

Mum

On the saddest day of our lives so far, my family and I gathered in mum and Michael's lounge room to plan mum's funeral. Right from the start, we all agreed that it had to be a celebration of her life not a morbid occasion.

Mum had given us two instructions for when this time came, one was that she wanted "Morning has Broken" played at the funeral (much to the disgust of the priest) and the other was that she wanted us to have a party – a good old fashioned Irish style wake. (We were just glad she hadn't wanted to go with her Norwegian heritage or else we'd all be standing by a lake watching a burning boat).

Most people sit around a table and have a serious discussion about the funeral arrangements, WE had a production meeting. After the odd drink, lots of tears and a few laughs (and that was only our Funeral Director) we came up with what we hoped was a fitting tribute to a woman that we all dearly love and miss. I think the general consensus was that we succeeded.

We're still in shock and realise what a great loss mum's passing is to our lives but we're also honoured that she was loved and respected by so many people.

The Essendon Theatre Company was one of her great loves and I know that she was very frustrated that she couldn't do her Presidential duties for the few months prior to going into hospital. It will be strange to have a production without mum "Front of House". No doubt I'll burst into tears at some stage so be prepared.

Funnily enough, one of the last things that mum said to me (as she was lying in Emergency on oxygen) was that she had the rights to "Caravan". We had a laugh and told her to put her oxygen mask on and worry about the theatre company when she got better. Of course we didn't realise at that time that it would be the last time we would hear her voice.

Mum retained her sense of humour to the end in spite of being seriously ill. She was throwing out her usual quips in Emergency while she could still talk and when she had some wakeful moments in Critical Care, it was up to us to provide the humour and we got a few smiles out of her.

While she was in Emergency, in extreme pain and needing oxygen, she was more worried about how her hair looked. Faye got out the brush to tidy her hair and noticed that she had managed to don hairspray before heading to hospital. Not even a suspected heart attack could prevent her from looking her best. I'm surprised she didn't ask for lip stick!

We had a doctor and a nurse both named Ben and mum decided that one of them should be Bill so the poor nurse was referred to as Bill for the rest of his shift. I don't know anyone else who has the flower-pot men attending them in Emergency.

I'm told that mum was seen dancing in the aisles and heard singing with the choir at the church and I have no doubt that she was there, marvelling at the huge crowd. If only I'd thought to hand out posters to "Black Rock" with the memorial booklet!

As Fran said at the hospital on the morning of mum's passing... "What are we going to do without her?" And my answer... "I just don't know". I'll always be grateful that I had such a beautiful, lovable mum who left me with lots of fond memories.

Dawn