**15804, Brian O’Connor**

My Dad was a big sports fan who could speak to local GAA games, the Olympics and the horses. I remember in February 2002, watching my New England Patriots win the super bowl, I received a call at 10:00 (3AM in Ireland). I was expecting a call from my brother in Philadelphia, but it turned out to be my Dad congratulating me on the win. That was the thing about Dad, he was also interested in the things that interested his kids.

Many of you know Dad as a Manchester City supporter, but those who really knew him know his heart was with Manchester United. Dad’s loyalty was always local. Boy, did he love the fact that a kid from up the street would become one of the greatest soccer players of his generation (Roy Keane for the uninitiated). Dad was also a patriot and would often correct me if I didn’t think of Northern Ireland as being Ireland.

Dad was not just a spectator when it came to the sports his kids competed in. Dad would unselfishly devote enormous amounts of time in helping with the Dolphin Swim team where he would manage the team and be a part of the crew working the meet. Dad tirelessly devoted himself to the Community Games movement, believing that all kids in all sports should have a chance to compete. Some of my fondest memories were travelling to Butlins every September to compete in what felt like a mini-Olympics to us. All the while he had time to drive us to swim meets and practice. Never once did I hear him complain about doing any of this.

Dad always saw the best in people. I never remember my Dad bad-mouthing anyone and, trust me, there was plenty of opportunity. Although my father’s professional titles always bore the manager title, there is no doubt this title in some way undersold him. My father was a leader pure and simple who inspired those around him to be better.

I’ve always felt that the mark of a man is the impression he leaves behind. The ripples that Dad left reverberate around the World. It’s easy to see my father’s personality reflected in his seven kids and 15 grandkids. If there is one word I could use to describe my Dad, it is grit. My father suffered from the debilitating effects of Rheumatoid Arthritis most of his adult life. Yet I don’t remember my dad ever missing work, ever missing a swim meet or ever missing a significant sporting event.

There is no doubt that my career as an Engineer was fostered by my Dad. I now lead a division at Amazon that creates the technology that serves trillions of pieces of content to the Amazon website. So, the next time you’re browsing around on Amazon consider the fingerprints left by my father on it, for it is his mentorship that drove me into this field. Imagine for a moment, the example set by a man living in a house sandwiched somewhere between Dillons Cross, Ballyvolane, Mayfield and the Glen. He had such a profound effect on a small boy growing up there that it resulted in that small boy going on to create a system that almost every American uses on a daily basis.

Another cool thing is that it’s not too often one can say their Dad worked in such diverse fields as a radio officer in the merchant navy travelling to remote places such as the Middle East, designing missile guidance systems, and creating test equipment for the nuclear industry. That’s pretty impressive stuff from a man raised on a farm in a remote area of Waterford.

I don’t know if Mom and the siblings know, but in the evenings when I used to sneak out for a cigarette Dad would usually follow me out and give me the familiar nod for a cigarette. I don’t even think he cared too much for the cigarette, but he wanted to engage in conversation. If we ever hit politics then it might often move into a two cigarette discussion. I don’t know if this was against protocol, but yesterday I sneaked a couple of cigarettes into his jacket pocket just so he’s always ready for that next conversation.