

Alan Michael Cleverly OBE
15 September 1948 – 7 March 2016
Eulogy by Barry Price OBE
Thursday 31 March 2016, Guildford Cathedral, Surrey

Having known and worked with Alan for nearly forty years, when Jane and the family asked me if I would say a few words today in a few minutes, I felt as if I had been asked to do a precis of the epic novel War and Peace on two pages

I could write a book on our experiences together, so please be understanding if there are some big omissions.

Alan was born on 15th September 1948 in Chichester and he was adopted by Charles and Jill Cleverly. Charles was in the RAF, so Alan had quite an interesting upbringing, travelling on occasions to Aden, now known as the Yemen. It was here I understand he learnt in the local markets his bartering, I mean negotiating skills.

In his early teenage years, he became interested in politics. Jill, his mother, was very political) and from that early interest he developed the desire to become a party agent. He was first appointed agent to Swindon and then to the new Constituency of North West Surrey in 1973, ready to fight the 1974 election for the late Sir Michael Gylls.

Alan and Jane were engaged whilst he was agent for Swindon, and on his move to Camberley they got married and Jonathan and Georgina were born soon after.

Michael Gove has said "Alan was a legend in his own lunchtime", whilst my description of him was that he was man for all religions. "God be with you, Shalom, Salaam Alaikum, Namaste, Sat Sri Akal", that is the way in which he always individually greeted people of different religions.

Alan was a true and loyal friend and we spent a lot of time together through politics, charities and socially through holidays.

Now I am sure that most of you know that holidaying with friends can put friendships very much to the test. We spent many holidays together and rarely had a cross word, although on one occasion our family had booked to go on a cruise and a few weeks before, Chris and I, Alan and Jane were travelling in a taxi to a social event in London when Alan, sitting in the front seat, was on the telephone to a travel agent enquiring about availability on this particular cruise. Between Camberley and London Alan had ascertained from me what deck we were on and the approximate situation of the Cabin, Jane said to me "What is Alan up to!". I said "He his booking to come on the cruise with us. He did ask me if I minded and I had responded yes but he had still gone ahead and booked. Needless to say, we still had a good laugh and enjoyed that holiday.

The Party conferences were where you would see Alan at his best and where I felt that he was on times more recognisable than some Cabinet Ministers; wherever you went it was "Hello Alan", "Hello Alan".

On one occasion in a hotel in Bournemouth he thought that he was calling me from his room; on connection he said, "Price there is a bomb under your bed!". Unfortunately for Alan, he had called a Sir David Price, MP for Eastleigh at the time, and who was not amused. Alan was full of apologies and quickly put the phone down

Alan was a good friend to many people and was always ready to help if there was a problem.

When Margaret Thatcher lost her leadership and premiership, Alan immediately thought of her husband, Sir Denis, who would be in need of an office so he called Downing Street and left a message for Sir Denis asking him if he could call back. On that Friday evening the four of us went out to dinner and when we got back to Alan and Jane's house, Alan asked the baby sitter if there had been any calls. She said, "Yes only one, from some joker saying that he was Sir Denis Thatcher!".

Consequently, Alan called Sir Denis and he agreed to meet up with us on the following Monday morning. That meeting was a little surreal because to be sat there with just Alan and Sir Denis talking about Margaret's demise it was like being a fly on the wall of history. Alan again went into overdrive and by the following week, Sir Denis had an office in the Small Business Bureau offices in London.

Two years ago, Alan received an official invitation to Lady Thatcher's funeral, something he was very proud of and again a reflection of what high regard he was held in by senior politicians

His campaigning skills and his fund raising skills for the Conservative Party are well known but he was also ready to apply those skills to any charity that he got involved with. In our case it was COSMIC, Children of St Mary's Intensive Care.

One of our triplet granddaughters became seriously ill when she was three months old and there were many trips which had to be made to St Mary's Paddington and Great Ormond Street hospitals for the three of them. Alan assisted the family on these visits to the point that they thought at one stage that he was their Grandfather. Through those visits he and I were asked to go on the fund raising committee, and through Alan's great regard held by Lord Archer, he agreed to act as auctioneer at several dinners. These auctions on two separate occasions raised in excess of £150,000.

In Camberley, on discovering that the Bangladeshi community were looking for a prayer centre, Alan went into overdrive to assist in them in obtaining a centre, this much to some locals' disapproval.

Alan was also a great supporter of the EU. In fact, he told me that his frequent trips to Calais were to assist in kick starting the European economy, by reducing the wine lakes and at the same time making Eurotunnel more financially viable.

Since the onset of his illness, restaurants in the Camberley area have seen a dramatic drop in business.

Over the years many plans were hatched at those "Working lunches" that saw fruition in elections locally and in marginal seats country wide, making Surrey Heath and its predecessor North West Surrey the most effective and successful association in the United Kingdom.

As witnessed by you all being here today, Alan Michael Cleverly OBE was someone everyone loved respected and the world is going to be a much poorer place by his passing. There is one certainty and that is not one person who knew him will ever forget him. His good deeds will be folklore well into the future.

He was respected in life and he will be regretted in death. Alan your virtues outweighed all your faults. We loved you and you are going to be sorely missed. Rest in peace.