

The Hastings Book of the Earth



PASSAGE MAKING

My mother died recently. She was 89 and had a long, good life. I went to Ireland for her funeral, and as had happened in my childhood, her body was brought to the house in an open casket and people came to say prayers in the room with her. My family and I said prayers, and although the content of the prayers held no meaning for me as I don't have a religious belief, the ritual of joining in prayer was comforting and fitting. There was something dignified and respectful to mark my mother's life and death with a joining together of her children and extended family to pray as one and acknowledge what she meant to us. *continues over* 🖱️

On the morning of her funeral, it is tradition for male family members to carry the coffin from the house to the hearse. Over the years I had dreaded this moment, thinking it would be too painful. Yet on the day as we carried my mother, my brothers and nephews and I, it felt both an enormous privilege and a terribly sad thing to do. As I walked I had tears rolling down my face but at the same time feeling I was honoured to be part of the intimate ritual of carrying my mother, this wonderful human being, to where her body would be laid to rest. As I reflect now, it is with an enormous amount of grace and serenity that I see those final moments of my mother's time on earth. ■■















My Father's death left me feeling detached. I had not really known him properly and had been estranged from him for many years. I hadn't seen him from the age of 10 to 28. He disappeared from my life and it was his choice to not keep in touch. On meeting him again I was disappointed ... we had very different outlooks on life.

*continues over* 

I somehow felt a duty to keep in touch erratically and on his death I did the honourable thing. I stood in the church amongst people I hardly knew and shared flashbacks of my memories of him before he disappeared. They were a child's romantic perspective of someone who was a ghost of a Father when alive and now feeling more mortal on his death. He was definitely gone and my anger, resentment and frustration for him was gone too. I stood there feeling emotion for the situation but not particularly for him ... overwhelmed by people staring at me and whispering after, *oh that's the daughter*. I can forgive him and knew he loved me despite his absence. Death allows a release and an acceptance, and I don't have to pretend or be duty bound as now he is gone. ■■





*continues in part 3* 🖱️