

Memorial for Charles P. Dethier August 16, 2016

Good afternoon. I'm Charles Brock Dethier, and we're here to celebrate the life of my father, Charles Putnam Dethier. First I'd like to tell you who *we* are. I'll ask everyone to wave when I call their name. Here's my brother David, my sister Megan, my sister Deborah, my wife Melody, David's wife Nancy, Megan's husband David—known as Captain David to distinguish him from David Dethier and because he captains a large research boat—Deborah's daughter Julie, David and Nancy's sons Dylan and Evan, Melody and my kids Larkin and Corey, Megan and Capt David's son Peter, and cousins Nicky Hardenbergh and Chalmers Hardenbergh.

Before I begin, I'd like to thank Dave Danielson and the yacht club for hosting us in this place that my father loved—all of us love--, and to George Wood and Dick Nesbitt and so many others at Haverford School who got the word out and brought us so many stories from Dad's Haverford days. We want to celebrate our father through stories.

Storyteller

Dad was happiest, I think, when he had an appreciative audience listening raptly to a story about snakes on Iwo Shima or squalls in Blue Hill Bay. He didn't embellish...much...and his reputation for having a photographic memory meant that everyone accepted his dates and names without question. There generally was some foolish behavior at the center of the story, and sometimes the outcome of the behavior was tragic, and Dad would end the story with an all-purpose, "Gah!" More often, the end would be comic, and he'd trail off amid laughter. He wasn't a dramatic storyteller. He didn't indulge in the Mark Twain pause or the parable-writer's moralizing.

Snake story (CPD recording)

Dad would often save his favorite part of the story—in this case, tacking the reconstituted snake on the bulletin board—for the end, almost an afterthought, and his favorite stories were ones in which he played an amusing behind-the-scenes role.

I'll play one more, longer, story from Dad's own mouth a little later, but mostly today we're going to hear from others telling stories about Dad. Since the majority of our stories come from people who couldn't be here today, I've asked Haverford alumni Dick Nesbitt and George Wood and various family members to read pieces from what people sent me. If at any point you're moved to add your story, please raise your hand or stand up or grab the microphone. The more stories the better.

Dad taught at the Haverford School in Pennsylvania for his entire career, from 1938, when he was just 20 years old, until his retirement in 1982. So we had no trouble collecting dozens of stories from Haverford students who remembered Dad as a positive influence in their lives. I've divided their remembrances into four categories: teacher, coach, mentor, and administrator. In fact, I've organized this whole ceremony around the more than 30 roles that Dad played, and I'm only going to give you a taste of them.

How he played some of his most important roles—like father, husband, and friend—I leave it to you to gather. I invite your contributions, whether or not you can see them fitting into one of the roles I've defined.

Teacher

In the classroom or on the field, Dad didn't care for formality or pretention—40 years later, some of his students still remember that they could call him “Charlie” when he coached. His genuine enthusiasm animated him as both teacher and coach—it was easy to see that he loved sports, but he was equally enthusiastic in the classroom, passing on to students what he had learned in summer school at Harvard or his latest insight from rereading *A Separate Peace*.

Cliff Pemberton '70: *I remember 2 specific interactions from English class. I turned in a book report on Moby Dick, treating it as the surface story of a whaling expedition, and missing the underlying deeper interpretations- your father gently wrote that “there may be more to the story than this”! Point well taken. I also remember asking him how long an assigned essay should be. His reply was “about as long as a piece of string.”*

Albert Oehrle '58: *He seemed to let on to us that there was a sophisticated, cosmopolitan world out there, but for the time being we would please read Emily Dickinson. I still wonder how he decided to anoint certain small boys with the appellation "gub gubs".*

Stokes Carrigan '48: *I can recall like it was yesterday sitting in "Sir" Dethier's 2nd grade French class reading 'Totor et Tristan' - Totor est un soldat du bois, Tristan est un soldat du bois. That was the beginning of my French classes We also used to quip about putting de chair under de table.*

Bill Olmstead '68: *He was a very good teacher and a very good person. He had a lot of enthusiasm and an extraordinary sense of humor. I still remember enjoying the stories he told us in 6th? grade about a caveman (Uggle Uggle?), although I do not remember any of the stories themselves.*

Bob Potts '42: *He never uttered a harsh word*

Coach

Until his hand and shoulder began giving him trouble, Dad was an excellent tennis player and golfer. In his youth he made many Blue Hill friends playing baseball, and in high school he played basketball, though I never saw him with a big ball in his hands. He taught tennis in the summers when he was in his 20s, and at Haverford he coached football, baseball, and squash. And of course here, he taught sailing, officially and unofficially, for decades.

Sheppy Douma commented on her Uncle Charlie as a coach: *Coach Charlie was adept at teaching us good sportsmanship and finesse and ball placement to win a match.*

Rick Mellor '63: *Mr. Dethier as I called him was my varsity squash coach in 1963. He did not know much about teaching technique or strategy but he was an encourager with a gentle spirit.*

He would give us 10 cents when we beat someone 15- 0 in a game (e.g. at the Naval Academy).

Haig Brown '70: *On many occasions Charlie would be the pitcher/play-by-play announcer for softball games. At Dethier/Brown family picnics Charlie designated the two teams the “big*

monsters” and the “little monsters” (Brock and I were the little monsters) and kept up a constant patter about the players’ heroics and misadventures. He was a good pitcher and could throw a real meatball, which I remember with gratitude from Brock’s 12th birthday when I was meeting my soon-to-be Haverford School classmates for the first time and wanted to make a good impression.

Does anyone else want to share memories of Dad as teacher or coach?

Besides coaching sports, Dad loved playing and watching them.

Squash player

Fred Whalen ‘68: *I had the pleasure of playing a few squash matches against your father - and he always beat me. He wasn't particularly fast, but he was very crafty. One example of that (and a story which I included in my last letter to him a few years ago) was when I was about to hit a soft shot at the front of the court. Knowing that your father was at the back of the court, I figured there was no way he could move quickly enough to retrieve a soft shot. Well, your father outsmarted me by rapidly stamping his feet on the floor, making it sound as though he was fast approaching the front of the court. In reality, he never moved from where he was, but I slammed the ball as hard as I could - right to where he was standing. He won the point and I got a laugh which still amuses me almost 50 years later.*

Sometimes you’d forget that the teacher who never spoke a harsh word had also been a captain in the Army in the Second World War. In 2004, Charlie’s grandson Corey and I asked Dad to talk about his war experiences, and at one point Corey asked him if he had any funny stories.

Gun story (CPD recording)

Administrator

Dad’s experience in the Army contributed to his later success as an administrator at Haverford--college counselor and registrar before becoming head of the lower school.

Rick Unger ‘70: *Your Dad was the reason my brother John and I entered Haverford in 1967. Our interview with him sold us on Haverford over Episcopal Academy. He was so gracious we couldn't resist. Best thing that ever happened to us. My brothers Peter and Jim followed later. I'm glad he had such a long life. I loved reading about him in your nephew's excellent book.*

Brad Ewing ‘78: *I specifically remember him - one time - leading a discussion of the previous night's (homework) reading assignment from the book Treasure Island. Mr. Dethier was so cool and collected....as if he had led this very discussion a hundred times before....and FUNNY. (He talked about the Treasure Island character "Long John SLIVER"and we boys all laughed at the sly name change.)*

I will always remember the way he encouraged us to take more responsibility for our belongings and not leave them around the school for others to pick up. He would communicate this message in his usual, cool, done-this-a-hundred-times-before manner: "We don't want to have to constantly pick up after Little Aloysius" (...al...a...WISH...us). Or, "Little Aloysius couldn't remember to pick up his sweater from the recess field."

Dave Groverman '70: My story of your Dad is so simple but very telling of his ability and the mark he left on the people he came in contact with. I believe I must have been in 3rd grade my first year at Haverford.. At that time we would wait to be picked up in front of the lower school. There was a drinking fountain and a short line. As I got to my turn an older larger kid pushed me out of the way. My mother who witnessed this started to come to my aid. Your father however was there and interceded, reprimanding the older student and to my mother's satisfaction calmed a situation that to him was very typical but to my mother a much worse situation for her Baby. I remember my mother being so impressed that this man would be so on top of such an event.

*Fred Housel '69: He always seemed very fair to me. But I think I was a bit too much of a smartmouth for Mr. Dethier. I remember two criticisms, one, perhaps in 6th grade, that I was not living up to my test scores (never disclosed to me!), and later, when I was editor of *The Journal*, our collection of artistic efforts (why me?), I remember him commenting (to my disappointment) on how negative it seemed to him. I AM a grim son of a bitch.*

Comedian

Fred Whalen '68: It was a morning assembly and Dana Allen was speaking prior to your father. Mr. Allen told a very long-winded joke about a man dying in the hospital, confined to an oxygen tent and surrounded by his wife and son. Just before expiring, the old man writes a hurried note to his son, hands it to him and then dies. The son puts the note in his pocket.

At the burial site the son remembers the note and pulls it out of his pocket to read, wondering what his father's last words to him were. The note read simply, "You're standing on my oxygen hose!". Everyone laughed in appreciation, and then Mr. Allen turned the podium over to your father, who had been waiting (im)patiently for his turn to address the assembly. Your father started off by saying, "Mr. Allen has been standing on my air hose for the past ten minutes!" The place broke up in hysterics and Mr. Allen was suitably red faced.

Sheppy Douma: From the time I first met Charlie, he made me smile or even laugh at some funny thing he said or imitated. His sense of humor really seemed to entertain all children perfectly. Perhaps his primary school teaching background allowed him to feel so comfortable with kids. We could joke around and feel at ease with Charlie perhaps as a contrast to the more serious Hardenbergh sisters and their brother Collis. Plans needed to be made and chores accomplished while at Concordia. I do remember Charlie staying home and listening to a Red Sox baseball game while everyone else packed their knapsacks to head out for a hike.

Does anyone have a funny story about Charlie to share?

Mentor

George Crawford '68: *I went to Haverford at the end of fourth grade in 1961 and Mr. Dethier was a huge positive influence on my life, just the sort of positive role model that my parents had hoped for. As I read the obituary my heart came to a stop as I read that one of Charlie's fondest stories was recalling when Georgie Crawford split his pants while playing on the seventy pound football team and had to be escorted off the field surrounded by a scrum of his teammates. Well I am that Georgie Crawford, and as I turned to my left I could see the field where that infamous event had occurred 53 years ago. To think that some tiny part of my life had given joy to someone I deeply admired, for so many years, warmed my heart. Thanks again Sir Dethier.*

Bo Dixon '61, who went on to be Haverford's headmaster for five years, wrote:

I was a junior shortstop on the baseball team – playing in a pretty big game – made three errors, which was a major factor in the loss. I blamed each error on someone or something else. The field was in awful condition (opposing shortstop has no errors), the first baseman should have been able to dig my throws out of the dirt. I had mastered the body language designed to deflect.

The next morning, I walked into my homeroom supervised by a beloved teacher who was also my coach – Charles P. Dethier. Before my books hit the desk, he got “into my grill” as they say but calmly said “Bo, I was very disappointed in you yesterday. You acted like a jerk” (actual term was stronger)

My initial reaction was shamefully, “Who me – but, but ...” all day his comments echoed. Finally I realized he was right. He was more interested in honesty and reality than “being a friend.” A mentor who values candor over friendship is a priceless resource.

Charlie is the reason I chose to be a teacher – so that I might be a mentor. Most of all he told me what I needed to hear – not what I wanted to hear.

While I'm delighted to see so many Haverford alumni here today, most of us remember Dad better in his more domestic roles. For instance,

Sleeping Giant

I can still feel the wool of the sweater of the Sleeping Giant, who would lie on the living room floor on his side, an invitation to any children in the area to come wake him or, better yet, with the combined force of 4 or 6 hands, roll him over. Occasionally he would grunt or move or even reach out a giant hand to grab one of us, which would send us all running, screaming. Then, at the climax of the battle, he would suddenly chant,

“Fee fie fo fum
I smell the blood of an Englishman
Be he alive or be he dead
I'll grind his bones to make my bread”

holding the word “bread” for an impossibly long time, despite the small hands that would attempt to cover his mouth. He never seemed larger, more powerful, more immortal than at those moments when three or four of us would throw ourselves against his back and legs while the sleeping giant loudly snored.

Carver

Until well into his 90s, Dad was the presumptive carver and head of the table, a duty awash with rituals. When he entered the dining room, Dad would bump into the table or chairs, pretending to grope in the air, all to signal his frustration with the light, which Mom liked to keep dim. During the carving, he would threaten to use his knife on those who tried to sneak pieces of skin with their fingers, but the next minute his fork and carving knife would be depositing the best crispy fat on the miscreant's plate. He enjoyed giving out small first portions and then generous seconds, asking, "What would you like?" and admonishing reluctant eaters that the food would "make your hair curl."

Haig Brown '70: *I remember Charlie (and Maisie) suffering my relentless appetite at the Dethier dining table. Particularly at Intervale, where there were always many mouths to feed, my interest in seconds presented a logistical problem but was always met with wry indulgence.*

Carpooler

For much of our childhood, we carpooled to school, usually with Charlie Boning, who lived on the other side of Conestoga Road. When we were being picked up, we'd wait in the driveway, sometimes taking a few swings at a wiffle ball. Many a gloomy morning was lightened by the hilarity of two men named Charlie starting their day by saying, "Morning, Charlie!"

Namer

Dad liked to give names to those he loved—"Day-day" was his first born, "Honeybun" applied to daughters-in-law and girlfriends, Megan was "Pagan," Peter was "Peanut," David O. Duggins was "Loverboy," Cornelia Brown was "Powerful Katinka," Melody was "Melodious." "Bunkie" was Deborah's lifelong name. "Mush-mush," "Gub-gub," "Doodlebug," and "Buglet" applied to young kids. Dogs were always "cats" or "kitties." He got renamed himself on occasion--at least one of his colleagues at Haverford called him "Mr. Dithers."

Haig Brown '70: *My memories of Charlie start from early childhood when we lived down the street in nearly identical houses in Broomall, PA. It was around then that Charlie gave me two nicknames "droolly nose" and "egg-in-the-face," which he used through high school even though they were earned (richly, I think) in early childhood. Fortunately no one else ever adopted them, but coming from Charlie they were great - affectionate and endearing.*

Greeter

People seldom listen to greetings and How are yous, and Dad proved the point often with his response—"Charmed" or, even better, "Charming, I'm sure." He was deferential to older men, especially ones he respected, like his father-in-law, Clarence, whom he addressed as "sir" even when on vacation. His parting was consistent and beloved—he would pull a white handkerchief or two out of his pockets and wave them forlornly.

I've left for almost-last the role most important to this setting—

Old Man of the Sea

When we were young and Dad was infinitely large and powerful, one of the domains over which he ruled was the sea. He had a keen eye for the wind, a feel for the tiller, instincts for tide and weather built on a lifetime of observations. He put out the racing buoys, ran the races, taught young sailors, pumped gas for visiting stinkpots, once rammed a huge shark, once filled a garbage can with a jellyfish. He was not a mechanical guy, but the diesel committee boat obeyed him without fail. He could ease the launch into the dock as if he had water fairies pushing it in sideways. He knew everyone, their family histories, their sailing strengths and weaknesses. He would take one of his children out in the committee boat to “help” with each race, and one of his most amazing sea feats came when the child himself needed help. At three years old, I liked to “surf” on the cylindrical boat bumpers that littered the committee boat, but when I fell on my face on the engine housing and broke my nose, Dad had to race into shore, drive me to Dr. Bliss, drive back and motor out before the race was over.

I have a couple of sea stories to share, but does anyone else?

Magical Wind story

Like most storytellers, Dad was occasionally prone to exaggeration, but when he told the story of the magic westerly, he would minimize the facts, which were too dramatic to need embellishment. Ned Rendall was Dad's best friend in Blue Hill, and he raced the family “J” against some pretty good competition. I crewed for Ned on and off, and sometimes Ned asked Dad along, well aware of his knowledge of the sport and the Bay.

The race began with a reasonable but diminishing north wind, but when we rounded the southernmost mark and had to tack towards the finish line, things didn't look good. The wind was petering out, we were behind, and Ned's mood was prickly. Gently, Dad let Ned know his prediction: the dying wind would swing gradually to the southwest and would most likely re-develop first along the western shore.

Everyone else was tacking up the middle of the Bay, where there was still some wind, and Ned looked grim as we split tacks and headed for the western shore. The race became a crawl, then a drift, as tide and momentum brought us slowly—sooooo slowly—towards the finish line. The other five boats were bunched up far ahead of us and maybe a hundred yards further out into the Bay. The time was so tense, we felt so impotent with no wind and no way, the embarrassment of having made a bad choice was so keen, we didn't say a word, and I didn't even glance at Ned.

Then Dad peered over his left shoulder for the hundredth time and whispered “C'mon baby.” The puff was barely a breath, barely a cooling on the cheek, but compared to the torture of dead calm, it felt as though the boat had been lifted by pixie dust. In total silence, the sails filled imperceptibly, and as we held our collective breath, the boat began to move. Js were elegant boats. “Junior” to the larger Atlantics, they were small enough to maneuver but large and sleek enough to cut through chop and go surprisingly fast. At that moment, though, I appreciated most their stealth, the silence with which we crept towards the finish line. The other racers, preoccupied with each other, took a while to notice us,

then responded with a flurry of activity to prepare for the arrival of the breeze. Slowly, with whispered but audible vituperation, they realized the wind was never going to reach them. When the cannon sounded our victory, they were still sitting there cursing. Dad and Ned were careful not to gloat in ways that could be seen to our stern.

Squall story: Perhaps Dad's proudest moment on the water came when he was fleet captain, perhaps in the year he got married, 1948. The fleet was out in the middle of the Bay, in the middle of the race, when Dad's legendary eye, sharpened by years of peering at the sky for Japanese war planes, spotted a long black line behind Blue Hill, moving swiftly south. "CALL THE RACE" he yelled to the committee boat, and in the miraculous calm, they heard him and fired the cannon twice. Dad took down his sails and the rest of the fleet followed suit, and most of the boats were safely tethered to the back of the committee boat when the squall hit. Nobody ended up in the water. The next day, they learned that no one on the Northeast Harbor fleet had been so prescient, and half their boats ended up swamped or turned turtle, a detail Dad would recount with particular glee.

Ice cream lover

Finally, there was only one treat, one reward, one symbol of celebration in Dad's world—ice cream. Dad knew of great ice cream shops up and down the East Coast, from the tiny place selling 10 cent cones by the river in Ellsworth to the Howard Johnsons with 32 flavors on the turnpikes to the Schrafft's of his New York childhood. His flavor was always chocolate, and he didn't go for the multiple mix-ins popular today. He licked his ice cream rather than biting it; he'd work at it vigorously, keeping the mound of ice cream perfectly shaped and as symmetrical as possible. Even when he was feeling most "dubious," with no appetite for dinner, even when the exotic desserts of Parker Ridge did not appeal, Dad got joy from a bowl of Gifford's World's Best Chocolate.

END OF SCHEDULED PROGRAM. TO THE ICE CREAM!

Extra roles:

Giants Fan

I don't know how or when the fixation on the sports Giants began. Maybe it was as simple as Dad's father, Edouard, rooting for the home team of his adopted city, New York. In any case, rooting for the New York then San Francisco baseball Giants and the New York football Giants was as close to a religion as Dad and the kids had. We all chanted, "C'mon Juan baby!" to encourage Juan Marichal, the Giants' high-kicking 1960s pitcher, we listened raptly to the play-by-play before anyone dreamed of *watching* sports, and we'd interrupt dinner at 6:19 to try to hear the ball scores from a radio station that didn't come in well. Dad suffered through the Giants' "one foot higher!" defeat by the Yankees in the 1962 World Series and the embarrassing 4-game loss to the Oakland A's in the 1989 earthquake series, but his years of loyalty were rewarded when the Giants won three times in Dad's years of heavy TV watching, 2010, 2012, and 2014. Watching a game with Dad at Connie Mack Stadium was a rare treat—how green the grass, how fast the foul balls flew, how salty the peanuts!

Pitcher/announcer

Dad was a successful pitcher in his youth—playing with Blue Hill and Ellsworth kids in the summer, Princeton intramurals during the year. But as a father, he did his most important pitching underhand, at school and at our parties and just playing wiffleball in the side yard. He'd announce the game as he pitched and loved to give names to the teams and players—Haig ("Egg-in-the-face" or "Droolynose") and Brock were the Little Monsters, David and Cornelia ("Powerful Katinka") were the Big Monsters.

Scrooge

Dad's attempts to deny the warmth and generosity of his character found their most consistent expression in the persona of Scrooge. "Bah Humbug" was his Christmas greeting, of course, but he used the phrase all year, to the delight of the Haverford junior school students, who took particular pleasure in knowing that he wasn't really a humbug because he always teased them and remembered their names.

Dishwasher

Although the Eagle Rocks house has had a modern water heater for decades, when I think of Dad the dishwasher, I think of him heating two metal kettles on the electric stove or the wood cook stove. He'd have one pan of suds and one of rinse and would keep 2 or 3 kids busy drying and putting away. "That's what your towel is for," he'd respond to anyone who pointed out a washing imperfection. "Paper towel!" he'd yell when placing into the drying rack something particularly greasy. "Sharp knife!" was his other warning. We heeded.

Gleeful Winner

“Pounce!” he’d yell as he slammed down the final and decisive card from his pounce pile to win another nerve-wracking game. His children complained that he pounded cards with unnecessary vehemence and noise but all he responded was “count your pounce pile.” He would let kids win while learning, but after that he was ruthless, and even if he was well ahead, after he had counted all the actual cards he would keep flipping and counting invisible cards into the pile until someone stopped him with “Dad!”

Santa’s Scribe

Probably because he had without question the best memory and the best math around, Dad was always the scorekeeper and recordkeeper, most officially so on Christmas, when he would get out a legal pad and a much-sharpened Haverford School pencil and keep track of each present and who it was from, giving each kid a list at the end of the process. The ritual helped slow present opening, and it symbolized a good bit of our childhood—we told our stories to Dad.

Card Player

Dad played bridge well, right into his 97th year, when he and I bid and made two slams in the first three hands against Melody and Corey. He would apologize for occasional carelessness, but when he was concentrating, exhaling with emphasis, he played flawlessly. When partnered with Mom, he took the conservative role to her sometimes intuitive one—she loved to double. He appreciated a well-played hand and generally said so.

At pounce, he loved to jangle the nerves of his opponents, slapping his cards loudly and laughing an evil laugh when he got on a roll, commanding, “Count your cards!” when the hand was over, to make sure that we didn’t fold all the cards together in disgust. Playing cribbage he was more subdued, reserving choice words for his opponent’s lucky draws.

Cowardly Lion

I’m not sure what movie Dad would have said was his favorite, but he certainly enjoyed watching *The Wizard of Oz* once a year when Hallmark would put it on, and his favorite character was the Cowardly Lion. “If I were king of the foreh-eh-eh-est,” he’d sing, and he’d announce the coming of the flying monkeys with real apprehension in his voice.

Packhorse

As a tall, strong young man surrounded by a self-identified harem of young women, Dad quickly took on the role of packhorse, the one toting the biggest and heaviest pack. During two trips to Katahdin, one in his 20s, one in his 40s, he cemented his reputation as he hauled most of the gear up to Chimney Pond. But for most of his fatherhood, he pled, “Bad knees from basketball” and would let Mom take the kids up mountains.

Writer

In another life, Dad would have written children's books, with a voice and a style somewhere between *Stuart Little* and *Shrek!* Instead, his creative writing oozed out in odd times when there was a need—for Willie the Worm stories to keep his young brood amused, for painfully rhyming doggerel to celebrate another Christmas or birthday for the love of his life, or for writing an adaptation of *The Land of Green Ginger* for sixth graders to perform.

Zoo Enthusiast

Everyone's favorite Sunday outing was for Dad to give Mom the day off and preface an ice cream at HoJo's by driving the kids in to the Philadelphia Zoo, as exotic a place as any of us could imagine. He liked the cats and the snakes, and he'd talk to them through the glass, but my favorite was the bird house, where birds were free to swoop over your head, and you felt that you, too, were in the jungle. At such times, he'd reveal his upbringing as a city kid, as he navigated the parkways and parking with an aplomb that his kids didn't quickly develop.

Sports Fan

Dad loved watching sports, and his loyalties were lifelong. He enjoyed driving up to Princeton for a fall football game and picking up some apples on the way home. He listened to the radio broadcast of almost every Phillies game; the voices of By Saam, Bill Campbell, and Richie Ashburn were more familiar to us than some of our relatives'. Once sports and TV hooked up, Dad switched most of his attention to the screen, watching golf long before the camera could effectively follow the ball, suffering through Howard Cosell. Though he wrestled with TV remotes until his death, the arrival of cable and satellite TV in Blue Hill gave Dad an almost limitless supply of sports to watch.

Sultan with Harem

For three or four years while Maisie was at Bryn Mawr and Charlie was teaching at Haverford, Charlie enjoyed the attentions of what everyone seemed to call his "harem," consisting of Maisie and her friends Frannie, Anne, Ali, and Flo. Charlie was older and his little sister Margot was ahead of the harem at Bryn Mawr. He was handsome and employed and good at things that the Bryn Mawr women valued, like golf and tennis and finding his way around Manhattan. Perhaps it was the attention of the harem that allowed Charlie, once married, to commit to a relationship that lasted 66 years.

Reader

Dad consumed text. His New York Times reached him even during the war; I imagine he was one of the paper's longest and most faithful subscribers. He always worked his way through local papers as well—the Inquirer, the Daily News, the Packet, the American, The Suburban and Wayne Times. And, especially before his eyes began giving him trouble, he read a book or two a day, mostly novels, eagerly awaiting the latest mystery or best seller to arrive at the Blue Hill Library. But it may have been Dad's bathroom reading that most influenced his kids. Because in the bathroom he read, along

with “the boy allies” books from his childhood, Pogo. And all four of his children became Pogo fans, to this day using Pogo language like “us chilluns” and “yew-ranium” and chuckling over Pogo lines like “I carry the hose.” By passing on to us his love of Pogo, Dad infected us with an appreciation for words and how they can provoke joy and humor. What a service to the world!

Music Lover

Dad’s father Edouard was a world-class violinist—a touring soloist in his teens, then a teacher at Julliard for five decades. And his mother Avis sang. So Dad grew up in a musical household. It was never clear to me why Dad didn’t play a music instrument—a few years of piano lessons didn’t take, somehow. But he inherited an ear for classical music that allowed him to identify much of the classical canon by just the first notes; his memory was as expansive as his appreciation. When we were young, Dad quizzed us—“What’s that instrument?”—and helped us distinguish between a bassoon and an oboe, developing our ears. Dad rebelled in his own way by embracing jazz when he was young, evidently upsetting his father, and his love for musicals like *Wonderful Town* is another major part of his musical legacy. Unlike Ma, who openly embraced the tragic love songs of pre-Beatles pop, Dad never compromised on his dislike for the noise we listened to, though he would send me *New York Times* clippings about Bob Dylan. And he appreciated my rock music knowledge when his crossword clue was “Pete Townshend’s rock group.”

The Sober One

I don’t think I ever saw Dad tipsy, much less drunk, though on very rare occasions he’d have a second drink of the rum and lemonade mix Ma would have for cocktails. His father, he said, couldn’t hold his alcohol, though he never explained what that meant. And he was always critical of Maisie for having a second drink and getting giggly. He certainly had his share of worries and neuroticisms, but he didn’t seem to use any conventional means to deal with his stress, not even, for the last few years of his life, exercise. Maybe his sobriety explains in part why his memory was so good that up until his death, the rest of the family, including grandchildren, counted on him to remember dates, names, and events that by all rights were ours to remember. He was a rock.

A Man of Habits

Dad was a man of habits. He’d read at least one paper every day and almost always do a crossword puzzle. For years he took an aspirin every day, which may have helped his heart go as long as it did. He held grudges, mostly, it seemed, about food. Lobster once turned him green, so though he loved to take the whole family out to Union River Lobster Pot, he never touched lobster or clams again. “Cherries will give you the trots,” he cautioned his children. Perhaps because there were so many foods to fear, he kept his food basic: plain ham on white bread, hamburger neat on bun, grapefruit halved and the sections freed. His habit was to object first to any idea and listen later, and when really upset, he usually relied on “God bless it!” “Damnation!” or “Son of a BITCH.” He labeled “Irish” anyone with an exotic, obviously non-Irish name.

One of the Three Kings

Dad never talked much about the evolution of his non-belief, though we assumed it was hastened by his coming home at age 11 and discovering his brother had died of a perhaps botched operation. But he resisted anything with religious overtones even more strenuously than he resisted Christmas, so getting him to participate in something Christmassy and religious was a gargantuan undertaking. Mom often prevailed, though, in getting Dad to sing one of the verses of “We Three Kings of Orient Are.” “Myrrh is mine: its bitter perfume/breathes a life of gathering gloom” was so suited to Dad’s “humbug!” posture that even he was taken by the congruence, and his participation made Mom happier than anything else on Christmas day. And for a real treat, he might sing, “Good King Wenceslas.”

outsider, sailor, father, friend, husband/beau, athlete, manager, saving the kid at thunder hole, role model, father, family man

Betsey Wanning Harries: His slightly rumpled elegance never left him. Nor his sense of humor. I was afraid that he might miss Maisie so much that he would get quiet and sad. But that didn’t happen. He was an extraordinary man, married to an extraordinary woman.

Betsey Wanning Harries: by the time I was ten (this would have been 1948 or so), I was allowed to sail by myself in the Inner Harbor (with Charlie keeping an eye on me, of course). One day I rowed out to my Brutal Beast and found an enormous porcupine in the boat. I retreated, and persuaded Charlie to go out there again with me. He managed to get the porky back over the side with an oar, but the determined beast just swam around to the rudder and started to climb in again. At that point Charlie clocked him over the head with the oar. He drifted away, probably dead, and I went out sailing.

Buzz Potts ‘66: I always remember that my 92-year-old Dad had him as a teacher and assistant coach, and then Tom, Dave and I had him as a teacher. We all knew your Dad was the boss, but he was truly a kind man and friend. I associate him with Nevil Shute's book about the last man alive after a nuclear holocaust, the subject of a paper I wrote that your Dad 'corrected' somewhat vigorously.

This is the way I thought of Dad as manager of this yacht club, a role he last served in 1964. It’s the beginning of a poem I wrote for Dad’s 80th birthday. He used to start the day with a bang.

Alone, harbor glassy,
ramp slick with dew,
mooring lines limp at slack tide,
wind cups still on the roof,
cormorants sleepily drying their wings
on the nun in mist off Becton's point,
he slides the shell home in the cannon
and when the radio beeps 8
yanks the town awake:
all is shipshape.