

SIMON ANTHONY BOWLES...

SIMON DIED AGED 23 YEARS 5 MONTHS 14 DAYS – A FRIEND REMEMBERED BY PAUL DICKSON.

This is a very difficult tribute to write as I knew Simon Anthony, Simon, Si on many very different levels, as a Venture Scout, Christopher's best friend, Friend, Confidant, Supporter and helper.

These roles all mix together, please forgive me I am not clear with my descriptions and references. I have so, so much I would like to share with you about Si, but it would take hours so I will try and stick to the highlights.

In 1996 I first saw Simon at the Heston & Isleworth District Swimming Gala at Richmond sweep all before him as he won every race for which he was entered; he swam as with all things with determination and style. I insisted and encouraged Graham Johnson, our Chairman at that time, and Chris to do all within their power to recruit Simon. Hey, I wanted to win the swimming gala for Centaur.

Simon was not keen to join at first, as he was quiet and shy (You better believe it). Simon roller bladed to the first Unit evening at Megazone in Isleworth and he soon became a permanent member of the Unit. One of the things that attracted Simon to the Unit was our forthcoming trip to Corsica in 1997. The Corsican High level walk was the most difficult Queen's Scout Hike members of our Unit have ever undertaken, the group consisted of Graham Johnson, Craig West, Alan Huntley, Christopher Dickson and Simon, who was just short of 16.

I have many great memories of Simon on that trip: His physical fitness, his investiture, our first five litres of rose wine over poker and hearts, our discussions about girls, waiting for the twin waitresses to open the beach bar each day, and finally his argument with some sea urchins, which meant two visits to the hospital in Ajaccio – Simon was not

impressed by the needle and the tool for removing sea urchin spines from both a hand and a foot. He was impressed by the nurse and by the doctor's Harley Davidson. In 1998 Simon and Christopher went on holiday together to Kandersteg, to undertake a Mountain Biking trip, I know little of this trip except they were having a great time until in Si's words he had to make "the most difficult telephone call of his life" to Annette to tell her that Chris had gone over his handlebars, landed on a rock and broken his neck.

Si had to cycle off to get help and call the Air ambulance, he arranged everything and visited Chris in hospital every day and got things arranged until I flew out. He was a great help to me and a great companion to Chris. I suspect Chris could tell you a great deal more about that trip.

In 1999 we went to the South of France, undertaking the now classic Queen's Scout Hike through the Gorge du Verdon, again many great memories when Simon ran ahead to collect water from the refuge to run back to share it among members of the hike that were suffering from heat exhaustion. His persistent hunting of sea urchins which he now hated; his dancing in the disco, the young French girl dancing just for Simon -he didn't know where to look.

In February 2000 after a great deal of discussion and persuasion Simon went to Grindelwald to learn to Ski, I certainly believe this trip changed his outlook on life abroad, he took to skiing like a duck to water, becoming proficient in just one week and skied with the advanced skiers for the last couple of days, all this on top of a tummy bug he was the first to catch on the trip. During all of this he progressed with his Queen's Scout Award, excelling in his community service by teaching swimming at Isleworth penguins. Simon with Christopher, James, Keyur, Alix, Viral and Andrew were presented with their Queen's Scout Award in April 2000. A record of seven members from one unit, held to this day.

Later in 2000 he worked as the Venture Abroad rep in Kandersteg for the whole summer season, an experience that again changed his outlook; he met Carolyn, discovered rock climbing in a big way: and I thought for a long while that he might emigrate permanently to Switzerland. He took part in the 2001 expedition to Kandersteg where he helped me provide guiding for Mountain Biking groups. He was now twenty, and was leaving the Unit; he had participated fully in all activities with the exception of football, which he hated. He was universally respected by all members of the Unit.

In 2002 Simon, Carolyn, Andrew and Alix took part in the ascent of the Gran Paradise at over 10,000 ft, the highest peak that any member of Centaur has achieved to date. This made me very proud as this sort of self-motivated adventure, is what I try to achieve through all of the Unit activities. In 2003 he took a break from Scouting and expeditions, but he was always there in the background. He discovered motorbikes in a big way and in 2004 he followed Annette and I across France for the 2004 Kandersteg Expedition.

Simon and I have unfinished business. He was to have gone skiing/snowboarding with our private group in four weeks time. I will think of Simon when we are there, because I know how much he would have loved it and I will raise a glass at Kleine Schiedegg in his memory. We also promised each other that someday soon, before I got too old, we would climb the Kanderfirn glacier together and stay at the highest mountain hut in Switzerland, the Mutthornhutte, and also undertake the circumnavigation of the Doldenhorn, Wiese Frau and Blumlisalp, (the mountains around Oeschinensee) – without Simon I may never do this but I am going to try.

To conclude: I will always remember Simon with fondness, his enthusiasm, his adventurous spirit, that glint in his eyes, that mischievous smile...

