

My mother thanked God a lot, although, for her, she was remarkably unspecific about who or what she was thanking. However, she knew that she had a lot to be grateful for.

I believe that mum felt that she'd negotiated a personal understanding with her maker: She followed her heart and her reason rather than any book. She lived a rich and a full life. She didn't like charities on the whole, but she was generous to human beings. She honoured her debts, actual and moral. It was her heavy smoking which caused her final illness, as she always knew it might: but she enjoyed it, and even at the end, did not complain about the price.

The hymn's words are "in purer lives thy service find". My mum's definition of a pure life would have been Polonius' advice to his son in Hamlet:

"This above all: to thine own self be true. And it must follow, as night follows day, Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Mum was always true to herself, and encouraged her friends to be true to themselves. One very good friend said she was like a cross between the respected headmistress and the naughtiest schoolgirl.

My lovely lovely mum. She started as a parent, but she became my best friend. I am only beginning to appreciate how much I will miss her. Even in her last week, when she was facing the ultimate test, she was more concerned about giving messages to friends and preparing them and me for what was to come. She gave up fighting to get better, and gently surrendered her life, because she felt her time had come. She did not want to live half a life.

Anything she chose to do she did with *hywl* - a beautiful Welsh word meaning, at least, heartfelt passionate enthusiasm. She loved the spoken word, and the beauty of language. This was something which bound my parents together in a community of the mind. Together, they fed my imagination and gave me both roots and wings.

Mum never lost her Russianness, but she loved Britain, and especially the England in which spent the best part of 60 years of her life. My final thoughts now are taken from the last verse of Rupert Brooke's 'The Soldier'

"And think, this heart, all evil shed away, gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given:

Her sights and sounds, dreams happy as her day, and laughter learned of friends and gentleness, in hearts at peace under an English heaven."

Thank you.