

Scoops of tributes pour in for Mansfield ice cream man with 'kindest of hearts'

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A grieving family has paid tribute to a much-loved "smiley, happy" ice cream man who always "went the extra mile" for his customers in the Mansfield area.

Michael Connolly - known as 'Mick the ice cream man' - has died aged 68, his family announced in a heartfelt social media post.

Mick, who served Mansfield for more than 40 years, leaves wife Dawn, aged 70, sons Peter, 49, 37-year-old Paul and Steven, 33, and 35-year-old daughter Emma Spencer, née Connolly, and three grandchildren.

Dawn said: "He was a loving husband, dad and granddad who will be very missed, but never forgotten."



Mick always went the extra mile for his customers.

Mick, who was born in Sunderland on 13th February 1954, to parents Jimmy and Mavis Connolly, was the eldest of four children.

His younger siblings, Val, Philip, and George, said they all loved and looked up to him. He always said he was very proud to be their big brother.

Mick, an avid Sunderland AFC fan, met his wife Dawn at Butlins in Filey, North Yorkshire, in 1981 and it was love at first sight.

Requiesce in pace James Michael Connolly (1954 - 2023)

After months of long-distance phone calls, Mick moved to Worksop to live with Dawn, and the couple married in 1984.



Mick was a family man who loved his ice cream van.

However, Sunderland was always home and he visited regularly. His stint as an ice cream man in 1982 was supposed to be a temporary job, after he earned a degree in geography from Sunderland Polytechnic, now known as Sunderland University, but became a lifelong career. Peter said he will be forever grateful to his dad for taking his daughter, Rhianna, on holiday and teaching her to swim and said his dad also planned to support Rhianna with driving lessons this year.



Mick, pictured with wife Dawn on holiday.

Steven said his dad had the broadest of shoulders and kindest of hearts. He said: "You were always so proud of all your family and I promise we will continue to make you proud. As you always said, 'it'll be reyt, Marra'." Joey, Freddie, and Rhianna, Mick's grandchildren, thought very highly of their granddad.

Joey, aged seven, said: "My favourite part of you is that you had lots of ice cream and gave the best snuggles."



Mick and Dawn, with two of their grandchildren, Rhianna and Joey.

Mick was described as a loyal and hard-working man of true integrity. In a touching eulogy from his children, he was described as the "most generous ice cream entrepreneur" who would offer the largest portions to all his customers, joking how even local dentists were grateful to their dad for keeping them in business.



Mick pictured alongside his wife Dawn, with their four children.

Emma said: "My dad always went the extra mile for customers." She recalled he would often call up parents with autistic children to let them know he was on the way, so as not to overwhelm the children with his bright-coloured van or loud van chimes.

Mick will be remembered by his family for eventful day trips, storytelling, and always ensuring those around him were the happiest they could be. Mick's funeral was held on Tuesday, 31st January, and more than £400 was raised for Bluebell Wood Children's Hospice in North Anston, in his honour.