Dear Friends, here are a few facts about an old codger! Born in 1928, the same year as women got the vote; and I have been subservient to women ever since! I lived and grew up in East Boldon and was one of the first five members of the 4th East Boldon Scouts and the only surviving member of the now second largest troop in Britain. School followed at Boldon Colliery Intermediate and did more “Digging for Britain” than studying. My first job was on the riverside office on the Wear and after two years I went to Skerry’s Commercial College in Newcastle for a good all-round training in Accountancy and English. Then I went to a Solicitors until called by the RAF from 1946-1949. On release, I started work in a Section of the NHS but did not like it so went to become a Shepherd in East Lothian on a 2000-acre blackface sheep farm for my uncle. I came back to the North-East and worked for a meat purveyor and tried to run a family business for my mother. Lastly, I worked for the Northern Electricity for 23 years until my retirement.

I met and married Theresa Parks when I was 34. We had three daughters, Helen, Louise and Rosemary who all married, and I have enjoyed my five grandchildren ~ Andrew, Oliver, Evie, Talia and Yuri. Sadly, Theresa had renal failure and even though she received a kidney transplant, she died after her 60th birthday. Then Helen died with a brain tumour. Tragically we lost Andrew too. All three girls worked hard, went to university and with a B.Sc, B.Ed and B.A ~ so I had my own three degrees! I have spent over 60 years as a member of the Fellowship of Services, twice as Chairman and District Chairman and President of the Sunderland RAFA and remained a member of the South Shields branch for 30 years. I’ve also been the Chair of Sunderland Art Club, Forum and a befriending agent with MacMillan Cancer Care and Age UK. My many friendships, too numerous to mention, have been of vital importance to enriching my life. The connection to Carolynn is closest to my heart and I thank her and her family for everything that they  have  done for me.

During my 90 years plus, I have seen many things and changes with some of the happiest times being part of so many joyous groups of people, both in faith, leisure, and business ~ perhaps the greatest lesson was to be at peace whilst alone on a hillside when the heather was in full bloom with its exquisite perfume. To see the Northern Lights alongside the stars twinkling made life feel good with no need of politics, no money required, no diplomacy needed ~ just one person relaxed and now my worldly life has gone, that peace will be with me always. During my 94 years I have seen many changes, happy and sad occasions. There have been many proud moments with my wonderful family. This is / was me. Please smile and make your life shine. Thank you, love from Barrie whose full title was Geoffrey Barrie Oliver.”

TRIBUTE

Barrie was a magnificent man. He was wise, generous, and loving. His faith shone brightly, and he has blessed everyone he encountered. He has lived well because he has loved well. His loving pride in his family and friends has shown what a man can be. His devotion to service, duty and contribution was highly admirable and an example to us all. His sheer vivacity permeated through each of his endeavours and his insight into the depth of suffering a human soul can endure was humbling. He had known the greatest sorrow and grief and yet his courage and dignity shone during the darkest of days. Barrie’s empathy was unparalleled, and his wisdom was a comfort to all those who struggled. His great spirituality and faith propelled him to adopt a range of younger souls with a parental joy and a perpetually open house. The gatherings were numerous and legendary! How many of us would have the audacity to have an 90th birthday party when we were only 89 years young! Louise and Rosemary were perpetually entertained by the fact that when two or three people were gathered together, their Daddy was always at the centre of things!

As we have heard in the letter from our much-cherished old codger ~ he was humble about his illustrious career and prolific in his contributions to our community. Perhaps most importantly, his family have been at the centre of his soul. He was immensely proud of them all, not just for their worldly successes, but for their loving unity, kindly care and altruism.

We thank God for the happiness and humour he shared with us all. May we take his momentous example and share it with everyone we meet. Sir Geoffrey Barrie Oliver, the wonder of Whitburn was a great blessing and we are sure he is in Heaven now and will be rejoicing in you all. We thank God for this vibrant, honourable and loving gent. Amen.