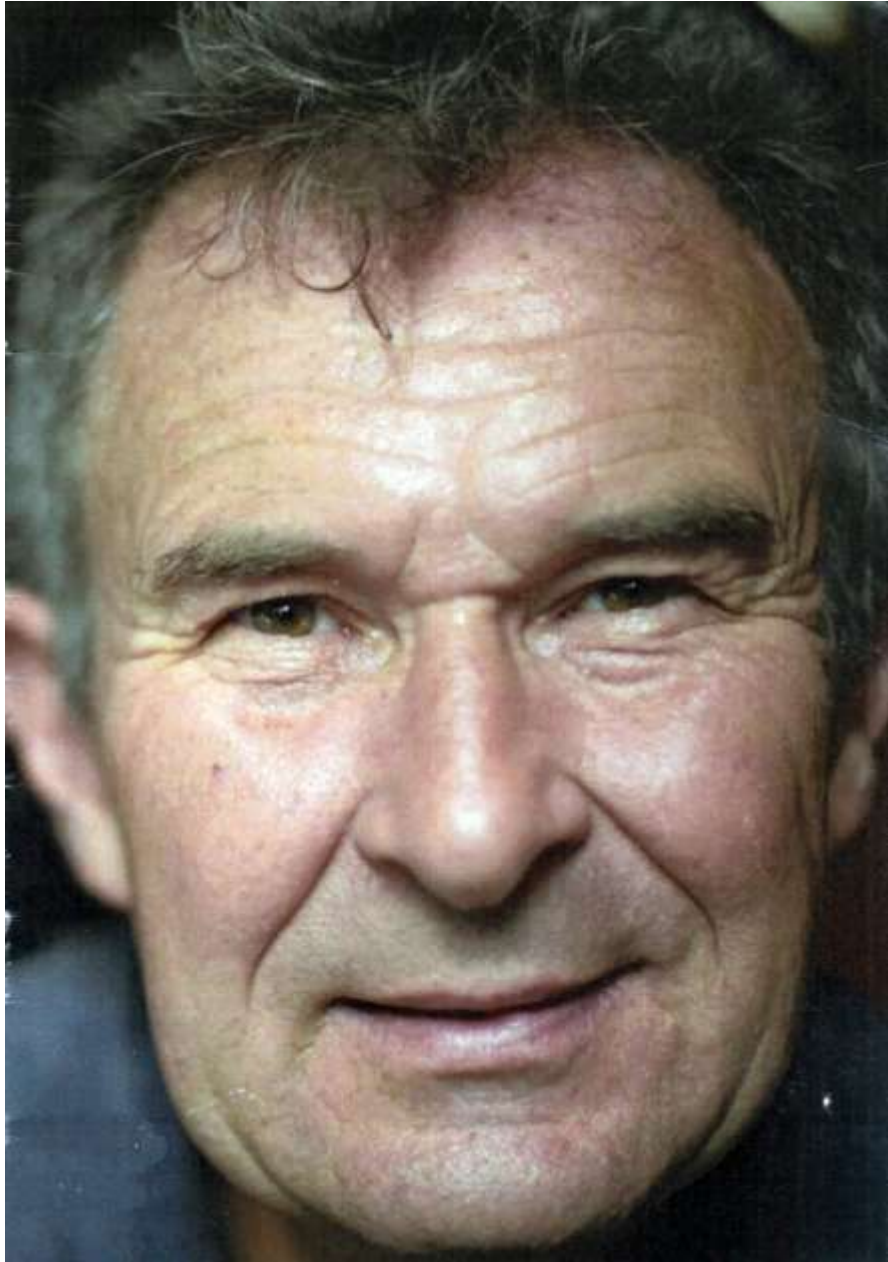


Laurence Henry Timothy Snook

16th June 1958 ~ 22nd November 2015



**His funeral was held at 1 o'clock
on Monday 21st December 2015
at Hinton Park Woodland Burial Ground**

Attendees gathered in the centre from 12.30, live guitar music was played instead of recorded music

Opening Words & Welcome

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. We have gathered here to remember and celebrate the life of Laurence Henry Timothy Snook in the company of others who cared about him and were a part of his life, and to say our formal farewell. May I welcome you to Hinton Park Woodland Burial Ground, and on behalf of Lou's family thank you for being here today. I imagine that Laurence himself would have been very touched by who and how many of you are here.

My name is Daphne Seymour-Hammond and I feel honoured to have been asked to be the celebrant for Lou's farewell. Today's ceremony will not follow the traditional form of service as there will be no hymns or prayers, but there will a period of reflection later which you may use in your own personal way, in private prayer should you wish.

Hinton Park is a very significant place for Laurence and his brothers, as in March 2011 their mother Doreen was buried in the plot next to Laurence.

Thoughts on Life and Death

As you struggle now with the sharp pain of parting from Laurence, it would be easy to say to you "This will pass. Time is a great healer". However, it is not my experience that the passing of time, by itself, does heal. Many years from now you may well find that the sight of some small object or the sound of a few bars of music, for example, will sweep you back in an instant to your original intense feelings of loss. What passing time does provide, however, is the space in which the shock can be absorbed. In time, the rapids of ever changing thoughts and emotions will eventually become the calmer seas of acceptance.

Although we can be understandably apprehensive about the manner of our death and of the great unknown, we do not need to be afraid of death itself. Everything that has life has its beginning and its end, and is a part of the never ending cycle. What matters are the experiences and satisfactions we have during our lives, the personal pleasures, challenges and achievements, the influence we have, and perhaps most importantly, the difference we made to the lives of others.

The first poem chosen, which I have adapted slightly, is called Woodland Burial and was written by Pam Ayres.

Don't lay me in some gloomy churchyard shaded by a wall
Where the dust of ancient bones has spread a dryness over all,

Lay me in some leafy loam where, sheltered from the cold
Little seeds investigate and tender leaves unfold.
There kindly and affectionately, plant a native tree
To grow resplendent in nature and hold some part of me.
The roots will not disturb me as they wend their peaceful way
To build the fine and bountiful, from closure and decay.
To seek their small requirements so that when their work is done
I'll be tall and standing strongly in the beauty of the sun.

Tribute

I did not know Lou, and so am grateful to family and friends for sharing such lovely memories with me at this difficult time. There have been beautiful things said and written, and I would have liked to have read them all as they were ... but it would be well and truly dark by the time we finished. So, I hope that you will forgive me for the edits, omissions, and summaries.

Lou was born in Maidstone, Kent on the 16th June 1958, one of three siblings with his brothers David and Anthony. The three of them were close and had many happy times together as youngsters. Laurence always had a love of the outdoor life and of nature, and camping trips were frequent and fun.

There is a lovely story of the time they pitched their tent on the sloping pasture at Lulworth Cove. The said tent was advertised as being gale proof, which was fortunate as the winds became stronger and stronger. Their dad was so confident in the claims of its robustness that he refused to follow in the footsteps of fellow campers and leave the tent. Unfortunately, it took off in the middle of the night and they had to bale out into their Austin A40. The next morning, fragments of tent were retrieved from all over the campsite, and a refund was demanded from the retailers ... but that's another story.

Laurence went to Fareham Junior School, before joining Hurn School, where they catered for boys wishing to take up Agricultural Science and Farming. Lou really enjoyed it there, before going on to Harper Adams Agricultural College to do an OND in poultry farming. He worked on a Shropshire farm for a while before joining friends on the Clarendon Estate near Salisbury. He subsequently worked in a wide variety of mainly agriculturally related jobs.

In these early days he was one of a group of life-long friends who formed the Fordingbridge Rock Appreciation Society. There were parties galore at Frogham village hall and Hengistbury Head, discos, pub and café visits aplenty, as well as camping expeditions in the New Forest. Who could ever forget Lou and Ian clearing the dance floor at the Ashburn Hotel, when they started dancing to Alex Harvey's 'Delilah'?

Lou's well equipped but not well organised camper van was had everything, even solar heated hot water. Lou always took hours preparing and cooking the most amazing dishes for shared meals, which far outstripped any normal camper's ambition of sausages and beans!

For many years, whilst Lou was operating his free-range chicken scheme, he travelled up and down to London delivering his eggs, although he probably wasn't proud of his carbon footprint at this point in his life. It seemed a little strange when he swapped the idyllic rural environment for a life in the big, bad city, but he never stopped gardening and looking to make city life greener.

In quite a contrast to his green credentials, one of his enduring passions was motorbikes. He was an all-weather, true blue, and fully paid up member of the biking fraternity.

Loraine once lent him her Moto Guzzi to go to the WOMAD festival. A few hours after waving goodbye the phone rang. Asking her if she was sitting down, Lou told her that the Guzzi had fallen over after he'd filled it with petrol. As he re-started the bike, it burst into flames. A pool of spilt petrol on the engine in front of him had ignited, but to the cashier it looked as if he were on fire; she – understandably – froze in horror. As mindful, cool and competent as ever, realising that she had not hit the safety cut off button, he pushed the flaming motorbike away from the fuel pump, grabbed an extinguisher and put out the fire. Reading may have been a very different place today, but for him!

On one trip through the Eurotunnel he was pulled over by a customs official, who wanted to know about the box of plants he was carrying on the back of the bike. 'Mind your Own Business' Laurence replied, straight-faced but with relish. Fortunately for him the customs man, sufficiently well versed in common plant names, realised Lou's reply was a statement of fact, not just barefaced cheek.

Lou was described – and I quote – as a mad chicken fancier, who would occasionally be caught scrolling through pages of photos of hens on the internet in a flurry of poultry porn, ogling rare breed silkies or leghorn chooks! Chickens aside, Laurence had three very special partners during his life, Moira, Maggie and Choc, who was Sol's mum. Laurence and Moira were partners for the last five years, were very happy, and achieved so much together. She told me a bit more about his enterprise.

Lou always wanted to live lightly on the earth and to share his wealth of knowledge, his vision and unconditional love with others. He started with Greenwich Growing, and was trying to find a plot to keep chickens in the way that he wanted to, but kept encountering obstacles to potential sites.

Finally, in Ditton, Kent, he found a plot that had been intended for community growing but where nothing had developed, and Lou decided to go for it. Surprisingly, no chickens, though! Lou had passion, drive and energy, and was good at inspiring others. With the support of the Plunkett Foundation and the School of Social Entrepreneurs, he set up Communigrow.

Eggs from scratch was also his initiative, and he introduced chickens to Corelli College and to St Mungo's hostel, amongst other places, where they made a big difference to some people's lives. He shared his knowledge and taught them so much about so much. He was a strong, silent leader, never the big 'I am', someone who took a back seat and always encouraged others.

Throughout the setting up period of Communigrow he was supported by the Young Foundation. He applied for a course at the School of Social Entrepreneurs, his proposal was accepted, and upon completion of the course he became a Fellow of the School.

These are just a few of the many lovely things that have been written about him:

Everyone should know a Laurence, and we are fortunate because we did! He certainly enriched my teenage years. This was due to Laurence's attitude to life and all that life has to offer.

Where to start to say anything that really captures the spirit of Lou. He was the most multi layered, talented, thoughtful, loyal, caring person with an amazingly gentle soul and free spirit, and I'm so proud that he called me a friend.

We had such fun, when we were all young. You are missed Lou, there's a giant Lou shaped hole in the universe now, you will always be in our hearts and thoughts.

Lou was a solid companion; resourceful and kind, and he propped me up on many an occasion like a surrogate big brother. When things were tough he was always there; kind supportive and comforting, with a rare honesty that I truly value.

I know that every time I see beads of rain or sunlight on a leaf I will remember Lou as the gentle man and dear friend who taught me, and others so much, and gave so much warmth to all who met him. I hope that the sadness of the huge gap he has left can be filled in time with memories of his laughter and the brightness of his smile.

Laurence was a big man with a big heart. He was never materially rich but shared unstintingly his knowledge, his strength and his time with

friends and strangers alike. A kind man who always lend a hand; if it needed planting, shifting or fixing he was your man.

Laurence knew a thing of beauty when he saw it and was not averse to appreciating the fruits of others' labours, including the finer things in life. He enjoyed a glass of chilled champagne or a snifter of whisky whenever the opportunity arose. He also had a passion for ice cream making - sometimes creating some, let us say, most unusual flavour combinations!

I could continue

Of course, as we all do, he also had some little ways that could be rather challenging. He was pretty grumpy at times, and could be extremely stubborn. However, it was his time keeping that really stood out, although you had to give him his due, he was consistent – consistently late, that is.

As we said, there are so many special memories which are a testament to who Laurence was. He had an enduring spirit of always putting something back, and giving far more than he took; the trips with Anthony to Youth Hostels in Cornwall and the Isle of Wight; the time he frightened the life out of David by taking him for a mad ride on his motorbike – never again; the wholefood trucking company he helped set up; those wonderful BBQs; his enjoyment of reading, especially Lord of the Rings, gardening and art books; his fascination with water flowforms; sitting around campfires, enjoying good food, good humour and good times; his dry and sometimes wicked sense of humour; his sometimes quirky and eccentric streak, his simplicity and authenticity; the fact that he was such a talented educator, someone who really made people think; his love the vineyards of Bordeaux, where he lived for a while; the visits and many outings with his daughter Sol, to places such as New Zealand or the Riverhill Himalyan Gardens near Weald.

Maggie, who remained a dear friend of both Laurence and Sol, tells us a bit more about the relationship between Laurence and Sol:

Laurence's most enduring legacy and the one of which he was most proud, is his daughter Sol. She was always the apple of his eye, and even before she was born he adored her. When she was little they would read together, go camping and picnicking at every opportunity, discovering the joys of the English countryside and seaside. On rainy days they could be found at the Tate Modern or in some other London temple of art.

He took such pleasure in watching her grow up and in her milestones ... and was immensely proud of her when her tutor told said was a model student and should go on to study at university. He was so proud to see her turning into the beautiful, strong, happy, independent young woman he wanted her to be. And now it has passed to us to be the ones to ensure his hopes for her are fulfilled.

After many years of hard work, commitment, disappointments and successes, everything was coming together so well for Laurence both professionally and personally, and all that he had dreamed of was coming to fruition. It was so hard when he was diagnosed in April with lymphoma, and then recently told that his condition was terminal. Despite this prognosis he and Moira still had hopes and dreams, and were optimistic for 2016.

After a recent stay in hospital, Laurence spent the Friday with David, and they had a lovely day in each other's company. He decided to rest on the Saturday, but he and Moira made plans for Sunday.

Tragically, before Moira arrived on Sunday Laurence suffered from a thrombosis. The only comfort is that he really would not have suffered. We never know what might have come to pass if ... but maybe Lou has been spared a long and drawn out incapacity, which he would have hated. Perhaps in some ways it was a blessing for him, as well as a tragedy, when he died on Sunday 22nd November, aged fifty seven years.

Dan Lee has brought us the gift of music today, playing as we were gathering in the centre. He is now going to play an instrumental piece by Andy McKee, and I would invite you to use this time for your own memories, and to say goodbye to Laurence in your own private way before our collective farewell.

Reflection: Dan playing *Stairway to Heaven*

Committal

We have been thinking about Laurence and the legacy he has left within you, as well as in the world.

Although his death has come far too early, he nonetheless had a good life. He enjoyed close and enriching relationships with so many people; he was loved and respected by family, friends and colleagues; he achieved much in his life; saw something of the world; laughed often, did what mattered to him, and made a difference. He still had so much more living to do and so much more talent to use, but he lived well and was blessed with friendship and love .

It is now time for his body to be returned to the earth that sustained and nourished him for many years and which regenerates all life. We part from him with a beautiful poem written by Rabindranath Tagore, called *Farewell My Friends*

It was beautiful as long as it lasted
The journey of my life.

I have no regrets whatsoever save
The pain I'll leave behind.
Those dear hearts who love and care,
And the strings pulling at the heart and soul.

The strong arms that held me up
When my own strength let me down.
At every turning of my life
I came across good friends,
Friends who stood by me
Even when the time raced me by.

Farewell, farewell my friends.
I smile and bid you goodbye.
No, shed no tears
For I need them not
All I need is your smile.
If you feel sad do think of me
For that's what I'll like.

When you live in the hearts of those you love
Remember then, you never die.

Thank you

Laurence's principles and ideals we commit into our minds; his love and memory we commit into our hearts; in sorrow for your loss and with appreciation for his life, we commit his body to its natural end. He will be a part of this place for all time, through the vibrant colours of summer and the frosts of winter, through the freshness of spring and the beauty of autumn, and he will be at peace.

CommuniGrow will continue to be run by colleagues, and his spirit will live on in this wonderful social enterprise and in the people who remember his vision and commitment, his generosity and love.

Lou's family have asked me to publicly acknowledge and thank all of the people who have helped him, and them, in so many ways over the course of the year. Should anyone wish to make a donation in lieu of flowers, all proceeds will be donated to MacMillan. They would also like to see everyone for refreshments at the Snakecatcher in Brockenhurst, where the celebration of Lou's life will continue. All details are on the back of the order of service.

When we lose those we have loved it can remind us of the limited timespan of an individual life, and of our interdependence upon each other and the world we live in. It can help us to remember what actually matters, and is a timely reminder that we should always try to fully engage with life, to

consciously appreciate every moment, to make every day as meaningful as possible; and perhaps most importantly to try and make life as happy and pleasant as we can for each other.

You all know that Lou had a great sense of humour, and I am sure that he would like us to close this service with a smile. The last poem chosen is a spoof on John Masefield's *Sea Fever* , which starts like this:

I must go down to the seas again,
To the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship
And a star to steer her by;

and so it goes on. Spike Milligan has written his own version:

I must go down to the sea again,
to the lonely sea and the sky,
I left my shoes and socks there,
I wonder if they're dry?

May I wish you peace and solace on your road ahead.

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