Reflection on a Life: Terry Joint

To The Royal Air Force Movements Association and the United Kingdom Mobile Air Movements Squadron Old Bods Association,

Subject: Terry Joint, who died aged 74 on the 15th of November 2020 at Costa del Sol Hospital.

Whenever I read the sad news of the ‘final postings’ of Mover colleagues whom I knew in the seventies, I wonder about the lives they led since and regret never seeing them. This poignant reflection took a turn in these last 4 months when I found myself privileged by an opportunity to catch up with Terry Joint. This unexpected connection left me with some profound thoughts to share with you, especially those who remember him.

Terry is survived by his wife Dee and two daughters, Alex and Jenn, and a Brother and Sister Andy and Jennifer.

He faced health challenges in the last 6 years and has been confined to a wheelchair for the last 2 years. He never fully recovered from an operation last July, after which he moved to a [home near Marbella](https://cklaquinta.com/en/residential_care_home_book_visit/). He faced the many issues that occurred over his prolonged period of illness with quiet confidence and bravery.

That confidence and bravery left an indelible impression on those who had the privilege of knowing him.

Since last July I have been able to spend some quality time with him.  On a visit, we would sit under a pagoda next to the pool and talk of memories, events, and places, but mostly the amazing individuals or ‘Stars’ that we worked alongside. Terry was indeed a Star, as I will try to explain.

He explained on my first visit that despite his speech impediment, his brain was functioning as normal. He was able to use WhatsApp and email and enjoyed communicating.

Terry's journey through life was filled with confidence and bravery, in family, service, aviation, and business. He will be remembered most as the man who taught thousands of people to fly aircraft without engines.

Terry was born in 1949 and went to boarding school along with his rugby-playing older brother.

He joined the RAF in boys' service in 1965, and his initial career spanned the Middle and Far East, he told me about the closure of British bases, including Sharja, Aden, and Oman.

Terry discovered Gliding in Cypres at Kingsfield, he still remembered the joy of that first flight. In the 1970’s he was posted from Gan to Brize Norton then to Luqa and then to Lyneham.

For a couple of years, I worked on shift with Terry and would regularly hear stories of retrieval after long cross-country flights or things that ‘nearly’ went wrong.  His passion for gliding was infectious. Two movers, who were gliding and working with Terry in 1976, achieved the gold standard of becoming Airline Captains.  There will have been countless others since but as they both continued to visit Terry in Spain and I also worked with them, I will use their story to give a glimpse into his life.

During the scorching summer of ‘76’, while working on shift, Terry, extended an invitation to Mick Alexander to join Tim Jessop and himself at the gliding school in Colerne. Despite Mick's initial unfamiliarity with gliders, he seized the opportunity to escape the block during the four-day shift breaks. Mick retired in March 2020 as a senior Captain on Virgin's 747s.

Mick has maintained contact with Terry since then and in a heartfelt message, shared;

*"Over 47 years, our time together was filled with stories, feats, and adventures that would fill volumes. His life profoundly impacted mine and countless others. Terry changed my future and was always a steadfast friend, dependable in many situations. I will miss him and keep the memories."*

Tim Jessop, who retired in 2016 as a Training Captain on Easy Jet’s A320’, also owes much of his aviation success to Terry's enthusiasm.

Tim and Terry first met at RAF Abingdon on the Movers course and were posted to Gan Island, they both spoke of it being a ‘best’ time with adventures involving beaches, shark fishing, speed boats fun, games and the NAAFI.

Their paths kept crossing over the years, were both at Lyneham and gliding at Colerne by 1976.

Tim said of Terry

*“Terry’s enthusiasm, dedication and love of aviation were infectious.  We would visit him in Spain, wine and memories… He was dedicated to flying, it was in his heart, you could see that in the way he always had time for anyone who showed a keen interest. He was a great friend and will be sorely missed by all who knew him.”*

That is the story of just 2 people; there must be hundreds of similar stories of lives being made altered, or saved among the thousands of people he taught.

After 5 years at Lyneham Terry was seconded from trade group 18 to the staff at the RAF Gliding Centre at Bicester, where he would serve the final 8 years of his career. He reached the pinnacle of gliding qualifications becoming a triple diamond, full category instructor and examiner.  At this point, his passion became his career, no more flat floor loads on freezing nights to pay for the gliding, the gliding paid him.  He would surpass all others over time to become Chief Flying Instructor of the RAF Gliding and Soaring Association. An even more amazing achievement for a Sergeant Mover in an organization top-heavy with the ‘world's best pilots’.

He left the RAF on his 40th birthday in 1989, It was the end of an amazing career with even more adventures in front of him.

He took on the role of Chief Flying Instructor at Lasham in Hampshire the largest and most successful gliding club in the UK and (arguably) the second largest in the world.

Most of us Movers did not know about Terry’s life at Lasham, So I asked Tim Browning to add a few words.

*“At Lasham and more generally within the gliding movement, Terry was known as TJ.*

*On arrival at Lasham, TJ introduced winch launching replacing car tow as a method of getting*

*gliders quickly and cheaply into the air.  He restructured the training system introducing formal sign-off for competency in each aspect of flying. Many of the Lasham pilots of today took their first steps (myself included) in gliding under TJ’s direction. Most pilots will never forget that he seemed to have eyes in the back of his head and an uncanny knack of knowing what was going on at all times.*

*After finishing at Lasham in 1993 TJ (and his partner David Innes) set up Joint Aviation Services providing insurance for gliders. They had offices a couple of miles from Lasham. TJ always looked after his friends and his staff and cared deeply for them.*

*Terry was a lovely, funny, generous and very spirited man.  He knew how to inspire people, he*

*certainly appreciated a good party and contributed greatly to the social side of Lasham in the*

*1990’s.*

After 5 years Terry saw more lucrative opportunities in the aircraft insurance business he continued to be associated with Lasham until he flew his last glider in 1998 and moved to better things.

By the late 1990’s he had a wife, two daughters, a successful aviation insurance business and a Bentley.  His parents had moved to Spain in the 80’s so in regular visits they fell in love with Spain and moved to Beniajan, a Spanish village in Murcia the family moved there and he was able to run his business online.   While living in Spain he traveled the world, drove sports cars, and was a lavish host when his friends went to see him.

In 2010 during a holiday in the Maldives, he found a rare opportunity to visit Gan Island.  He said he felt like a ghost as he explored the buildings, and beaches while remembering the people of his time there.

For many years he suffered from diabetes and by 2016 it began to affect his mobility. He was confined to a wheelchair 2 years ago after which he had to employ a full-time qualified carer.

He was struck by a speech impediment 14 days after receiving a vaccine in 2022.

In July he had an operation on a tumor which left him needing the type of care that only a residential home can provide.

Only a few weeks before his death was lifting 2k dumbells, having speech therapy, and talking about his hopes of making a full recovery. His driving ambition was to get the British Legion home at Gallanos House where he could catch up with many people he had missed since moving to Spain.

Members of our amazing local British Legion were pleased to visit him and continued their support until his final day. Their President Ex Major Andy Nye got to know him and had organized a group of visitors.

Terry was in good spirits until Monday, 6th November, when he was taken to the Costa del Sol hospital.  He had an operation the Wednesday, and following the operation, his body could not recover.

On Friday, 10th November, he was unable to speak but was fully conscious and could communicate by squeezing my hand.  Having just received the Movements newsletter, I read through the list of Movers who were due to march at the cenotaph two days later. I asked him to squeeze my hand when he recognized a name. Of one hundred on the list, he responded to about thirty to forty; some (stars no doubt) were signaled with more than one squeeze, like he wanted to speak.

By the following Monday, his condition had deteriorated and despite the best efforts of amazingly dedicated staff, it continued until Wednesday 15th.   Three hours before he died, I said goodbye to him; on behalf of you all.  Like his parents, he left instructions for no funeral; so I stood the British Legion Guard of Honour down!

There will be a service for the scattering of his ashes at Lasham at a date to be announced.

Terry will be remembered fondly by his family, and as a ‘Star’ by those of us who worked and flew with him, and especially by those whom he taught the ‘way to the stars’.

R.I.P.

Patrick H. Meehan

[Fuengirola](https://www.google.com/search?q=Meehan+Fuengirola)

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