

Sidney Leonard Gattrall Garland

1915-1999

I make no apologies for bringing this joviality juddering to a halt by making a speech. No apology, for two reasons: if there were two things that Pa particularly enjoyed, one was a party, and the other was bringing it juddering to a halt by making a speech.

A particular memory: my 21st birthday party. The music died and all the lights came on. We blinked. Was it a police raid? No, it wasn't a police raid, it was just Pa about to make a speech.

But to be honest, a police raid may have been preferable.

All of us here have been subject to these orations, and the Garlands the frequent object of them. Now, Pa, the tables are turned. Revenge!

Pa was 83 when he died, and I was fortunate enough to have called him the day before. (He said 'so how's health, wealth and happiness? – a typically systematic review.) Whenever I called or visited it became clear to me - as, with children of 6, 4 and 2, an *apprentice* father - that being a father, and indeed being the youngest son, doesn't really ever stop.

And as such an apprentice father myself, with the anxieties and inadequacies and 'are we doing the right thing? -eries', I contemplate what attributes made him - and perhaps make - a father.

I think he had them all.

Colossal shorts. They were great, khaki, *curtains*. Whether they struck fear into Rommel, they certainly seemed awe-inspiring to me. All fathers in the fifties seemed to possess monumental trousers. And underneath them, gleaming white legs, like porcelain or forced celery. Of course, these memories of Pa off-duty predate 'leisure' as the relaxed activity we now know it. These memories were of holidays – Cornwall, the Norfolk Broads - which had the feel of a military campaign, frequently of triumph over rain-lashed privation. They were intensely happy. One such holiday – was it March or August? English weather provides no clue, particularly – I caught mumps, at that time a notifiable disease which could, if notified, have closed the farm B&B for the season. But a mere temperature of 103 was not to be allowed to ruin our holiday. Pa instigated a big cover-up – literally: my illness was disguised with lipstick and face powder.

The trousers of power; ah – the natural authority that fathers are meant to have. (Today, if only.) Does this authority only derive from the ability, quite illegal now, to inflict precise, sudden pain at the lunch table with, in our case, a spoon to the head?

Or does it come from basic ‘father’ characteristics, like the ability to ‘do it yourself’ with thrift and resourcefulness.

Burst hoses massively fixed with clumps of bitumen tape and jubilee clips, (but still they leaked); swing ropes knotted preposterously tight, then cauterized – they must be welded into the tree at Vale Lodge by now; electrical repairs made with great fists of insulating tape; massive repairs to delicate objects made with toxic glues and solvents. All these had stupendous, masculine, overkill. But looking back, the subtext was strength.

Pa believed that there was always something interesting in anything and anybody. The word ‘interesting’ I use advisedly, as interesting things are often simply boring. But he also believed it his duty to impart it nevertheless. As his sons, Chris and I were often nearest; so I still know the voltages of various power transmission lines, what groynes are for – the type at Bognor, that is - how they grew the sugar crystals into Rowntrees fruit pastilles, why Belisha beacons are, why 471 lis, how to tuck a shirt in – no, properly - why soldiers broke step on Albert Bridge, how Battersea Power Station heated the flats in Pimlico, which is the only London Street you can legally drive on the right (the Savoy), what that chimney is for by Victoria Station, who Plimsoll was, and so on.

Fathers have totems. Washing tackle of pigs bristle and bleached wood - spartan utility: oiled cotton shaving bag, loofahs, back brushes, a gillette three piece safety razor, a ‘smokers’ toothbrush, a pair of greasy hairbrushes and combs, huge cellular underwear with complex net gusseting, nail clippers that would have done a horse, medicated shampoo that smelt like Jeyes fluid. Bathrooms then were about hygiene. How little that word is used now it’s taken for granted.

Of course, to a child, these totems are nature’s way of bonding. But as the sixties got under way, prosperity replaced austerity in some key departments – though by no means all. As the agency prospered, Pa began to look less like Terry-Thomas – the British Warm, the post-war dinge, the hats, pipe, brilliantine, all these went – and started to look more like the Man from Uncle. Lightweight suits. Strange, shimmery American ties. A modish hat. This was something to do with the agency’s partnering with Compton in the US, something to do with the sixties in general. Gadgets appeared in the house. They always seemed to be prototypes - or was it just that nothing quite worked out of the box in those days? The Corkette pneumatic corkscrew. (You pumped and pumped and pumped and bang – the bottle of Mateus Rose exploded.) A

Harrison rechargeable battery shaver, in which the batteries leaked acid. 625line BBC2 with its weird new aerial. A Sparklets soda syphon with its unique taste of perished rubber. The new Stereo, an Emisonic, and all that furniture moving to get the best sound arrangement. An electric rotisserie, brought over from the States, in which the Sunday joint would most un-Englishly revolve. An electric carving knife, which brought the sounds of the abattoir to the dining table. An early Pentax camera with which Pa battled for years and years, and its concomitant - the ritual of holiday slides (now, in the 70s, in the med.) I can name and shame several here I know for certain dozed off under the punishing strobe of I think the Rank HyLite projector – with its spare bulb at the ready.

Fathers get stressed out. And with Leonard, this took its toll with a bout of illness at 50. Because we were never told what kept him at the London Clinic for ten days in 1967, we all correctly assumed it was piles. Pa's weight came down from a plush 14 stone to a sleek 12, aided by Sweetex, Hermesetas and something called 'jogging' - brands of the early dieting industry.

Fathers are strong. They are strong in adversity, of course, as he was during the seven years or so he spent dealing with the sickness of his mother, mother in law, and then finally his wife. But they have strong opinions and strong expectations of you, and unfortunately these get strongest and most urgent just when you start pupating into a sullen teenager. I don't know how he tolerated my company during the seventies, but he seemed to enjoy it. Even when I took him to a Van der Graaf Generator concert at the Civic Hall: 'it's not that they were loud, but they were *late* – that's just unprofessional.'

Fathers don't give up.

God, how I wished he would.

When Pa hooked his drive, we'd spend hours searching for the ball on that long fourth or is it fifth? fairway at Effingham. And he hooked his drive often. Or sliced it. Either way we went on searching long after others would give up, because he thought it an important example, I think, for me. Or maybe just because he was thorough.

And how those golf balls disappeared among the chalk soil!

Whether it was a campaign to learn to sail, or to ski, - in Scotland, at 50 - or the handicap – it inched down briefly from 18 to 16 in 1972 I think – or learning to cook after Ann died, when Pa turned out an impossibly fancy galantine of julienne vegetables, as unfeasible for those great dry hands as lacemaking. Or learning to play bridge – or to be part of a bridge party, different – which he accomplished with Jean. In all this giving up wasn't an option, as his MC at 26 made clear. Good for a child, because we knew he'd never give up on us.

From giving up to giving.

Fathers give parties. We had themed parties. Pirate parties, tea parties in the garden – Pa’s gardening was of the slash and burn school. We had a lethal rotary lawnmower called the Rotoscythe, and a marginally less lethal one called the Boadicea – whirring knives, you get the idea. Lots of mowing - petrol, funnels, spark plugs and cursing; lots of hacking and cutting, and bonfires. Maybe there was a stress relief function behind this. But the garden was just grass and jungle, paradise, in short, for parties which called heavily on army surplus ropes, nets, tyres and tackle of that sort.

Cheese and Wine parties, the cheese perhaps daringly foreign. Carol singing parties, with - can it be? *benches* orderly arranged in the sitting room? It was, and some of you here were there. Hallowe’*en*. Twelfth night. The house was floodlit by a pineapple-sized photographers light bulb borrowed from Dennis Hooker wrapped in tin foil in an upturned fishtank. It cracked the glass and gave me a shock via the tin foil. But fathers are always resourceful and inventive.

Dinner parties, where business guests were served Chicken Maryland, or Coq Au Vin, or Boeuf Bourguignon, cooked by a chef moonlighting from RAF Headley Court. I have no idea if these were socially a success, but each was audited for the number of bottles of Army & Navy claret, the numbers of people invited, replying, attending, and most crucially, their thank you letters - and how promptly they arrived.

And then Pa retired, in 1971. As it turned out, the Saatchis reversed into Garland Compton in 1973, attracted by a wonderful client list (many of whom are still there) – a solid management reputation, and of course solid cash in the bank, in a business notorious for the lack of it.

Pa’s retirement project: it was another campaign. It centred on care, really. On the first conversion of South Hall and the Coach House to Guildford in 1972 – 3. Fathers protect and prepare, and those days of high inflation and industrial unrest saw Pa’s pessimism “it’s not pessimism, it’s realism” attain its most glorious flowering. The cellar of South Hall was stocked with Fray Bentos tinned pies, sugar, beans and tinned potatoes. The house possessed two boilers, a gas one to outwit the oil tanker drivers, and an oil one to foil the gas workers. A Honda generator was there too, pitted against the power workers.

Fathers are, of course, reactionary.

On one visit, during an inconsequential local election, he gave me the usual lagoon of gin on the balcony of South Hall, looked out as the sun went down and said to no-one specially: ‘Well, the sun’s going down on a Conservative

Guildford. Tomorrow we'll all be liberal democrats. Good God. I never thought I'd see this. Another?

Fathers are wise; fathers set an example.

When doing anything with Pa there was a moral. 'Plan ahead'. 'A bad workman blames his tools'. 'Make your own luck'. And to me, again and again when I didn't get the strange Hozelock rubber brush under the bumpers of the Humber Super Snipe, 'finish the job'.

Looking over the whole life of my father as my father, you did, Pa, you did.

Thank you.