

My Father, Leslie Hatton, 1920-1996

My father died on Christmas day. I had had a strong premonition that this would be the case two weeks beforehand and my first reaction was that this in some way was the worst time to die with the festive associations of Christmas.

On reflection I think it was the best time for a man as gentle as my father to die, a privilege if you like for my father was the gentlest man I have ever known. Some would say that he was soft but that wasn't the case. He was a simply a gentle and humble man.

He had many reasons to be less than humble. He was a wonderful craftsman and I can once recall him making a replacement drumstick with a chisel half an hour after I had broken my last spare shortly before playing in a band. The carved one was truer than its machine produced twin. I still have it. There must be something about carpentry, my father's life-long profession.

When I was at school, in spite of leaving school in his early teens with little in the way of formal education, he built a 6 inch reflecting telescope to fuel my early passion for astronomy. He worked out how to do this from a book. He was a wonderful artist but did not even consider himself one. Everything he touched was perfection itself. When he smiled which was frequent, his face lit up like the sun.

Most of all he was a loving man. He was a wonderful husband, a wonderful father to me and a wonderful grandfather to Leo, Felix and Isabelle. With them, I said goodbye a few days before Christmas. In spite of being in a comatose state for several days, when I hugged him he found a way through the waves of pain and drugs to raise an arm and murmur. He got through. I will always remember that. We could always rely on my Dad and we will miss him terribly.

Dad, I'm sorry I cannot speak these words. The words form so easily in my mind but grief robs me of the ability to speak them clearly and I will have to rely on another to express what I feel in my heart. Goodbye Dad.