

Tim Searcy - Eulogy 10th November '22 courtesy of Joe Welburn-

Tim was born on 8th March 1938 at the Manor Farm Tibshelf. He was christened in the Local Parish Church. His birth certificate shows that he was christened Joseph Francis Wetton Searcy. This is a name he rarely used, from an early age he was called Tim.

When he was a baby he was serenaded by a Mrs Wood who used to help out at bath times with a catchy little song “Bye oh bye My little Tim wash him in a dripping tin, when he’s wet, dry his chin, bye oh bye my little Tim”, he loved the tune responded to the words and so he became Tim.

This has been a bit tricky at times, for instance when he had major surgery in Sheffield for an aorta transplant the surgeon tried to arouse him calling him Joseph, he didn’t respond, fortunately his sister Marion was present and put matters right, and again more recently in Hospital in Chesterfield when his sister Barbara corrected matters, however I am jumping too far ahead.

Tim went to the primary school in Tibshelf. He was also invited into the Tibshelf Church Choir, he had a lovely Soprano voice and became the lead choir boy. The church had a large choir and he enjoyed the singing, particularly at Xmas when he led the choir procession into church singing the solo “Once in David’s city”.

He was a bright pupil; passed the 11 plus exam and went on to Tupton Hall Grammar school. He had a flair for Art, the Senior Art Mistress Miss Marshal gave him a very warm reference and I quote

“I have taught JFW Searcy for 6 years and in that time he has proved to be the most outstanding pupil I have ever known. He obtained an extremely good result at ordinary level and a distinction at Advanced level. He possesses a most adventurous imagination which he has applied to both experiments in craftwork, a drawing and painting. His work is characterised by a conscientious attitude throughout.”

She also encouraged him to go to Art school and introduced him together with some of his work to the head of the Art College in Worksop. He in turn was impressed So much so that he recommended Tim for a scholarship to the Slade School of Art in London. He was accepted and started in the Autumn Term October 1957.

The Slade as it is generally called is part of University College London, which by the way was rated the Best University in the world 5 years ago and is still in the top ten. I say this with a degree of pride as I too attended, starting at the same time. The University lodgings department was available to help new students find accommodation. Tim was offered a room in Bentham Hall in Cartwright Gardens. The college in Gower Street is a ten minute walk away so it was very easy getting to and from lectures.

Bentham Hall was a fantastic introduction to life away from home, there could only have been 50 or 60 students but they were from all disciplines, half were 1st year and half second year,

I think that Tim was the only Art student. I too was a freshman and sharing a room with another fresher Robert Clifford. The three of us got on well together. We met in the queue for supper – Bentham Hall provided evening meals and Breakfast. Seating on a first come first served. We often arranged to meet first and eat together. The friendships that were formed have lasted to this day, and I am so pleased that Robert who now lives in Austria is here to join in this last farewell’

It was surprising how often we bumped into each other in the Hall. Usually in the queue for the telephone, always after 6 when the cheap rates started. Tim was worried about his sister Dorothy who was expecting her first baby and running late. I was wanting to check on my sister as my parents were abroad and she was unsettled at school.

Then we met for auditions to the College choir, which we both joined. Xmas term was the most demanding preparing for Bach’s mass in B minor. We were joined by The College Orchestra for the last rehearsals and then we played in The Quakers Hall to a full house. And of course, there was the Xmas Carol Service which was well received too.

At the beginning of the second year Paul Robeson visited England and the choir was involved in a concert with him in St Pauls Cathedral, Tim was involved and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. He loved his music.

After two years we knew that we would have to leave the hall to make way for a new batch of freshers and we agreed to share a flat for our last year.

We decided how much we could afford and that we should look for somewhere within easy reach of college. Robert and Tim found a lovely 3 bedroomed flat in Hampstead, 2a Upper Park Road, in fact it was half a house with lots of space for each to be able to work independently. It was about 100yds from Belsize Park tube station, it was on the main bus route from Euston to Hampstead, and just over half an hours walk from the college; and it was priced within our budget.

Everything worked very well. It was the first time any of us had been seriously independent. Tasks seemed to allocate themselves without much discussion and we continued amicably until we left. We all had to work hard for finals, Tim perhaps less so as a large part of his course was practical and had to be done in college or in various art galleries. He did however bring a painting home which just needed touching up namely a copy of

“A Nymph by the Stream” by Renoir.

This was to be submitted for assessment as part of his final examination. The painting was and I think still is on display in the National Gallery in London. Permission to make the copy had to be acquired and then Tim was allowed to take his equipment into the Gallery for an agreed number of sittings and paint a copy. It had to be oil on canvas. The original is 66.7 x 122.9cm the size of the copy had to be proportionately reduced. Tim said he always had an interested audience in the gallery, particularly as it approached completion and he used to enjoy bringing the face of the painting to life by a splash of white paint in the corner of each eye, and he enjoyed explaining what he was doing. He gave us a demonstration by blanking out the eyes and then bringing them back to life with his splashes of paint. Fascinating to watch.

The Antique market in Portobello Road was a weekend must, as was a coffee in La Ronde in Baker Street. I think that our finances must have been fairly robust as we ate well and even bought the occasional antique from the Market. Tim loved the Theatre and went quite often albeit in the Gods. The prices then were manageable. One particularly memorable show was "The Merry Widow." Memorable for me in that he invited his younger sister Marion down to stay with us to see it and have a look around London.

I was quite taken with Marion, it was an unusual introduction as I met her sitting on the steps of 2a Upper Park Road when I came back from college. She was waiting patiently for Tim who had missed her at the station. Fortunately, Tim had given her the address and instructions in case he was delayed. The result of this casual meeting was a request by me to Tim some 4 years later to be my best man at the wedding.

The summer passed quickly, and we all had excellent results for our finals. Tim particularly so.

His reference from the famous Slade professor Sir William Coldstream was very good.

I quote it verbatim:

Mr Searcy is well known to me as he followed the course leading to the University of London Diploma in Fine Art which he gained in June 1960. Mr Searcy is a talented young artist and while he was with us did very good work in drawing painting and sculpture.

Tim invited me to stay for a couple of weeks with him in Tibshelf, before we started out on our respective careers. He loved the countryside and we walked for miles Marion joined us a lot of the time and a favourite walk was across the fields to Hardwick Hall. Tim was an excellent guide he was particularly fond of the Tapestries

Tim decided that the next step in his career should be teaching. This would give him time to look after his aging parents and to develop his painting. To this end he enrolled on a course at Kings College Newcastle leading to the Art Teachers Diploma of Education.

He excelled at all the aspects of the course and found that he enjoyed teaching. He made a lifetime friend of the land lady in the house where he lodged, but at the end of the year was ready to return home and start working.

He applied for the post of Art Master at Chesterfield School and was immediately accepted

I will read an excerpt from his recommendation from the University of Durham

Mr Searcy is a versatile and inventive artist with wide interests. He has a main interest in Fine Art but a practical knowledge of Pottery, Textile Design and Silversmithing. In his teaching practice Mr Searcy has taught boys and girls in Secondary Modern and Grammar schools and has proved a stimulating teacher of art and crafts. His class control has seen no difficulty and he has succeeded in capturing his pupils' interest with rewarding results.

Tim started at Chesterfield School in September 1961, Art was not considered to be a serious subject at the time and the facilities were at best mediocre. He was persistent in pressing for changes and was able to improve the standing of the Art department, Mr Glister the headmaster said

“He not only fulfilled the promise of his good qualifications but increased in Stature as a school master and gave a really first class service in the Art Dept. He is one of the best Art Masters I have ever known. He went on to say he is particularly well balanced and has a sincere feeling for Art as a means of education and a way in which personality can be developed. He sees Art as a means of correlation with other subjects and activities, and each year has given excellent service to the school by preparing with his students the stage sets and also making the costumes for all the school plays

He has prepared students for GCSE O and A Levels and his results have been good.

His genuine interest and sincere approach have been appreciated by his pupils and there has been no trouble at all with discipline.

During the planning of the new School Buildings Tim helped by designing the facilities for the new Art Dept. and designed the tiles for the new corridors helping with the choice of décor.

He had a sharp tongue and you certainly wouldn't want to be on the end of it but he used it sparingly and relied on the respect his pupils held for his talents and his ability to express them. This respect developed into a mature friendship with many of the pupils which still exists today.

Tim was put forward to oversee the Art departments in the region, he thought about it and although it would have been a nice promotion he decided that he would leave teaching and develop the outside interests that he had for some time been developing.

He loved collecting Antiques he had started to play the cello; he had become interested in spinning and weaving, and he was still looking after his mother and father. He also loved travelling around England. He had been able to combine these activities with his teaching, but was finding it impossible to expand as he was still living at home and going into Chesterfield each day. He needed a workshop.

Friends suggested he look at the neglected Chapel in Ashover. Stone Built and sturdy but only had an entrance a tower and a large room with a very high ceiling. Tim was enchanted at the prospect of having somewhere which could be developed into what it is today, but my oh my what a mammoth and demanding task and what a challenge to work up a design that was practical. Tim was a perfectionist so it wasn't going to be Gerry built, it had to be solid and worthy of the building it would enhance. Tim had many willing helpers without whom this task would never have been completed, He thoroughly enjoyed it, searching all Derbyshire for the right timbers, then cleaning them measuring and fitting them. Anyone who has visited Butts chapel can only be impressed by the massive beams that support the first floor and wonder how they were fitted into the walls with basic tools.

Tim was very lucky to find that not only did he have excellent friends, but skilful and able ones too and of course an excellent builder in John Smith. It was John I think who said to Tim we cannot knock modern nails into this lovely wood we need antique ones. Just the challenge for Tim Apparently a local hospital was changing all the wooden beds for new metal ones and were planning to burn the old ones in the Ashover Quarry. Lo and behold buckets full of old nails were found in the ashes.

As soon as the first floor was in place Tim was able to store his collections and enlarge upon them, initially spinning and weaving equipment, the Chapel was only a storage facility at this stage, but it graduated into a workshop, and finally it was extended so that he could live and work in the same building.

For the first few years after leaving teaching, he lived at home looking after his parents, he purchased an old Volkswagen mobile home and took his mother and father on trips to Devon, they loved the Foss way, and to Scotland, but when they passed away he moved permanently into the Chapel and made it into a very comfortable home. It has spectacular views across the Ashover countryside which he loved. He was always so positive and his enthusiasm was catching. If it was cold

wet and windy we would be able to enjoy and appreciate more the next warm day. I thought about Tim the other day when I looked out of the bedroom window it was foggy, and rain was drizzling down on a real November day. I could imagine him saying but Joe just look at the way in which the mist softens the harsh outline of the trees and brings out their beauty. It reminded me too of the many times he would suggest we went to his favourite Bluebell woods, or later in the year visit a poppy field he had found. I can remember now how he persuaded Marion and I to break an early morning return journey to look at a field he had found that was full of dandelions. He wanted to see whether they had seeded. It was worth the trip as it was just daybreak and the rising sun lit a field that was nearly full of dandelions with their fragile stalks and seed heads glistening in the sun waiting patiently for a breeze to take them all away.

Tim loved collecting antiques his favourite by far was Denby pottery, and he has amassed a collection that would enhance a museum. He was first attracted to Denby as his Aunt Winnie used to work for the Bourne Wheeler family who owned the Denby factory. When it was running into hard times, she saved it from going under by designing an attractive new range of pottery and helping sort out the finances. Tim felt a family connection and pursued his interest for decades. Even when he was quite ill he went with Roland to follow up an advert in the middle of a council estate in the Wolverhampton where someone had found an interesting pot in an attic during a house clearance. He returned to the chapel with a smile on his face and a large jar in his hand.

I won't go into all the other ranges of antiques that Tim collected, clocks, pianos, paintings, furniture, but will say a few words about his spinning and weaving

He enjoyed spinning and weaving and would often use his own dyes and he joined the National Spinning and Weaving Society to meet some like-minded people. He enjoyed the meetings and workshops and slowly became very involved in their affairs. He travelled around the country giving lectures to schools and interested groups. He was elected chairman of the Society and held local meetings in the Chapel where he could demonstrate on his own equipment. He took parties of interested individuals out to the Hebrides to see the cottage weaving industries at work.

He wove several splendid tapestries and created a reputation for his work.

His masterpiece is before you. Tim was commissioned by the church to create a tapestry celebrating the millennium. He decided to weave a one of 2000 rectangular but different coloured sections, each section to represent a year since Christ was born. He decided to design and incorporate the flower head of a dandelion in the tapestry to represent the fragility of time.

It is a large tapestry as you can see and a heavy one. Again Tim was helped by friends, particularly Tony Yorke to make a frame strong enough to keep the shape of the rectangles as the weaving proceeded.

When completed Tim donated the Tapestry to the Church. It has since been loaned to various exhibitions.

Tim had many interesting tales to tell about his time as Chairman of the spinners and weavers. From times in the Hebrides with the guild , speaking at schools, and attending exhibitions, but the most entertaining one was when he was called a couple of days before an exhibition he was planning to attend. The organiser asked if he could come a couple of hours early. When he asked why, the organiser said Princess Diana will be attending the opening and would like a preview of the exhibition. She has asked me to find a knowledgeable guide and please make sure it is someone who is tall and interesting. Tim turned up looking very elegant and when they met he said Diana was absolutely charming. She apologised for wanting an early preview but she was hoping for a clear explanation of what she was seeing when no one was around, she would then be able to ask intelligent questions when they were.

They chatted and laughed the whole way round and at the end when looking at the last exhibit she giggled and said to Tim I think they have hung this one upside down. Tim laughed and said you may very well be right.

Tim will be sadly missed by family and friends, but we may all take some comfort in the knowledge that he died at home looking out through the picture windows to a view which he loved in all weathers, in the house that he had built, surrounded by the artefacts he had collected, and cared for by a loving sister.