

## **Lucy's Speech – Friday 25<sup>th</sup> March – My parents' 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary party**

Thank you everyone for coming today to celebrate my dear parents' 60<sup>th</sup>, nearly 61<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary celebration. I think you will agree that it has been a delicious lunch and thanks to the chef and the Mercers' staff.

I am sure most of you know quite a lot about the wonderful life Margaret-Anne and Anthony have shared together, but I thought I would give you a whistle stop tour of not only their lives together, but the difference they have made to other people's lives. My father has asked me to keep it short, so with my speech lasting about 10 minutes, let's get going.

### **How they met**

Margaret-Anne and Anthony met at a dinner dance in January 1958, organised by a mutual friend of their parents, Pam de Meo. Anthony, aged 21 was with his older brother Nick and Margaret-Anne, aged nearly 18, was with her younger sister, Heather.

Anthony, who had completed his National service in the Navy, was in his second year at Oxford university. They started courting or dating as they call it now and after Anthony graduated from Oxford with a first-class honours' degree in Mathematics, there were discussions about his future employment. MA made it clear that she didn't want to be married to an Oxford Don and that Anthony needed another job.

After asking Gerald, MA's father for his daughter's hand in marriage, it was agreed that Anthony could only marry MA, if he was able to earn £1000 per annum. This took another six months or so to achieve and the young couple were able to form their life together.

### **Marriage and early work life, birth of James and Lucy**

They married on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1961, honeymooned in Paris and started their married life together in a small flat in Hampstead. It is said that the wedding date was chosen as it is a day before Anthony's birthday, so hopefully he would always remember his wedding anniversary!

Anthony had started working for the company, Elliott Brothers the previous year in 1960, creating accurate instruments for navigation using gyros and accelerometers.

After two years working in Boreham Wood, Anthony moved to Rochester where he spent a further three years working on electronics and electromechanical research in aircraft and navigation systems. When working in Rochester, they rented a house in Bearstead in Kent. James was born in November 1963.

**USA** - In 1966, still working for Elliotts, they moved to Atlanta, Georgia, USA. This was the time when the USA had opened up its defence engineering contracts to the world and one of Anthony's main roles was developing C5A transport aircrafts. James was 3 and they had a large basset hound, Bertram that also made the journey with them.

In Atlanta, they formed life-long friends, with neighbours and fellow musicians/parishioners at Dunwoody church. They are still in touch with many of them now, with fairly regular zoom conversations. I was born in August 1967 in Atlanta.

In 1969, Anthony decided to leave Elliotts and moved to work for a company called Diebold, in New York to work on early computers, so the family moved to Derien, Connecticut.

**In 1970, they returned to the UK**, working briefly for MA's father's company, before moving to Sperry Gyroscope in Bracknell. They bought a house in South Ascot and in 1975, they moved to their house, Spring Lanes, on the outskirts of Bracknell, Berkshire where they still live today. More about this later.

## **RDA**

In 1971, MA met the regional chairman of the RDA (Riding for the Disabled Association) and became involved helping with the local Warfield RDA group. With a lifelong love of horses, this charity was ideal. The group mostly helped and helps physically handicapped children with regular group riding lessons.

MA was soon asked to run the Warfield RDA group and she is still in charge, over 50 years later. The Charity was in its very early stages of development, having been formed in 1969.

**Horse Shows for Disabled riders** – MA organised the first horse show for disabled riders in 1981, held at Royal Ascot, which was a huge success. The second show had a special visit from Red Rum.

**Dressage** - With more shows organised, MA introduced dressage for disabled riders. This was met with some scepticism at first on whether disabled riders would be able to perform a test with such precision and control of a horse.

Once established over the next few years, Dressage was such a success for disabled riders, that it became part of the Paralympic Games in 1996, almost completely due to MA's introduction to this highly skilled, equestrian sport.

One of her first riders, Sophie Christiansen, now CBE has gone on to be one of the most successful Dressage Paralympians, winning 8 gold medals and a silver medal overall at the 2009, 2012 and 2016 Paralympic Games.

**Newsletter** - With the idea of sharing the news from all the different RDA groups in the South, MA produced the first South Region RDA newsletter in 1976 and was editor for over 30 years retiring from the post in 2007. The newsletters were and are still very popular, bringing together lots of stories, pictures and events from all the different groups.

**Fancy Dress** - One of the favourite events for the local groups, was to take part in the annual Fancy Dress class at Windsor Horse Show. MA and her team of dedicated helpers spent hours planning and producing wonderful outfits for the children, ponies and helpers. Here are a few of the creations.

I was roped in to help with Gardener's World and experienced wearing a clean, fertiliser bag in rather warm weather and feeling microwaved, with a sculpted cabbage on my head! Thankfully I couldn't find a photo!

**MBE and Awards** - With recognition to the considerable amount of work dedicated to the RDA for over 50 years, in 2008, MA was awarded an MBE by the Queen at Buckingham Palace. This was particularly due to starting the horse shows for disabled riders and her editor work creating the Newsletter.

It was a very special, proud family moment and so deserved. Further recognition was made by the RDA and she was awarded the President's Award in 2012, presented by Princess Anne, the Patron of the RDA. In the following year, MA was presented with the Sue Ryder Charity Woman Lifetime Achievement award.

She has met Princess Anne on quite a few occasions over the years, but nobody is quite sure what she is describing in this photo! She is due to meet Princess Anne again in April, who is coming for a special visit to see her Warfield group.

She continues to fundraise for her group by organising a large annual horse show for able bodied riders, Covid allowing and also organises a Carriage Driving show.

## **AEH**

Back to my dear father, he moved into Senior Management as a Senior Engineering Project Manager at Sperry Gyroscope in the early 70s. The projects he was involved with, were mostly for military and civilian electronics, including an early, quite primitive messaging service for ships.

In 1979, Anthony joined ICL in Bracknell. They were looking for people who thought a little differently and Anthony fitted the bill. He became a technical consultant involved initially with early mainframe computers and other projects.

In 1993, Anthony left ICL to set up his own company, XDotD Associates, working with a consortium of companies to produce specialist directories. He half retired in 2006 and now thoroughly enjoys teaching music theory and Latin to children. He also has a promising piano pupil.

For fun, he worked towards a BA Degree in Humanities and Classics, with the Open University gaining a first and graduating on Sep 20<sup>th</sup> 2003. This involved Latin, Greek and Music.

**The Mercers' Company** has always been a very important part of my father's life. He was invited to join the Court of Assistants in 1996 and became Master in 2001. The Master's life for a year, is a busy one, being involved with all the company's affairs and with speeches at a wide variety of organisations.

In 2001, when Anthony became Master, it was a particularly special year, as it was the year that the Mercers' invited women to be members.

I was very honoured to be in the first group of women to be invited, along with my wonderful late great Aunt, Mana, who made a notable speech, aged 93.

Through the Mercers', not only has Anthony participated on various committees and was a governor at St Paul's Girls School, he has been an important member of the management of Gresham College for many years.

**Gresham College**, has close links with the Mercers' Company. Its purpose is to provide lectures in a wide range of different subjects and now lectures are available both live and digitally worldwide. Anthony was interviewing and appointed a new Information Technology professor just a few weeks ago.

As Master Mercer, he and Margaret-Anne met fellow masters of other livery companies and formed some good friendships. Through their involvement with Past Masters of other livery companies, they meet several times a year, visiting different places of interest, with some culture and always wine and dine together.

## **Music**

After playing the oboe as a boy, Anthony started to play the euphonium in the Navy national service, mostly as the salt air didn't agree with the oboe. He continued playing the Euphonium for several years. In 2002, he started playing the bassoon. Reaching a high standard, he was working towards his grade 8 exam when unfortunately, lockdown hit.

He has been a long serving member of the Woodley Concert Band, with regular rehearsals on a Wednesday evening. He is also an able pianist, organist and enjoys composing. A talented all-round musician, who loves sharing his skills with others.

**Church** - St Mary's Church, Winkfield has also benefitted from both Anthony and MA's dedicated service. Anthony plays the organ regularly and MA is a sidesman and helps with the flower arranging.

Anthony also runs the excellent Christmas concert at St Mary's, having taken over the organisation from me in 2011. This is often a showcase of young talent and Anthony is involved in all aspects of the organisation, arranging music, composing and conducting the Junior choir. They are lucky to have him.

**Family** is important to them. They are very proud of their grandchildren's achievements. Their two granddaughters are here today.

Louise (aged 24) graduated with a first-class Masters' degree in Physics at Warwick University in 2020 and is now in her second year, studying for a PhD in Soft Matter Physics at Edinburgh University. She is also a regular member of the England Women's Chess Team.

Becca (who will be 22 next week), graduated from Oxford Brookes University last summer with a 2.1 in her BA honours' degree in Social Anthropology.

Becca has been working successfully as a Lettings' Sales' Negotiator in Wandsworth since graduating and is about to start a new job, letting prime, very expensive houses in Mayfair for a leading Estate Agents. Becca is also an amazing cook. If anyone is lucky enough to go to dinner at Becca's, you are in for a culinary treat.

James' son, Michael (aged 16) completed GCSEs last summer and is in his first year, working towards A levels. Sadly, James decided not to be with us today.

MA and Anthony remain in close contact with most members of the family and with the wonders of zoom, this has kept them connected with friends and family further afield, all over the world.

**Holidays** - MA and Anthony have enjoyed some memorable holidays together, visiting places all over the world. France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Sardinia, Sicily, Greece, Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, China, Japan, New Zealand, Australia, Iceland, Hawaii, to name just a few, plus many visits to see old friends in the States. Yellow Stone, being one of their favourite places to visit. Here are a few photos from over the years, on their adventures.

**Life Together** - They continue to enjoy life together. They have nearly reached their 61<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary, which is quite an achievement. They love each other dearly and are loved by many. They put their success down to loving and respecting each other and having a similar sense of humour! Let them have many more years together.

There is so much more I could say, but I hope I have given a flavour of their busy lives together.

Please raise a glass, to toast my dear parents, Margaret Anne and Anthony.