

*An ode to Phil and Sue*  
*Diamond Wedding Anniversary Luncheon*  
*The Lodge, Winchcombe*  
*23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2022*

In nineteen fifty-nine, it's true  
A boy named Phil  
Found a girl named Sue  
At the CODS they met  
When the weather was wet  
And to offer a lift was the right thing to do

From this simple start  
Came a fluttering heart  
And a love which flourished and grew  
With short term Commission  
Our boy changed his mission  
"For Queen and country – and Sue"

Posted to Medmenham  
But with fiancée in Cheltenham  
Didn't stop the chance for a jive  
By his Dad's Jag to a ball  
In Danesfield House hall  
And home for breakfast at five

At another event  
Dad showed he's a gent  
When a ball gown in Cheltenham remained  
From Malvern he drove  
To collect it by Jove  
And the plaudits on Him were rained

When out for a date  
In Phil's Standard Eight  
Sue asked for a go at the wheel  
Turning left with a yank  
They went up the bank  
And the guy behind's laugh was for real

We now come to the day  
To set out on their way  
Together as one for this life  
After saying "I do"  
Groom Phil and bride Sue  
Started home as husband and wife

Salcombe, South Devon  
A small piece of Heaven  
A honeymoon dream in the sun  
But it's the night-stop location  
Near a Royal Air Force station  
We return to when further we've run

The words had been said  
With more heart than with head  
"I'd love a small cottage with beams"  
So with more perfect timing  
Than my contrived rhyming  
Phil found one the image of dreams

Eighteen months later  
Sue became mater  
On a day when she worried about snow  
The chapter unfurled  
As I entered the world  
And Dad chased there from Air Force Henlow

With Sue now my Mum  
The feeling was numb  
When to Coningsby Dad was then sent  
Apart they would be  
This new family  
Because nothing was vacant for rent

When a house did become free  
Short lived was the glee  
On collecting the key for the door  
The TSR2  
Nearly was due  
So now they were parted once more

To rub in the salt  
Intentions had fault  
And the parting was needless to make  
Axed by Healey and Crew  
Only one aircraft flew  
A complex and blameful mistake

One welcome reprieve  
Was a fun Chinese eve  
But a challenge first had to be beat  
To collect wife and boy  
The latter with toy  
And tucked up in a drawer on the seat

“You’re posted to Stornoway”

Said the communique

“A unit is yours to be led”

So by ferry MacBrayne

With Mum and me by plane

Dad, by car, away sped

On this windswept isle

For mile after mile

Were beaches with nary a soul

Some ‘naval assistance’

Would cover the distance

To a barbie, a drink, and quiet stroll

A shipping strike brought

Times that were fraught

And shelves that were empty of greens

So in bomb aimer’s station

To cheer and elation

Arrived carrots, potatoes, and beans

When the time came to leave

It was hard to perceive

Just what had been loaded aboard?

Salmon and trout

In case there was doubt

As up and away the plane soared

It was early in May

In fact the fourth day

When the Borehams increased by another

For Mum and Dad, joy

At the birth of a boy

And in Stuart, Steve now had a brother

Sixty seven brought change  
By flying long range  
To Changi and weather so hot  
Work starting at dawn  
Perhaps with a yawn  
Was followed by dinghy or yacht

Now back in UK  
So from sun to the grey  
And the grind of a week in the Smoke  
Lads didn't see Dad  
Or Dad, either Lad  
So weekends brought the fun and a joke

Off to Belgique  
A posting unique  
With fortune and favour sublime  
With plenty of trips  
And lasting friendships  
Enduring the passage of time

Seventy six  
Brought mortar and bricks  
A roof, four walls and front door  
The first home of One's own  
With party line phone  
And a bar in the lounge to be sure

With painting all done  
It was off at the run  
To Belgium and NATO HQ  
Newly promoted  
It must now be noted  
With John's role now Dad's to pursue

For command that was plum  
It's to Oxon we come  
And the station of RAF Brize  
TCW the name  
Comms still the game  
But deployment in theatre the prize

Un-fort-u-nately  
That wasn't to be  
As Dad was so sadly short toured  
No South Atlantic  
Just things problematic  
Kuwait, and frustration endured

Defence advice  
To be precise  
Was slow and a bit of a bore  
But the rumour is fake  
That for interest to make  
It was Philip who started the war

As an Officer's wife  
Mum'd led a life  
Of committees and plenty to do  
But on this long tour  
Options were poor  
And interesting things were too few

The start of a theme  
In fact a regime  
That would last for a long time to come  
Was karting and sailing  
With parents unfailing  
As supporters in full; and then some

Now back in UK  
And once more to the grey  
Of a train to the Smoke at first light  
It was time for a change  
A new role to arrange  
But it wasn't all over; not quite

The posting that's last  
Somewhere from the past  
I wonder where it might be?  
Rudloe near Bath  
Is where ended the path  
And Wing Co. became "r-t-d"

A journey by train  
With fine food and Champagne  
Was a great way of ending the stress  
Twenty-five years  
Gave rise for three cheers  
And a ride on the Orient Express

Years with BT  
And little time free  
The same with Thames Valley Police  
Planted a seed  
That then became need  
The pressure just had to decrease

Retired at last  
But with experience so vast  
Would Dad really just simply adjourn?  
Of course that's not him  
So with plenty of vim  
To consult was now his concern

With home in Long Compton  
Commute long forgotten  
A spell self-employed was ahead  
Dads' skills in demand  
"Please help" the command  
And he did, it has to be said

When finally retired  
The days remained wired  
With plentiful things still to do  
There were clubs to be led  
And energies spread  
Because this is our Phil and our Sue

There also came tours  
To plenty of shores  
Both British and further away  
By ship or by plane  
By car or by train  
Vancouver, Peru or Calais

When at home not abroad  
The time of reward  
Is labours for family and friends  
Not for money or fame  
Or to make a big name  
But kindness that truly transcends

I gave you for sure  
A whistle-stop tour  
Through sixty three memorable years  
Please be upstanding  
For a couple outstanding  
It's time for another three cheers!