

**M**y mother-in-law was a spectacular human being with a wonderful sense of humor. She spent over thirty-five years in Al-Anon and was a loving and compassionate soul. After a silent heart attack in her eighties, she was in the hospital dying.

Her room was filled with the voice of Alexander Scorsby reading the Bible on tape and the sweet voices of her friends singing. She was unresponsive for hours and sometimes days at a time. Then, out of the blue and with eyes closed, she would periodically clearly comment on something someone across the room had said. Even in dying, she had hearing like a bat!

Several days before she died, one of her sons was sitting with her and holding her hand. She tried to open her eyes, then closed them and in a mock British accent said, "I'm not dead yet!"

Without skipping a beat, the son, in his own mock British accent countered, "Yes, Mummy, but you're mostly dead."

After a few minutes, with her eyes still closed and smiling broadly she said, "Yes, but I'm feeling much better!"

(Their family had lived in England for several years and dearly loved Monty Python. The exchange between mother and son was from the "Bring Out Your Dead" scene of the Monty Python movie *Quest For the Holy Grail*.)

A few days later, just about dawn, two of her sons and I were sitting with her. One was telling her to go to her favorite place

on the farm where she had grown up. He described the place, the color of the sky, the white clouds, the sounds of the birds, the trees, the view from that little hill, the smell of the air, and the feeling of the sun on her skin. He told her that she might want to spread a blanket and take a nice nap in the sun with the cool breeze on her skin.

As I looked down at her, I noticed she wasn't breathing. I kept expecting her to take another breath as she had been doing for days. After a few minutes, I looked at my watch to time her silence. One minute, two minutes, three minutes. I looked at her two sons and gently said that we were done. One of the boys said, "She's never done anything we suggested before! Go figure!"

We sat with her for a while as the sun came up and the rest of the family arrived to spend time and say their final goodbyes. There was some debate as to what would be engraved on her headstone and I still think she would have preferred, "But I am feeling much better."



*Every man goes down to his death bearing in his hands  
only that which he has given away.*

*~ Persian Proverb ~*