

Monday 9th of April 2018

This is a very sad message for all my radio friends as it just became known that Graham Gill passed away in his house in Amsterdam at the age of 81. He went peacefully in his sleep, just 6 days away from his 82nd birthday.

After a career in radio in his native Australia he went for a holiday to Europe in 1966 but instead, he made a fine career in radio including working for Radio 390, Radio London, Britain Radio, Radio Caroline, RNI and Radio Netherlands. Even up till high age he visited the annual RadioDays.

You all know that I always want to share the many memories I've made since I started to research and write about radio, way back in 1969. Just hours after our mutual friend Bob Noakes informed me about the sad news of Graham Gill passing away, a few memories directly came to my mind.

I listened to Graham for the first time in 1966 on Britain Radio and met him for the first time in 1973. Together with Jacob Kokje I produced for RNI boss John de Mol sr. the RNI double LP and it was Graham who recorded the promo spot which was aired several times on the international service of the station.

Graham invited me to come one day to his house in the Blassiusstreet in Amsterdam, where Paul Jan de Haan and I had a lovely day with some good memories and some studiotapes that he gave us. From that day on, we stayed in contact till 2 months ago.

Graham was a special person. Not only he wanted to be in the middle of attention but gave a lot of warmth with fine words to other persons. It's after all those decades a pleasure to listen to his shows from almost a half-century ago.

Through many years we stayed in contact, talked about radio, did visit each other many times and often Martin van der Ven went with us to Amsterdam to be with another mutual friend, Rob Olthof.

Also we went to happenings in England related to radio, together with Martin and both our wives. It was, I think, in 2007 we went to a reunion in London for some days. My wife Jana and I went to our regular Bed and Breakfast in Hanwell and we found a place for Graham above an Indian Restaurant in the same surrounding and around 9.20 in the morning we were standing in front of the bed and breakfast being very surprised that Graham was standing there with a double suit which didn't fit him too well.

Can you image what happened there in the middle of the road Jana helping him to get everything right when I tell you that the suit he was wearing was the same one as he was wearing when he wanted to go for a job in 1966 at Radio London?

Graham decided to stop working in 1984. He was well appreciated at Radio Netherlands but the problem was either the Dutch Railway system brought him problems, or Graham didn't liked to be programmed at certain times by the organisation, or he forgot to have a look at his watch on a regularly basis.

Graham was a late-night person who wanted, after he stopped working, to enjoy television from countries as far away as possible. Probably he was one of the very first persons having a satellite dish in 1980s Amsterdam. When on the phone he could talk very long about special programs he was watching and of course about his favourite radiostation from Austria, which was easy listening programmed.

People who went with him to a restaurant for the very first time could be very surprised about Graham's behaviour. One day we went with about 20 people to an Italian restaurant in Notting Hill in London. Graham often couldn't hold back when it came to the mass productions that were served in such a restaurant and made this loud and clear to the shame of his fellow guests and those present. When it came to giving his order, he had special requirements because he did not want to eat the container garbage. Everyone was served according to their wishes and at a certain point, when Graham's food was not yet served, we decided to start in order not to let our food get cold. When everyone else had eaten, Graham's food was served. It was as if the operating staff had been waiting for it. Many years later, after similar incidents, I understood that he was playing a game in the restaurants; it was never good. But of course it was good for some more laughs with 'Grasilda', which was his nickname in the seventies when all male presenters got a female nickname.

Getting up early was not easy for Graham either. When I told him 14 years ago that one of his former colleagues from Swinging Radio England would make a stopover at Schiphol and would therefore have several morning hours free to meet us in Amsterdam, I made an appointment at a breakfast restaurant in the centre of our capital. There we met Rick Crandell and his wife Joy and it was the first time since 1966 that both former colleagues saw and talked to each other. Until the night before Graham was grumbling that the meeting had to take place at such an early time. But he was there and happy to see his former SRE colleague again and they didn't get talked out.

We also remember the long period in which we collaborated on the book about Graham's life and work, which was published for the first time in 2006. To write the book, to make it historically correct and readable, Graham Gill, Cornelia van den Berg, Hans Knot and Jana Knot-Dickscheit collaborated in parts. Cornelia spent a long time describing and typing out, little by little, the period during which Graham still lived in his native Australia, went to school and began working after graduating from school of broadcasting.

I then jumped in to describe the radio periods of Graham Gill in Europe as historically well as possible. In the end, we jointly selected many, partly never published, pictures and Jana did the layout. This was a process that - between all kinds of other publications - lasted a year. But what a joy Graham had when we went to see the first proof at a print shop on the Amsterdam canals! A moment we could never forget.

It was a great pity that Graham had his secrets and didn't release them in time when we were preparing the publication. Two years later, when Martin van der Ven and I visited him in his apartment in Amsterdam, he suddenly proposed that we go to his cellar. A stale-smelling space that was really full of all sorts of collected things. These included three suitcases full of collected mail from listeners and memories in his own notes, but also many unique photos. The link below will take you to a page on The Pirate Radio Hall of Fame with photos of Graham's time on Radio 390, which he often told me was the finest radio station for which he ever worked.

To all his former colleagues and radio friends, Graham wrote:

"Hello good people. Martin van der Ven and Hans Knot have promised me to make a wonderful photo album of our friendship, my long-standing radio career and my years in my native country Australia, where I left for Europe in 1966. Around 350 photos taken by several persons and digitalized in good memory of the Great A Graham, Grasilda, Gill. The first pages are from last 3 centuries and next are the older photos. Hope you will enjoy these in memory of the good times we all had together through the loved-by-us all medium of radio."

We lost a great friend in radio. Let's say: 'Way back home, Graham.'

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/offshoreradio/albums/72157667729830018>

<http://www.offshoreradio.co.uk/album91.htm>