

**Eulogy for Harold Pollins**  
**Monday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

*Given by his son Joe on behalf of himself and Harold's other children, Debbie & Karen, his daughter-in-law Patricia and son-in-law Patrick, his grandchildren Ben and Anna, his step grandchildren, Robert, Lynnsey and Stephen, his step great grandchildren, Robbie and Jack, And Anna's partner, Morgan.*

But I would not read too much into the word 'step', family is family.

Thank you all for coming here today to witness Harold's passing. We of course did not know him by that name, he was just Dad. Albeit during his time from 1964 as tutor at Ruskin college and subsequently resident tutor at Ruskin hall in the fields of industrial relations and economic history, certain students preferred to call him 'Harry', if in ear-shot a name that made one look over his or her shoulder for this 'Harry'.

Whether he was called Harold or Harry when he worked for London Transport, the Coal Board, Swansea university, Herndon College of Technology, the Open University, Ministry of Agriculture, Oxford College of Further Education etc – is not known. However, his introduction to teenage students on his travel agents' course (yes you heard me) at the Oxford College Of Further Education was, 'you can call me, Mr. Pollins or Harold or sir'. And I would surmise Dad's honorific title was Sir, when he became Chairman of the Agricultural Wages Committee for the whole of Southern England.

And that's it really, but a long life requires more words.

Dad was the last surviving member of the Pollins/Woolfman families, having survived his older siblings, our aunts' Ruby, Dorothy & Sylvia and uncle Bob. Dad was born in 1924 in Leytonstone, E.11 to parents, Percy (the first of his family to be born in the UK) and his mother Dora, who owned one of the first domestic electrical retailers in London, the shop eventually ending up as 'Pollins radio' at 550-552 High Road, Leytonstone. The family shop and home was in the same road where mum lived, albeit they did not know each other, that was until Dad visited aunty Ruby in hospital having given birth to our cousin Diana, the year was 1959 (sorry Diana) and where Mum was a nurse. They married the next year.

Dad attended West Ham synagogue where he was Blackman & Goldberg Memorial Prize Winner in 1936 aged 12.

Dad's paternal line were skilled trades people, namely, cabinet makers. It is noted that this skill jumped two generations, and has yet to land.

Dad was the first of his immediate family to go to university, his undergraduate studies at the London School of Economics being interrupted by his call-up for the army during the second world war. On his return he only had to complete a total of 2 years of study to gain his degree – (did you hear that Ben?). His later teacher-training studies lasted a

matter of weeks, walking away from the course. Asking him 'why' Dad said, 'you cannot teach teaching' – this action I guess was his adult rebellious side. His childhood rebellion was when he used to go 'missing' from his home, though not for too long. Dad recounted that his brother Bob would be sent to find him using the enquiring phrase, 'have you seen my brother, the one with an eye patch?'

As you are here you knew Dad, you knew of Dad.

If you just Google his name examples of his interests and academic works will be found. They are numerous, his personal unfinished bibliography is at least 63 pages long covering 75 years of published works from 1941 and varied, I can offer you 'Aspects Of Railway Accounting Before 1860' to 'Newcomers: The West Indians In London' to 'Britains Railways': an industrial history to 'Economic History Of The Jews In England' Dad's *magnum opus* to 'The History Of Ruskin College' to 'Two Graves from Knockaloe', but to be honest it is impossible to précis his bibliography and be representative of its content at the same time. You can even find Dad's works as part of the John Johnson collection in the Bodleian Library.

But I believe he was most proud of, and I certainly am, in published corrections of errors and omissions found in historical records. In particular those found in the 1922 publication, the British Jewry Book of Honour – the account of 50,000 British and colonial Jewish service personnel who served in WW1 and, in this example, making it known at least 400 names, or rather 400 fathers, sons and brothers were missing. If ever there was an example of giving a 'voice' to the forgotten and on behalf of their descendants, then this is one, as Colonel Bob Wyatt, editor of the Military Historical Society concurred. Such work was noted and celebrated by, not least, 'the Jewish Genealogical Society Of GB', when they entered Dad on to their roll of honour on 18 May 2014, citing '[Dad's] assiduous writing on provincial Jewish communities, and for his work on many individual biographies and on fallen Jewish services personnel. And it is at their website you can find many of Dad's articles on the smaller Jewish communities of the UK and the Isle of Man.

Nevertheless, none of your Internet search findings will sum Dad up. And now is an appropriate time for a big thank you to Sir Tim Berners-Lee for inventing the World Wide Web and giving Dad an outlet and tool for his future research and I am convinced resulting in a longer life. And not forgetting the Oxfordshire NHS in all its forms.

Hopefully the following does sum Dad up.

Our achievements are because in the main as children he let us be ourselves, find our own way in the world by doing our own thing, not constrained by any of his personal beliefs or views. And we will always be grateful for his approach to parenting.

Moreover, many years ago I asked Dad the same question asked to the actor Paul Eddington by Jeremy Isaacs in a TV interview concerning Mr. Eddington's terminal

illness, namely, 'what would you like your epitaph to be?' his answer was '**Did very little harm**'. When I put this to Dad asking him would he like the same epitaph he replied quite vehemently, 'no' – asking him, 'why', he replied, 'that implies I did *some* harm'.

I point out simply for accuracy; Mr. Eddington was a WW2 conscientious objector and certainly explains his reply. I point out, again for accuracy, Dad was not a conscientious objector being a Sergeant Major and, therefore, I believe Dad's response was therefore of the greater morality.

In conclusion, at Mum's funeral here 21 years ago my brother Patrick said Mum's greatest regret was, she would not see her grandchildren Ben and Anna grow. We are all thankful Dad did.

Many thanks to Jesmond for conducting the service and a special thanks to Dr Michael Ward for arranging so much.