

# Obituary

## The Rev Dr Tom G. Aikman 8 October 1924 – 5 January 2013



*Tom and his friend Misty at home in Pleasant Valley*

'A life lived to the full – often at breakneck speed – but always with Christian humility'. So ended a lively and moving tribute to Tom Aikman, made at his funeral in Callander on 15 January by his barrister nephew, John Edwards.

Born in Bannockburn in 1924, Tom grew up on his father's Sherriffmuir farm. At Morrison's Academy in Crieff he shone in Greek and the classics. But war interrupted his studies and, aged 19, Tom found himself disembarking on Gold Beach, taking part in the D-Day Landings with 47 RM Commando. The dagger he took to the Normandy beaches was always by his bed and rested on his coffin during his funeral service.

After a degree in classics from St Andrews and studying at St Mary's Theological College, Tom spent three years in what was then Southern Rhodesia as assistant to the minister of a parish the size of Scotland, based in today's Harare. Working in Newcastle, as a young minister, Tom met Eiluned,

daughter of the esteemed minister of nearby Gosforth parish. They were married in 1962 and were to remain devoted to each other for more than 50 years.

Honeymooning in Pennsylvania, on an exchange posting, set the stage for the couple's future life in America. First, however, came five happy years in Yorkshire when Tom was a senior lecturer in Greek and Biblical Studies at High Melton College.

Then came the call from a congregation in Grandville, New York State, an area where Tom and Eiluned were to spend the next 21 years. After five years in Grandville, they moved to Pleasant Valley, 70 miles north of New York. The pair threw themselves into local and church affairs: in between completing a doctorate on St Thomas Aquinas, Tom was active in the Masons of New York State, chaplain to the firefighters of Arlington and president of the Rotary Club. He also found time to publish a fascinating biography of his maternal uncle, John MacLaren, the visionary superintendent of the Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. He was, says his nephew, 'quite simply revered and adored by his congregations in America'.

Eiluned meanwhile busied herself with the choir, women's associations, study groups and the library. In 1979 she was named by the United Presbyterian Church of America as Churchwoman of the Year.

Tom and Eiluned retired to Muir Crescent in Doune in 1988 where Tom found numerous outlets for his energies. He was a leading light in Rotary and the Burns Society, and a keen member of the 1745 Association. An avid reader and writer, almost the last thing he read were the entire works of Thomas Hardy and John Buchan. Tom would recite Greek, as well as Gaelic verse, with as much ease and pleasure as the poetry of Robbie Burns. To relax he gardened, whizzed daily through *The Daily Telegraph* crossword, wrote a crime novel and painted powerful sea and landscapes. He also contributed to **The Bridge**.

Increasing frailty over the past months necessitated the couple's recent move to residential care in Callander. They are much missed by their friends in Doune.