

A Celebration of the life of
Cyrus Pundole

1970 – 2022

**Arbory Trust
Barton Glebe**

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1pm**

Prepared by :
Clare Delderfield
Humanists UK
Tel: 01223 837742
clare.delderfield@humanistceremonies.org.uk

♪ Take Five – Dave Brubeck Quartet ♪

I am pleased to welcome you all here today, to celebrate the life of Cyrus Pundole, or Cy as he was known to many.

We are all here to pay our respects, and then to say our goodbyes to this unique and special man.

We remember to as we sit here that there have been others who have known and loved Cyrus who may not be able to join us in person here today. I know that there are family members and friends will be joining us remotely, from places including the USA, India, Dubai and Malaysia. Whether in person here today, or remotely from around the world, you have all been a part of the journey of Cyrus's life and it is right that you are all here to remember him.

I first heard from Cyrus on 11th January. He had recently had the news that he was facing his last chance treatment, and he wanted to get his affairs in order, including planning for today. He had been given my details by a mutual friend and colleague of mine, Leigh, having decided that a humanist ceremony would best fit with his beliefs and outlook. We arranged for a Zoom meeting the following week, and I was struck when we met by his ability to address the practical issues that needed to be put in place, for the worst case scenario, which sadly turned out to be what happened, whilst also holding onto an energetic positivity about things he was looking forward to doing. Despite the outlook being bleak, he did not come across as being down, but full of purpose and drive.

We spent a good hour and a half talking about his life and his wishes, and we planned to talk again a week or so later, but he messaged me to say that he had been admitted back into Addenbrookes. Sadly, things didn't go the way he hoped for, and I was very sad to hear the news. Although it wasn't completely unexpected, for Cyrus or his family, I know that it is still such a shock, having

to adjust to this new reality without him and without his energy and enthusiasm being so present and constant.

However, one of the many gifts that he left for those he loved was the fact that he had done the thinking and planning about today. He had put the work in to make clear his wishes, and by that simple but uncommon act he had provided his family with the knowledge that the plans we have put together for today were in keeping with those wishes.

Cyrus thought carefully about his choice of ceremony. His family are Zoroastrian Parsees, and for Cyrus, although not someone who carefully followed or practiced the faith, he found that ritual aspects of the words of prayer that he was brought up with, helped him keep a link with his father and his heritage. He couldn't remember all the words of the prayers his father had recited, and which formed part of his upbringing, and he didn't even know the meaning of them all, but he found repeating them gave him a chance to be with his thoughts and feelings and to connect to his roots and his family. His brother Neville described Cyrus as someone who believed in Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds.

These are indeed good things that unite many people of different faiths and none. Humanists believe that this life we know is the only one we have, and believe in living that life to the full, whilst showing kindness to others and consideration for the world around us. There is much here that is in common with many people of faith. It is with these sentiments that today's ceremony for Cyrus will be conducted. Later at the graveside Neville will recite Ashem Vohu to reflect this part of Cyrus's heritage.

We will hear shortly about Cy's love of all sorts of music. He had put considerable thought into choosing the music for today. As we started the ceremony today we heard some of Take Five from the Dave Brubeck Quartet; a piece he loved. The other pieces we will hear today were also chosen by him.

Cyrus also shared with me when we met a little about the story of his life, both professionally and personally. But what shone through our conversation was not just the love and pride he had for his daughters, Zareena and Farah, but also that he wanted to make things as good for them as possible.

I hope that as we join here together to celebrate his life and to say our goodbye's, that this knowledge provides some comfort to all of you, but especially to Zareena and Farah. We are here, together, because it is specifically what your Dad wanted. He wanted to be with nature, he wanted to be close to his mum. He wanted for you all to stay on afterwards here, to chat and have some refreshments, maybe listening to Teenage Fan Club in the background. But mostly he wanted for his girls to be surrounded by the people who support and love them, safe in the knowledge that these were his wishes. It is a powerful gift to leave, and one that shows such care and forethought and an element of bravery.

As I discussed with Cyrus, following this ceremony and celebration of his life here in the lodge building we will gather together outside for a short committal at the graveside as we say a final goodbye.

So, now is the time to remember Cyrus with love, and all the joy we can muster. If we can remember his life with an ounce of the enthusiasm he had to live it, we will be doing him proud! So, we will now look back a little on Cyrus's life reflecting on some of the times and the people that have been important to him.

Remembering Cyrus

Cyrus was born in Peckham on 1st June 1970 to Edwina and Russi Pundole. When he was still a toddler, his parents moved to Saffron Walden and bought a Mini Market & Launderette, which the family lived above. As Cyrus became old enough he would help in the shop, and he enjoyed having the responsibility of counting the money and helping out with jobs there. Across the road from the shop lived cousin Diniar and his wife Anoo. Cyrus spent a huge amount of time with them in childhood. They now live in New Jersey. Cyrus told me that it was Diniar that got him following Manchester United whilst also supporting Cambridge United, saying that his cousin's enthusiasm was infectious and a huge influence on him.

Cyrus told me that he was quite shy in those early days, and certainly became self-conscious of living above a popular local shop as he entered his teenage years. His shyness clearly didn't stop him making true and lasting friendships at school though, and I would like to welcome forward David Moloney and then Nick Watts to pay their tributes to Cyrus.

Tribute from David Moloney

I'm Dave and I have known Cyrus since we were both 11 years old. I joined our school a term later than everyone else and he was a really good friend to me right from the start. A strong and unusual characteristic of his then – and for as long as I knew him through the rest of his life – was how natural and open and honest he was, how interested he was in other people's lives, and how easy he was to talk to. These have always seemed to me quite rare qualities – particularly in an Essex boys' comprehensive in the 1980s! – and I've always thought of Cy as someone unique, and a privilege to know.

We shared several interests – football the main one – and a highlight of our early teens which we would often remember over the years was a Subbuteo table football league that we ran with another friend, Murray. This involved visiting each other's houses for home and away matches on alternate weekends, and so I got to know Cy's home and his mum and dad quite well. I was a bit jealous of the fact that he lived above the shop and had ready access to all the

comics, football stickers and sweets. Cy often brought to school the latest edition of Smash Hits magazine, the source of much important information about one of his other passions – music. He had proper music knowledge, it seemed to me; all his life he loved to talk about it and to recommend bands that he thought I might like

There was an intensity in Cyrus, applied to all his interests, and the ways he set about everything in life – his work, preparing his food, keeping himself fit. In recent years I felt the same intensity as he talked about what has been going on in the world politically, and also as he talked about the natural world, the plants and the birds that came to his garden. This was a part of his friendship too – the seriousness with which he considered his relationships, the interest that he took in every aspect of everyone's lives, always with other people's very best interests at heart. I genuinely can't remember a bad word that he ever said about anyone he knew. He cared about people, and society, and the world.

We kept in touch over the years following school, and before families came along we did quite a bit of travelling together, driving across Europe for holidays and watching England football matches. These journeys were never, ever dull (although I did wish he would drive a bit slower sometimes) – because he could talk and talk about everything and anything. I don't mean that in a negative way; Cy could never be described as boring! I think it was because of that genuine nature he had that he was such a pleasure to talk to and to listen to. I should also say that he was incredibly funny, and he could always find a silly or unusual angle on just about every subject while interrogating right to the heart of the matter! I'm going to miss those long, rambling conversations, the bizarre tangents on which he would shoot off into even more fascinating territory, so much.

I think it's going to take me a long time to process that Cyrus has died, that he's not going to be there for more of these conversations in the future, that we won't be able to laugh together or reminisce together again. It's really quite scary when I start to think about it deeply. I'm sure that's true for so many of us here. It's one of those mysteries of the universe that is too difficult to comprehend.

But – Cy was so special, so unique, so distinct as a person and as a friend. He has left such a deep impression on my life that I think his voice, conversations we had, things he told me and questions he asked me, silly songs that he sang and observations that he made about life, the universe and everything, will stay with me for ever.

Tribute from Nick Watts

I'm lucky enough to stand here today and say that I've been a friend of Cy's for almost 40 years. We met at Newport Grammar, as it was then, and our friendship developed from there.

During that time we would regularly play 5 a side football, where he quickly managed to gain the nickname of the wasp. Now whether that was down to him wearing his beloved yellow and black of Cambridge Utd, or the fact that he would fly around the pitch at 100 miles an hour annoying the opposition, and sometimes his teammates, I'll let you be the judge.

Interestingly though another sport we played together he was almost the complete opposite to how he played football. Now typically Golf isn't a fast game anyway, but Cy managed to take 'slow play' to a whole new level. Before we even got started he would almost always turn up late, time keeping was never his strong point! Once playing though he was very methodical about his shots, but most of the time it was either fiddling around with his clubs or his bag falling off his trolley.

Another passion of Cy's was of course his love of music and what a varied taste he had too. He never ceased to amaze me with his deep held knowledge, always coming up with a fact about an artist or his ability to reel off album tracks one after another. He was the catalyst for many of the groups I now follow and I've lost count of the number of gigs we've been to, over the years. One of these gigs just happened to be on the same day he was moving house. Now most people wouldn't dream of doing much else, let alone go to a gig on the same day they move house, but for Cy he had no second thoughts. I picked him up that evening, with boxes littered all over the place and no idea where the cat was!

Throughout the years I've known Cy, we've never lost touch. Even when we went months without speaking or seeing each other, it was never awkward and was always as if we'd only seen each other the day before. He was always interested in what you were doing and it was never about himself. Just the most kind-hearted, supportive friend you could wish to have and I'm proud to say he was also my best man at our wedding. He will be greatly missed, but certainly never forgotten, they broke the mould with him.

It is good to hear what good friends Cyrus had from early in life. His time in Saffron Walden was very happy and those friendships have clearly lasted the test of time.

A more difficult time for Cyrus when his family moved to Haverhill, when his dad retired and his mum took a part-time job in a school. He didn't find the move easy, and it was around the time that he was struggling with his A levels and with finding the path he wanted to take in life. Having not gone to university, he took a part time job working in Marks and Spencer, but also volunteered at the local BBC Radio station. It was here that his early interest in journalism really began.

I believe it was David who suggested he should consider studying journalism, and he applied for and then started a journalism course in Harlow, setting him on the course of a career that always provided him with work.

After his course in journalism, he moved to Daventry to work on the Daventry Express which he did for a few years before moving back to Cambridge to become the sports editor for the Cambridge News. It was sub editing that he settled on and he became the Chief Sub editor for a Hertfordshire group of local papers.

Although he enjoyed being a sub editor, he found that the constant, immovable tight deadlines created a stressful high-pressure environment, which didn't always suit him, though he excelled in this aspect of newspaper work. He started doing some weekend sports shifts for the Sunday Times and later moved to full-time freelance sub editing work. He told me how he was always very lucky to have work come his way, always having jobs lined up when others came to an end. This included work with the Independent and later the I, and also the Metro. He also worked more locally, including for a set of specialist magazines at Europa, based close-to-home on Newmarket Road. He really enjoyed being his own boss and managing his own work.

In 2002 he met Rifat and they married less than a year later and bought a house in Romsey. He loved this part of Cambridge and I know that when he and I spoke he talked to me about it very much as 'home' for him, describing the area, and the local groups and organisations he got involved we.

It is clear that this area of Cambridge was very much a community he was part of, not just a place he lived. This was of course wrapped up with becoming a father to Zareena and Farah who were born in 2005 and 2006. On Fridays Cyrus would be the one at home with the girls. He started going to a toy library which he later helped to run, and this brought him into contact with lots of new people and new circles of friends.

When the girls were quite small he was often working, so wasn't always around, but he would regularly take them to the local park on Ross Street where he taught them to ride their bikes and played games with them. These are some of their earliest memories.

He really enjoyed taking the girls to the classes that they did. Farah did lots of ballet and dance classes and Cyrus took her each week, and made a new group of friends, who were known as the 'Ballet Dads', who would go to a café called Urban Shed each week whilst the children danced. They even had their own reserved mugs on a shelf that the owner got down for them as they arrived each week.

As a father Cyrus was always planning special things to do with the girls. For about 10 years he helped to care for his mum who was very special to him, and he visited her every week in Haverhill. After she died, he was determined that he would build great memories with his girls. He wanted to show them different parts of the world and introduce them to people from his wider family. In 2011 they went to Turkey together, and in 2012 they visited family on the East Coast of the United States, including in New York and New Jersey.

In 2013, they visited family further afield in a memorable trip to Malaysia. Cyrus, as ever, approached all these trips with enthusiasm and excitement.

In 2012 he was absolutely enthralled by the London Olympics and he entered many of the ticket lotteries which resulted in quite a few trips to the Olympics park and to see various sports. The girls don't remember a huge amount about those trips, but the lasting memory is his excitement and enthusiasm and how special it all was. As a sports lover he must have been in his element!

He took them to see Cambridge United to play at Wembley, and the year the Tour de France came through Cambridge caused great excitement. Clearly trips and events were always very important, especially if they included nature or sport!

When he and I met, the trip he spoke most about was the one he and the girls did together in 2019; The holiday in Iceland. It was just a few months before he became ill, which made the memories even more precious. The girls told me that he researched and booked it all himself and that he was thrilled to be able to share so many beautiful and unique aspects of that unusual natural landscape with them both. On one occasion they visited a waterfall in extreme wind, and the girls stayed in the car, whilst Cyrus went closer for a look, but when he'd been gone a few minutes they began to worry that he'd been blown over the edge. But of course he'd just become totally absorbed in the moment, as he so often was; enthused by the natural world around him, and later they were able to laugh at the video that Farah had recorded on her phone, worrying about what terrible fate had befallen him.

The characteristic theme that comes through over and over again, is Cyrus's enthusiasm. We have heard already about his love of music. He was so enthusiastic about this interest that he would even take part in record store days, starting at 5am on a Saturday, pre planning his vinyl steals and then enjoying breakfast with fellow fanatics, or 'nerds' as Neville referred to them. Zareena told me that he was involved in a number of music communities online, and that these had provided a real sense of community and focus for him during the early parts of the pandemic when his illness meant that he necessarily had to live alone. After he died, they posted on his Facebook page and were amazed by the number of responses from the online music communities of which Cyrus was a member.

Another thing that was important to him during this time of forced separation was his cat Olive. He really took a lot of comfort from her company.

Again from when the girls were younger, Cyrus was a member of a local book club, and met good and longstanding friends through that group too. He loved to do quizzes, or put together music quiz rounds for others, using his extensive music knowledge.

In recent years, especially during his illness, he really got into cooking. He revelled in making and exploring different dishes, including frittata and fish curry. During lockdown, his family bought him an ice-cream maker for his birthday, and every time the girls visited him in the garden during summer lockdown he would have a new flavour for them to try, although Zareena admitted that Farah was more adventurous with tasting them than she was. He loved trying and developing new recipes.

Another major enthusiasm of Cyrus's was the drama group he joined when the girls were very small. He discovered a real love of performance and passion for alternative theatre. He enjoyed performance and the world of creativity that this opened up to him. I would like to welcome forward Richard to talk about this now.

Tribute from Richard

My name's Richard. I'm part of a performance group called in situ: that Cyrus was deeply involved in for more than 15 years. When I told people that he had died, this is what they said:

I am still incredulous

such a nice man

an inspiring actor

his joy of life

that expressive face, those hands

his darting movement

a ball of energy

I have moments of feeling the loss and feeling very sad and not quite understanding it

Endlessly positive and encouraging

He was in the first performance I saw. His energy and commitment

I am so upset

I will never forget him

He used to go off at tangents. He was great to photograph

Notorious misreadings and mishearings

I remember racing Cyrus in King Lear. He would always start faster than me and he'd always beat me

His courage and upbeatness in the face of illness

His impish sprightly energy

O Richard this is such sad news I'm struggling to process it such a great bloke
I will never forget him
His acting took my breath away
Warm, talented, memorable
Gentleness kindness wisdom
I will never forget him
Fun and laughter
Cyrus running
Cyrus crouching
Never losing energy
Never losing focus
Such a beautiful person
Hugs and tears
So difficult to understand that we won't see or feel that again
I'll never forget him.
We'll never forget him
We love you Cyrus.
We'll never forget you.

One of the things Cyrus most enjoyed about the drama group was when they performed environmental theatre, outdoors at Wandlebury. He knew the entire site like the back of his hand and he really loved it there.

Nature and the natural world were so important to him. This was demonstrated in so many ways. He had a passion for Lake Malawi fish, including maintaining and caring for a tank full of fish and sourcing specialist tropical fish from various rare breeders, with them occasionally arriving through the normal post! He loved the annual Christmas Day trip to Wyken Fen. He liked little better than a nature walk; he participated in and helped to organise Park Runs.

He even ran half marathons. He cycled and watched cycling with his usual enthusiasm.

During his treatment he took the girls and Trip to Lakenheath – watching the birds and sitting and watching the sunset with them both. He wanted to share his love of these things with them and for them to experience those things with him. I think we can say that he succeeded in that. Family was so important to him, and as with everything else in his life he loved them with enthusiasm and commitment.

I know that he hoped that he would have time to do so many more things with his girls, and to enjoy many more experiences. He talked about, for example, wanting to go back to Old Hunstanton, and to visit or be visited by family members. He knew it was unlikely that all these things would happen, but it didn't dent his enthusiasm for life and its possibilities.

Diane Ackerman once wrote *"I don't want to get to the end of my life and find that I lived just the length of it. I want to have lived the width of it as well."* Some people live for many years but never manage to cram in as much life as Cyrus did. He crammed as much living as he possibly could, squeezing experiences, enthusiasm and memories into every crack and crevice.

Even with the challenges of his illness and the pandemic, Cyrus found ways to live richly and with enthusiasm and commitment. He looked his likely death in the eye, but still went forward with hope, and with compassion and love for those around him. What a lesson and example to us all.

Whilst we can rightly mourn his loss and feel anger at his life having been cut short, we cannot deny the quality and richness of the life Cyrus had, and the tributes and the contributions from his friends and family today have demonstrated that so clearly.

Let's take a moment now to pause and reflect in our own ways on what Cyrus has meant to us all, and whilst we do we will listen to the second piece of music he chose for just this moment. It is the beautiful "Who Knows Where the Time Goes" by the Fairport Convention.

♪ Who Knows Where the Time Goes - the Fairport Convention ♪

It is the uniqueness of each human life that is the basis of our grief in bereavement, because you could look throughout the whole world and there is not now and nor will there ever be anyone like Cyrus. But he lives through his girls and in the memories of all who have known him.

Although Cyrus is no longer a visible part of your lives, he will always be a part of your family or your circle of friends through the influence he has had on you and the very unique and special part he has played in your lives. His enthusiasms and his ability to live life to its full width will inspire so many of you to grab life with both hands and live it to the full.

Every time you see a sunset, hear the birds singing, watch a football match, hear a particular song or eat a certain flavour of ice cream, or so many other experiences, his love of life will sing out to you and remind and inspire you to make the most of your time on this earth. It is a good and precious gift for him to leave for us all. We have much to thank him for.

On behalf of the family, I would like to thank you all for coming here today and helping to pay tribute to Cyrus and for helping his wishes to be honoured.

Now, there is one last thing we need to do to honour his wishes for today, and that is to lay his body to rest in this place that he chose. So, in just a moment we will make our way to the graveside. I have brought some rosemary with me, which is the plant of remembrance, so that when we have committed his body to its final resting place, we can leave a memory of him using a spring of rosemary before we take our leave. Before we make our way outside to say our last goodbye's to Cyrus we will listen to the last piece of music chosen by Cyrus for today. It is David Bowie with Starman.

♪ Starman – David Bowie ♪

At the Graveside

We stand here together today; in this beautiful and quiet place to commit Cyrus's body to its final resting place.

Before we say our final goodbye to Cyrus, I would like to welcome his brother Neville forward to say a few words of prayer.

Neville to share a prayer

As we commit Cyrus's body to the safe ground that nurtures and sustains us all, I will share an old Celtic blessing in dedication of his memory.

***The peace of the running water to you
The peace of the flowing air to you
The peace of the quiet earth to you
The peace of the shining stars to you
And the love and care of us all to you.***

Cyrus will rest safely here amongst the natural world that he so loved, and close to his mother. The sun, the moon and the stars will shine upon Cyrus and he will always be a part of this place; through the warmth of summer and the sleep of winter; through the freshness of spring and the mists of autumn; he will be at peace.

Please take some Rosemary to leave a thought or memory for Cyrus and take as long as you need to say your goodbyes before making your way back to the lodge.