

## William James Doe

26<sup>th</sup> August 1911 – 26<sup>th</sup> March 2011

It's a great privilege to be the one to speak for the family today. Looking back on this grand life of 99 years 7 months, we will all have shared a different bit of it, so the Doe boys and girls have knitted up a story to describe our esteemed, loved husband, dada, and granddad. Norman has written most of this, with contributions and memories from all the family- Julia (Mama), Martin, Heather, and grandchildren Rachel, Elizabeth and Edward.

Capital and labour. In their many and varied senses. These two were constant themes in the long and extraordinary life of Jim Doe. And, as a result, they became themes in our lives – we, his family.

Jim was conceived over a hundred years ago at a time of political struggle between capital and labour, in the town of his birth – Tonypandy in the Rhondda - in the autumn of 1910, the year before he was born. We now know it as the Tonypandy Riots, the miners' strike centred on collieries around Tonypandy, and always something of a controversial topic in our family. Jim's father was a miner at the Bush colliery – but not on strike – he was in charge of the engine house and ferried the scabs up and down the shaft. But, medical point here, being in work whilst his wife was pregnant allowed baby Jim to grow without stunting. Julia's great uncle – Sir Lleufer Thomas – was the stipendiary magistrate for the Rhondda – and it was he who contacted Churchill to send in the troops. You can see why it might be a bone of contention around the Sunday lunch table.

And so James grew up at One Five Two – as he always knew it – in Court Street in Clydach Vale, Tonypandy. His mother – it would seem something of a matriarch – was herself cousin to Roy Jenkins the politician; his father was an elder at Mount Zion Chapel, and his four older sisters doted on Jim and he doted on them. So often Jim would say how much he owed them all. It was a house of music, and singing – but frugality, soon to be Rhondda in the depression. Jim often told us about other children who would say "Giss the stump" to let us know that he- and we -didn't have beg for the core of an almost eaten apple – unlike his friends in Court Street.

In his teens - after he got home from Tonypandy Grammar School – he would make radio sets. That inventive labour too set the scene for his future. Forever practical – working on some project or other – usually with his hands. But always mindful of the need for capital to fund the interests of his endless labours. The Protestant work ethic was deeply ingrained in him. There was no alcohol in One Five Two, no playing cards on a Sunday. Jim was always difficult to interpret in terms of religion. Sometimes he would say he was not a believer, that life was survival against purposeless decay. But he told us that in his teens he had a vision of Christ at the window of his bedroom in One Five Two. He did not himself attend chapel; but he

would give capital to the church, and he loved to come to our concerts at St Edwards. In fact this generosity, (giving a 'round pound' to the rather pretty Miss Julia Hooper, when she called in 1953 collecting for the Welsh Church Appeal) was rewarded richly– but more of that later.

Jim's father's ambition for him was to avoid the pit – to go to university. And indeed he read Latin and French at University College Cardiff from 1928. He wanted to be a doctor but there was no capital in the family to support this, so undertook teacher training at Bristol.

Then in 1939 was called up – into the artillery. A week before his unit was shipped out to Burma, Jim was posted to the Army Education Corps – and he spent the rest of the war in an office at the end of the pier in Aberystwyth. (I always used to ask him which end and I still cant remember the answer) – his life there was happy and industrious, lectures, sea air and sunny bicycle rides on the slopes and in the lanes around Devil's Bridge. And at Aber he developed his reading in science – particularly physiology and anatomy – self taught through reading textbooks– often a topic of conversation later with Eric and Margaret whom he so much admired. He loved Aber, invoking happy memories during family summer holidays there in the 1960s – but guilt and horror at the effects of war on his fellows in the artillery unit when he visited the survivors at Whitchurch hospital.

After the war he returned to the Rhondda, and taught at Porth County – the Rhondda County Grammar School for Boys – at Porth Secondary Grammar, and then at Tonypany Grammar – where he stayed until retirement. He was apparently known as "Fu Manchu" to the pupils, but whether because he was a strict disciplinarian, his inscrutable nature or his Hollywood good looks and noble bearing – fearsome in school photos – a family can never really know. He set up school trips to Belgium with a teaching colleague of his – Bob Hourmont – taking groups on visits to European capitals – starting with Brussels, using Jim's excellent language skills. But he couldn't be lured to join Bob in what became Hourmont Travel.

Jim designed and organised the building of the first bungalow in the Rhondda – Pengarth. This was on the calling list of the dashing young secretary of All Saints Church Trealaw – Julia Hooper – a dead ringer for Vivienne Leigh. Well, the round pound turned out to be a good investment, and the two of them married in 1954. Chalk and cheese, really, but a happy, successful alliance: Hooper and Doe; church and Chapel; believer and agnostic; serious and party girl; Patience and -well, less patience. As these two families came together in Julia and Jim's marriage, we can only imagine what the family gatherings must have been like. Julia's father the legendary Dai Hooper, a Rhondda standup comedian and many other things besides – his only child's loving father and a devoted husband to Edith, herself a most elegant lady .

This new Doe family was completed when Martin and Norman were born. And it was this quartet – Jim, Julia, Martin and Norman that dominated Jim’s life thereafter. Life at Pengarth was an idyll. Jim in his element – labour and capital - building a summer house – planting exotic grasses – tending the woods - harvesting the pears and plums from his trees – autumnal bonfires – listening to his beloved Schubert on the veranda – organising his investments each Saturday morning spent with the stocks and shares. Julia and the boys basking in a glorious home and garden, although never enough for Martin, whose tendency to scare the neighbourhood with 40 foot tree climbing feats, leaping over coal heaps , and careering down hills on scooters tended to end in hospital.

Then in 1965 Julia’s father passed away – looked after so wonderfully by Mr and Mrs Cronin next door. The Does moved from Pengarth to live with Julia’s mother on Cemetery Road Porth – Jim’s aim to be near Porth County Grammar – he was always confident Martin and Norman would pass the 11+ for the Boys’ County School. Maybe prophetically, Kathie’s aunt – Miss Hudd – was headmistress in the Girls’ County School, and Jim had once borrowed a bicycle from Kathie’s father Ron Hudd – their family being also from Tonypany – laying the early nexus that would blossom later in our generation’s friendship in Cardiff.

For Jim, family was always the focus - practically every week there were visits to his sisters – Winnie, Rachel, Gladys and Gertie – in Port Talbot, Miskin, Bristol, and Tonypany. The family home in Porth was the other focus – labour on the new garden – modernising, digging, mending, planting. Julia was back with her childhood community on Cemetery Road and the boys inseparable from their neighbours, the four Cronin brothers – forever roaming the mountain and getting up to all sorts of mischief. Jim took mischief over a certain level as a sign that the time had come to civilise his boys - Violin for Martin, Piano for Norman. Jim playing both – learning Sun of My Soul on sleepy Sunday afternoons by the coal fire in the middle room. He also continued his carpentry – cabinets, clocks, lamps, a wooden edifice to house his hi-fi system.

By 1972 Jim had planned the next stage in the family journey, to a different Capital – Cardiff. The reason, his own imminent retirement, and his plan to support Martin and Norman to study law at Cardiff University. And so they moved, with Julia’s mother, Edith (or Dama) to Mafeking Rd. Jim enjoyed thirty-eight years of retirement with Julia – concert-going – the BBC, the City Hall. With Julia – travel – to north Africa – and later on day trips to Paris, Rome, Prague – the capitals of Europe. And his labour? The stock market, manipulating capital ; Walking – into and home from town even until his early nineties; Reading – novel after novel – but always returning to Dickens – “the descriptions”, he would say – always the incomparable

descriptions. And music – especially Chopin and Schubert – touched his inner life and was his expression of the spiritual.

Jim, Julia and Martin moved up the hill to Melrose Avenue in 1987. Martin was by now settled as a solicitor in practice, which was very gratifying for Jim, as well as Martin's dedication and industry in developing the Howardian Nature Reserve which he set up on coming to Cardiff, having had to leave behind Porth mountain. Norman, with his academic success – maybe less practical – but equally valued by Jim, his two lawyer sons giving him enormous pride. I can still see Martin driving his 1960's Rhondda double decker bus along Ninian Rd with Jim and Julia happily sitting in the top front seats, the only passengers.

Jim and Julia were devoted to their grandchildren, Rachel, Elizabeth and Edward, interested in their hopes, fears and achievements, always involved in family events, forever crystallised in 'Sunday Lunch', and forever instilling the ethic of capital and labour – work and save; work and save. The grandchildren did their bit in helping Grandad develop this idea to 'work and spend, work and spend' but he wasn't wholly convinced.

Jim was unbelievably fit and seemed strong as an ox – or maybe that was just his determination. He used his scientific reading and personal discipline to control his diet, exercise well, and live by "Moderation in all things". And he largely escaped the attentions of medicine until he was 95. Then volvulus -twisted bowel – happened, and kept happening- about 55 times since then, so UHW Casualty, SAU and A2 became a well trodden path, escorted with unflagging loyalty by 'the tall brothers'. Eventually Jim had a stroke and we realised it was a one way ticket. So for a week we sat with him in turns until dawn last Saturday when he left us for his new home

So now we have to take our leave of this remarkable man. We all hold a deep love and appreciation of him, his capital and his labour. We know that sharing **his** values and toil has given **us** security and freedom, the two jewels of Cardiff and Rhondda, loving family and friends, and fulfilling work.

Only three weeks ago, he was still improving our Latin and French – 'whats the French for miser? It's avarre' . So Jim – Dada – Grandad – we thank you for your 99 wonderful years – and we hope it's just 'au revoir'.