

Ghie Berry Transcript

My dad Frank was a lovely, lovely chap erm quite a practical man, you know, er his life was very much about family. He started his family young when he was in his late teens, early 20's, separated from my mother when er after about 16 years and then started another family, had 3 more children, he was a lovely guy, a really lovely guy well liked by people, very fatherly figure.

it's really bizarre actually both his funeral and his death 3 weeks before he died I had a conversation with him and asked him you know how he felt about death and he said I'm not scared of it, which was nice, and I said well how would you like to die? And he said on the golf course with my friends on a sunny day. And bizarrely the very first sunny day of the year in April he played golf, he was on a perfectly flat section of the course with my brother and one of my best friends and he collapsed over his bag and died on the spot.

We'd also discussed his wants for a funeral, he wanted no money spent, he wanted to be buried in a cardboard box preferably taken to the tip a local tip in a van and disposed of without the council knowing about it which was obviously great for him but not really what the family want from his funeral so we had to go against his wishes a little bit I think that was difficult for my step mum because she wanted to kind of honour them, but after a conversation about who funerals are for and you know the fact that there also for the living, they're not just for the dead I think she appreciated that maybe putting a bit of family culture and personality into it and doing something to celebrate his life was a worthwhile endeavour

And um one of the big deals for the funeral was the fact that we all got to carry his coffin. It was probably the most poignant moment of the funeral was carrying the coffin through for all of us, it was a moment of reflection and um banding together around, i guess my dad for the last time really right, cos that's the final journey so yeah, that was a big deal, ,it probably doesn't mean a lot to other people but for me just the fact That my sisters were there carrying the coffin which kind of breaks tradition as well was really important.

I think having the conversation with dad about his death, weeks before had a number of positive effects, 1 part of the conversation was him saying he's not scared of death - that's huge right? As his son you know he suddenly dies 3 weeks later and you go well at least he wasn't scared of this outcome, um secondly i think it's such a difficult conversation death with a lot of people like it's not something we openly talk about, um i guess the underpinning message was, it didn't really matter to him, it freed us up from making the funeral about his needs allowed us to pick what we wanted for it, and again you know different strokes for different folks, I don't think funerals are for the dead - they're not there they're for the people left behind - we played the music that reminded us of him , we didn't play the music that he necessarily would have chosen, cos he didn't chose any music you know I think, what did we actually have, I think we had King of the Swingers from the Jungle Book brilliant so representative of him, so it freed us up, it gave us freedom to make the funeral something that we could invest, that we could be involved in that meant something to us, and look when people pick their funerals and they write it all down,

i'm sure it still has the same value but you're trying to deliver on someone else's needs rather than deliver something that helps you with the grieving process and helps those friends and family that are having to suffer loss.

I think funerals are really important in the grieving process because they are the point at which you say goodbye, for whatever reason. The funeral is the full stop itself. It's the point at which we acknowledge that is the end. Whether you make it the end of the relationship, or the end of the person that's personal to you, but the funeral is the full stop for me. That's where you start having to rebuild yourself and rebuild your journey without that person in it.

Why was I proud of the funeral - I was proud of the family actually, I was proud of the family, yeah, because we're not really an emotional bunch, we don't really believe in spending too long on our woes and it was an emotional, sad, happy reflection of our family culture in the best possible way, so yeah i'm proud of all elements of the funeral, i'm proud of my family for getting involved and i'm proud of what we delivered.