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The brother and father we loved

Less than two years after the death of the broadcaster Sir David Frost, his oldest son, Miles Frost, died suddenly aged only 31. For the first time, his two surviving sons write about their family tragedy and what killed their brother



When the celebrated broadcaster Sir David Frost, scourge of Richard Nixon, died in August 2013, his family was devastated. Two years later, his 31-year-old son, Miles, died suddenly, and mysteriously, while out jogging.

Here, Miles's younger brothers, *Wilfred and George*, write about the tragedy and reveal the rare condition that caused his death

We miss our dad and brother terribly

PARTY TIME

The Frosts celebrate David's 55th birthday at home in Michelmersh Court, Hampshire, April 1994. From left: Miles, Carina, George, David, Wilf





When Dad died at the age of 74 we were all in utter shock. He went too soon — both suddenly and unexpectedly. But when our brother Miles died last summer at the age of 31, it was even worse. Totally and utterly out of the blue, while he was still so young, with so much to give. We are still reeling.

After 9/11, the Queen wrote an open letter to the people of New York City. In it she used the phrase “Grief is the price we pay for love”. This resonated with us in 2013, when we lost Dad, who was known to millions for his extraordinary broadcasting career and his interviews with Richard Nixon — and even more so when we lost Miles, in July last year. Losing him was tragically unfair, but given that such an awful event had occurred, in a strange way it was preferable that the pain was excruciating, because the depth of it highlighted the huge, positive impact he had on our lives. It was only later that we found out they both shared a rare genetic condition, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM). In the wake of Miles’s death, we have helped to set up a fund that will increase awareness of the condition. Every week in the UK, 12 apparently fit and healthy people aged 35 and under die of an undiagnosed heart condition. The most common cause is HCM.

The pain came on Sunday, July 19, 2015. Miles collapsed while out running near our home in Oxfordshire. He had become incredibly fit in the final few years of his life, and would exercise regularly and intensively. The day before, the Saturday, he had been at a wedding nearby — on typically lively and energetic form. When he got home, he quickly retired to bed. He rose as normal on Sunday and had a long breakfast with Mum. Over most weekend breakfasts, Miles would be engrossed by the newspapers (sport more than business or politics, though he would try to claim otherwise), but Mum remembers him being unusually talkative that day, saying how proud he was of how strong she had been since Dad died. Indeed, almost two years on from his death, we had all started to be much more positive, Mum in particular. Miles told her what an amazing mother she was, and thus for Mum, that breakfast remains particularly poignant.

After breakfast he went off to do some exercise. He started with a boxing workout in the garage, which lasted about an hour. George then saw him briefly as he came back into the house, to drop off his boxing gloves, and pick up his iPod and headphones to go running.

When he didn’t return in time for lunch, George went out looking for him, discovering him peaceful and motionless halfway up the drive — just a few hundred yards from the house. We think he’d been doing sprints up and down the drive, as



Miles (left) with George in 2013. “He was the go-to guy for so many people,” says George

George on Miles

“The experience of being the first to Miles’s body, and trying in vain to save him, should be a memory that I try to block for evermore. The truth is, though, that I find myself thinking about it a great deal, not only because it helps me to deal with the fact that this *has* actually happened, but also because the sight of him lying in the sunlight provides me always with at least some solace that he died in complete and utter restful peace”

opposed to a long-distance jog.

George attempted CPR on Miles while on the phone to the emergency services, and he was pouring with sweat when an ambulance arrived. By this time Mum had arrived on the scene, and she and George were held back by the police, inconsolable, as the ambulance staff, and then air-

ambulance staff, also tried in vain to resuscitate him, before finally delivering the devastating news to Mum and George that Miles had died.

Wilf, meanwhile, was en route back from Stockholm, where he had been for the weekend. Mum and George knew he had to be the first person to be informed, so they travelled to Heathrow to meet him.

Wilf recalls receiving strange messages from George as he went through passport control, asking exactly what stage of arrivals he was at, but he did not think enough of them to become suspicious. After clearing customs, Wilf saw a forlorn-looking Mum and George, and had 10 to 15 seconds for his mind to whirl before reaching them; but at no point did the possibility of what was coming cross his mind.

The three of us broke down together, in front of everyone at Heathrow, people who were waiting for their own loved ones. The following 12 hours of informing people about what had happened, whether in person or on the phone, was repeatedly met with shock, disbelief, agony and grief. Nobody could believe it. It is all still inconceivable today.

The funeral was held within a week, at the small church a 15-minute walk from our home, with 60 of Miles’s friends and family. He is buried next to Dad. A memorial service will be held this week to celebrate Miles’s life, six months on from his passing.

Miles was born on June 2, 1984. Dad was 45, Mum was 32, and they had been married for just a year, having only been engaged for a matter of months. This marriage, and the family that followed, came relatively late in life for them both, and that amplified the positive effect that children have on an already happy couple — Miles made them happier than they could ever have imagined. So much so, they foolishly thought of having a couple more. We quickly followed in August 1985 [Wilf] and April 1987 [George].

We were so close in age that Mum often described us as triplets rather than just brothers — a fair description. We became inseparable very quickly, and that brotherly bond only grew stronger as time passed. Everything we ever did was with each other or for each other. That remains true today, only the dynamics have changed.

Our childhood was insanely fortunate, but it was the love and support that Mum and Dad surrounded us with that made us luckiest of all. Miles summed this up perfectly, speaking in the ITV documentary that followed Dad’s death: “We’ve been spectacularly lucky to have the upbringing we’ve had — the parties that we’ve been to, the people we’ve met, all that side of it has been unbelievably lucky. But I guess at the heart of it we’ve all always felt totally loved by Dad and by Mum, and on very simple matters he was just an incredible father.” As indeed Mum is the perfect mother.

We were both led by Miles. He ➤➤➤



BABY LOVE Above: Miles, aged one, on his first trip to the United States, with his proud mother and father in Los Angeles, 1985. "Miles made them happier than they could ever have imagined," say his brothers. **TRUE ROMANCE** Below: Miles with his girlfriend Emily Forbes, "his one true love", in Indonesia, September 2013. He was with her from the age of 25-29





FUN IN THE SUN Above: (from left) Miles, Wilf and George celebrate Miles's 30th birthday in Ibiza, June 2014.
A LIFE REMEMBERED Below: Sir David Frost's memorial service at Westminster Abbey, March 2014, attended by (from left) the Dean of Westminster, the Prince of Wales, Miles Frost, Lady Carina Frost, George Frost and Wilf Frost



never told us what to do, he just led by example and we followed. This tended to mean rushing home from school to play football in the garden with Dad. Or cricket and tennis (and still a bit of football) in the summer. Dad was a natural sportsman, not far off professional standard in his early years. We'd joke that his talent got heavily diluted when it was passed to the three of us. But we have always adored sport, and tried very hard at it, Miles more so than anyone. And when he put his mind to something, in due course he would excel. Tennis and skiing in particular were great examples of this in his final decade — he was outstanding at both.

Going to Eton was an important part of Miles's life, as it was for all three of us. Miles got four A-levels and went to Newcastle University to study politics.

His time at Newcastle, and his gap year beforehand, were about making friends, meeting girls and having fun, which he did in spades. But he would not have said the academic side of his degree had been crucial to his future. Because Dad got a third from Cambridge, we would always wind him up before our own exams, saying, "There is no need to revise — you got a third, and look where you are." Miles was the most effective at this argument. He got a 2:2, but could have got a first if he had wanted. Either way, it made no difference to what came next.

He found his calling in the world of private equity, joining LDC in 2007. He loved it, and suddenly began working incredibly hard. Peter Brooks, his boss and, later, his business partner, said that Miles worked harder than anyone, in part because he had a famous name — he wanted to make sure people knew he was there on merit, and he did that.

Although they started rewarding him well fairly quickly, he didn't stay long at LDC. He left and formed his own private equity firm, Frost Brooks, with his boss. In this regard, he was following in Dad's footsteps in being punchy and ambitious, but in a considered way. Frost Brooks was not plain sailing — he had to work incredibly hard to find the right deals and raise money from investors, both of which took time. But his hard work paid off, and he made headlines by closing two major deals in 2013.

In his short lifetime, Miles really only had one true love, Emily, from the age of 25 to 29. They were madly in love, and we are delighted that Miles experienced that perfect, storybook love. That particular relationship did not quite work out, but they remained great friends, and Emily and her family remain close to Mum, George and me, and always will. When we pause and look back at his life, I think the only thing he



SIBLING REVELRY Miles (left) with Wilf on holiday in Zanzibar, 2012

Wilf on Miles
“My life at that point changed instantly and tragically. It is impossible to describe the sudden and immense pain. Emotionally and physically, I was shaking while trying to process the news that my darling older brother was gone for ever. As fate would have it, I had also been absent from the rest of the family when Dad died. On that occasion, Miles was the one to drive up to London to tell me what had happened. This time he was not delivering the news, he was the news. The shock was similar to when Dad died, but even more severe”

did not experience was having children. Which is perhaps a saving grace.

Throughout his life he was so kind and giving. He was a go-to guy for so many people, because everyone knew they could count on his loyalty and wisdom. His moral compass was exemplary and unwavering. Even when offered personal advantage for

the most minute deviation from that compass, he would not take it — always leading by example. There was no better example of this than the way he stepped up to the plate to look after Mum when Dad died. Mum would not have got through it without him, and I know he was immensely proud of her strength — strength that, once more, has been tested to the extreme, but shone through again. We are so proud of her.

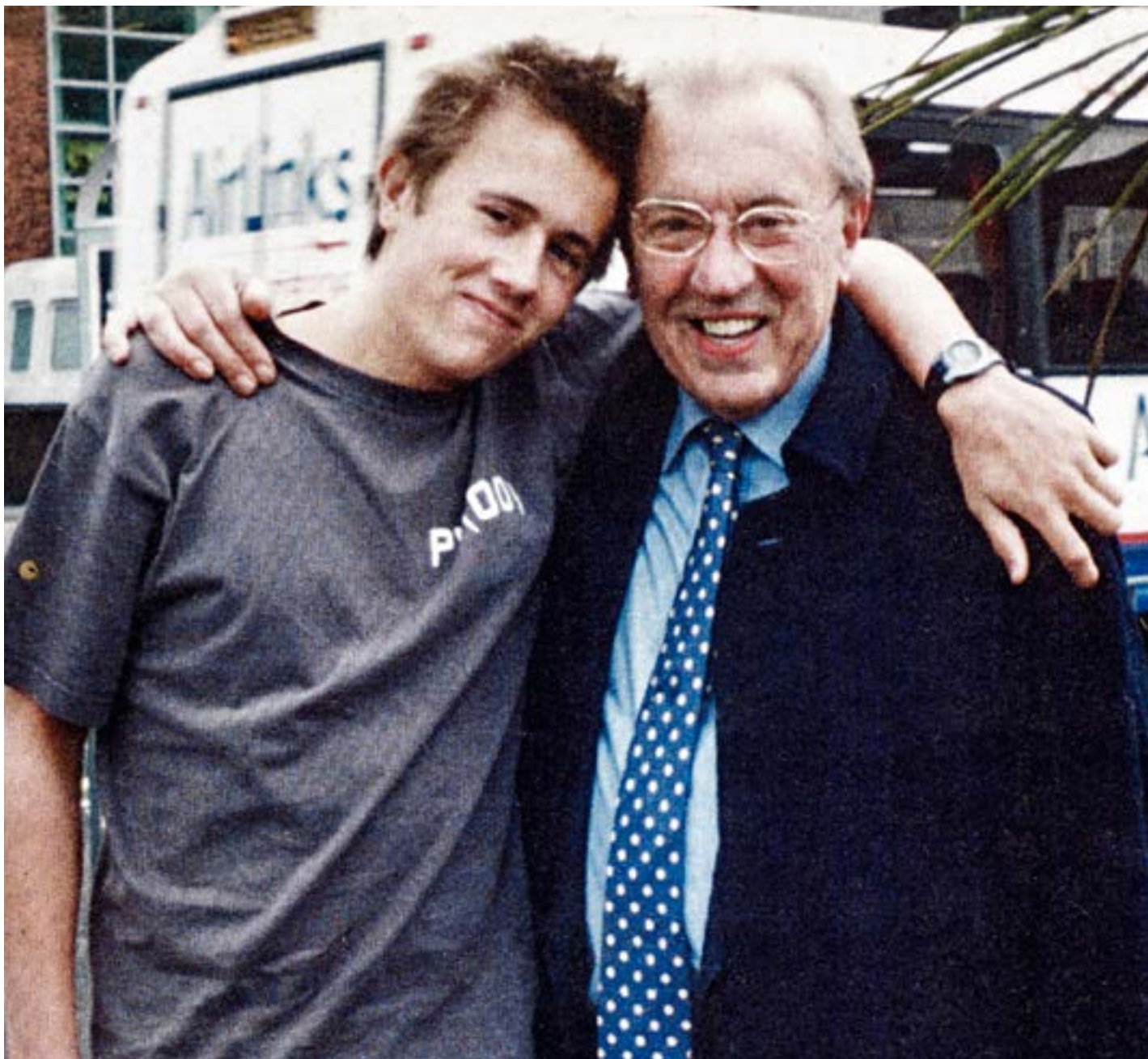
There is no doubt that Miles had a wonderful and happy life. That is what we try to focus on. But it is an upbeat perspective that is hard to hold at all times. Many times one asks why he had to go at all. And with that comes the inevitable question of whether something could have been done that might have prevented his death. Sadly, the answer to that is yes.

The condition that Miles suffered from was unidentified until his death. Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) is a genetic condition caused by a change or mutation in one or more genes, and is passed on through families. Each child of someone with HCM has a 50% chance of inheriting the condition. About 1 in 500 of the UK population (circa 120,000 people) has the condition, although most who have it have few symptoms and are therefore unknown to the medical profession. This is important, because HCM can lead to sudden death at any age. While there is no known cure for HCM, research has shown that, if identified, most people with the condition could live a normal life, with proper treatment, such as drugs, a pacemaker or ICD (implantable cardioverter defibrillator) and follow-up.

The key, of course, is that it can remain unknown, then strike suddenly. This is often, though not always, in young people who push their bodies through sport and exercise, which is what happened to Miles. Knowledge of the condition has improved hugely over the past two decades, but awareness and action relating to HCM is still dreadfully underwhelming.

Dad did not die from HCM, but it transpires that his postmortem showed that the condition was present, although he didn't know it. Sadly, this was not flagged up to us; thus Miles, George and I were not tested two years ago, as we should have been. Clearly, this adds to the agony relating to Miles's death. Yet there is nothing to be gained from regretting missed opportunities.

However, lots can be gained from trying to use what has happened to make progress in the future. Miles's death will always be incomprehensible to Mum and us. No one will ever replace him, and the pain from his departure will never go away. But if we can help prevent just one similar death occurring in the future, then Miles will not have died in vain. More than that, I am confident that in partnership with the British Heart Foundation [see overleaf], we can prevent many more than that. ➤➤➤



BON VOYAGE Miles, aged 18, with Sir David at the airport before departing for his gap-year travels to South America, January 2003

It is impossible to overstate how strongly Miles shaped the paths that our lives have followed. Had he been an unpleasant person, then we would have been too. It is only because he was such a wonderful man that we can claim to be even vaguely agreeable. He guided us through the first 30 years of our lives, and for that we will never be able to thank him enough. The only thing that we can do is live our lives to the full and try to do things that would make him, and Dad and Mum too, proud in the process.

Miles — we miss you terribly. But you will never be forgotten. Your memory inspires us every day, and your passing will not be in vain ■

The fee for this article has been donated to the Miles Frost Fund

The Miles Frost Fund will raise money in partnership with the British Heart Foundation. It will work to establish a family-based screening model for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) and similar conditions. It aims to provide clinical and genetic testing services across the country, which are not currently supported. This could help identify many more people living with undiagnosed HCM and ensure that they get the treatment that could save their life. For more details, or to donate, visit milesfrostfund.com