Peter Nolan – Truly a Heart of Gold.

We lost Pete early on Wednesday August 10th 2022.

Every now and again, I have been very privileged indeed to encounter, and even be befriended by, an incredible and exceptional human being. Pete had a truly unique caring personality, with an incredible sense of humour and he has been a longstanding friend of mine for over 30 years.

Always the epitome of fashion, Pete is seen here preparing for Southend Carnival procession.

It was actually Peter himself who recently reminded me that I was already a member of Southend Model Railway Club when we first met there. Truthfully even now it still seems to me that Pete had always been a member, (although we did discover the Club had been founded before 1936 ;-). Sadly I can't actually remember our first meeting, but he was most likely wearing his "Biggles" style leather flying skull cap and goggles at the time..!

Back then, Peter was also actually working at my local "Dimland" bank. Later, he astonished me when he decided to move from such exciting clerical work, to fulfill his ambition to drive trains from Southend Victoria! He just loved it.

Peter was both a highly talented photographer and superb model maker, (specializing in modern image rail). Sharing these interests to a large extent, (give or take a century or two), I live, and will always sincerely live, in awe of his work.

When I announced my departure from the UK to USA to get married, Pete could not have been more positive, exclaiming "Good for you Mate"! He even insisted on driving me, accompanied by my mother, to see me off at the airport. Pete then promptly followed up; by regularly keeping in touch with me, exchanging gifts and seeking out modelling supplies several times a year for me without fail for the next 23 years. Pete had an uncanny knack of finding the ideal technical materials and kits that I needed, often before I even knew I really needed them myself! Negotiating his Wallace & Gromit answering machine, we spoke, sometimes at great length, about our hobbies, politics, life, the world, the universe, and just about everything. The answer of course was always "42"...

Every Christmas a gift was always sent to me, well in advance, carefully wrapped in Christmas paper, with detailed instructions, even though he was lucky if he got *his* Christmas present from me before Easter! With every gift there was a carefully chosen transport image greeting card, and his latest inimitable, priceless, annual newsletter. These letters were *always* hilarious, reflecting his somewhat cynical and vastly amusing "Victor Meldrew" view of hobby, life, life at work and politics.

As a result, (and even now as I write..), I will continue to be surrounded by many, many, reminders through those generous gifts from Pete. He even sent me my favourite artist's calendars, (often more than one), every year for over 20 years. I have of course kept every calendar, greeting card and most, if not all, of his hilarious annual letters. Peter was nothing if not prolific with his traditional hand written words.
His hobby and personal support has been truly priceless for me over the last 23 years.

But, it was caring about people where Pete was at his best and most generous. For example; I introduced him to my 98 year old WW2 RAF veteran friend Grayham. I had taken Grayham's rare WW2 (East Africa) Flying Log home to USA to make a digital copy of it, before securely sending Grayham's rare log direct to The Imperial War Museum in Duxford. I was quite unable to travel myself at this time, but Pete decided it was "no problem" to pick up Grayham all the way in Bletchley, so that he could officially present his Navigator's log to the IWM archive in Duxford himself. Pete then assisted Grayham on a guided tour of the Duxford museums, before driving him all the way back home again. Grayham was over the moon with this trip. Pete also joined me on a visit to celebrate Grayham's 100th Birthday with his family, opting to join us for both Holy Mass and dinner.

An especially fond memory of Pete was a stay I had with him at his home. He insisted that I stay with him, but I was embarrassed to find that he had given up his bedroom for me. He was sleeping on the floor! Of course I was not happy that he did this so, and, although I knew Pete would have made that same sacrifice again and again, I never repeated that arrangement. Perhaps it was just as well. I had such a wonderful relaxing time on that visit that it became the only trip to the UK when I have ever been tempted not to return to my American wife, home and family!

On my most recent short trip Pete, once again, insisted on driving all the way to Heathrow to meet me. We met and, despite the overcast day, we unexpectedly stood chatting in drizzle for an hour at LHR taking pictures of the aircraft taking off. Pete then drove me to my hotel in Hornchurch, and then straight off to John Duttfield model shop, in Chelmsford.. I bought quite a lot of enamel paint there and a gift for him too even though he vociferously protested about receiving it at the time. 'Learning that I was still looking for more paint, he then promptly drove me all the way to the Phoenix Precision paint factory itself in Wickford; to make sure I got them all! If that was not enough, a day or so later, he drove my friend Stephen Smith and I on a wonderful day trip right out in Braintree to visit my friend Bill Hannaford, before taking me back to LHR the next day.

These few examples will, I hope, give you a flavour of what a priceless friend Pete was. His care, consideration and attentiveness extended far beyond our shared hobbies, as I am sure his wife Di can testify to, better than I can. My condolences of course to Pete's wife Di, the family and all those of you who, like me, were privileged to know someone so warm, welcoming, considerate and truly extraordinary.

On our very last call, following a near normal discussion of our interests and current events, I thanked Pete as best as I could. Pete simply responded:

"We're mates. That's what mates do".

(May eternal rest be granted to Pete O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May Peter rest in peace. Amen).

Left to Right

Southend Carnival.

Southend MRC AGM.

Southend Carnival.

Our club visit.

Pete's demonstration table at St. Clements Hall.

That amazing 2018 visit to Braintree.