. Not achievable on your own – completely interdependent. Isn't that just a perfect picture of Phil and Mary?

Dad. Phil was the supreme patriarch, the head of the family, par excellence. A role he relished from day 1 – the 7th October 1975 when Nigel was born, and a role which just grew and grew and made him happier and prouder as the years went by. Fatherhood did have its moments though – when they boarded the aircraft bound for the USA with a 6-week-old baby, Paul, Phil's first concern was for Paul's comfort so he immediately got Paul settled into the specially prepared baby carrier complete with blankets thoughtfully supplied by the airline – or so Phil thought until the stewardess rushed up to him and enquired what he was doing – as he had put Paul in the overhead luggage locker! Clare used to love Phil playing the towel machine game with them when they were little – as they got out of the bath he was there with arms outstretched, towel in his hand – they would run to him he would swaddle them and be the machine that ribbed them dry! Years later she even caught him doing the same to the dog! He inculcated a spirit of competitiveness in them – he wouldn't soft-peddle with them; if he played tennis with them for example they had to rise to the occasion and if they beat him it was because they had played better than him. But he was also a sensitive and emotional dad – you could see the pride and the joy – as well as that characteristic huge smile - as he walked down the aisle with Clare here in this church just under 12 months ago. His love for his children was limitless; – although he could be quite authoritarian; he wouldn't allow a television in the house while the children were growing up – and I doubt that he ever discovered that Paul secretly borrowed a tiny hand-held tv from a friend and used to watch it under the bedclothes after “lights out”! Heather recalls how he made her go with her into the office every Saturday morning before her 11 plus exam so that he could give her extra maths coaching – although the deal was that she had free run of the office drinks machines. He worked tirelessly to ensure that his children were given the best possible support, encouragement, and opportunities. He simply wanted the best for them. But he could be an embarrassing dad too. Imagine Heather's horror as a young teenager at the end of the first party she had been allowed to go to when she called her

dad to collect her and he turned up in full view of the party revellers – on the tandem as he had too much to drink that evening and didn't want to risk driving. Nigel and I talked about the family at Christmas in Australia. Phil was the head of a closely-knit family, who don't live in each other's pockets all the time but who are always there for each other. As Phil was always there for them. He led the family by example. Phil encouraged Nigel, Paul, Clare, and Heather to grow wings and to use them, but he and Mary gave them roots too to anchor them in such a strong family. He gave them a real sense of adventure. As the family spread geographically he did whatever he could to enable them all to spend Christmas together each year – this Christmas just past in Australia being one that will be especially cherished. There were so many occasions during that three weeks where Phil was just a picture of absolute joy and supreme pleasure and happiness at being with all of his immediate family, and his extended family Vin, Karen, and CC whom he loved and embraced, and included as his own.

Friend. Phil has been my friend for over 50 years – ever since the family moved to Bramhall in 1953. We were in Sunday School at Bramhall Methodist Church together. Then we were Cubs, Scouts, Senior Scouts, and Leaders together in 1st Bramhall Scouts; we were in Bramhall Methodist Youth Club together. We grew up together, shared the same sense of humour and had lots of interests in common – particularly the love of the outdoors, adventure, and travelling – there were some differences; Phil was brilliant at maths and sports and I was at completely the other end of the scale! But that didn't stop us from having many happy times together with loads of fun and adventure on the way. Phil gave me the greatest honour of asking me to be his Best Man. We've always been there for each other and to me Phil was the brother that I never had.

Phil has a myriad of friends all around the world. Countless numbers of people feel honoured and blessed to be able to count themselves as one of his friends. Why? Because Phil was such an engaging character who loved people – he was just wonderful to be with. He lived out in his everyday life the highest qualities and values of honesty, integrity, self-respect and respect for others. He genuinely cared about the people he was with.

Business Colleague. Phil effectively only ever worked for one employer, although it went through various amalgamations and name changes. He was a very faithful and loyal employee who was highly respected in his profession. He was a Principal at Mercers; he was Chair of Mercer's Global accounting Group. His reputation in his profession was international, and his impact is far-reaching world-wide. I Googled "Phil Turner Mercers" – there were a staggering 58,600 entries for him, many quoting speeches he had given, papers he had presented, or innovative policies he had spearheaded. A text message sent to his Blackberry the day after he died, from a colleague in one of the offices on the other side of the world, in Asia expressed how much of a loss to the company his death will be. He had a variety of job titles at Mercers – at one time he was "Knowledge Manager" – a pretty onerous responsibility I should imagine but one which I'm sure he performed with distinction! When Nigel first went to Melbourne he met a friend of Karen's whose girlfriend worked for Mercers. When she found out Nigel's surname she said "Do you know Phil Turner?" – she had remembered watching a video presentation that Phil had made and such was the impact it had made on her. His current title was senior Retirement Consultant – probably a case of "do as I say, not as I do" as I know he had no plans for his own

retirement (something else we talked about in Australia) – because he had not decided what major project he wanted to embark on in his retirement.

I've been reflecting on the last month of his life for it was exactly one month before his death that we set off for Australia. What did he do in that month:

Travelled a few thousand miles, with Mary, to a previously unvisited part of the world, to be with his family

Trekked 50 miles through bushland

Climbed the three highest peaks in the area

Planned the practical details of the gear needed

Spent quality time with his family

Got up early in the morning to prepare his favourite breakfast dish - porridge

Met up with a friend and went on a strenuous cycle ride (unusually, without Mary)

Met with business colleagues in two offices on the other side of the world

Recreational reading – a weighty tome about the end of the world and the forging of Christendom, as well as Sir Walter Scott's classic novel Waverley set during the

Jacobite rebellion of 1745 about the clash of cultures

Kept in contact with his mum in Bramhall

Ate lots of food and drank lots of beer and wine

Went into work a few hours after returning to UK to clear all his emails ready for a clean start the following week

Hosted a party for cycling club friends the day after he returned from holiday

Jogged and cycled to work and at lunchtimes

Entertained a house guest

Drafted a speech he was to deliver at a Burns Supper in Scotland tomorrow

So all in all a pretty typical month for Phil. He had boundless energy and he used his time to the full, usually for the benefit of others. He was there for everyone. He was inspirational. He had infinite patience. He was calm. He was incredibly generous with his time and his talents, and he was often an anonymous benefactor supporting many causes – always unsung. And he had a great sense of humour. He led by example. He set himself high standards; he didn't force them on others but he liked people to move in the same direction as him. He worked hard to succeed in whatever he attempted.

He dismissed things that he considered a waste of time – such as sleeping! If he wasn't interested in something he could get it spectacularly wrong – he wouldn't have a clue how much a shirt, or a pair of shoes cost. At times he had an endearing naivety – within days of arriving in the USA he wandered into a racist “no-go” area of Washington DC; it wouldn't have occurred to him that people would behave so badly.

But his interests and his achievements were wide-ranging. From an early age he had a love of music – to this day his mum remembers being entertained by Phil aged 5 singing “Walking my baby back home” (perhaps a foretaste of things to come with the other Mary years later?!) He learnt to play the piano, the ukulele banjo, the guitar (particularly Country and western with Steve in the USA who is here today), he led many a Scout campfire. And recently he took up the piano accordion. Mercifully he never took up my challenge to learn the bagpipes! He encouraged Paul to take up the saxophone, Clare to learn the violin, and Heather to play the piano. He and Heather would frequently sing together – especially Country and western. He appreciated listening to music too – he and I used to go with my dad to Organ recitals in Manchester Town Hall when we were teenagers and I remember us both loving one particular recital piece – Now thank We All our God - the one that will be our

recessional today. His wide ranging tastes are well represented in the music chosen for today. He and I were fortunate enough one year to go to the BBC recording of Carols from Kings in Cambridge – something he referred to often as it brought him so much pleasure.

And of course sport was always high on his agenda – particularly rugby where he captained many teams at School, University, in the USA, and at Brentwood. He was Captain of the 1st 15 at Emmanuel College, and President of the George Washington Rugby club in America. He was keen for Nigel and Paul to play rugby and he often helped by coaching the local team. One of his ambitions was for him and Nigel to play together on the same rugby team. He achieved that when he was playing for an Old Boys team and they were short of a prop so Phil volunteered Nigel. Phil hobbled out from the first scrum and Nigel went in – he came out of the second scrum in just the same state. Anyway Phil decided it was time for him to hang up his boots when Nigel got a hat trick in that match and he didn't!

Whilst he was a student at Emmanuel College he took up rowing, rowed for the Oxbridge Society, and earned a Half Blue at Emmanuel College. Incidentally his other achievement at University was winning the Wibbly Wobbly race – on more than one occasion. This was an activity involving drinking beer, spinning round, and trying to walk in a straight line. Oh – and there was another achievement at University – he graduated with an Honours degree in Mathematics. And some other achievements? A Queens Scout, and Head Boy at Stockport Grammar School. He continued to support the School in many ways – often travelling up from Chichester to be present at a special event such as the recent dedication of the climbing wall to his old school friend Peter Boardman who lost his life on Everest. Phil was Treasurer of the London branch of the Old Stopfordian Association.

After graduating he started work in Liverpool as a trainee Actuary, continuing his professional studies at the same time. He qualified as an Actuary within two years – virtually unknown for this to be achieved so quickly. 6 months later Phil and Mary moved to USA. He continued his studies there to become a Fellow of the Institute of Actuaries. He delighted telling everyone he had become a member of the MAFIA – as these were now the letters after his name.

Phil had an impressive intellect – but he wore his learning very lightly. He was widely-read. He would engage you in conversation on a topic of which you knew he was more knowledgeable than you, but at a level you were comfortable and nicely stretched by. He was interested in, and stimulated by, amongst other things, history, science, current affairs, economics, religion, mathematics, world affairs, politics, philosophy, and the environment.

And of course cycling. As a concerned environmentalist Phil started cycling to work in Brentwood. This soon developed into a leisuretime activity that he and Mary took up and which has brought such pleasure to them. And cycle trips that leave most of us breathless just thinking about them – John-o-Groats to Lands End, Canterbury to Rome, Paris-Brest, the highest sections in the Alps of the Tour de France, mountain passes across the Sierra Nevada in Spain. Hardly a week goes by when they haven't clocked up a couple of hundred kilometres. But typically Phil didn't just take part in the trips organised by the local cycle club; he became actively involved in helping to run the club; he was chairman of the local CTC and Treasurer of the District CTC. His other great love was walking be it on the Downs locally, in the Scottish Highlands, or trekking in Nepal (which he and I did on several occasions, along with

Mary, Nigel and Paul), or on the John Muir trail in America, or the Inca Trail to Macchupichu in Peru.

Phil was a gentle giant. He was inspirational. His family believe that they collectively are still aspiring to be to be as inspirational as he was. He was there for everyone.

I have had the privilege of offering this eulogy; I have had the privilege of having Phil as a lifelong friend. We have all had the privilege of knowing this truly great man. Phil touched the lives of so many people – and he lives on in all of us. The legacy he has left all of us is phenomenal. We have so much to celebrate and to be thankful for. Let us grieve not that he is no more, but give thanks that he was.

Andrew Corrie
23rd January 2009

Mac read this at Phil's memorial service on 23-Jan-2009. It was standing room only, attended by family, friends, and colleagues, including a large contingent from Phil's cycling club. Phil's bicycle stood at the front of the church next to his casket.
