

Henri Gaston Robert Tykoezinski (Dickie) A948

21.02.1957 – 11.01.2022



It is my very sad duty to write Henri's obituary for the Old Sternians Association. Henri passed away after a short and sudden illness. I spoke to him while he was in the Royal London Hospital and he was stoical to the end – grateful for all the many gifts life had bestowed upon him and for the extra 27 years of life he enjoyed after contracting leukaemia in his thirties.

In his early years Henri was brought up in Paris in an artistic commune on Montmartre. His father, Gaston Tyko, was a close friend of Pablo Picasso with whom he often worked. It is rumoured Henri brought an original portrait of his father, sketched by Picasso, to Junior House. I have only seen a print of it but I believe the rumour might be true! Following the death of his father Henri and his mother moved to Primrose Hill where Henri had to quickly adapt to a new way of life

(primrose Hill not being quite as fashionable in those days as Montmartre). His mother learned of LWC and the sponsorship it offered to one-parent families; Henri was accepted as a Founder and he enrolled at Junior House in 1968, as did I. The house master at the time was the legendary Oliver Tweedie Stoddart a much respected and loved Scotsman with a propensity for cross country running, winter dips in the outdoor swimming pool and “cosy tails” (which for those of you not familiar with the term, means the glow in ones derriere after receiving the slipper for misbehaviour). Terribly non-PC but that was how it was in those days. After the slipper it was customary to say “thank you bod” – a phrase both Henri and myself became familiar with!

So that is how life at LWC started. Henri adapted well. In 1970 we both moved up to Sutton House which at the time was probably the least desirable house to be put in. However, the then headmaster, Neil Henderson, saw potential in our year group and it wasn't long before Sutton was shining in amateur dramatics, winning inter-house cups and generally excelling. Henri had a “starring” role with myself in the school's production of “Oliver” (we were both workhouse ragamuffins!) he enjoyed the Young Farmers Club and of course was the star pupil at French. We did the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme together enjoying hikes to The Lakes, Exmoor and elsewhere. He always had an eclectic taste in music and he was the first person I knew to own an Amstrad record deck, so his cube (terminology for room) at Sutton House was the “in place” to be. Many of us were introduced to bands like Santana, Greenslade, Bowie and Floyd by Henri. We had plenty of fun at Sutton House. Henri had a mischievous sense of humour and we did get into a few scrapes – probably best left out of print – and that sense of mischievousness never left him. I have been overwhelmed by the tributes to Henri from his old school friends. He had that knack for making friends – “he was a lovely warm man” as one wrote which sums him up brilliantly, and the friendships he forged back then have lasted over 50 years.

Henri, coming from a French background and having been sent to various infant schools, started at an academic disadvantage compared to others but his sharp intellect and eagerness to learn more than compensated for this. He left LWC with good A-levels, including geology and earned

a place at Sheffield University to read Geology and Zoology where he met his wife to be, Janet. After graduating in 1978 he undertook an MSc in Palynology which he finished in 1981. This proved to be the first step towards a very successful business career. As one of Henri's business colleagues wrote about him "having worked as a geologist for several companies Henri began consulting to Shell in 2000 where he quickly became frustrated with the disordered well data he was contracted to work with. He spotted a niche business opportunity to organise and manage this data and he founded DataCo in 2001. DataCo thrived, expanding across Shell's offices in Europe, Australia and beyond and grew to become one of the world's largest independent oil industry data management companies with more than 120 employees at its peak". A real success story.

Meanwhile Henri and Janet juggled business life with family life. Their son, Robbie, was born in 2002 and Henri was very devoted to him. They would spend many holidays hiking and camping together and enjoying each others company. Henri was rightly proud of Robbie's many achievements not least his continuing progression through medical school.

In 2019 Henri and Janet sold DataCo to its largest competitor with a view to enjoying partial retirement (Henri, being a bit of a workaholic, had other business interests and charitable activities). Henri had started to renovate an historic farm in Purbeck, Dorset with plans to rewild its landscape and carry out various conservation works. Our network of LWC friends were looking forward to holding their next reunion at the farm but sadly that isn't to be.

Henri is survived by his wife and soul mate Janet and their son Robbie. He will be fondly remembered by many.

Ray Coop A930