

# Albert Baird - A good man with utmost integrity

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*Address by Revd. Stephen Smyth, Christ Church Kilmore, at the funeral Saturday 6 August 2016*

Albert – a modest man who has asked for no flattery at his funeral. But really I believe we are not in danger of flattery, rather it would be difficult to do him justice.

Albert was well known to his friends and family for his wit and intelligence, his insight and compassion, and of his simple humanity.

Born in Dublin 1929, in Drumcondra, his father David was a grocer and his mother, Jessie, hailed from a farm in Killeel. In his own words Albert's Dublin "was the North Side stretching from the Bull Wall to the Phoenix Park". He had childhood memories of watching horse-drawn barges going through the loch at Dublin's Binns Bridge. In his summers he stayed at his relatives' farm at Glenloughin, and developed an enduring love of nature and working outdoors. Educated at Mountjoy School Dublin, Albert won a Sizarship in Mathematics, a scholarship into Trinity College Hons course in Maths. In 3rd year became a Scholar in Maths, entitled him to free Commons (evening meal) everyday, and occasionally had to say Grace in Latin, which he did without notes. Albert graduated from Trinity with a 1st class Hons degree in Mathematics.

After Trinity he continued studying for several years to become an Actuary.

Albert moved up to Belfast in 1965 with his work for Noble Lowndes, so he has lived longer in Northern Ireland than in the city of Dublin where he grew up. That was a milestone year - he also married Mabel in 1965 before starting family life. Albert has been a much-loved pillar of strength for his three children who have valued his support and sound advice over the years.

Albert took up playing tennis in his late teens in Cherrymount Lawn Tennis Club, and was still playing into his eighties with the Belfast Boat Club. Even after a fall from the top of a ladder had affected his powerful backhand, he looked forward to and very much enjoyed his annual trips to Portugal with his tennis pals.

An active member of the Belfast Rotary Club and President in 1993-94, Albert was deeply committed to their principles of helping those in need, fairness and building friendships across people and understanding between communities.

Despite working hard in his profession as a Pensions Actuary, Albert also made time to contribute in a much wider sense to society. For example, he was Director of the Blind Centre For Northern Ireland from 1987-2007. In 1992 he was appointed to the Down/Lisburn Trust as Deputy Chair and for nine years gave a deep commitment to provide the best health and social care to the community where he lived. Using his professional expertise he worked closely with the Executive Team – each month Albert went through the every line of the accounts helping to ensure the Trust remained within budget every year, enabling any surplus to be used to improve facilities in health centres, hospitals and homes. His contribution went beyond that of his professional expertise, and he visited care homes and attended numerous award ceremonies. In his unassuming way Albert showed to all those he met the respect he had for their contribution to the work of the Trust and is remembered by many people with great affection and esteem.

Albert was a man of great character and generosity, above all a man of the highest integrity as all who had dealings with him in business and social life will testify. (A friend once described him as, "the only man I would trust with a blank cheque").

Albert was always interested in the achievements of his family Aisling, Morag and Jonathan, always wanting to hear what his nieces and nephews were doing, no less so in the work and ministry of his younger brother Stanley and in the interesting life of his older brother Bobby in São Paulo, Brazil, until his death some years ago. A keen gardener, he was also a dab hand at using a chain saw, and was happy to volunteer wherever there might be a tree to convert to logs.

We were all enriched by knowing him and sharing in his love and life.