

Johnny Lindesay-Bethune was born in November 1929 in the very same month that the remarkable clarets of 1929 were being produced in Bordeaux. This coincidence turned out to be very fitting.

The 1929 vintage was both outstanding and immediately engaging at an early age – so much so that commentators then and in later decades were convinced that its qualities could not last and would have faded well before the end of the Century.

They were wrong. Every time the pundits predicted that its best years must surely be over, it defied them and peaked again, eventually proving to be a superbly long-lasting vintage whose qualities not only saw out the 20th Century but endured well into the 21st Century.

Therein lies an astonishing symmetry with Johnny.

Johnny's all-round prowess was evident at an early age. At Eton in the 1940s, he captained the golf team and, as a gifted oarsman, rowed in the eight that, against the odds, won the Ladies Plate at Henley. Few who witnessed those schoolboy feats, however, could have predicted the fresh heights that Johnny would go onto in the following decades, or how much he would still be achieving more than 60 years later.

Likewise, when Johnny retired to Fife in 1981, after 30 successful years at the sharp end of the business world, all who knew him predicted that he was heading for a quiet and well-deserved life of leisure amongst his Kilconquhar and Lindsay family roots, free from any further serious challenge or endeavour.

How wrong their predictions proved to be.

Many of the achievements of which Johnny was proudest came during his last 30 years, not least in the early 1990s. It was in 1991 that he played an instrumental role in the building of the Visitors' Club House on the West Sands at St. Andrews – as well as winning the Calcutta Cup, playing with his son Nicholas. And in 1992 came his crowning glory when he was elected Captain of the R&A.

Having reached those high-water marks, and by then well into his sixties, Johnny again defied those who thought that his best years must be behind him. As many of you here know, his energy and commitments continued apace, encompassing roles in numerous organisations as well as serving as a Deputy Lieutenant of Fife.

In almost every single decade of his life, from his school days onwards, Johnny consistently notched up achievements that most would be proud to have achieved over an entire lifetime.

Johnny's impressive and extensive record, however, only reveals a part of the wonderfully rounded man that he was.

It does not capture his affection, generosity and sense of humour – or the many close friendships he inspired.

It does not capture his keen sense of right and wrong – which included putting rose clippings and other rubbish from his garden into the boots of cars illegally parked in front of his garage in London (- that was in the days before central locking systems) – or the outrage that he felt whenever the judges at the Colinsburgh and Kilconquhar Flower Show, of which he was President, saw fit to award First Prize in the raspberry section to anyone other than himself.

It does not capture that Johnny was in many ways a very private person – and was also by nature cautious. His children well remember the only time they can recall him succumbing to an impulse-buy when, one morning, they found themselves in a car showroom admiring a gleaming white Sunbeam Rapier. They badgered him about buying it to the point where Johnny reluctantly gave in and wrote out a cheque there and then. At the end of that same day, therefore, they had the excitement of watching the brand new white Sunbeam Rapier being delivered to their home by the showroom off the back of a low-loader and put straight into the garage, after which they sat down to dinner. Suddenly they heard an almighty clunking thud from the garage. Rushing through, they found that the engine had fallen out of the car and was lying in pieces on the garage floor. With Johnny still not having driven the car, it is no surprise that his first ever impulse-buy also became his last.

Most important of all, Johnny's record does not capture the immense love that he had for his family. Married to Queta Koch de Gooreynd in 1953 and Jean since 1977, Johnny was a devoted husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather to both his and Jean's ever-expanding families.

His nearest and dearest sometimes discovered that Johnny's devotion did not guarantee a life free of drama.

When his daughter Sally was 18, Johnny took her on a skiing holiday to Lenzerheide in Switzerland. There, one morning, he decided that the two of them should embark on a 2 hour langlauf to a well-known restaurant. The trek was hard work but the lunch was

delicious and all was well until the bill arrived, when Johnny realised that he had forgotten his wallet. The *patron*, understandably, was wholly unamused and refused to accept Johnny's promise to return the next day. The only arrangement that Johnny could negotiate was for Sally to be handed over to the *patron* as a hostage whilst he langlaufed back to get his wallet. Off Johnny set for the two hour langlauf to the hotel, followed by the two hour langlauf back to the restaurant. It was therefore some four hours later that he was able to hand over the money and reclaim his daughter.

The hostage crisis was over – or at least that hostage crisis was over.

Some years later, Johnny and Jean pulled off the auto-route in France and found an out-of-the-way restaurant for lunch. After a relaxing meal, the bill arrived. This time Johnny had remembered his wallet, but not the need for French currency. He could not settle the bill without first going to a bank – but there was no bank nearby. The French restaurateur was as unamused as his Swiss counterpart years earlier and refused to accept Johnny's proposal that he and Jean drive off to the nearest town and drop back later with the money. Of course Johnny was by now an experienced negotiator in such situations and he quickly struck a deal whereby he handed over Jean as a hostage whilst he set off to find a bank. It took some time for Johnny to find the local town and even longer to find the local bank – and when he did, being France, the bank was shut. It was therefore some hours before he was finally back at the restaurant with the money and able to reclaim Jean from captivity.

Both Johnny's hostage crises were linked to his great love of skiing – and in Jean he found the ideal companion with whom to enjoy not only skiing but also his other much loved pursuits, which included walking in the Alps and the Himalayas, and golf and shooting, both of which he excelled at.

Indeed Johnny had a habit of excelling at whatever he turned his mind to – and this was certainly the case with his most unusual pursuit, which required Jean to traipse after him around rubbish dumps – rubbish dumps being a favourite habitat of Purple Emperors.

Johnny's enthusiasm for collecting butterflies started when he was at school and continued throughout his life, regardless of where he was or what he was otherwise meant to be doing at the time. In 1949, having joined the Scots Guards, Johnny and Normile Baxter found themselves posted to Malaysia during the troubles as two short-service subalterns. Johnny

saw active service there, but – with a determination that characterised so much of his life – he combined chasing and catching communist insurgents with chasing and catching butterflies to add to his growing collection.

The risks to life and limb that butterflies prompted Johnny to take were evident in the Himalayas some years later when, ignoring warnings, he would happily lean out over 2000 foot precipices to try and net butterflies wafting past on the updrafts. Doing this once too often, he lost his footing and fell headlong down a steep slope, net in hand. A few hundred feet down the mountainside, he was miraculously saved when his rucksack snagged on a short, stubby tree. But for that humble tree we might have been giving thanks for Johnny's life some years ago – and his butterfly collection, which he later donated to St. Andrews University, would have been less considerable than it eventually became.

Johnny was also a painter – and it was his artistic side that in part explained his success in the cut and thrust of the advertising world. This is certainly the view of one of his long-time business colleagues, whose memories of working with Johnny include the following: “He had the sensitivity of a true artist and could always uncover and put to good use the best talents of his colleagues, whom he treated with unfailing charm, courtesy and an aura of goodwill. This made him a very special person with a great gift for man management.”

Johnny has done so much of note since he moved back to Fife in 1981 that it is easy to forget just how successful he was in the preceding 30 years with J Walter Thomson in London.

Johnny joined JWT after coming down from Trinity Hall Cambridge in the 1950s and rose through the ranks to become, in the 1970s, Managing Director and then Group Managing Director. During his time there, JWT established itself as the biggest advertising agency in the UK with a galaxy of prestigious clients.

The highest profile account that Johnny led came when the Government commissioned JWT to sell the joys of decimalisation to a reluctant and sceptical British public. This led to Johnny having a starring television role and doing a rather better job at promoting the new currency than Edward Heath, the then Prime Minister.

As Managing Director, Johnny discovered that he had to do more than win new clients. He was also responsible for hiring the chef for the directors' restaurant on the top floor. Johnny was as successful in this as he was at everything else. Indeed he was credited with finding such a superlative chef, and fine wines to match, that a number of his co-directors were unable to make it through the afternoons without a siesta.

The chef and the fine wines may have been partly responsible for what Johnny described to me as being his one major misjudgement. When a small and previously unheard-of company appeared at the door to ask JWT to handle their advertising, Johnny invited them in. Having heard them through, and doing his best not to laugh, he declined their business on the spot, explaining that consumers would never take to such products. Johnny remembered pronouncing his judgement to them with supreme confidence, as befitted one of the most successful advertising executives of the day, and showing them the door.

The company was called Highland Spring.

Whilst in hindsight Johnny saw this as a misjudgement, in his defence the consumer lover-affair with bottled water was still some years off. But if misjudgement it was, it was a rare and uncharacteristic one, and was no more than the exception that proved the rule.

The sheer breadth of Johnny's achievements, spanning so many decades and so many different walks of life, is conclusive proof of just how extraordinarily sound and consistent his judgement was.

Johnny hit a continuous succession of high notes throughout his 83 years – yet at no stage did he ever see life as being solely about great deeds.

Every bit as enduring over the decades was the affection he had for family, friends and colleagues. In the words of Normile Baxter, who knew him from his school days onwards, "Johnny was a most exceptional person, a lifelong friend to a veritable host of people, all of whom admired and loved him".

Many of that veritable host are gathered here today.

Few of us, if any, will ever have had the privilege of tasting the famously long-lasting 1929 wines.

But all of us have had the much greater privilege, and the pleasure, of knowing, admiring and loving an infinitely more remarkable and long-lasting gem from 1929: Johnny Lindsay-Bethune.

JL – 4th July 2013