

Hans 'Tiny' August Kuhle, 87th Entry

From Brian J Colby



Tiny at the Webbington Hotel Garden

It is with great sadness that I have to announce the death of Hans 'Tiny' Kuhle, Chairman of the Locking Apprentice Association, on Monday 14th February 2022.

Hans, who was born at Gottingen in Germany on 12th of December 1940, moved with his German mother, eloping with a British service man, to the UK in 1946, where after the passage of time he eventually joined members of the 87th Entry at its formation at RAF Locking on 18th Sep 1957.

With his impressive height of 6 feet 3 inches and a friendly nature to boot, this gentle giant of a lad quickly gained the inevitable nickname from his Entry colleagues of 'Tiny' which would naturally stay with him for most of his life. Sharing the same Hut 382 together for about 2 years, Tiny was a handy billet guardian, occupying the first pit on the left as you entered from the linking corridor, we all rested easily in our beds knowing intruders such as the Senior Entry on a night time raid were never going to get past him? With over 200 members the 87th had a number of boxers in its midst, all of differing weights and Tiny, with his height advantage, turned out to be a very useful hard hitting southpaw in the noble art, steadily progressing to become the Wing Heavy Weight Boxing Champion.

Attending inter squadron boxing matches was always a pleasant change from normal billet routines, in which case the billet would completely empty as we joined our Wing colleagues on the way to the gymnasium to watch the various Entry boxers competing, the exciting final bout always involving our 87th Entry Tiny. The thrill value went up a notch when the Army apprentices from nearby Chepstow barracks in Wales came to compete against the Station, On such occasions the gym was jam packed with enthusiastic RAF supporters, from the Station Commander downwards,

all waiting to witness Tiny knocking the proverbial 'seven bells' out of his opponent, with excited cheers ringing from the whole of the Apprentice Wing as his hand was raised by the referee to announce him winner.

Tiny naturally represented RAF Locking when the RAF Halton apprentices came to compete, his opponent on that occasion was even taller than him but, after winning his bout Tiny was heard to say "yes maybe he was bigger, but he couldn't move" Tiny's other claim to fame was the possession of a 'light duties chit', which he should have surrendered long ago, excusing him of 'boots, marching and parades'. One morning when everyone else in the billet was lined up ready to march down to the Tech blocks in their highly polished boots he was caught by Flt Sgt Burley lazing quite openly in his pit keeping warm. Nonchalantly holding his chit aloft for inspection, Tiny was allowed to make his own way to the blocks, in his shoes, at his own pace and more than likely with a very wry smile on his face. He was eventually promoted to LAA in our last year, leaving the billet to move further down the block to keep another group of Entry members in order, passing out with the rest of the Entry in the summer of 1960 as a qualified Air Radio Fitter.

His first posting was to A&AEE Boscombe Down where, instead of working on AI17 radar which he had been trained on at Locking, he found himself in the station lab, servicing large ECM units of the V bomber force. These units, renowned for being somewhat rather heavy, suited Tiny well as heaving them about went a long way to keep him fighting fit. A year later, it so happened that after finding he was being posted to RAF Akrotiri, and unable to store his cherished 1939 red MG TB car, he arranged to sell it to a certain Martin Palmer of the 91st Entry, yes no less than our Association President.

At Akrotiri, besides meeting up with a couple of ex-apprentices, 87th Mick Ostler and 83rd Mike Horlock, Tiny was regularly detached to a number of the Canberra squadrons operating there, type B15 and 16's that had been modified and made capable of delivering nuclear weapons, as well as 13 Squadron, which flew high altitude photo reconnaissance PR9 Canberra's. One long detachment with 13 took him off to Bahrain in 1963, where the squadron was busy keeping an eye on Iraqi forces that were massing on the Kuwaiti border. After this detachment Tiny was immensely proud to be the one to fix the intermittent faulty intercom that had plagued one particular Canberra for months, the problem caused by a loose junction box connector hidden behind an ejector seat. He continued with his boxing at Akrotiri, where he enjoyed going for runs along the cliff tops as a means to keep fit, finishing off with a dip in the warm Mediterranean Sea, all this training effort rewarded with a number of sporting trips to the likes of El Adem and Malta.

In early 1965 he returned to the UK with a posting to RAF Lindholme, which to Tiny seemed a backward step, as the Varsity's and Hastings there used ancient equipments such as GEE 2 as a Nav. aid and TR 1154/55 for communication, which he

considered to be just old 'war-time things'! It was however a fortunate posting, as this was where he met his future wife, Jenny Hurst, in nearby Doncaster. They married at Spalding Lincolnshire in 1966.

After completing 12 years of service Tiny left the RAF in 1970. He was employed by a number of company's, initially 'Scientific Atlanta' followed by 'Marconi' which involved him on submarine related work, and enabling them to move to Milton Keynes where they bought their own house together, then finally 'T-Mobile' from whom he retired in 2005.

It was sadly unfortunate, that after 35 years of happy marriage, his wife Jenny tragically died in 2001, which must have left him completely bereft. On one occasion, at the National Arboretum, he mentioned to my wife and I, that he had never ever thought of re marrying because Jenny was the love of his life.

After joining the Locking Apprentice Association, meeting up again with his old friend Martin Palmer, Tiny then in 2002 took on the mantle of Chairman of the RAFLAA. Under his leadership, aided by the committee, the Association grew in numbers, where year by year he was delighted to meet again with many from the 87th including his erstwhile billet and boxing colleague Bryan Chillery. For all of us it was great to be able to chat and reminisce of times past with our gentle giant once again.

Tiny was without doubt a successful Chairmen of the RAFLAA for the past 20 years, a benevolent and cheerful organiser of numerous events that many attended and of course efficient at keeping the AGM meetings in an orderly fashion. He was also a very good gentle persuader, managing to talk John 'Charlie' Trussler and Barry Dinnage in helping him to organise the 87th Entry 50th re-union which, held in May 2010, was a brilliant success. Tiny, as he always did at functions, raised money for many a charity; at our reunion it was by holding a raffle of bottles of wine, at AGM dances his technique was to take a bucket round to every table and with his usual smile gently invite those gathered to dig deep! Generous by nature, over the years of his chairmanship Tiny must have raised many £thousands for deserving causes. He was also generous with his time, attending for at least 6 years, the Remembrance Sunday parades in London, proudly marching together past the Cenotaph with Entry colleague Roy Mortlock and other members of the Association. My last communication with Tiny was just before Xmas, when he informed me he was resting at home recovering from a hip operation, so it came as a great shock to me and all of us to find that he had subsequently returned to the hospital in Milton Keynes, where we believe he sadly succumbed to Covid related issues.

Along with his family and friends, many members of the 87th and the Association attended the funeral on March 4th. including John 'Charlie' Trussler accompanied by his wife Sue, Barry Dinnage, Chris Bryan and wife Sue, Roy Mortlock, Brian Garratt together with our president Martin Palmer with his wife Ginny, Chris Tett and wife

and Rick Atkinson with his wife, to name but a few, all to say goodbye to our dear old friend Tiny. Other members of the Association were grateful to be able to view the proceedings via the webcast and watch Tiny's son Karl give his eulogy, full of respect for his father and then Chris Bryan, reading a very moving tribute from the 87th Entry and the RAFLAA. A recorded 'Last Post' was hauntingly played; it was quite a moving experience, watching on the Webcast, the Royal British Legion flag bearer stand to face the coffin and poignantly lower his head and the RBL Standard in a silent salute to our departed Chairman. Tiny's favourite song "Always look on the bright side of life" completed the service, whilst all the guests slowly left the Chapel.

Without doubt our gentle giant Tiny was a very kind and generous person who had time for everyone he met; yes a loveable big man with a big heart, it was a privilege to know him and he will be sorely missed but never forgotten by all his 87th Entry chums and RAFLAA Association members.

Rest in peace my old friend.