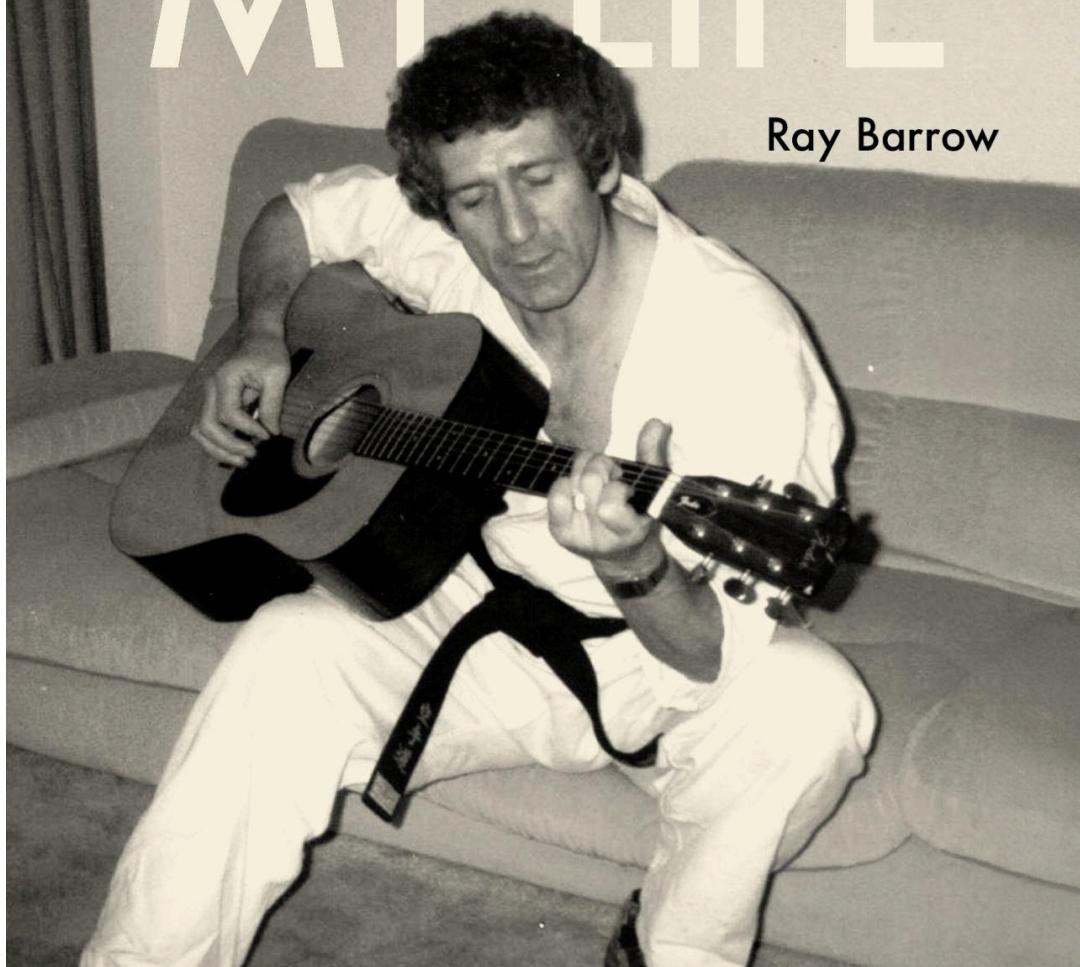


A LITTLE BIT OF MY LIFE

Ray Barrow



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Ray Barrow, 7th Dan BKA

I decided to write this journal today as in 2018, I was diagnosed with Vascular Dementia. This is short term memory loss. I can remember most of the past, but short term I forget what has happened the day before. Things like films I can not remember at all. Every so often, I would be watching a film and Pam would tell me that I had seen the film before. I would have no knowledge of this, also I can get half way through a sentence and forget what I am talking about. I am unable to read books because as soon as I get to the end of a chapter, I forget the contents that I have just read. This gets frustrating for both myself and Pam, so I am writing this whilst I am able to. I can tell you this, that all that I am writing is the truth, the whole truth, so help me God. This is written in words that I use myself, there are no substitute words. The punctuation has not been changed, most of the spelling has been checked with the spellcheck on the Mac, the grammar is how it is, so as you read this you may have a good laugh at the way it's written. You may find that some dates are mixed about a bit, some times of events in the article should be in different places, all the photos are listed in the last page. I hope this is interesting. It's a bit about my life, any dodgy stuff has been left out (if there was any).

Meeting my Mum & Dad

I first met my mum in 1942. I was born in a top floor apartment, in Kier Hardie House, Hazellville Road, a large block of flats at the top of Crouch End Road, North London. This is where we lived with three elder brothers and one younger sister, who was born in Liverpool. John was the oldest out of us all. He was born in 1936. Next came Fred, 1938 and Bill, 1939 (they were born in Blundell St, North London). My Dad was a professional soldier in the Army. He was in the Royal Fusiliers. Then, because of his railway knowledge, was transferred to the Royal Engineers. He worked on the railways in France and Germany in the 2nd World War. I can only remember one thing whilst we lived there, that is when I was about three years old, my mum took me outside to see what she said were fireworks. They were, in fact, the bombs being dropped on London. As we lived at the top of the block of flats we had a view of the whole of London being bombed, I could see houses and buildings on fire, I can still remember it today. (Silly war joke: If women ruled the world there would be no war, just a bunch of countries not talking to each other.)



The Flats where I first made an appearance in 1942.

It was about 1946 when we moved to 84 Hornsey Road, North London. I was four years old and we lived in a three storey house that was owned by a film star. His name was Arthur Mullard. He had the first two floors and we had the top floor and the attic. The toilet was downstairs in the garden. I can remember sleeping in the attic with lots of coats on the bed for blankets. We had the water tank up there and my dad put fish inside the tank. I remember him saying to me that they keep the water clean for us to drink. It was in 84 Hornsey Road that my younger brother was born. His name was Jimmy. I remember that sometimes mum would let me feed him, holding the bottle. In 1947 he died of Whooping Cough, he was only 18 months old. In those days, of course, there was no NHS. That did not start 'til 1948. I can remember at the end of our back garden were railway lines, and trains would come by with American soldiers on it, and as I was only about four they would throw money for me. This was probably my first venture into business because I would go out most days to catch the coins, then give them to my mum who would buy cakes for us.



My Mum and Dad.

We had lots of fun in those days, I would play on the railway lines with my brothers, we would play on the bomb sites, and go scrumping. I can remember we would bunk in cinemas (go in the back door that was left open most days), then have the cheek to go up into the balcony and pick the best seats. I think that the manager knew what we were doing and turned a blind eye to us. At least it was warm in there for a few hours, we did not have any heating in our house, or hot running water. This had to be boiled in a kettle. We would go to the swimming baths to wash and bathe, not far from 84.



The 2nd Arch is where 84 Hornsey Rd stood

We would leave the house at 9AM and would go back when we were hungry. All day, most days, we found some new interest. I remember one day we were over Clissold Park and Fred was down in a bomb site, and an old bedstead fell on him. Bill and myself managed to lift it up, so he was ok. I started school when I was five and can remember that the teacher would make us stand in line and she would give every child a

teaspoon of malt. She gave a spoonful to one child, then put the spoon in the jar and fed the next one without washing the spoon. As you are aware, there was not too much hygiene in those days.

We were very poor in those days and did not have much in the way of clothes. I would get the ones that my brothers had grown out of. Some had holes in them, so at the school the teacher took me to the stock room and sorted out some clothes for me to wear and told me that I should only wear these at school. (Silly School Joke: Why did the teacher wear sunglasses to school? Because her students were so bright).

Dad Coming Home

I can remember that my dad came home from the Army one day, and said that he will be home to stay now because he had resigned from the army. He did this knowing that he was only just a few weeks away from getting his pension. He was a Sergeant and one story he told us was when he led a small platoon onto the beach, whilst he was at Dunkirk. It was here that the Germans were bombing. One of his group had gone AWOL and Dad had to go back and get him. Whilst he was looking for him, his whole platoon had been killed by a German bomb. How lucky was he?

I was very proud of my dad. He could make and build anything. He took a motorbike engine to bits and put it all back with new parts, without an instruction book. When we were at Hainault, he taught me how to do woodwork and lots of different things that a handyman can do. Sadly, I was not very good at this, and later in life Pam is the person that does most of this at our home. He brought a Grandfather clock home from Germany. It was all in pieces in his kit bag, then he assembled it and that stayed in the hall in our new home to be, in Hainault.

My mum managed to feed us all with only a small amount of money coming in. Dad managed to get a job as a railway engineer at Acton, West London. He later got a transfer to Hainault, Essex Depot. (Silly Dad joke: Why do fathers take an extra pair of socks when they go golfing? In case they get a hole in one!)

Moving to Essex

Hainault was one of a few council estates that were going up fast in Essex, and if you worked in the area you were eligible for a council house, so we were on our way to a much cleaner part of England.

If I can remember, we put what furniture we had onto a lorry and off we went to our new home. This was a three bed home that had just been built. This had a bathroom with hot water and a bath, our own kitchen, a back and front garden. To us kids it was just like we had gone to heaven (by the way, I now had a sister to annoy every day, Pat. She was born in 1944 in Liverpool, so she was two years younger than me). There were more to come yet, another three; two sisters and one brother. We lived at 2 Burrow Close, Chigwell, Essex (Silly Essex joke: How do you confuse an Essex girl? You don't. They're born that way.)

Burrow Close soon filled up with other families and soon we were making new friends to play with. I was now six and three quarter years old. I used to have to go by coach to school, about five miles away, because the schools in Hainault weren't built yet, but soon the local school opened up and off we went.

My teacher, Miss Townsend, used to put her sandwiches on my desk for me to eat because she knew that I got little food at home. She was a lovely teacher and I wished that I could have met later in life to thank her. I did not like school much, later when we got to senior school I would miss school and bunk off. I then went off the rail a bit and started thinking of easy ways to earn money. My dad and I would go to Hainault Forest and dig the leaf mould up and sieve it, then put it in an old pram that we had, and he would spread it over the garden. Leaf mould was good for plants. I said to him that if I could use the pram I could sell this to people. This was the start of my first business. My first customer was my School teacher, Mr Neville. I would sell this to him for two shillings a load. He would take as much as I could get, his wife would give me a cup of tea and cake as well. Mr Neville was a very strict teacher, a bit of a bully in some ways because he would hit you with a wooden ruler for the least bit of noise you made in class. As I was now best mates with him, he always walked right past me. Word soon got around and after school nearly every night I would pick up two loads each day and sell them (the only problem was that I would spend the money on cakes).

My next adventure was doorstep cleaning. I had seen my brother Bill do this, so I thought I would try. I would buy red tile polish and clean the front steps of houses for two shillings a house. Most women would like to have a nice clean door step, so with a bit of cold calling I was on my way to building a good business. I soon built up a cleaning round. With the money from this I would go to jumble sales and buy clothes for myself. I was about ten and a half years old now. It was good growing up in a big family because there was always something going on. I did not see much of my elder brother, John, because he joined the RAF when he was seventeen. So the only time I saw him was if he came home on leave.



My brother Bill and Myself (with those ears)

Brother Fred was the 2nd oldest. He can remember most things back at 84 to Hornsey Rd and would tell me of the street fights that went on. There were two gangs, one on each side of Hornsey Road (this is the road that Arsenal football club is on. In fact, The Emirates Stadium which was built years later was only 2 minutes away from 84 Hornsey Rd, just on the other side of the railway lines.) Fred was really good to us in those days, he would take Bill and myself scrumping (well, we had to eat something). We would get very hungry some days. Never saw much of John, he was friendly with Arthur Mullard's daughter, Barbra. Don't know what they used to get up to?

Later, when we moved to Hainault, I would stick mainly with my brother Bill and his friend Dave Ince. He was two years older than me so I would go around with him and his friends that were older. This was good because when I started senior school all the bullies kept their distance. They would have to face them if they gave me trouble. In the 1950s there was lots of bullying going on in schools, there would be a fight after school nearly every day at our School (Grange County Sec Modern). Noel Edmund's father was Headmaster at this school, prior to me going to the school. I can remember one day I heard someone say, keep away from Ray Barrow he has two brothers in the school. As in most schools there were bike sheds to go to if you wanted a cigarette. (Silly School joke: What did the pen say to the pencil? So, what's your point!)

I was in Senior school and when I was about 12 years old, I decided to run away from home with a mate of mine, Micky. We managed to get on a train at Ilford, we had decided to go and live in Southend-on-sea. We managed to get there without paying, and now it was time to go and look for somewhere to stay for the night. We walked across the beach and we thought that one of the beach huts would be good for the night. We managed to open one and there were our beds for the night, two beach chairs. We went in and settled down for the night. Well, half way through the night, I was so cold. We had no blankets, so we had to put up with it. In the morning, we were hungry, we had no money, so I said to Micky, if we follow the milkman and he left any goods on a doorstep, we would have them away. Our luck was in, two bottles of milk, a fruit loaf and also some buns were left on a step, Micky kept look out and, after a few moments, I had picked the goods up and we were on our toes, got to the local park and ate the lot.

We walked around Southend town. Then I began to realise that we would have to find a new home for the night, and then I thought it would be cold that night so I said to Micky, I would like to go back home. He felt the same. We got to Southend station and got on the platform when a guard spotted us. I said, "Quick, run Micky", but there was nowhere to go. He took us back to his office and made us a cup of hot tea and made us some toast. He did say to us that he would have to inform the police, but I thought as he had fed us, that he would let us go, no such luck.

They got in touch with my Dad and he was on the way to pick me up. I thought it was bad enough running away, but to have the police informed, I was in big trouble. My dad arrived with my elder brother Bill. Dad said, "Why did you run away, son?" I said "I don't know, I'm sorry dad", but he seemed ok about it. I suppose that he was glad that he had found me.

Micky's mum came and picked him up. My dad said that I was not allowed out for two weeks. It hadn't finished yet. When I got to school the next day the headmaster wanted to see us. I went to his office and he pointed out that we had let the school down and out came the cane. I can still remember the pain in my mind now, I would never run away again.

I started smoking when I was 10 years old, addicted by 12. By the time I left school I was smoking 10 fags a day. Good job I had my leaf mould and doorstep cleaning round to fund this. My dad would have gone mad if he knew that I smoked. I can remember my dad coming home from work one day and I was sitting indoors having a fag, reading the Dandy, when he walked in the room. I froze, then put the fag under the comic and said hello to him. Lucky for me, he went straight into the kitchen and I ran upstairs, put the

cigarette down the toilet then pulled the chain (The chain I hear you say!! What is that? Ask Dad kids, he will know).

I remember whilst I lived at Burrow Close, Bobby Goodyear, a friend who lived opposite me, came home with a small sailing boat and asked me if I would like to go sailing with him. I said yes and then we were on our way, in his van, with boat in tow to Mayland in Essex to try the boat out. I did not know that he had never sailed before and I had no idea what we had to do. Anyhow, we managed to get the boat out to sea. We started to drift into the middle of the sea when we realised that we could not get the boat back to shore, so we had to get out and swim with the boat back to shore. After about two hours we managed to get the boat out of the water. We were soaking wet and freezing cold, and the boat was about a mile away from Bobby's van. Luckily, a man had seen what had happened and came over and said he would take us back to Bobby's van, so we got in his car, soaking wet, and he drove us back. I was so cold, as soon as we got in Bobby's van he put the heater on. Then we had to drive back to pick the boat up (I think Bobby now knows how to tack when sailing).

The same thing happened when we were on holiday on the Isle of Wight when Pam's brother, Laurence, took our son Dave, and his friend Steven, out on a sailing boat and got stuck in the middle of the water. Lucky for him the lifeboat crew were at hand to tow the boat back to shore. (Silly boat joke: What did the boat say when he was not feeling well? I need to go to the dock).

About this time, my Dad, who was now promoted to the breakdown gang (which was a team of about 10 men) worked at the Railway yard in Hainault. They had to go out to train-crash sites and their job was to get the train back on the railway line so that the rest of the trains on that track could keep going. One of these breakdowns was in 1975 at Moorgate station, where 43 people died and 74 injured in this crash. This must have brought bad memories back for my dad because of Dunkirk and Belsen, where he had seen lots of dead bodies. A few days later, he took me to the Depot at Hainault to look at the front of the damaged train. It was not a very pleasant site to see, the front carriage was all mangled up.



My Grandson Maxim (my favourite Photo of Max)

As I said before, three more kids to come at Burrow close. Next to me was Pat, two years my junior. She was born in Liverpool. We had a love/hate relationship through our lives, but as we have gotten older, we get on really well and I know that she would do anything for me, as I would for her. Pat stayed at home and looked after Dad when he had cancer. She nursed him all the time 'till he passed away. He spent his last few months at Pat's flat. I know that all the family were, and still are, very grateful to Pat for doing this. Pat has six children; Steve, Pam, Lisa, Joe, Julie and Francis. Pete is my younger brother who can put his hand to anything, just like Dad. He is married to Jackie, who is easy to wind up. She will believe anything that I say. She lived near Pam in Loughton. Pete and Jackie are well suited for each other. They have three children; Mark, Paul and Cheryl.

My sister Jean, the next one down, is very quiet. When we are in the same room with her, we have to tell her to speak. She would be with Mum nearly all the time. They would go shopping together, have their hair done together, they were like best mates. Jean is married to Ken who only looks about twenty years old, instead of 70-ish. He is a nice guy, he really looks after Jean. They have 5 children; Kevin, Darren, Gemma and Michaela and Nicola. As I said at the front of this book, everything will be the truth, the whole truth, so help me God. Sorry girls, I have to say this, that Mary is the most beautiful out of all the girls, as I am the most handsome out of the boys. She, like me, spends 4 hours a day making herself look good.



Sister Mary, myself, brother Pete and sister in law Jackie

Mary is now the most wealthy one out of Barrows, her wealth overtook mine when I retired (There is nothing that Mary would not do for me, as there is nothing that I would not do for Mary, that's how we go through life, doing absolutely anything for each other.) Nick is my favourite brother-in-law (after Ken). Nick is a nice guy and works hard with Mary (because he can do her job better than she can). The only trouble with him, he supports that stupid West Ham Football Club. (Silly West Ham joke: What do you say to a West Ham United supporter with a good looking bird on his arm? Nice tattoo).



Family Group

Mary looked after Mum and Dad. She bought 2 Burrow Close, when the council started to sell council houses, and let Mum and Dad live there. Our Dad passed away first, and Pat organised a Bugler to play Last Post as the possession made its way to the Burial ground in Chigwell. Not long after this, my Mum had a stroke. She was found by sister, Jean, who had not heard from mum for a few hours. She was taken to hospital. She managed to come round but had a problem with the left side of her body, and could not speak.



Brother Bill, Sister-in-law Brenda, Myself and Pam

She stayed in hospital until Mary found an old folks home and sorted out the fees, because she had to pay a little bit extra to get her into a good home. Although Mum could not speak, she still knew what was being said. I remember I would go and see her and, one day, I said to her that I would water the pot plants, (that were plastic,) she shouted 'ka ka', which was her word for no no. Pam and I laughed. I would also take a teddy bear that was in the room and hang it from the light, because Mary was going to pay a visit later and this would make her laugh. We used to pick mum up from the home and take her home to Epping for the day.



Sophia (Scallywag) (My favourite Sophia photo)

I remember one Christmas we took her to Tina's house in Hainault for the day, and she loved it. One day, I was playing a tape of Cliff Richard and she started to sing. We could not believe it, she could not talk but could sing. She passed away a couple of years later.

I got the call from Pete. Pam and I rushed to the Hospital but missed saying goodbye, we were twenty minutes late. We were living in Clacton at the time and the A12 had bad roadworks on it and the speed was 40 miles an hour all the way. Mary looked after her and did all the paperwork that had to be done. She is with Dad now at Chigwell.

As I have said previously, I have three older brothers. My eldest is John, born 1936. He was married to Trish (who has sadly passed away) and they had two children, Denise and Karen. I did not see much of John because, as I said earlier in the book, he signed up to join the RAF when he was 17. He always said that he did this so that he could have his own bed.

I remember that his first job was laying floor tiles. We would only be seeing John occasionally, when he came home on leave. Fred was next, he was born 1938. I remember he joined the Army when he was 18, serving National Service. When he came home he worked for a packing company that would make big boxes out of wood for packing large items. Fred's wife, Irene, who came from Hainault (not far from Burrow Close) has two children, Steven and Jackie. Bill was born in 1939. Bill was married to Brenda and had three children. Trudy, who passed away in 2023 (she had heart problems), was the eldest child followed

by Janet then John. They are all great kids. Brenda has since passed away. She would have been the same age as me, 81 years old, and like all our family would do anything for each other. Bill was the comedian of the family and by far the funniest out of all the Barrows. He would have you in stitches the things he would do, sadly passed a few years ago with a heart attack.

First Proper Job

I was fourteen years old when I cycled up to the Bald Hind Garage in Chigwell and asked for a job. As I was about to leave school, the boss asked me if the school had sent me up to apply for the job. I told him that it was my idea, he admired me for having the courage to come to him without any reference from the school. He said start on Monday 8AM, wages £2.00 a week. I could not wait to start and arrived one hour early. They wanted to see how bright I was (Pam said they will have their work cut out there then), so they gave me lots of different jobs to do, to find out what I would be any good at. This was from cleaning cars, serving petrol, or in the greasing bay servicing cars. The one I liked was serving petrol because lots of wealthy people came into this garage, Bobby Moore the footballer was one, and they would give me tips. It was the servicing cars that they wanted me to do.

After a short time, they transferred me to their other garage at Grange Hill, Chigwell, opposite the home of Bobby Moore the footballer. They had me serving on the petrol pumps. This was a good job because during the lunch hour, I had the garage to myself and would drive the customers' cars around the small site, to get used to driving. This was my first learning curve into learning how to drive. One day I had the surprise of my life when my best friend from school, Terry Corrie drove past in his dad's car (he was only 15 years old, the same as me). I thought to myself his dad would go mad if he saw him.

One day as I started to serve some petrol, the pump started on 2 gallons already shown on the pump. This should have gone back to zero. I then thought, when the coal trucks come into the garage for fuel, I would start it on two and make two gallons worth eight shillings for myself. I should have reported the faulty machine to my boss, but I accidentally forgot, and would start it on two gallons every time a coal truck came in for petrol. One good thing about the pumps at this garage is they did not have any smelly diesel pumps.

About this time I had my first crush, this girl would come past the garage every day on a horse, she worked at a local farm and looked after the horses. She was the most beautiful girl that I had ever seen, she was older than me I think. As she went by, she would give me a smile, but I was too shy to approach her. Anyway, I was punching well above my weight there. It was three years after this that I was to meet someone even better, my future wife Pam, who I have had a crush on ever since. (You can take your fingers out your mouth now readers).

I was now coming up to sixteen and able to drive a motorbike, so with some money that I saved from tips, bought a moped from one of the customers at the garage. I got my provisional licence, L plates on and I was driving all around Chigwell pleased as punch. Coming up to my 17th birthday, the garage had a driving school, so my boss said I could have driving lessons in work time. So not only did I not have to pay for lessons, I was taking them in their time. After about 12 lessons they sorted me out for a driving test, well me being what I am, passed first time. (By the way, I managed to pass my motorbike licence the day before). Now, my job at the garage was delivering customers' cars back to them. Remember, I was working in Chigwell so most of the cars I would be driving were top of the range cars. Sunbeam Rapier, Humber Hawk, E Type Jaguar and different sports cars, (I'm getting paid for driving these flash cars). I soon got used to driving all different types, also the other job I had was going out getting spare parts for the cars that were in for repair.

My next venture was to save up for a car. To get funds for the car, I purchased a scooter that had been damaged in a crash, my sister in law's brother Roger repaired this for me. I part exchanged it and with the cash I had saved, brought a 1961 Morris Minor 1000 registration number '389 KMU'. Now, this meant that I was able to go anywhere. I would take Mum and Dad to see brother John who was now in the RAF,

wherever he was based at the time, sometimes he was at Doncaster. As I was the only one with a car in the family, at the moment, Dad always wanted me to be his taxi.

When I was seventeen, I started going out to our local youth club with a friend to dance halls. At the Ilford Palais and Tottenham Royal, there used to be lots of fights at the Royal, we had to make sure that we kept well away from some of the groups. The Kray twins would use the Royal sometimes, although I never saw them, I can still remember the band at the Royal. Jeff Rowena was the band leader and singer. I would watch the bands that used to play. My friend, Paul (I call him Paul because that is his name) was more interested in talking to girls and taking them out. I was not the clever one to chat up girls like he could. Paul was the best looking out of the two of us. I was more interested in the bands and groups. I was keen on music, and at school was top student, being able to play violin (Passed grade 3 of the Royal Schools of Music for this) and also had a go at the cello and viola, but now it was the guitar that I was interested in. I would just stare and watch the band all night long.

I was now eighteen and a friend that used to come into the garage, told me about this job that was going over Fairlop Ballast Pit with the P T Read Company. It was working in the canteen, all I had to do was make about 40 cups of tea for the workers three times a day. Well, the wages were eight shillings an hour, eight hours a day five days a week which came to mega bucks. This was for making 40 cups of tea. With overtime it was three times the money I was getting from the Garage. This job gave me lots of free time while I was at the ballast pit, so I bought a gun from a friend, it was a twelve bore shotgun, along with some cartridges. I would go over the field shooting Rabbits. The company was based at Fairlop Aerodrome, we used to play over the aerodrome when I was younger. It was not used any more by the RAF, they left a lot of radio equipment in the bunkers there. It was then used by the public, to fly model aircraft, these would be on at the weekends. We would go and watch them. It is now called Fairlop Waters. The rabbits that I had shot, used to have loads of pellets in them so I did not take them home for mum to cook because she would have wanted to know how I came by these. (My dad would never have let me have a gun at home because of the four younger children at home). I used to hide the gun in the canteen where I made the tea for the workers, one day I went to get it out and it had gone, someone had stolen it. (Silly gun joke,,I buy all my guns from a guy called T-Rex. He's a small arms dealer). I stayed at the pit for about a year when a job vacancy came up for a baker's salesman, so I applied for, and got the job Bakers roundsman. (Silly job joke Why did the invisible man turn down the job offer ? He couldn't see himself doing it).

The 1st True Love In My Life

My first true love came when my friend at the garage wanted to fix me up with a blind date. I never had many girl friends, in fact you could count them on one hand (this where you go ‘ahh!’). However, he knew that I was shy, so sorted it for me. She was waiting in Pyrles Lane, Loughton, by the telephone box, her name was Pam (I call her this because this is her name). Wow, I liked her straight away. She looked at me and gave me as you all know one of her great smiles. (Pam is famous for her smiles, I have had lots of people tell me this. At the garage, they would always refer to her as ‘smiler’). I was so pleased to meet Pam and I was glad that I would not have to look after any horses? (think about it). My nickname for Pam is funny face, her nickname for me is the whale (I’m only 12 stone). We have had so much fun in our lives and now have two great kids and six grandkids (that all smell of poo). (Silly Love Joke: Do you believe in love at first sight, or should I walk past again?)



Butlins, Barrow family in 1974



Myself and Pam in 1966

Pam got very excited when we were courting after two days, when I said, “Would you like to see my red thing in the back of the car?” (Referring of course to my new red guitar). She then gave me one of those smiles. Pam is the best thing in mine and everyone who knows her’s life. She is so friendly and loves talking and helping other people. When I was teaching Karate, she managed the desk, looking after every student and parent that stood in front of her. Pam’s customer relationship was top notch. She went out of her way to make herself have good job satisfaction. Sometimes after teaching a session, when leaving, all I wanted to do was to get home, have tea and relax. Pam would be hard to get into the car because often she would

be talking to a student or parent. Pam would always drive us home after work because she knew that I would be worn out and tired. She is the better driver out of the two of us, she actually drives faster than me. She will do 70mph on a motorway, where I drive at 50mph. If I drive home I will drive a bit faster then, but going to wherever we go, normally 50mph.



Pam

I first taught Pam to drive in 1963 in my Morris 1000. We found an old Airfield near Matching Green in Essex. It was not being used, so we were able to start Pam on driving lessons. She was so good, it only took about two hours for her to get the basic idea of driving. Pam loves driving, she wanted to go there more often, after a week or so it was time to let her go by herself. I would get out of the car and she would drive around the Airfield by herself, round and around. After a couple of hours, I managed to get her out of the driving seat, and head on home.

Next job, get Pam a provisional driving licence and take the car on the road. As soon as her licence came back, she was then driving me around all the time. We were in her minivan that I brought her, with brother Bill in the back. We approached Gants Hill roundabout. The right wing mirror was broken, so as she went round the roundabout, a car came on the right side of her, making Pam pull to the left. I said you should look in the wing mirror when going round a roundabout, she said, "I did but the FLIPPING mirror" (or words to that effect) "is broken". Well, this is the first time that myself or brother Bill had heard her swear, we were in stitches with laughter. (Silly Car Joke: What do you do with old German cars? You take 'em to the old Volk's home).



Pam's Mum & Dad

Pam is very caring and also gives out good advice to anyone who wants it. If a neighbour or friend knocks on the door with a small problem, Pam will be there straight away to help them out. She comes out with silly ideas sometimes. She once told me that my pants and socks should be ironed before I wear them. (I do my own ironing because I do acutely like ironing, but not socks or pants, that is one of her stupid ideas). In the morning, now that we have retired, we have tea before we plan the day. I would ask Pam the question, "What shall we do today?" she will say, "I don't mind, what do you want to do?". I will then say "where shall we eat today?", she will say, "I don't mind, it's up to you".

Pam will do anything for me, as I would for her. (After saying all these nice things about her, I think that I will be in her good books for a long time). In the early 70s, we bought a caravan, and after I finished work on a Friday. Pam would have the van loaded up with supplies and off we go. Clacton was a favourite, along with the South Coast, we would go away till Sunday night. The kids loved these trips and so did we.

We used to go to the coast in the summer in my Morris 1000 and would go to the pictures. (Today, you call it the cinema). We would sit in the car at the end of night planning all the things that we were going to do in our life. Life was so different in the 60s, there were no places to eat like there are now. Wimpy Bar came to the UK in the mid 50s, Kentucky Fried Chicken in the 70s. The first carvery we went to was the Blue Boar in Abridge. Other than that there weren't many places to eat. I remember when I worked in London I would bring pie and mash in to eat on Friday, not forgetting half a chicken for our dog. We were living in Wanstead at the time.



Myself and Pam

We were lucky living our lives in the 60s. Life was so exciting. London was buzzing. You could go to London and park easily, plus it was free. (Parking metres had just started to come out). We would go to theatres in the afternoon and get student rates for the shows. It was very cheap, not like the prices nowadays. We were on our way to the cinema one day, I drove in the car park and got out of the car when I could hear a shout of "Ray! Ray!". It was Pam, she had opened the passenger door and fell down the bottom of some steps, she came up not too happy and because she had laddered her stockings. She wanted to go home. I said to her if we go in when the film starts it would be dark, and no one would notice her torn tights. I brought some Maltesers to eat in there.



Pam saying, "why is it taking you 15 minutes to take the photo, Ray?" (These two photos on this page are my favourite photos of Pam)

As we went in, the 1st film had just started. (In the 60s you would get two films shown on the screen, instead of one that you get nowadays). It was pitch black inside the cinema (most films were in black and white). It was really dark, you could not see a thing. We stumbled in and sat down in the seats. After a while you started to be able to see a bit better, we noticed that we were sitting, not in chairs, but in the aisle on the floor. People were looking at us sitting down, they had got used to the dark because they had arrived before us. We were so embarrassed, we started giggling which turned in loud laughter. So we went up to the back of the cinema where no one could see us and started to eat our box of Maltesers. I dropped the box and they fell out making their way down the aisle going flop flop all the way down, to the bottom of the stairs. That was it. Giggle time again. I think we left the film a bit early so the people would not see us. We laughed so much that day. (Silly cinema joke: I just heard Back to the Future was getting a re-release at the cinema. It's about time.)



Greengrocer van

I can remember one night, we went to the cinema, we parked in the cinema car park. The cinema was called the State Cinema. It was in Barkingside, the car park was used by the people that were inside using the cinema and the bingo hall. I parked in an allocated space and when we came out after the film had finished, someone had parked their car in front of mine blocking us in. I went inside and reported this to the manager and he put an announcement out for the person to come and move their car. Half an hour later we were still waiting, when the lady arrived to move her car, I explained that she should not have blocked me in, also why the long time getting here to move it. She said she was not going to miss any of her bingo, and we could wait. I explained that she should not have left it there in the first place. By now I was getting the ump, (posh people call this word Hump). I left it there and made a note of her car registration. I said to Pam we will come here next week same day, same time and I will make her late home that night. We got there the following week and I saw her car parked in the car park. I said to Pam to keep lookout for me, I went over and let all four tyre's down. It's not worth doing just one because she could change one tire, (but not four). We then sat there and waited when she came out and saw her flat tyres. She must have known it was me, but did not know who I was. I had taken her number but she did not know mine, (I can be nasty sometimes). I don't think she will block anyone in again. Remember, CCTV had not been invented in those days, so you could get away with murder. (Silly tyre joke: Recession has got so bad, I have a friend who used to live in a spare tyre... Then he got a puncture, now he lives in a flat).



Pam, with younger brother Lol

Pams mum was great. She had only lost her husband about one year prior to me meeting Pam. I had not known about Pam's dad's death when we met. One day Pam was crying, I said "what have I done?" She replied "i'm ok", then I realised she was thinking of her Dad. It was hard for her at these times. Pam comes from a small family. (She was so rich, she had a TV and a record player, she would have breakfast, lunch and dinner everyday, where I was lucky to have just toast in the morning and dinner at night). She has two brothers, Michael who is four years younger than her, he was married to Kathy. Sadly, Kathy has since passed. They have six children. (they were both married twice) between them. Her other brother Laurence is fifteen years younger. He was born a couple of years before her dad died. Her dad was in his forties when he went to the hospital with a slipped disc and passed away in hospital. Laurence, who is married to Yvonne, has three children, two boys and one girl, Steven, Thomas and Victoria. (Silly love joke: Darling, even if gravity didn't exist, I'd still fall for you)

The Forming of the Ravens Band

I did not have any money to buy a guitar, but I was so desperate to learn. I was talking to my old boss one day and told him about a guitar I had seen in a shop in Romford for £30. This was a Watkins Rapier electric guitar (I saw one of these on ebay recently, for £650). I did not have any money because I had just spent every penny on the car. He said he would finance it for me and take the money out of my wages each week. He was a good boss, I think I was his favourite because when they were short staff on the petrol pumps, I would always offer to stand in for extra wages. (Silly work joke: Did you hear that Larry got a new job working for Old Macdonald? He's the new CIEIO).

Pam and I would go out most nights, to a pub in Leytonstone High Rd called the Red Lion and watch the pop groups. I learned so much from watching these bands and knew that I would soon be playing in one. I tore my fingers to pieces practising my guitar, three hours a night each day of the week, then over to Loughton to see Pam. In ten weeks I had got some other members to play and we formed a band called the Ravens, we were playing all Shadows music with taking turns playing lead and rhythm.

A friend that I worked with said that his brother in law Dave wanted to start a band. I met Dave. He played rhythm and I played lead (with about four chords between us, we were off). We found another guitar player who was able to get the chords of songs, (there was no internet or YouTube in those days so you could not get the chords to songs, we had to work them out between us). I would play the lead by ear (Not with my ears kids, that is a term for saying you play with no written music). Then we found a bass player that had the works, big amplifier, echo unit and lots more stuff, but could not play a note. We helped him along to get him going. My brother Bill played the drums. We had about twelve numbers within a few weeks, then I managed to get us a guest spot in a club in Chigwell. It went down really well. Pam and her Mum came along, her mum used to love listening to us playing, then I fixed us in to play in a pub in Buckhurst Hill called the Mother Hubbard.

We would play every Friday £5 a night = £1 each (Worth about £20 each a night nowadays). We would have band practise twice a week in an old church hall in loughton. We worked on new numbers then would have a break, it was during one of these breaks that my brother Bill threw a knee pad at me. That was it. An all out war started with all these kneeling pads being thrown about. (Silly rock band joke: I've opened up a gym helping ageing rock bands get back into shape. It's going okay so far...Just working out the Kinks.)



Sister in Law Kathy, Pam's brother Lol, Mike's Sister in law Yvonne, Pam and myself.

We would also practice at Pam's house but that did not last long because the neighbours complained about the noise. (Fancy calling our music noise) We had so much fun in those days with the band. The only problem for me is that I was the only one with a car, so I had to take all the gear to the venues, this meant doing everything twice. I remember once I had to break hard in the car and one of the drums fell on Pam's

head, we both laughed. I remember that we were looking for a singer for the band, and we had a guy from Woodford come to see us, it was Peter Jay from Peter Jay and the Jaywalkers. We did not take him on, what a mistake because he became famous with his group. We never did find anyone, so we kept it to instrumental numbers.

We did have one song where we sang on it, it was Guitar Man by Dwane Eddy. I was playing lead and all of us would sing the song, we were not the best singer's. (Pam just said, no change there then) It was really hard to get anywhere for groups in those days. Today you have YouTube, TikTok, and other stations to get on to. Mind you, a while ago we found some old tapes of us playing and we did not sound anything like today's music. (Pam said still no change there then), this was because of the equipment we used. I have an amp now that makes your voice into chorus mode, the reverb is better and echo is great, and remember you also have Garageband on the computer. (Silly band joke: I started a band called 999 Megabytes. We still haven't gotten a gig.)

Home and Family Life

We were sitting in the car one night when I said to Pam “shall we get married?” she said ok (How was that for a romantic proposal then?) So we saved up, put a deposit on a flat 54 Clarendon Gardens Ilford and off we went. Pam had to get her mum’s permission for her to get married because she was only 20. (In the 60s you had to be 21 years old to marry). We did it, it was wonderful. I did not have to go home after we had been out, I could stay with Pam all night long. It was a simple registry office wedding, this is all we could afford. After the wedding we all went to Pam’s house for tea and cakes, my dad took all the photos of the wedding, not one came out. I said at the beginning of this journal that my dad could do anything, but he could never take photos. He was useless. (Silly wedding joke: The wedding was so beautiful, even the cake was in tiers).

I started a new job. The firm I was about to work for was Farm Crust Bakery. It was a big bakery that made bread and morning goods (these are fruit buns and scones). I had to sell them to grocery shops and as I said, the new super markets. These were popping up everywhere, Victor Value (They used to give pink stamps, these you could redeem for gifts,) It was one of them that I sold to, they later changed their name to Tesco. Did you know how Tesco got their name? The wife of the owner was called Tessie Cohen, the name was taken from the first part Tes, 2nd part Co. I was given an area in South London. We lived in the flat for about 1 year, then I managed to get a better job so we moved to 54c Aldersbrook Road, Wanstead. This was a one bedroom flat opposite Wanstead Flats. (Silly proposal joke: I love marriage proposals. They’re so engaging!)

My next job in van sales was for a sausage firm that also sold meat and pork pies. This is where I found out that I was becoming a pretty good salesman. I was winning prizes for selling, I once won a Polaroid camera, this was when they first came out. I was top salesman at McVities cakes one year.

I worked on van sales for about 10 years selling meat, pork pies, and sausages. I also worked for Kipling cakes. One job I went for was Passingshams, a meat pie and sausage firm. I went out with the manager to Gravesend in Kent. He wanted me to build a round in the Kent area. We went out the first day, well he was the manager but had no idea about selling. It happened that this was the same area I used to go to when I was on Farm Crust a few years ago. So the next day I went out on my own and approached all my old customers on the Kent round for business. (Jackpot) I went back with loads of goods sold, and half a round already made, they were well pleased. Then they said that the next day I would be in the factory making sausages, “no I won’t” I said, I am a salesman not a sausage maker and told them I was leaving. The manager came running out and said, what about all the new customers that you got? I said I am not a Sausage maker, he was begging for me to stay with them. (See they knew that I was a fantastic salesman). (BIG HEAD !!!)

I got a new job the next day. (In the 1960s you could walk in and out of jobs, Pam will tell you I was only out of work for one week all my life). The last job I got was at Wonder Cakes. I built up a very large round and then the management decided to give the round to someone else after I had built it up. They said that they thought that I could build a new round up in Chelmsford. Remember, most of these sales jobs work on commission, so I was leaving a good wage and had to take a cut in salary, until I had built this new round up. I said to Pam I am going to give my notice and work for myself. Then whilst I was handing my notice in, the company called me into the office. I thought that they probably wanted me to stay. I went in and the Manager said to me that one of the clients on my old round was not buying as many cakes as I used to sell them. (This was because myself and the buyer of the Hospital that was being served were very good friends, so he would give me very large orders because he knew that I was on commission). Well I said hard luck, you should not have taken me off the round, and I was still going to leave.

In 1967, The GLC were giving out 100 percent mortgages, so we applied for one and managed to set us up with a semi detached house in Hainault Essex. The house cost £5,000 (Imagine a three bedroom semi detached house two minutes from Hainault station for £5,000). This was good timing because our first child Tina was born, she was lovely (still is). Tina was beautiful. I can remember when she said her first words, we put her in the car and she looked at Pam and said "swts". She said it again, then we realised she was trying to say "sweets". But the first clear word was when we had just bought a caravan at Heybridge near Maldon. We let her sleep on the floor next to our bed, when we woke up the next morning she looked at us and said "hello", we looked at each other and laughed.



Tina and Myself

We sold this caravan then brought a new 4 berth touring caravan. We went to many seaside places with this. I remember we parked the caravan on a farm up in Blackpool, let the kids out to play when they came back, Dave had cows poo in his hair. Tina had decided to lift him up over a fence and Dave fell into large cow pat. It took Pam about half an hour to get it out. Tina was a good at art and would draw sketches in her room night after night. She was good at school and managed to get her Bachelor of Arts, she now teaches in the same school she very first went to. Tina started Karate with me and at the same time Bob, my son in law, started. It was to be about ten years later, when they started dating each other. I think their first date was at the Live Aid concert in 1984.

Our son Dave was born 1969. Dave was lovely as well. I was downstairs with a friend who was staying with us at the time and Dave's first words were, "can I have another pint please dad?". I must be honest, I can not remember Dave's first words but I know that he would put a W in front of every word. Pam went to buy some veg from the local greengrocer and the greengrocer said to Dave "where are you going today?" Dave said "Wimin." What he was trying to say was swimming.



Brother Fred, Sister-in-law Irene, Pam's brother Lol

Dave was mad on football at school and was in the local kids team it was called Chigwell Boys. He was in the same team as Paul Alderson, the 1996 world Karate Champion (you will see his name later). I used to

go running most days and I would take Dave over to the local park and kick a ball about with him. Then I would run around the field and Dave would kick around by himself. I have great respect for Dave who was good at school the same as Tina, gaining two A levels. He did not go to uni, he went to college (for one day). He came home and said to Pam that he did not like it. Pam said "get a job then."

Dave started the next day at Littlewoods department store full time. He was only there a couple of years when he was transferred to the Oxford St London branch as assistant manager. He then got a job for Christian Salvesen Logistics and now works for DHL as a manager. Dave has worked his way up to management in most jobs that he has had, he works really hard. I hoped that he could have worked with me on the Karate clubs, but in the early days of Karate we were not sure if it was just a fad and would go away like most things in life, so we felt it was not a secure job for him. I have great respect for my daughter Tina as well, she started work as a graphic designer in London. She was earning megabucks, she then left this to be a School Teacher, but like she said to me, it's not worth doing a job if you don't like it no matter how much you earn. She has a great position at her school now and really loves her job. I did not realise that teachers have to work so hard, she is out of home at 7:30AM and gets home about 6:30PM. She then works in the evening sometimes.

Whilst she is teaching, Bob has been the housekeeper, bringing up all four kids when they were young. He has really made a good job of this. Bob will do anything and help anyone, he really is a great guy. (I put in what you told me to, Bob).

I was a Tottenham Hotspur fan, it was Dave who was about ten years old that got me into football. We would drive to Tottenham and watch the games. In 1981 they got to the FA cup final and I said, 'Dave (because that's his name) let's go to Wembley and watch the game.' He said, 'Dad, you will not get a ticket', 'Don't worry' I said. We were on our way listening to all the Tottenham songs on the radio on the way. When we arrived at Wembley it did not take me long to smell out a tout. (There he is, I said to myself), we approached this guy who had two tickets for sale.

I think I paid about £200 (don't tell Pam this, I told her we paid £30 for the two tickets). It was well worth it, just to see the look on Dave's big beaming face, he was so pleased.(Football Joke: 1966 World cup final tickets were like gold dust some selling at £1000 a seat). A guy went to see the 1966 World cup final at Wembley, he managed to find his seat and was chatting to the guy next to him who said. "I notice that no one is sitting in the seat next to you", the man replied "yes it was my wife's she could not make it. She passed away" the other man said "could you not have given the seat to a friend or relative" He replied, "I would have but they are all at the funeral."

The Greengrocer

Pam and I had a chat and discussed what I was going to do as a job. We had recently bought a new Ford Capri that was straight from the showroom and cost £1800. I said that we would have to sell this to buy our own business. Well, we were lucky because this new car was in demand, so I sold it to my sister Mary's boyfriend for the same money that I had paid for it. Looking through the local paper, I found a Mobile Green Grocery business for sale for £1,000, right up my street. (I knew that I can build this up with my sales experience) and that we could make a go of this. I went out on the round to learn the Green Grocery business in just one week, at the end of the week I had learned enough for this. If not, his shop was only a couple of miles away if I needed advice.

The round was all around Wanstead, Ilford and Dagenham, just a few miles from New North Rd Hainault which is where we lived. I had to go out on the round to make sure that it was taking the amount of money he said it was, before I would buy it. We worked out the figures and true enough there was £85 profit. This

was a good wage back in 1976 the job I had previously left, I was being paid £35 a week. The van that came with the round was very old and about two tons. I bought a Transit Van and my dad and I built all the shelves. I put in a portable gas fire, so we had a Mobile Greengrocers. This was our first business and Pam and I put our heart and soul into it. We worked hard at this, getting a good wage working four days a week, we had the round for eight years.

I would have to go to Stratford market to buy all the goods that I needed for the day, this meant leaving home at 5am, sometimes earlier. So this of course meant 9pm bedtime every night. You do have to be sharp when buying goods at the wholesale market, they would over charge you if they could. I was lucky that one of my Karate friends had a warehouse at Stratford and I would buy most of my goods from him, (If he stitched me up, at Karate I would beat him up, was our saying). We had lots of laughs on this round, the van had a sink, (We had to have this fitted because if the public health inspector came on the van, for a hygiene inspection, everything would be up to scratch). The heater was to warm up meat pies. When Tina (I think that's her name) was about 10 years old she would help me after school on the round. The customers loved her, so she was soon to be top saleslady on the round (after Pam). Dave followed in about a year helping as well, this gave him lots of confidence dealing with the public. They all loved him, he managed to get on well with all the customers. I believed that giving them jobs dealing with the public, put them in good stead for their future, giving them confidence to communicate with people in their future lives. (I also had my Nephew Steven helping me on Saturday's).

I remember one day Dave was upset because we did not have any tickets for Tottenham v Liverpool in the league cup at Wembley, a customer I was serving said to me what's the matter with David he does not seem too happy. I told her about the football, "leave it with me" she said. Next week she gave Dave three tickets for the match FOC. Her uncle was one of the Tottenham accountants. Here we go again Wembley!! Wembley!! We arrived at Wembley early because we had one extra ticket left over to sell. This is where I became a ticket tout, realising that the money we got for the ticket, would buy us a burger and chips. I told Dave I was only going to ask the ticket price to someone that would be sitting next to us. (Making sure that he would not sell it on, to try and make money from it). Dave thought I was mad selling it so cheap, but then we did get the ticket free of course. Sadly Liverpool won so I had to console Dave all the way home (I won't tell them you cried Dave).

Pam and I worked this round for eight years, Then one day, I made more profit at teaching Karate in one night than a full week selling greengrocery goods. I got home from the club and said to Pam that I would like to teach Karate full time. Pam had faith in me and this is what we did. Pam also had a part time job selling football pools coupons. (Silly Greengrocer joke: I heard that beans were John Lennon's favourite vegetable.....up until he decided to give peas a chance.)

Enter the Dragon

We went to the cinema one day and saw a film called Enter The Dragon. (We'll put the guitar away) I now had something else to put my all into. I told Pam that I was going to start training at Karate. I then told my siblings as well, they all laughed saying that would only last a week. Forty five years later, when I received my 7th Dan Black Belt from the British Karate Association, I often remind them what they all said. Training at Karate was hard because I was trying to keep up with other students that were half my age. So my plan was, they would train once a week, I would train through the day and every night at clubs or at home.

My first instructor was a guy called David Slapper. He was a Brown belt in Shotokan. I had private lessons with him for about ten months. I remember grading with his instructor, there were three of us taking the grading, myself, a young lady and the drummer from Manfred Mann the pop group, Mike Hugg. I was first, don't think I made too many mistakes, next was the young lady, I think it was Mike Hugg's girlfriend. She was great. Then Mike Hugg's turn, he was not so good, he was so nervous. After the lesson, I said to him, how come you were so nervous? He said he can play in front of thousands of people because he did this all the time, but grading, not so often. Anyhow, we all passed. The girl got 1st class myself 2nd and Mike 3rd, I went home with the new Red Belt next to me.

I was so pleased that the last 10 months were worth it. Soon after my grading there was a new club opening up at the Community Centre in Limes Farm Chigwell. I put my name down and was being taught by Alfie Pitkin. I have never seen anyone so fast, he was magic. This pushed me to do more training every day of the week. Two hours a day, running one hour a day with this. I was getting really fit and loved Karate. I managed to achieve my Green belt in 1974 with the UKKW. This was after two years training. (In those days there were only four belts to obtain. White, Green, Brown and then after about 5/10 years of training to grade for Black Belt. (In Japanese it's called Sho Dan meaning 1st step).



Grandson James, My niece Victoria and Granddaughter Georgia.

I was having private lessons with Alfie. He taught me how to fight, (thanks Alfie) we would do a lot of fighting, telling me all the things that were important like distance, speed, power and most of all timing. I was only a green belt when I started teaching the kids at his club, my two children were in the lessons.

Tina managed to obtain her Black Belt, about 8 years later, Dave was more interested in girls so only managed to get to Brown belt. I continued to train and soon I was training with the top Japanese instructors that were coming over from Japan. Tatsuo- Suzuki Yoshi Shinohara and Shiromitsu Sensei Meada, all top instructors. I was also training at a club in Buckhurst Hill, with Instructor Laurence Wills 3rd Dan.

I asked a friend at the club, Ian Cuthbert, to help me run a club. The club at Limes Farm had closed down. We did this under the umbrella of Sensei Wills, Ian said yes and we were off. The building of the Roding

Karate Club 47 years later is still going strong with my son-in-law at the helm. Both Ian and I were going to build a great Karate Club at Limes Farm. Ian was teaching the adults and left me with the kids, we loved it, there is no better feeling than passing on knowledge to others. I got on very well with Ian and we had some great years in Karate together.



1st Roding Karate Club Photo 1979

We would go to different clubs, to try to improve our knowledge of karate. We took part in lot's of fetes in the summer. I remember that one day at a fete in Epping it was held in a big area. We were about to start our demo, then Ian said to me "lets go where all the people are and pretend to have a real fight". There we were fighting away, then we stopped and Ian shouted out "if you want to see more then go to the karate area". They all rushed over, we did knife techniques and tile breaking. My speciality was breaking the tiles after they were set alight. (Silly Karate joke: Why did the Cupboard learn Karate? For Shelf-Defense)

I used to go running every day and started to run further and further, so one day I decided to run a marathon. The training was really hard, I followed the SAS program which was very hard training. I could not get an application form for the London Marathon so I marked out 27 miles round our local park and started training. It was the start of summer and it was too hot to run in the afternoon when I finished work, so I would go out at 6am in the morning before I went to market, to pick up each day's stock of fruit and vegetables to sell during the day. I got the club involved and had the kids running for charity. I managed to finish in just under 4 hours, (not bad for a 39 year old) just to show how fit I was. After the run we played football.

Ian received his Black belt in 1979. We were so pleased for him. Ian helped me get my training together by making sure that I went to as many clubs as possible. I remember I would go with Ian to Picketts Lock Sports Centre in Enfield on Mondays to train with the Top Instructor Tatsuo- Suzuki. This was always a hard training session. The best fighters in England would come to this club on Mondays. Vic Charles, Jeff Thomson, these were England team members and they were Green belts they were so good and fast, lots of times I would be on the end of a kick or punch. Going back to this time, the late 70s there were not many places to train at, not like nowadays you have Karate clubs at the end of your Road. We had to go to North London, East London and different Counties in England for competitions.

I received my Black Belt in 1981 (After 9 years of training). My friend Ian was a hard fighter and about 16 years younger than me. He always came first in all the competitions we entered. I could never beat him. I had this back roundhouse kick called Ushiro Mawashi-geri. It's a famous kick Bruce Lee would use. He called it 'The dragon whips his tail'. I worked hard on this kick since the first day of putting on a karate suit. Then one day at a training session with instructor Lawrence Wills at The Brook School Loughton we were sparing, "yes", there it goes, a perfect kick on the side of Ian's face, he was surprised. This was the first time that I had beaten him in a fight. In 1979 the club I was training with were going to West London for a friendly Karate tournament.

Lawrence picked the team to go and put me down as a reserve. I travelled with Ian in his car. When we arrived they were sorting the teams out, my 7 year old son Dave was to be our mascot. I was left on the sidelines when a German Black Belt Girl came and asked me if I was fighting. I told her that I was a reserve. She asked if I would like to fight with her team, I said I would ask Lawrence. He said yes that's ok as it's only a friendly. (Not such thing as a friendly. As in football, no such thing, you want to win). She took me over to meet the German coach. He said to me that although we have asked you to fight, you may not have to, because my team will win in the first three fights. This meant leaving two people will not have to fight. They were so confident when the first fighters came out, Germany win, 2nd fight Germany win, 3rd fight Germany win. The Germans and this Englishman had won. I went up to receive my medal and all my club mates were a little bit fed up.

On the way home I was polishing my medal in front of Ian winding him up. I started to have lessons with Sensei Meada at the Judokan Do-Jo in Hammersmith. I was a Green Belt and it wasn't long before he awarded me my Brown Belt. When you sparred with Sensei Meada you had to be very careful because he had this special technique, this was when he would turn a front kick into a round kick. What this meant was, as the front kick came to your mid-body, you would put your arm down to block, he would then change it into the round kick that was aimed to your face. This you could not block because you have committed yourself to blocking the front kick. He would catch me and lots of other young good fighters with this technique. When executing this kick you have to think that the technique is just one movement. Not a front kick and then a round kick. It was front/round at the same time.

I trained with Sensei Meada for six months then he returned to Japan. Before he went he told me to have lessons with Shiomitzu Sensei who had just come to England from Madagascar where he had been teaching. He gave me Shiomitzu's telephone number.

I trained with Sensei Shiomitzu for about three years, he then awarded me with 1st Dan Black Belt. A few weeks after I was awarded my Black Belt by Sensei Shiomitzu, I arrived at his Dojo for my normal lesson. He congratulated me on getting my Black Belt and said later "we celebrate". (I was thinking that we would go to the pub after). We did the normal lesson, then he said "we spar" (word for fight). Well, this was really different, because he was attacking me really hard. (Remember he was one of the hardest fighters coming out of Japan) he was getting close with his kicks and punches, then one kick caught me very hard in the body. I was getting a bit worried as he came in, I threw a punch to his head to keep him away, this knocked him to the floor. (thanks Alfie) I had remembered what Alfie said about timing (As soon as he moves attack). With his nose bleeding, I was stunned, so I went to him to say sorry, he then said it was not my fault it was his, because he should have blocked the punch.

After the lesson, Terry Laurence, a Black belt from the next Dojo (training area), came up to me and asked me what all the screaming was. I explained what had happened when we started the lesson about celebrating. He said you fool, when they celebrate someone receiving their Black Belt, the celebration is they all give the new Black Belt a hard time. This is what Sensei Shiomitzu was doing. (Remember there were no hand mitts or gloves in those days).

We had arranged for Sensei to take a grading for my students. When he met Pam he said to her "look what he done to my face," he was showing her the scar on his nose.(I often wonder if he still has it.) He came to Hainault when we bought the Bungalow in Chestnut Grove. We were decorating at the time when he came in, he was looking around the place and Pam had just finished painting a wall that was still wet. Sensei was getting very close to it and he had a very expensive Crombie overcoat. He was getting closer and closer to it then went into another room, lucky for us.



Sensei Shiomitzu and myself 1977.

The private tuition with Sensei Shiomitzu was mostly basic techniques and Kata. It was in one of these lessons he introduced me to a friend of his. I think it may have been his old Instructor who was over from Japan on holiday in the u/k. His name was Tanabe and in the session that we had was myself, Tony Heap a Black belt 4th Dan who was a very fast fighter and Sensei Shiomitzu. Sensei Tanabe wanted to fight Tony, I thought there was going to be blood here because, as I said, Tony was very fast. Tony started to fight but was taking it easy because he thought that he might catch Tanabe who was a lot older, but he said to Tony why don't you fight properly you are too slow. I thought, here we go, bloodbath, but no, as Tony kicked him, Sensei Tanabe moved to the side, just enough to dodge the kicks and punches. Tony could not get anywhere near him he moved to the side so fast, and kept getting out of the way of Tony. When the session was over Sensei Tanabe said this is a very good move in Wado Karate its called Tai Sabaki.

The Roding Karate Club decided to pull out of the UKKW (United Kingdom Karate Wado-Kai) Sensei Shiomitzu said that he could not teach me any more, because we had left the UKKW. The reason that Ian and I had decided to leave the UKKW was because they were bringing in lots of changes that we did not agree with. I then started a long association with Sensei Shinohara, he was a brilliant coach. I learnt a lot from Sensei Shinohara. I can remember we were training near where I lived in Epping. There was just myself and him, when suddenly we heard an Aircraft flying low, we both looked out of the window, I said "It's ok sensei it's one of our's" he laughed so much. Him being Japanese and me being English, and it being an American Harvard Aircraft. This made us laugh because, remember, in 1939 we were at war with each other. This is the same aircraft that pop star Gary Numan used to fly from at North Weald Airfield.

At this time I was having tuition on the computer. (Remember they did not have computers in schools when I went to school). I had bought an Apple Mac. My daughter, Tina, showed me how to work it for what I needed for my work. What Tina taught me I was passing on to Pam who now teaches me the computer. (Silly Computer Joke: What do you call a computer mouse that swears a lot? A cursor!)

I then got one of the first digital cameras and started producing small books on Karate. I had lots of Instructors wanting these books. They would come to the hall and I would take photos, and put them in a book. These were Kata books. It took a lot of hours of work on my part, but I loved doing the job. Anyway, I put more money into the club. Sensei Shinohara wanted a book made up for him to sell to his students. These were pictures of the Kata moves for his style of Karate. I took the pictures and Sensei looked to make sure that he had the correct stance in each picture. When he said ok to them, I would produce the book and show him the proof. (Silly Computer joke: Don't fart in an Apple store, cos they don't have Windows).

When the book was finished. When I showed him the book he said "this no good" and started to pick problems with his stance on some pictures. He wanted to do the photo shoot again. I then printed the new lot of pictures up, showed him, and yep, you got it, he wanted to do them again. He was such a perfectionist, we spent hours on his books. It cost me a fortune in time wasted. I could have produced

another three Karate Instructors books in that time. At the time I was doing lots of this sort of work, but as I had not long been using a computer it was an enjoyable job. (Silly Computer Joke: The oldest computer can be traced back to Adam and Eve. It was an apple but with extremely limited memory. Just 1 byte. And then everything crashed).

The club was expanding, we were getting so many new calls about Karate. I said to Pam I think I will have to get one of those Telephone Answer Machines. (These had just started to come on the market) a friend of mine had one, so I borrowed it until I got my own one. We opened another club in Wanstead, then Ian went off to Australia to see his brother and left me to run the clubs for a few months. I was a greengrocer by day and karate instructor by night. A few months later Ian started to teach ladies self defence so we decided that I could have the clubs and he started teaching self defence in London. We were charging 75 pence a lesson for adults and children. (I was paying £25 a lesson for my private lesson with Shiromitsu in 1976). After Ian went off to teach the Posh Ladies in London, I started to spend more time on teaching, children mainly.

I get on well with kids. They are so much fun, I would get them playing games running up and down in teams, this would start to get them fit and understand working in teams for later when they compete. It was about this time that I was teaching at a club in Barking. A woman came running into the club with a baby who had stopped breathing, the baby had a purple like face so I quickly put the baby on the floor and called Pam over. (We have both received our experience in first aid on a regular basis, so we knew what to do). Pam was working with me, "has she got a pulse" said Pam? I said "no". I just gave the baby chest compressions with my finger tips. She came back to life, we were so pleased. Pam and I had done something that we train for, we felt really great that day.



Clacton Summer camp with Sensei Shinohara awarding me my 5th Dan Black Belt.

Another time this happened was at North Weald Market. A baby was choking, she had swallowed a sweet, and the Mum was panicking. So I took the baby from her and turned the baby upside down, tapped the baby's back, and out popped a sweet. Another job done. The clubs by now were getting bigger and bigger so I opened up more, Ilford, Loughton, Goodmayes, Collier Row Romford, then got the jackpot. It was called Dagenham.



Myself

When I arrived to teach at the new Dagenham club, I saw this big queue. I spoke to someone in the queue and asked them what they were there for, they said a new Karate Club was starting. Fifty one people had turned up, there was no way I could even get them in the hall. Pam came up with one of her good ideas and said she would go and see the caretaker, and ask to have the hall for a further 2 hours. I managed to get them all sitting down and explained to them that although I was the best instructor in the world, I could not teach them all at once. This got quite a laugh, I said that I would do a demonstration and explain all about Karate. I then got twenty up at a time showing them how to do the first two blocks of Karate. Then get the next group up showing them two more blocks. We did not charge anything for the lesson that night, but took orders for Karate suits, for them to wear next time. Meanwhile Pam had sorted out different times for them over the three hours, then we managed to get the hall for two days in future. I noticed that the people in Dagenham would rather spend their rent money on a Karate suit than pay their rent. We had over 100 members in the Dagenham club in 2 weeks. Dagenham was a big club. It was at this time that my brother had left his job on the London Transport. He asked me for a job, so working together, I showed him how to get halls. Open new clubs and run the clubs. This was so that when I was unable to make it, he could keep it ticking over. Also it was handy that he lived just down the road to me.

Pete is just like my dad, he can put his hand to anything, and it wasn't long before he was making Trophies for the club. Since the start of our summer camps we would use quite a lot of these. Also, we would be running our own competitions at club level, and would need the Trophies for this. I opened a shop selling Karate suits and belts etc.

There was really only one place to buy suits and this was a shop in South London called Blitz. Which means on this side of London and Essex there were no shops selling this type of stock. I opened the shop in Epping and Pete was going to be there every day to advertise and sell to whoever came in. I myself had lots of fellow Karate instructors from clubs all over Essex that I knew buying the Karate goods.



Paul Anderson and myself.

JJB Sports showed interest, they wanted a sample which I sent up to them. They then put a big order in for lots of stock. (At the time JJB Sports shops were very strong up north). I had never heard of them down here in the south, however I gave them a call and got through to them. I sent them the Invoice stating payment in five days. They called back and said that it would be 30 days before I would get my money, that's the way they work. I said to Pam I am going to pull out. I did not want to be stitched up,!! BIG BIG MISTAKE !! I did not realise they were such a big company. I noticed that they started opening Sports shops in Essex London all over the place, it was a big company and I had let it slip through my fingers.

I bought my stock from a seller in Pakistan and would have to pick these up from Birmingham in a big 3 ton truck. This started off well, then, although the stock was of good quality, Blitz started to undercut us and the shop was not selling enough to keep open. I had to close it down. I said to Pete that he could have the clubs that he was teaching at for himself and that he could open his own clubs for himself.

I was left to run the clubs by myself. I had arranged to open a Karate club in Romford. We would be training in a big area upstairs in the Dolphin Swimming Club. I was so lucky because the night before they had shown the film Karate Kid on television. Here we go again. 45 student's arrived for this one. Off you go Pam, more nights please. We were lucky because I was friends with the manager Steve (He was a Spurs fan like myself) he helped us out. The clubs got bigger and bigger and soon a Martial Arts Journalist from Manchester got to hear about the different way I was teaching at the clubs. The difference is that I was teaching the kids teamwork.

I would have junior Black Belts teach adults on a one to one for short sessions. I found out that most adults would rather be taught by a child because it takes the pressure off them. (An adult would want to know how to do the move but had a problem trying to remember the moves, whereas a child can remember moves straight away. Although the adult will perfect the move, after coming to me with practice).

The Junior Black belt would also teach other kids that found it difficult to learn the moves. This would take a lot of pressure of me because it gave me more time with the serious students. The other difference was what an adult had told me, when I asked him why he had left his last club, he said "It's good to come and train in an atmosphere that was friendly and that you control all the fighting, so that we don't go home with black eyes and injuries." I am proud of the students that managed to fight for England and also giving Paul Alderson the 1996 World Champion, his first introduction into Karate when he was 7 years old (I remember Paul's dad Colin Telephoning me from South Africa half way through the night to tell me of his win).



Demonstration, Myself

I was talking to Paul one day, he was explaining to me about muscle twitch that he has, this is where he moves faster than most students, for instance, if you throw a punch to something or someone, your brain

tells your hand to go to its target asap. Well there are two movements involved here, you tell your brain to do it, then your fist goes to the target, well with a person with muscle twitch, your fist reacts as soon as you think of the technique, so its only one movement, so this with a lot of training makes you faster in fighting.

The club had a lot of good fighters come along, and even to this day I often walk along the street and people say hello to me. I was taking a Sunday walk along Burnham-on-crouch a little while ago and someone called my name, he said Hi Ray "I said I am sorry you got me," he said "it's Paul I trained with you about 40 years ago." No wonder I could not remember, he was only 14 when I taught him then. I remembered he was a friend of my Dad's and lived near to me in Chigwell.

It was 1977 when my friend Ian Cuthbert asked me to phone the BBC because they wanted someone to break some tiles for a demonstration on TV. I gave them a call, they asked if I would go along to White City to break some roof tiles. They were going to demonstrate a high speed video camera, and they wanted me to break about 10 tiles so they could see which one brakes first. The top or bottom one. I went along with Pam and set up the roofing tiles in the morning. I showed them how I was going to break the tiles, they set the camera up and away we go. I did this a couple of times, then they asked me to stay the rest of the day.



Dave's wedding

They gave us a tour of the studio, showing us where they do Top of the Pops. We then went off for a bite to eat. I still had my Karate Gi on and soon it was time to do the show. The show was called Tomorrow's World fronted by Keith Chegwin's wife Maggie Philbin. Keith Chegwin combed my hair for me, in those days I had long curly hair. It was about time to do the show. I thought that it was nice of them to let us stay and see the Programme. Which went out live, then they said ok Ray this is where you do the break. (Now I thought that they were going to use the breaks that I had done in the morning, no such luck, live in front of a few million viewers). No problem. I had done this hundreds of times at fete's and demo's. I first learnt to break tiles when I would go to watch other people do this at big competitions. The demonstration went well, now it was time to talk about my fee for the day. I had two ways to receive my fee, if they use the demo once or if they use it more than once, if I chose the latter it would be less, I chose the first one and got paid there on the spot. (Well they said they would post it on).

My next TV appearance was on a Programme called What's My Line. This is where celebrities had to guess my occupation. I was to mime clues and answer their questions with a yes or no. They had ten chances to guess my occupation. They could not do it and I won. Angela Rippon asked me to break some tiles on the show. I had to have an interview with Angela Rippon, she knew so much about Karate she asked me about the different instructors that I have trained with. Pam and I met lots of celebrities that day. (Silly Celebrities jokes. Which celebrity is always ready for ice cream? Reese, with her spoon.)

The other child Pam and I loved

The Roding Karate Club has Raised over £24,000 for charities over the years, the first big charity was for a friend that I would talk to on the CB radio. He was 14 year old David Walker, he had Spina bifida and had to be in a wheelchair. They were going to get him an electric wheelchair, and I said I would help. We had two Karate children's parents that offered to help me. The first one was the parent of a student that I got very friendly with. The boy's name was Scott Curzon, he first walked into my Chigwell club with a Tottenham Hotspurs T shirt on. I looked at him and said, you are definitely Black Belt material with that shirt on. It was my football team, the parent laughed and introduced himself as Bernie.

The next one was an adult I was teaching. His name was Sidney. The three of us and Pam got together and started to make plans on how we were going to raise the money. Pam suggested that we have an afternoon tea party at our Bungalow in Hainault. We had all our CB radio friends. It's good to meet fellow CB friends in person, you talk to them for years and not know who they are. This soon had our garden full of friends.

I had a big club now so I put out a newsletter for the students to get sponsors, we decided to do sponsored sit ups and push ups. We soon got this on the way and money started to come in. The first thing I did was open a bank account in young David's name so that we could save the funds. Bernie came up with asking some of his business friends for donations. Bernie was a car dealer and had a couple of garages. Sidney owned a big number of curtain retail shops, so he did the same. A friend of mine from the CB club Terry Jenkins got in touch with Chigwell Council to ask permission to use a large park in Hainault to run a one day Fete. This raised about £1,500. One of the events was a sponsored walk around the field. There was a quadriplegic boy in a wheelchair being pushed by a blind man, with his wife showing him which way to go. There were lots of my CB club friends helping out, I could go on forever thanking these kind people that helped on that day. It did not take long to get the money for the electric wheelchair. We also had money to buy David a computer so that it would help with his studies.

David was 14 years old at the time, the very sad part of this story is that the chair was delivered and David passed away the next day. It was so sad, I remember the funeral, there were people in large numbers outside the church, because the church was full. Both Pam and I loved David, he was in so much pain the most of his life, and having the amount of operations I have had with pain, I now know how he felt. He never complained, he was a very happy kid and we missed him very much. When he was on the CB radio, it was very hard to talk to him, because he was so popular with everyone, that you could not get through on the air waves. We had money over so I suggested that we buy the boy in the wheelchair, who was at the fete a special car for him to drive. This was a new Ford Escort and we had to take it to this special garage near Heathrow Airport. That would fit changes to the car so that the quadriplegic child would be able to drive. The money that was over was donated to Claybury hospital to buy them some computers, we did lot's of charities in the coming years most of this going to Haven Hospital. The year of these events were about 1982/85 (Silly Charity Joke I was thrown out of the charity food kitchen on my first night of volunteering. All I said was, hurry up, some of us got homes to go to...)

Enter The Dragon part 2



Myself and Sensei Shinohara

Anyway, back to Karate. We made a lot of friends at Karate, we would have Summer Camps twice a year and had lots of fun. I remember one day a student came up and told me that there was a girl student (she was from Sweden) in the mens shower and was talking to them. She said that the ladies showers were not working and could she use the men's showers. Well the boys were in for a treat that day as she took all her clothes off. I was taking my parents out to lunch that day so I missed the show.

Sensei Shinohara would make a guest appearance at the camps. The students loved him and his great sense of humour. He was a great instructor, sadly no longer with us. I thought of a way, at one stage of the club's history, that we could get an even higher standard of student. I thought of making the advanced student take extra special lessons, this worked a charm with students improving by one hundred percent in their gradings.

They also had to take part in outer competitions because you have to let the student see his or her progress outside their club, this can only be done by doing this. Any Karate club that does not enter competitions between other clubs and keeps it all in house, can never see how good their standard is. I was always fair with the grading of all students making sure that they were confident in what they were doing. I always said that if I recommended a student for grading, I felt that they were capable of doing well in the grade. Obviously you have to take nerves into consideration when grading.

When the advanced students take their Black Belt Dan grade I would always have a panel of at least three Senior Dan grades marking up the scores, as well as myself. In the Black belt grading, the student will have to spar with about 30 students, these are made up from Brown belts and above. This would test the students fighting skills as well as their stamina. They would have to show about 4 or 5 Katas (Forms of movement) as well as what they are doing in the kata. They would have to take a Karate theory test. I have many parents saying to me that they find the sparring to be brutal. I point out to the parents that it is not hard for the student because they have been doing it for about 6/8 years. The Black Belt Grading lasts about one and a half hours. We encourage students to enter club competitions, then inter-club competitions then, to fight at outer club competitions. This is a building platform for students to enter The English Championships, then onto World Karate Championships.

The Roding Karate Club have about 160 trophies from different competitions (these are on show at The Jo Richardson School Dagenham). We soon started to get more Black Belts going through the club, this meant of course, more help for me as a lot of them would teach for me at my own clubs. I think I have probably taught over 2,000 student's all through the years that I was teaching. The system we had at The Roding Karate Club was, if I saw a child or adult with good fighting ability I would send them to our three

instructors that were running the competition side of the club. Dean Ince was a 5th Dan Black Belt and he would teach the students how to fight. People don't realise that there are so many things to learn about combat, they had to learn when to attack or when to counter attack. This means, for instance, I was a counter attack fighter. This would mean that you wait for your opponent to attack you, then at the correct time you attack him with your technique.

This is what I would call picking off your attacker. If you were an attacker, you would have to move in fast, this is so you hit your target before he could counter attack. I have an example of this is, I was coaching a team at a competition in the early 90s. I had a green belt from my club coming up against a brown belt higher grade, I was watching this brown belt in a previous bout. I said to the green belt, (the student's name was Greg Wallace) I have watched this guy fight and he keeps coming forward all the time. I said to Greg just listen to my voice and you will win.

(A fighter should listen to his coach only, because you want them to only hear your voice on the mat). I said as soon as he moves you go in with your counter as fast as you can. The brown came forward, I said now Greg, Greg executed a punch that knocked the guy back. This was first point to Greg. The brown belt came forward again, Greg did what he did the first time and countered with a punch to the mid section. He received another point for this, he did this three times and won the fight. He came off the mat really pleased, he said to me that he could only hear my voice coaching him all the time. What Greg was learning here was timing, now if you're fighting, you need to get the distance correct, after this you need to train for speed. Then next is power, you have to have a powerful punch or kick. Power, Speed, Distance and Timing is what you have to work on by doing lots and lots of repetitions. (Silly fighting joke.. Never get into fights with ugly people, they have nothing to lose).

This meant Greg, now a 5th Dan, and Dean were to teach at the club. We had another Instructor Steve Brane 5th Dan who would teach Kata (forms of movement) at his class, for the squad. Nearly every Sunday, Greg would take a squad to competitions and spend the day with them coaching. He did not get paid for this; he just loved watching the student progress at competitions. It was about this time that I started to run Karate Summer Camps. This was a good move because it would be a busman's holiday for us. We taught karate for about five hours during the day, then students were able to go to the club house and drink orange juice. ? That's what they were supposed to drink. (The barman at the camp said to me one day, that the Karate students from Dagenham would drink more beer in the one week, than three weeks in the summer peak season). (Silly bar joke two guys walk into a bar, the 3rd one ducks)



Retirement boat up the Thames

I have been retired now for about 13 years, for my retirement I hired a boat to take the students up the Thames on a boat trip and BBQ on the boat. This was a great day and I was presented with my 6th Dan from Dean Ince on behalf of the BKA. On the train on our way home, my brother Bill had one too many drinks and was showing all the people on the train my 6th Dan certificate, at the same time pointing to me, this was very funny with all the people on the train laughing at him. The Roding Karate Club is still going, with my Son in Law Bob at the helm. It's good that Bob keeps it going, he runs the clubs full time now. (I

have since received my 7th Dan Black Belt) (Silly Karate joke. I was really upset that I came in last at the karate competition yesterday. I was kicking myself).

Karate ni Sente Nashi: Never Attack First

We are taught in Karate never attack first in thought or deed, however sometimes this is a hard thing to hold back, especially when your appointment has no control. This happened in a lesson I was training in, two new Brown Belts came into the Do-Jo (training Hall). Sensei Shinohara was the instructor, he told us to pair up for sparring. I looked across at the two new Brown belts sitting on the side and one nudged the other and mouthed "watch this" (he did not notice that myself and Shinohara had seen him and he started to laugh). I thought to myself thanks for the warning. He came and stood in front of me waiting for the command from sensei to commence, we both bowed and got into fighting stance, my thoughts were right, he steamed in to hit me. When he was in distance my left hand jab has always been fast, I hit him on the nose and cut his mouth. (Thanks Alf) Perfect timing, he went over to Sensei and complained, Sensei said to him I saw you nudge your friend. You have five minutes to clear the Do-Jo Sensei gave me a grin and said I was a bully.

I have often been asked by people if I have ever had to use my Karate in the street, my answer is only once. I was driving our greengrocery van to work one day. I said to Pam "I'm not sure if I should keep this Karate going". I had been to a lesson the night before and had a kick catch me on the head, near my eye that made me have a black eye. So this day, I had a bad headache, then a few minutes later we had to turn left at a T-junction. As I was about to turn the corner a car overtook me and made me swerve up the pavement. I managed to keep going then overtook him and got out to tell him that he should not have done what he did. (Or words to that effect). He got out of his car and started to attack me, well the first punch I did, cut his eye. (thanks Alf) He still kept coming next jab nose, every time he moved forward he could not understand why he was being hit. I hit him once more then Pam shouted to me "stop Ray that's enough" His face was covered in blood, as she shouted he looked at her as if to say thanks. Then it was my right hand that put him on the floor. I thought to myself, what have I done? I got back in the van and drove off leaving him there. I drove around the corner and I thought Pam was really going to have a go at me. She looked at me and said brilliant, you did everything that you normally do in the Do-Jo except you made contact.

I was expecting a visit from the Police, still remember, I thought to myself he threw the first punch at me. I did have a black Eye from the night before to show the police (what he did not do). You must remember I was not being a bully by hitting him. If he had stopped coming forward, I would have left it at that. Sometimes you only have to show in your actions that you are in charge, this was when my 11 year old son Dave was helping me on the greengrocery van. He came back to the van soaking wet, he was crying. I said "what happened Dave", he said "those two men up there soaked me with their hosepipe." I said "did they do it on purpose?" he said "yes they were laughing", I said "lets go and see them." I said to the guy holding the hose "Did you aim that hosepipe at my son deliberately" he said yes, they were really cocky. I said "ok", took the hose pipe from his hand and shoved it down the front of his shirt and just held it there. I looked at his mate and said "move if you dare". He said sorry, I was still holding the hose pipe down the other guy's shirt. He was soaking wet by now. Then we just walked away, David loved it to see them get what they deserved.

The next time we were working up Limes Farm Chigwell on the van. Dave had taken a shortcut across the end of a garden. A man came back to the van shouting at Dave as he got to the van. I said go away (even more, words to that effect) he turned his back and walked off. He knew that was the best thing for him to do. What I want to know is why always David ? I don't have this problem with Tina.

I was on my way to teach our Wanstead club one day with a girl called Dawn who lived across the Road. I often took her because she would like extra training. Anyway, I was about to enter a junction at the end of our road. I did not see the car coming down the road on my right and had to pull up sharp so as not to hit

him, he got out of the car. (I thought here we go again) I got out of the car and said sorry to him and that it was my fault. He said "are you ok ? I was making sure you're ok." I thought to myself why is he apologising? It was my fault. I got back into the car and Dawn said to me it was a good job you had your Karate suit on Sensei. I then realised I had got out of the car with karate suit and Black belt on, we both laughed all the way to the club.

In later years it was Dave's turn to stand fast, I was an old man now and we were in our seats at Tottenham watching the match. The man behind me kept booing in my ear, I turned round and told him about this but he still kept doing it. Then at half time Dave leaned over and said don't shout in Dad's ear anymore. We never got a peep out of him again, the man had seen the look in Dave's eye, seeing that he meant it. People in the seats near us said to me that this man was a nuisance and always shouting abuse.

I can remember one time there was a heated discussion going on in a club that I was teaching between a child's parent and one of my Instructors. I told them both to go outside the Do-Jo to settle their discussion. This was happening just as we were about to go home. Someone came up to me and told me that there was a fight going on outside. I rushed outside to stop the Instructor and parent fighting, straight away I got in-between them knowing that they had no grudge with me, it was with each other they had the problem with. (The parent was winning the fight at this stage, by the way). I had a go at them saying that they should set an example, they both went home. Next day the parent came up to me and said sorry boss (this is what he used to call me) he wound me up so much. Then when we got outside he wanted to fight, he said the instructor did not realise that I have been working the doors up Newcastle for ten years. So remember, 3rd Dan Black Belt against a Doorman be careful. You never know in this world who is better in any confrontation, so don't get into road rage or any unnecessary confrontation.



Pam and myself.

As I said, we had a great time teaching Karate and Pam made so many friends. We had lots of holidays whilst we were working, our favourite being Los Angeles. We would go to Santa Monica every year for a well earned rest. We normally travel mid class on Virgin Atlantic, but found out that if you ask prior to the flight about two hours before, if you are smartly dressed and polite and ask for any upgrades they will upgrade you to first class FOC. I think we managed to upgrade about eight times, free of charge. (Some people would be paying up to £3,000 for a first class seat). We went to Hawaii one year from Los Angeles and went to see Pearl Harbour. They had the original Arizona (still under water where it went down).

We went to Cyprus in 1996 we had rented a brand new Bungalow, in fact they still had to finish the garden and around the pool. We agreed to this and we had a few days of peace and quiet, then it all happened. We could hear a cement mixer coming up the driveway, I approached the driver who told me that they were going to lay cement around the swimming pool. As you can imagine this was out of order, so I told them not to empty the mixer today. I then went to see the owner and told him, he said that they had to lay the cement or it would be no good and they would have to dump it. I told him if they come back I would drive his Jeep, that we hired from him, into the swimming pool. So he quickly moved us to an apartment overlooking the sea. We said ok and headed for the apartment.

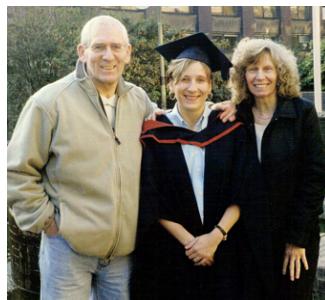
Through the night Pam noticed a load of cockroaches all over the place, they were the biggest we had ever seen. Next morning I went over to see the owner and told him that we were going to stay at the 5-star Hotel up the road and he would have to pay for it. He reluctantly paid for the rest of our holiday. I was pleased then because not only were we in a nice room it had a television in it. There were not many places with tv in Cyprus at that time, anyway England were to play Holland that night and I watched England beat Holland 5 -0.

It was at this hotel that I remembered that the new car registrations were to come out in a few weeks and it was going to be P reg so, I thought I wonder if they have sold P1 NAN yet, I gave them a call and it was mine for £995. I thought that this would be nice on my next car. Pinan in Japanese means Peace of mind, goes well for the Karate club.

We went to Crete one year and normally when we go on holiday we hire a moped to get around. Well, this year we thought we would upgrade to a Scooter. On a moped the brakes are on the handle bars. On a scooter, they are on the running board, so you have to use your feet not your hands when braking. We were travelling down a hill with a bus up my back-side very close, I came to a bend and had to brake to slow down, so I used the hand brake by mistake which operates the front brake. I went over the top of the scooter and Pam, who was on the back, came over the top of me. I hit the floor first with Pam just in front, she was about two metres away from a 15 feet deep cliff. I got up and I went to see if she was ok, she had a nasty bump on the top of her head. People from the bus behind had come to look after her, I had a cut on my head and blood coming out. The people in Crete were very good, a man with a van said he would take us and the scooter (that was a right off) back to the garage.

Lucky for me I had taken out full insurance so I did not have to pay anything. I forgot to say that as it was cold that night we had stopped to buy a jumper for Pam and a track suit for me. (The only colour they had was bright yellow) when we got back to our hotel, We had to go through the lounge with blood running down both mine and Pam's face. Everyone was looking at us, we went up to the room and got cleaned up, what a night.

We went to Palamos in Spain one year, not far from Benidorm, so we decided to drive to Benidorm by car. I had taken my own car on this holiday, it took about 50 minutes to get there. As we drove into the town, I got a puncture on my rear offside wheel so I pulled into the side of the Road. As I got out of the car, a man got off of his scooter and came over to talk to me, he was talking in Spanish, I was unable to understand him. I was more interested in getting the tyre fixed because I was parked in a red zone and did not want a ticket. I phoned a local garage to come out and fix the tyre, it was not long before the mechanic arrived to fix it. He got the spare wheel from the boot and did not realise that had to have special wheel nuts because it was a different wheel. He broke two of the studs on the back plate of the wheel trying to use the wrong nuts.



Me, Pam and Tina

Whilst this was going on the man on the scooter came back and started to talk, again in Spanish, as Pam and I were talking at the back of the car not known to us a man had opened the front of the car door and taken Pam's handbag. He didn't realise he was seen doing this by a lady sitting outside a cafe. She chased after him, hitting him over the head with her handbag. He dropped Pam's bag and ran off, the lady returned the bag to Pam who thanked her. The man who was speaking in Spanish to me drove off fast on his scooter. He must have been with the man who tried to take Pam's bag. He was trying to distract us. Getting back to the car that was now useless because the wheel nuts were not fitted. I telephoned the local Mercedes dealer who towed us back to their garage. The car could not be fixed because it needed a new backplate. We left the car and booked into the local hotel. We were fed up now because we had lost two days of our holiday. We picked the car up the next day minus £800 charges and paid £80 for the hotel. Not a very nice two day's. By the way we went back to the cafe and spoke to the lady that got our bag back and offered her £50 to treat her children. Big mistake. She went ape, saying that she did not want money for doing the correct thing. We thanked her again and left. I said to Pam on the way home how brave she was, she did not think about getting attacked or hurt. It goes to show you, there are still a lot of good people about, but she shouldn't have chased him. She was a really nice lady.

One year coming up to our Wedding Anniversary, I thought I would surprise Pam with a special holiday. I booked us to see the Rolling Stones in New York Shea Stadium. We arrived at Gatwick to catch our flight, only to find out that the airline had gone bust, so they transferred us to a Virgin Atlantic flight. We booked in and managed to get upgraded to first class. This was on a Jumbo Jet aeroplane and we went upstairs in the bubble. We got to New York and went out that night and saw a shop selling paintings and prints. Pam had her eye on a picture of the Flintstones, it was a cell from the actual film. We went in and the price was eight hundred Dollars. The sales lady said, if we come back a little later, Joseph Barbra and William Hanna are visiting the shop and they will sign it for you. We went back and sure enough they were there. They asked us where we came from in England. One of them was English and recognised our accent, we told them. We talked for a while and they signed the back of the painting (cell) for us. With good wishes on the back. Next day we went to see the Rolling Stones but only just got there in time. Our seats were near the front, they were great. The following day, we went on a boat trip around the Hudson River.



Pam and myself

The same day we took a helicopter flight over Manhattan. We then had to go back because we only had four days in New York. We went back to New York a few years later and then on to see Niagara Falls. It was so cold that day, it was a shame because it was our Wedding Anniversary on this day. We went back to our hotel. After a short while we decided to go to the cinema to see The Bodyguard. The next day we went to Washington, this was a two week holiday, so we had more time to explore the country. One year

when Pam had her 60th birthday. I arranged for all our family to surprise her in Los Angeles. They were sitting in the Hotel when we arrived, she cried her eyes out. It was brilliant. What a holiday.



Grandson Harry after a few Guinesses

Most students used to think that all we did was teach at the club for an hour and do nothing for the rest of the day. (wrong) We had to manage the paperwork that came with the job, Advertising. We would spend the day walking the streets putting flyers through doors. The student had to be licensed (so we had to get these) Also organising Competitions, Special courses and Summer Camps. So much to do. I had lots of Black Belts helping me on the mat. But someone had to be at the desk at the clubs doing the desk work. This of course was Pam.

It was not only me running the club, Pam would do our Art work for any leaflets. Pam also would be walking the streets (putting flyers through doors, that is.) She did the artwork for our videos we would do. Pam had to make the tea as well. (Someone had to drive me home as well). I did pay her £10 a week for her working with me. (So these holidays were important to us, it was a way to get away from work).

Place of abode



New North Rd house

Our first own home was 131 New North Rd Hainault Essex. Before exchange of contracts we would sit in the car just looking at it. We were the first in our family to own our own house because at that time the government was giving out 100 percent mortgages. We moved into the house in 1967 and could not wait to put our own stamp on this 3 bedroom semi (which had a telephone in it. Never had one of these before). Pam was eight months pregnant with Tina at this time so it was not long before we had to whip her up to Wanstead hospital. Tina was born. Meeting Tina was the best thing in the world. She was so small, she was love at first sight for myself and Pam.



Chestnut Grove Bungalow

In 1969 I can remember seeing the first man on the moon on television. This was so exciting, we sat in our back room, with me making tea for Pam all night. I had to look after her because she was pregnant with our 2nd baby. Our son David was born, (we had a friend staying with us at the time). I remember creeping up the stairs to have my first look at him. (In the 60s there was no way of telling the sex of a pre born baby, there was not a thing such as scans. So you had to wait till the baby was born before you knew the sex). Not bad I thought, handsome, just like his dad. This was just right, a boy and girl. The only problem having child birth at home, after a few days Pam decided to get up and come down stairs and start doing house work. This actually made her ill and the doctor made her go back to bed.



Forest Edge Air view

It was 1981 when we sold our house in New North Rd (£29,000 not a bad profit in 13 years). We moved to Chestnut Grove, a three bedroom Bungalow, just around the corner. We bought this for £25,000 so we were

mortgage free. We had some work done on it and this was a really good home for us. Close to the kids school and local shops. In 1987 we were on the move again to Thornwood in Epping. We received £87,000 for Chestnut Grove and paid £88,000 for this Detached bungalow. We had a small mortgage on this to help pay for some work we had done. It was a nice Detached three bedroom Bungalow. This was handy for the M11 and M25 that made it easy to get most places and easy for work. By now, the clubs were going really well and it was not long before we were in our next Bungalow in Holland on Sea. (We sold Epping for £220,000) and paid (£180,000) for this brand new three bed Bungalow at Holland on Sea. This was a good home because all the grandchildren could come and visit us by the sea. We spent a lot of time with our kids, and had great times, with our grandchildren.



Grandson James and Saf Wedding

Tina and Bob got married in 1991 and had their reception in a grand hotel in Woodford. All the Famous Fresco photographers were at the Wedding. They went on to have four children, three boys and a girl. These kids are so clever, all going to University (they take after me). All three of them passed all their grades. James was the first one who was quite lively. I remember when he was about six years old dancing round a Mall in Miami with Pam he was driving her mad. He got married recently to a lovely girl called Saf, they are made for each other and make a lovely couple. James is magic on the guitar, so fast with his hands. He is a camera man on TV. Next in line is Georgia who was a child actor and has done many plays, shows, musical's and a film. She also starred in Les Misérables in the West End. She is now teaching at the first school she attended when she lived in Hainault. (Silly teacher jokes What kind of school do you go to if you are ice cream man? Sundae school!)



Tina's Wedding

The next grandchild is a nutter, his name is Harry he can do and mend anything. A computer programer is what I think he is, he is good at all media which is handy for Pam and I who are not too clever with technology. Pam will work on any problem for hours to solve it, most of the time she manages to sort it out.

Harry is the comedian of the family, he has a funny answer to any question that you put to him. He plays any instrument you put in front of him. I used to go to him and he would give me guitar lessons and show me how to switch the amps on. Next on the Fresco list is Alfie who is a great drummer. He is a very happy child and is so polite. I remember him when he was only four years old he came to see us at Clacton, where we were living at the time. I had just bought a remote car, we all took it in turns to have a go. When it was his turn, he was driving it fast and he got so excited jumping up and down. He was the youngest of the family and I think that our time living in Clacton was good for him, we used to see Tina Bob and Co. quite often.



Mulberry front room.

We moved from Clacton 2009 (sold the bungalow for £288,000) we moved to Witham into Mulberry, a Detached three bedroom Bungalow. (£340,000) and had this refurbished and stayed in it for seven years. Then decided to move to a smaller one because Mulberry was too large. It had large rooms and needed a lot of looking after, so we managed to sell this for £420,000. We then bought a smaller one for £270,000 that was just down the road.

This needed a little work on but looks great now. The reason we moved from Clacton was so that we could be nearer to work, the journey from Clacton was a long drive. One day we were travelling past Colchester on our way to work when I spotted an old kettle on the side of the road. I said to Pam “look at that old kettle, do you think it works?”, Pam laughed and said it probably does. The next day as I was going past the same place I said to Pam, “I wonder if the kettle is still there.” She said “I don’t know” in her fed up mood. The following day I just said “it’s still there”, this went on for a couple of months. I could see that it was really getting on her nerves, so on my way to football, when Pam was not with me I stopped where the kettle was and put it in the boot of the car. The next time we went past the spot the kettle was gone. I said to Pam “look it’s gone”, I think she was glad because she knew that I would not mention it again. (Wrong) The next time we went past the spot, I just pointed to the spot where it was, I didn’t say a word. Next time I coughed. It was coming up to Christmas. One day when Pam was out, I got the kettle from the boot and wrapped it up for her Christmas present. When she opened it up on Christmas day she was in tears of laughter, after a while she then put it where it belonged in the dustbin. I took it out the next day and put it in the boot of the car. I put it back where I had got it from on the road near Colchester. When we went back to work after Christmas, we were coming up to the spot. I said “look, the kettle is back”, Pam laughed. I loved to see the look on Pam’s face every time we passed that spot, the kettle stayed there through the winter. Then one day they cleared the road and it was gone.



Tina and Bob

I did the same thing when we went to Spain. Pam would always leave her old slippers wherever we stayed. I got hold of a pair that she had thrown in the bin, and packed them in my suitcase and left them in the Forest in Spain. What I was going to do was to take Pam for a walk, and go past the slippers. Then say to her that they looked like the ones you threw away in the UK. But when we got to the spot where I had left them they had gone. Someone had taken them to use. When I told Pam she could not stop laughing, the joke was on me. (Silly kettle joke I asked my wife to put the kettle on She said "No, It doesn't fit me").



Dave and Liuda

Clacton was good for us, we were in Holland-on-Sea. However at Witham, we have the Seaside at Maldon. This is where David's mob would now come. The journey for David to Clacton was a long drive. Taking up of course the dreaded M25 about 110 miles each way. Dave and Liuda got married in Ukraine, Liuda is a great wife to Dave she is so funny, she has got a great sense of humour. They met at Daves firm when she came to England, as a student and decided to stay. Their first baby Max, was born whilst we were at Witham. Sophia came five years later. Max is a great character, at the time of writing this book he is thirteen years old. He is interested in technology, he helps me with my phone sometimes. He was staying with us in the summer and we were in the kitchen one day. I was making some tea, and I was struggling to open a bottle of milk. Max said to me hold the top and turn the bottom of the milk round grandad. This was easy, the top came off. I said to him no matter what age you are you can always learn something. (A thirteen year old showing an old man of eighty one and three quarters how to do it). It reminded me of what I was saying in the early part of the book about the child Black Belt that we had teaching the adult.

Max helps his dad clean his car which brought back memories of Dave washing my Greengrocers van for five pounds. Max makes lots of different things with his Lego. He has so much patience. Max gives the biggest cuddle you have ever felt. He won't let you go, holds on to you for ages, great kid. Our other grandchild is Sophia. She is Eight going on eleven, a very sharp girl who is hard to wind up, she is another nutter in the Barrow/Fresco family. She has us laughing all the time, my nickname for her is scallywag. Sophia has just started to learn the Ukulele. We have called our group The Scallywags. Her on her Ukulele and me on my guitar. When we go to see her she always shows me the new chord that she has learnt. She is an up and coming singer with a terrific memory. I taught her the alphabet backwards and she picked it up

in a couple of minutes. (Silly Grandchild joke, I asked my Granddaughter to give me the newspaper. She said that newspapers are so out of date, and that people now use tablets, so she handed me her iPad. That Fly didn't stand a chance.)

For The Love of Cars



Morris 1000

I told you recently in the journal that I never had many loves in my life, well I have made up for it with cars. In order as I can remember, my first car was a 1939 Ford Y Model. This was given to me by one of the customers at the garage I was working in. The car was taken from outside my house by two mates, who thought they would have a laugh and hide it, but in fact managed to crash it. It was ruined, after a couple of days it was found two streets away. The car had been bashed about and looked in a poor state. The best place for this was the breakers yard where I had it towed to. (Silly sat nav joke: I would be lost without my sat nav !!I I wouldn't know where to go)



My new number plate RGB 51

Next, my first proper car was a 1961 Morris Minor 1000 registration 389 KMU. I can't remember how much I paid for this. I know some of it was on HP. (Hire purchase had just come into force in the 1960s). Next came a 1962 Ford Anglia 105e that had a sloping back, looking really American looking. Then a Ford Consul, Ford Zephyr 4, then another Ford Consul. After this was a Morris Mini. Then a new Ford Capri (which I later sold to buy the mobile greengrocers business). After this a Hillman Avenger, new Datsun. Then another Ford Capri, Ford Siera. A Vauxhall Cavalier, (Reg 51 RGB). A Vauxhall Calibra, (that was my fastest car). A BMW A Series, Mercedes C Class. A Mercedes E Class (Reg P1NAN). (I had this car for five years). I Drove this car down to Marbella, Southern Spain. Audi A3. Audi A3 Sportback. BMW 1 series. Then an Audi Sportback, Audi QC 3 series. (Drove this to Disneyland France). Audi A3 Sportback. Then to a humble Fiat 500. As you can see I have had a great love of cars. (And sending Pam out to work).

(Silly car Joke: what do you call a Spanish man who has lost his car ? Carlos.)

Pam passed her driving test in the early seventies, so this was handy for her because she could take the kids to school. Before this, it was a twenty minute walk four times a day. We got her a Hillman Imp that was in beautiful condition. The car was good for Pam because I was not the only salesman in the house. Pam would go door to door cold selling Eggs, on a new Egg and Potato round she was forming. When she had built it up she then passed the round over to me, to add to our Green Grocery round. As you probably know, that's very hard to do. Pam then ventured into selling double glazing.

My son David broke down in his car one day and called me to help him sort it out. Pam and I arrived at this lane in Chigwell to help him, after we had a look we decided to tow him home. We fixed the tow rope on and I started to pull him slowly home. As we went to turn a right hand corner, we realised that the steering wheel had locked in because we had not had the ignition switched on. I was on one side of the road, and David on the other, with cars coming towards us. I quickly got out and stopped the traffic from running into us. It was night time and unless I had told the coming motorist they would have run into the tow rope. We continued to make our way home to Epping. As we pulled into our driveway I stopped, but David kept going right into the back of my new Mercedes. I think David had only been driving for a little while so we went easy on him. We stopped his pocket money for one week.

I must tell you this story of Dave whilst we were living at Epping. We had a plum tree in the back garden, and one day I saw a rat climbing up the tree to get one of the plums, it came from a ditch at the back of our garden. Our bungalow was at the end of the farmers field. We were stuck with fields all around us, so we would get mice etc come into the bungalow occasionally. Well, I had an Air Rifle so we would shoot these rats and have a competition who could get the most kills. One day whilst I was out shopping, I purchased a Plastic rat. I put it near the Plum tree and waited for David to come home from work. After a while I shouted "Rat Dave near the tree" Dave rushed into the kitchen to get the Air Rifle and kept pumping slugs into the plastic rat. He thought it was a real one. He went running up to look at his kill. Well, Pam and I were laughing so much, it took a few days for Dave to forgive me.

One year we had a firework party at Epping and we sent the plastic Rat up in a rocket, this was so funny. Pam's brother Lawrence went over to the farmers field and not known to us, took it home. Since then (1987) they have been sending it to each other every Christmas backward and forward.

Dave and I had season tickets at Spurs for about 8 years when I moved to Clacton we decided that it was too far to travel. The seats were level with the halfway line so they were top seats. On the last day of the season I told a guy in front that we were not returning next season. He said to me, there is a man just along the row who will buy your seats from you, even though they have expired. I approached the guy and sold them to him for £500. All I had to do was tell Tottenham that I had given the seats to a friend. (Silly Car joke: I tried to sell my old car, but the buyer just kept haggling. In the end, I just gave in and threw in the steering wheel. It was a great deal).

Music my 3rd Love of my life

It was 2012 when I was walking past our local shop that sold guitars. I said to Pam I fancy taking it up again. Having not played since 1964, I did not know if I would have the time to play and learn it again. Pam said, you have plenty of time now that you have retired. I gave it some thought and decided I would give it a go and sent away for a Fender Stratocaster. Next day the guitar came and I could not put it down, (like today if I have my guitar in my hand I have a job to put it away. When the family comes over to see us I end up playing about five tunes instead of just the new one that I was going to show them).



Last Karate Lesson

As I have said previously music is very important to me since retiring I play the guitar and write songs and (try to sing). My grandson Harry would give me a few guitar lessons, it's like everything in life, you never forget anything. I still remember a few chords from the time I played in the 1960s. Then we only knew about four chords, we did not know that there were about another 92 to learn.

I now practice playing every day for about two hours. At the moment I have about 120 songs on my playing list. Most of them Beatles, Cliff Richard, Old country songs, most 1960s hits from various artists and of course my own songs wot I av rote. Most of my own works are funny songs to cheer you up. (Guitar Joke: "This bloke said to me: 'I'm going to attack you with the neck of a guitar.' I said: 'Is that a fret?'"")



My new Stratocaster

I wrote a song about Pam and a couple of years later all my grandchildren got together because Pam had booked us in a recording studio for six hours. We recorded two of my songs. This is the first time that I had played with all my grandchildren together. James on lead guitar, myself on rhythm, Harry on Bass. Alfie on drums and Georgia singing and directing us for our timing. (Georgia used to go to drama school so knew how to do this). To have all the kids there for this was wonderful, thank you Pam for sorting it, it was one of the best days of my life. We must not forget my daughter Tina for taking the video of the session and Pam for walking about 1 mile on a boiling hot day to get the coffees for us. When I play now, I have to have the

music in front of me, otherwise I forget the lyrics and chords, even to the songs that I have written. My face is covered by the music stand as I play, which is not a bad thing.

People that know me would find it hard to believe that I struggle with nerves, when I play in front of people. Yet I would be able to teach Karate to as many as 120 students at my Summer Camps no problem at all. I find it a big problem when I go to the Guitar shop to buy a new guitar, I have to play it to see if I like it. But now, as I have gotten to know them, they let me use a small room to try the Guitar. I find I have started getting more confident since playing at care homes. I do this for nothing as it really helps the people in these homes, they don't have much to do. I like to entertain them, mind you I am not stupid you know because they can't hear all the mistakes I make. It's strange I call these people old, and yet I think I am older than a lot of them.



Sister Pat

The old songs that I sing sometimes bring back memories of where they were when it came out. They say that this is good for people like myself who have Vascular Dementia. But some of the songs that I have written have a few naughty words in them, so I have had to change the words on them. Pam comes with me in case I get into trouble, also she is the only one that can switch the amps on. She keeps the ladies away from me when they throw their knickers at me. It's great playing in these homes. I said to one of the workers "I am not sure if they like what I am doing", she said that they would be talking all week about the session, they love it. I always put 100 percent into what I do as I told you, in Karate, all the training I did was more than most people. I think I do the same with my music, the only thing that stops me playing more are my fingers, they get very sore after a couple of hours.

The singer and songwriter that has inspired me most is Joe Brown, he wrote one of my favourite songs Picture Of You. Pam and I have seen him in concert a few times when we lived in Clacton. I first saw him at the Wykenham Church Hall Romford in 1960. He filled the hall. He was so good, but even better than this, I was about 18 when I was at my brother Bill's flat in Buckhurst Hill. We were just about to go out to the shops when a Ford Zephyr Four came rolling down the hill with Joe Brown at the wheel. I said to Bill "there's Joe Brown", he was trying to get his car engine running because the battery was flat. He was trying to bump start the engine. We went up to him and asked if we could help by pushing the car at the same time that he was trying to start the engine. "Yes please mate" he said in his cockney accent. Bill said to him cheekily "Sign this first Joe" Bill had a Capstan full strength fag packet, he handed it to Joe. We pushed him until we got him going. He did not stop to thank us because he was frightened of stalling the engine. I wonder if Bill kept that autograph?

The next time I saw Joe he was driving a Convertible E Type Jaguar sports car. It was passing the garage where I was working. He had a friend in the car who I had worked with at the ballast pit, his name was Ginger, as they stopped at the crossroads at the Bald Hind Chigwell. I shouted "Hi Ginger" to my friend

who was sitting in the passenger seat, they both looked round and Ginger gave me a wave. I think that Joe Brown must have been a bit disappointed that it was not him I was calling, because he was the Rock Star not Ginger. I saw him mouth to Ginger "who is he?" I found out later that Ginger was doing some work on Joe's Garden. Joe had moved from Buckhurst Hill to Chigwell, he lived in the Big detached house next to Grange Farm Chigwell. (Silly Rock Star joke, What will happen if you put a rockstar's skeleton in a tumble dryer? It'll shake, rattle and roll)

Well, as you probably read earlier I had this thing about changing cars. I am doing the same thing with Guitars changing and buying new ones. I started with a Fender Stratocaster that came from Mexico (Fender Guitars are made in four countries, that's USA, Mexico Japan and Korea. The USA Stratocaster are the best and most expensive. Mexico 2nd best and third best Japan and Korea.) After the Mexico Strat I bought a USA custom 1958 Fender Strat. (£2,400) the one that Hank Marvin has. This was a great guitar but I got fed up with playing instrumentals and switched to Acoustic Guitars. This is what I play now. My latest is a new Guitar that has just come on the market, a special Taylor Mini GS special edition. It plays better than the Gibson I have. I have also got a full size Taylor that I use. I can only have three guitars because that's all the space I have in the room where I practice. People say to me "why three guitars when you can only play one at a time?" It's because they all play different sounds for different songs. The one I use most is a three quarter size, which is easy to play (like Ed Sheeran and Taylor Swift plays).

I also have my Dad's sixty year old Mandolin that my sister Pat gave me, but this needs new strings on. I don't want to change it knowing that he was the last person to play it. He would play this at home and sing to us all when we were kids. He once got me told off from school, when he put stickers on where the notes are, on a school Violin. It was on the school violin I was learning on. The teacher went nuts, but I think it was probably because the teacher did not know where the notes were and was jealous of my dad teaching me music.

Dad went out and bought me my own violin, then fixed for me to have private lessons. The teacher I had was a lovely old lady. Her name was Jenny, she really helped me read music, which I found hard to do. I remember once she made dinner for me, I must have looked although I was starving. She took me to see my first classical concert at Ilford Town Hall. I kept this up for about one year managing to grade to grade three of the Royal Schools of Music with 1st class. I did not continue these lessons because I was about to start work as a trainee Motor mechanic. I was grateful to my Dad for paying for the lessons. I know it must have been hard for him to get the money together for this. (I did repay this later, because I was able to give him £40 each week to add to his pension when he retired). I think Dad was really proud of my music achievements, and of keeping the Karate schools going. He was in hospital once for a heart operation and Pam and I went to see him and he was telling the person in the next bed that I was a millionaire. Pam and I laughed at this, but it was sad because at the end of the visit he said that he wanted us to take him home. He had only just had an operation, we had to tell him that he had to stay in hospital a bit longer. I still miss my dad, but one thing that I will always remember was when I received my 5th Dan Black Belt in 1992. Sensei Shinohara awarded it to me at our Summer Camp. My dad was there to see it.

The Spitfire



Spitfire photo with Dave and Myself

A few years ago I said to David “how about a Spitfire Flight?”. I had already flown in a Lancaster Bomber when I was in the Air Cadets. I went on a trip with them to RAF Camp Alder Grove in Northern Ireland. I spent a week on the RAF camp with the cadets, we did shooting with Royal Enfield 303. That rifle sure had a big kick in it. They told me to push it into my shoulder when you fire it. Back to the Lancaster, it was so noisy, all the seats were round the outside of the aircraft. We did not go far because the IRA were just starting to make a show at that time, it was a great holiday. I was only fourteen at the time. To get there, we had to travel to Liverpool and cross the Irish Sea. Now this was around 10pm at night. The sea was really rough and waves were coming up high up the side of the Ferry. Even the staff on the Ferry were sea sick. We were in third class I think, so we did not have a cabin or anywhere indoors to sleep, so it was very cold. I was so pleased to see the docks at Belfast. Then on a coach to County Antrim where the camp was. (Silly Ferry Joke Why does a Ferry Boat never get Sick? Because it's always going to the Dock.)



Spitfire photo

Dave did not need telling twice about the Spitfire trip. The next day we were looking as to where they fly from, the best option for us would be Goodwood. Next to the race track is an airfield where they have some Spitfire Trainers (these are Spitfires that have had an extra seat behind the pilot). Well it was not cheap, about £1,800 each for twenty minutes, well you only live once. Goodwood here we come. First, we had to take a course in safety which is how to get out in an emergency, how to pull the parachute cord and a few other things. At the end of the course they explained to us not to worry because a Spitfire can land in a field if it has to, (this I know because one crash landed at Grange Hill not too far away from my last school. So after school we all went to look at it in the field.)



Spitfire photo

Anyway back to our flight, I went first and got in the seat and they put the head gear on me. They went through the safety bits with me. Tom Cruise and Alan Sugar have both flown in these two Spitfires we were in. Up I went! wow! the sound of that Merlin Engine. What a feeling the pilot was telling me what was going on. After a while he said it's your time to fly us now. He explained what to do, soon I was banking left then right. He then took the controls back, after a while. He then did a roll, then a loop. I could see the tower at Portsmouth in the distance. Then it was time to go back. Dave was telling me that his pilot slowed the plane down to 50 miles an hour. Dave said it looked like you could get out at that slow speed. The pilot explained to him that it was the Spitfire that helped win the war because they could fly so slow. They could get behind enemy aircraft and shoot them down. Dave and myself were up in the clouds for a few days. (there's a joke there somewhere)

No I am Not a Hypochondriac

When I told people that I was ill or needed some sort of operation, some would say to me that I am a Hypochondriac, well I wished I was because it's no fun going in for any operation. Since being retired I have had really bad arthritis, I have had two knee replacements, one shoulder replacement and one hip replacement. I had an operation on my right foot, they had to take one of the bones out. When I got home from the hospital, I had a notice from Tottenham Hotspurs about my season ticket renewal. So Pam and I went to Tottenham to look at where the seats were that we were buying. I had a cast on my foot and had to walk across the pitch to where my seats were. I did not want to get the cast wet so I put a plastic bag over my foot. There was about three inches of snow on the ground, so I had to drag my foot across the pitch. We had a good laugh over this, anyway the seats were fine. (Funny Hospital joke.. Why do surgeons wear masks? So no one will recognise them when they make a mistake.)

These replacements that I am telling you about are due to my Arthritis. I had burnt myself out. I have two stents put in my two arteries (the stents were my own fault because of the junk food I would eat. Did not realise that although I was really fit and ran each day, this had nothing to do with being and eating healthy). I have chronic kidney disease as well. As I previously mentioned at the beginning, I am five years into Vascular Dementia which reduces blood flow to the brain. We are ok at the moment with this, it's not too bad (I say we, because Pam, who is my official carer, has to suffer with the problem of helping me. She does not have dementia, but has to look after me so is just as involved). Although we could receive payments from the government, we have decided not to. It's a horrible disease, I get mood swings, but I am able to control these with medication. I forget things, which is why I am writing this book before things get worse. Dementia is the umbrella for other diseases like Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, Huntington's disease, Mixed Dementia and Vascular Dementia. I have noticed with dementia that it affects you a little bit at a time. I forget to do several things every day, these are mostly small things. For instance, yesterday, I put the used teabag back into the new teabags. I have started to stutter a bit and forget what I wanted to say. What I have to do if I am having a conversation with a few people and want to speak, I have to jump in quickly and say what I have to say. Sometimes having to speak over the top of someone, in case I forget what I was going to say. This is a small thing to everyone but these small things, seem to be very big, to the person with the disease.

I first had the exam to find out what was wrong with me back in 2018. I had a test first, where the doctor asks you to remember three words that she tells you. Then she talks to you for about ten minutes, and then asks you to repeat back to her, the three words. I managed to get one, this tells her what's going on in your brain. Then I had to have an MRI scan, no problem for me done this loads of times, still very noisy though.



Pam and Georgia

I have just started to take Broad Spectrum Gummies that contain CBD. These are good for keeping me calm and helps me sleep at night. Before I started to take these I would only get about 4 hours sleep at night. (I now get at least 7/8 hours of sleep although I only need about 6/7 hours each night). These make

you sleep and when you wake up you feel refreshed. They are on sale in most chemist shops. (Silly Hospital joke Where's the worst place to hide in a hospital? The ICU.

Last year I had my 80th birthday bash in our local Pub. We had about 30 friends and family come, it was a great day. Then my family had arranged for us all to go to Butlins Minehead. We had a few great days. All our family and grandkids were there. As I said earlier we now live in Witham, Essex. Witham is a great place to live with hardly any crime or problems and has quite a few shops. If we need a larger shopping area we go shopping in Colchester or Chelmsford every other week. It was at Chelmsford where I had my most embarrassing moment. I was in Debenhams and bought a sweatshirt. I went to the cash desk to pay, I took the headphones out from my ears so that I could hear the cashier talk to me. I paid and then put my earphones back in. The girl smiled at me then some other workers came close and started laughing, it seemed that they were laughing at me. I then realised what I had just done. I put my left ear phone in but the right ear phone was still hanging down.



Sister Jean with Ken and Niece Gemma

What I had done was put the end of my sweatshirt cord into my ear instead of the head phone. I walked out of that shop as quickly as I could, so embarrassed. We go shopping mainly to make sure that we keep fit and try to do 5000 steps a day. Not like the old days when I lived in Clacton I would run 5 miles every day, some days I would go on my bike along the seafront. There was a pathway that went from Holland on Sea to Jaywick about three miles. Nice in the summer). I still go on my exercise bike most days 50 minutes a go. I also do sit ups and lots of stretching. (Silly dad Joke ... Did you hear about the guy who cut off the entire left side of his body? Don't worry, he's all right now.)

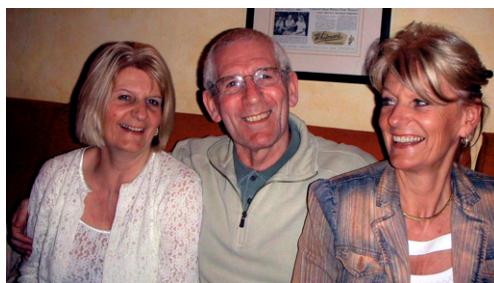
Things that I have remembered after

These are some of the things that we have done that you are not allowed to do now. The first was going into the cockpit of a Jumbo Jet, I took my Grandson James up in the cockpit. The navigator said to us that we were lucky because we had just come up, when he was about to bank the Jumbo to the left. James was only five at the time. When we went to New York we managed to climb to the top of the Statue of Liberty. There are winding steps to the top, and we got a great view of Manhattan. It was great. Whilst we were in New York, we went to the top of the twin towers. When you were at the top you could feel the tower moving from side to side, It was a fantastic view. I would like to have gone back after nine eleven, to see the present memorial. But no more long haul flights for us now, I am too old. Pam's not old, she would be ok.



Granddaughter Georgia in Les Misérables

I thought I would like to tell you that of all the students that I have taught at The Roding Karate Club about sparring. I would often find that it was the girls that impressed me the most, they are so aggressive. I had two twin girls that came to me Jenny and Lisa Skinner. They were so good, they would really want to win. Even when they fought each other we would often have to pull them apart. Some of the boys were like this as well. I can also remember a small five year old who came to me, he was so focused. His name was Reese Taylor he went on to become an England player. On a Summer camp at Caister we had the next Caravan to his. At 6am I could hear him walking up and down his caravan making so much noise. I asked him what he was doing and he said he was practising his Kata. I can remember I had two young Black Belts training with me at Clacton, Michell Thorpe and Conor Hewitt. Conor had come to the club because he wanted to learn how to fight and did not like any confrontation. Michell also came to learn how to fight, they were sparring and Michell lost his temper and rushed in to try and hit Conner. Well Conner just moved out of the way and blocked Michell Thorpe's punches.



Myself, and sisters Mary and Jean

I quickly rushed in and pulled them apart, I told them to go and sit down. I called the parents over, and I explained to them that although they should not have done this, it did show that the years of training made it so that Michell was good at attacking and Conner could now get out of the way of an attack. Karate had ruffed these two kids to be more confident and could now hold their own on the street.

I remember at my Pitsea club a while ago. I was teaching blocking techniques and went to show a girl student that she was not doing the move correctly. As I approached her to show her what to do, she moved back as if I was going to hit her and covered her face. I asked her why she did this, she did not answer me, so I thought to myself that the child may have been bullied at home. I asked her this, she would not answer.

So I left it there for the moment and said to the girl to let me know if there was a problem at home. This made me watch her at every lesson, I kept a sharp eye on her. I did not want to tell the parent at this stage in case there was nothing in it. But I checked on her from time to time. It was a difficult persuasion to be in.

Showing students how to pass on Karate Knowledge

As I mentioned early in the journal, I used to let Junior Black Belts help in the lesson (I must point out first of all, that all students that become 1st Dan Black Belts no longer have to pay tuition fees at the Roding Karate Club, In case you may think that the Black Belts' time helping is making their lesson short.) I sometimes have students help me teach, I believe that this makes the Black belt more confident in engaging with people inside and outside the club. I would get a junior Black Belt and ask him if he would help me show an adult that was having problems with learning a move (This would normally be in Kata practice.) If I had a full class and spare space on the Do-Jo I would get the Junior to show parts of a Kata that the adult is struggling with and then help them with it. I have adults do the same, whilst they are doing this I can tell who has the ability with more practice to become an Instructor.



Fete

I found that a lot of students would like to run a Karate club for me, then eventually themselves. The first thing the Instructor has to do is a risk assessment of the training area, making sure that the floor of the Do-Jo is clean. Then next was to make sure the floor is sprung (if in a church hall or community centre).

The Instructor must have a Licence and full insurance. When the instructor enters the Do-Jo they should check the students licence, without this, the student will have no insurance. Next, make sure that the student has a Gi (Karate suit) or track suit to begin with. That their feet are clean (I once had to tell a young student to go and wash his feet before he starts the lesson). Then you must explain to the class the club rules. The best way to teach is to try and keep all the students at the same level of grade.

This makes teaching very easy. Obviously some students will progress faster than others so they would have to join the next class. Some people will think that this is an impossible task because you may end up with only a few in the class, well this is where you have to advertise for new students all the time to keep the class full. When I was teaching, I would put enough funds aside to advertise the club once a month. (I had one instructor open a club on his own and put out two thousand flyers for an area of twenty thousand people. He had one beginner arrive over three weeks). If I was in his club I would have put out ten thousand flyers. You would then have an average of ten people arrive for the lesson.

The kids would normally tell their friends they were going to start and then that's another beginner coming to the club. Nowadays there is social media to advertise on so this could be a good way to get to people. I used to show demonstrations and attend demo's at schools and community centres. But most of all you must keep the young student interested in what they are doing. You do this by playing games in the club. (They call it games, but I call it exercise). I never had a good memory for names, so what I found out is that if I gave the young child a nickname myself, I could then remember it. For instance, a young child I had at my Clacton club kept putting the wrong leg in front whilst doing line work. So I would call him Wrong leg, that was his name and by calling him this, made him think harder at what he was doing, and

solving the problem. I was sitting next to Pam at the club when a child came in, I asked Pam her name. Pam told me and I said hello and called her by her name. After she had paid her Do-Jo fees, the child walked off and I heard her say to her mum. "He just called me by my name mum." She felt special and was so proud.

From that day on I made it a point to try to remember all the kids' names. I would explain to the future instructor how to pick up mistakes that the student was making. Sometimes I would run a lesson, have every student give commands and pick out all the mistakes.

I would put a few would-be instructors in the line up making deliberate mistakes, to see if they are picked up by the instructor. This would cause a laugh from time to time. I always encouraged parents to stay and watch their child train. Then after a few times the parent would say to themselves, if I am bringing my child to the class. I might as well join in the class, (this happens a lot and sometimes the child would stop training and the parent kept on training).

I would explain to the Instructor that if you had a difficult child you were teaching acting the fool, you must try to stop this asap because it can distract the whole class. I found out that the more you tell a child to stop misbehaving the more they will do it to get attention from other students. It was not until after a few years of teaching I realised the best way round the problem, I would work the yellow card system like they have in football. That is two cards then you don't come back to the club the following week for training. If you stick to this it will work, you must show from the off that you have control of the lesson. It is important to remember that it's not what you teach, it's how you teach that matters. You have to make the lesson fun if you're teaching kids. Pam and I watched an instructor in the States teaching. He was making the kids in the class kick a front kick for about 20 minutes. Well you could see on the kid's faces that their mind was thinking of what they were going to do later that evening and not on the front kick that they were doing. Watching this, I felt like going to sleep at the time myself. This instructor had about ten in his class, which went on for about two hours long. It's important that students leave the lesson wanting more. Sometimes when I have stopped the class to go home, I have heard kid's moaning that they want more. One hour is long enough for the average child's attention span, more than this they normally get bored. (Not the smart kids, I would let them do the next class as well).



THE BARROW FRESCO CLAN

Georgia, Alfie, Saf, James, Bob, Tina, Pam, Ray, Dave, Liuda, Harry, Maxim, Sophia and Benji.



My 1st Dan Certificate Signed by Hironori Otsuka

Famous Actors In There Day, Who I Have Met

These are the famous and semi famous people that I have met during my life. The first is an old now passed actor Arthur Mullard who would play in comedy films with Norman Wisdom and he was also in the Carry On films. He owned and lived in 84 Hornsey Road North London, where we lived from 1945 to 1947. From What's my Line ...Angela Rippon. Ruth Madox. Ted Rogers. Simon Williams. Jilly Cooper. From Tomorrow's World, Kieth Chegwin. Maggie Philbin. Judith Hann. Mike Hugg. (Manfred Mann). I also met and had a chat with one of the hardest villains in Great Britain, Roy Shaw. When he shook my hand he nearly broke it, so much strength. He was well known for his bare knuckle fight with Lenny McLean, he was a Krays henchman at some stage, he passed in 1998. Bobby Moore would come into my garage from time to time.

My future wife Pam and I were driving along Fencepiece Road in Barkingside when I spotted Bobby Moore's Jaguar in front of us. I said, 'Pam, that's Bobby Moore in front'. She said, 'Is it?' and I said, 'I will overtake him, you look and see if it is as we get level'. Pam looked at him and he smiled to her, but when I wanted to get past, he would not let me overtake. Now, the car I was driving was a Ford 100E Popular (Roland Rat car) and this could only do about 50 miles an hour. He then laughed and pulled away at fast speed. Both Pam and myself were in stitches. I felt such a fool.

I also went to a private concert (with about 100 other people, for rehearsal) with my daughter Tina. We saw Paul and Linda McCartney. The concert was in London and outside he signed autographs. Had a cheek to use Tina's pen, but returned it to her with a smile.

Good Friends, and helpers on my Journey though Karate

I have met some really nice people during my Karate Journey. I must say that My son in law Bob 6th Dan, who now runs the Roding Karate Club, has been loyal throughout since joining the club in 1978. He has helped me a lot, he would teach at many clubs for me. He would also find training halls for the club. Next has to be my brother Pete for helping me run the Karate shop, also for teaching at clubs throughout Essex and Hertfordshire. He was a great help at Summer Camps that we would do. He also would sort out new clubs for us, and make trophies for the club. Next must be retired Karate teacher Dean Ince 6th Dan, he mainly taught fighting at the clubs and Summer Camps. I first taught Dean when he came to the club with his brother Ricky in 1982. (His father is Dave Ince, who I would get up to mischief with along with my brother Bill when we were at school). Dean started to teach for me a few years later.



Demo

Then we have Steven Brame, 5th Dan, who would teach Kata for me at his club. He started training with Bob in the early 90s. He has been a great help for the club. Steve still teaches at Harold Hill. We then have Greg Wallace 5th Dan he would spend hours with students on the competition circuit. Nearly every week he would take a squad up and down the country competing. He would help me at Dagenham and now runs the club at Dagenham. I must also give big thanks to all the other Instructors that have helped over the years. Far too many to list.



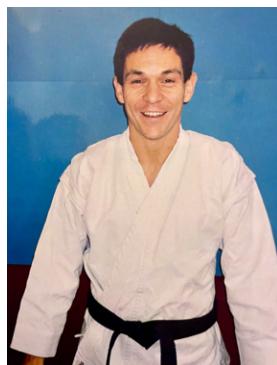
Myself with Ian Cuthbert

But most of all I would like to thank my partner, the man that helped us start the club back in the day. That is my good friend 7th Dan, Ian Cuthbert. We started the club together back in 1976. We both loved teaching. When I wanted someone to help me start the club, he was the best man to pick. Ian now runs Tai Chi classes and he has his two children Luke and Daniel help run his UKA Karate Schools. Ian worked hard

on getting the best out of the students. He became friends with the brother in law of my Instructor Alf Pitkin. That was Carl Dyer and I worked with him for a few years. Carl was good for Ian to fight with being a younger partner and feel They both learned a lot from each other.



Instructors Greg Wallace, Steve Brame



Instructor Bob Fresco

My children Tina and Dave have also helped from time to time. Tina helps Bob at gradings and Granddaughter Georgia has just started teaching for her dad Bob. Most of all The love of my life Pam who has helped year after year when we were teaching and running the administration side of the club. Pam's help was so good. When new students had a problem they would go to Pam who would sort it out. Pam would take the filming and reproduce videos of the summer camps. She would spend hours doing this. (I would like to point out though, that she did get £1 an hour and free dinners for helping).



Myself and Ian



Group Photo of Summer Camp Students Late 80s Early 90s I believe it was Dymchurch near Folkestone Kent

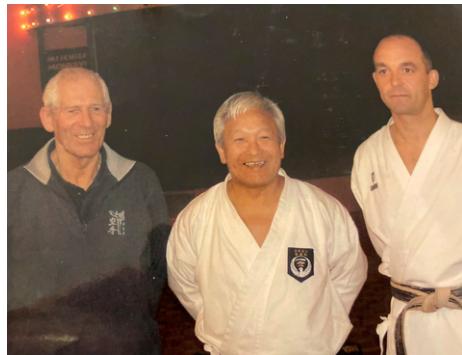
The Roding karate Club started teaching at this camp twice a year from 1984-1992. We then moved the Camps to Clacton Great Yarmouth / Caister then one at Camber Sands. Then Kessingland near Great Yarmouth. These camps were a great success all those years, producing lots of great Karate students. I can't remember all the students' names unfortunately. I notice in the front row young Reece Taylor, England Kata Champion and also England players Steve Brame and Greg Wallace. At these camps the students would train in the morning. Starting with a two mile run along the seafront. I can remember one year when some of the students tried to get me drunk by buying me drinks all night. Although they nearly succeeded I still managed to get to the Do-Jo the next day although I felt a bit under the weather. I still took them on the normal run. But instead of going into the Do-Jo I made them go into the sea (and myself) up to their waist and practiced punching techniques. They never tried to get me drunk again. It was at these camps that we would hold our Black Belt Dan gradings, with all the parents and other students that were not grading watching. We would have a big party on the last day of the holiday to celebrate those that passed their grade.



This Photo was taken in the 70s at the Brook School Loughton, it was the annual Budokan Karate Competition. I am in the back row 4th from left (what about the hair then?) front row 1st on the left my friend Ian Cuthbert now head of the UKA.



Myself and Sensei Shinohara.



Myself, Sensei Shinohara and Dean Ince

A Little Bit of My Life

...and finally, I'd like to thank everyone that's been a part of my life.