

BUSINESS EYE

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It's hard to beat good story-telling

WRITTEN BY

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On Sunday I was privileged enough to attend the combined 170th birthday party of the parents of my girlfriend's great friends.

It was a marvellous occasion with three generations of blood family, adopted family, life-long friends plus me, Johnny come-lately.

The room was full of love, memories, hope and pride. It was truly a magical afternoon, which ran without hiccup beyond Auntie Ann's mild turn and despite the unexpected rain and cloud which brought the barbecue indoors.

Lots stood out for me but what struck me most was the power of story-telling and its importance to relationships.

As the new boy pretty much every word spoken was new to me.

I hadn't been at Uncle Joey's solo parachute jump on his 80th birthday, nor heard about the time Michael inadvertently kidnapped the Jehovah's Witness and took him camping to a wet and windy Wales by mistake.

Beyond the magnificent spread, welcomes and small talk there came a powerful wave of love, all delivered through the medium of speeches.

It began with mum welcoming everyone and saying how lovely it was that we could all be there on this special occasion.

As MC, mum stood up at various points, each time needing only a little more by way of support to stand as the fullness of the afternoon's imbibing took effect.

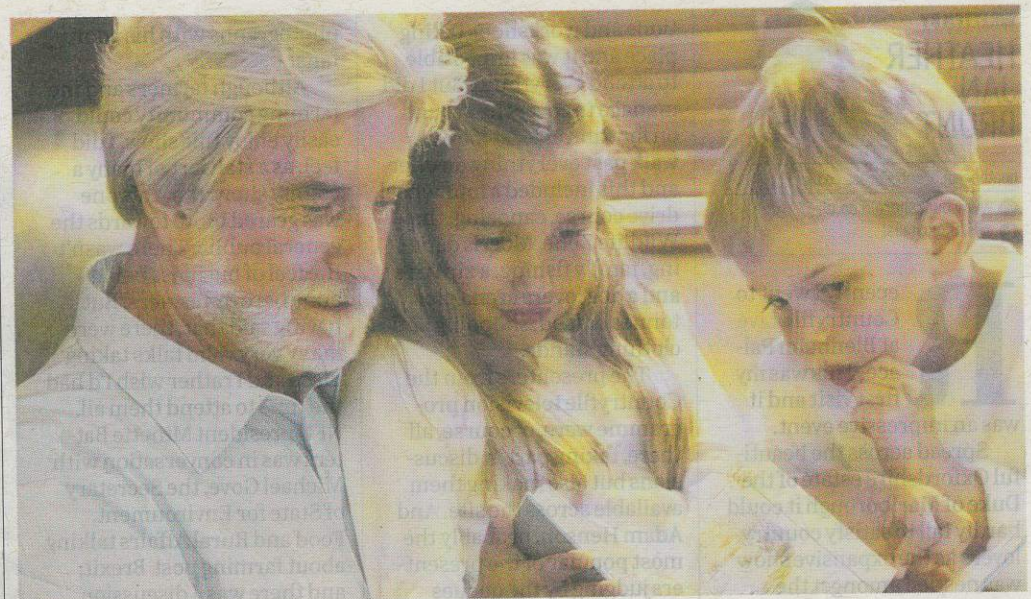
Mum made everyone feel special to be there and played the key role of making sure dad could relax.

Next the three grand-daughters stood in line and recounted hilarious stories of granny and Bop's nefarious exploits as the irreverent, fun-loving, caring paternal heads who had through the fullness of time brought together the dynasty here represented.

I watched dad look on with pride as his three girls held the room one by one, each in their own entertaining way.

Then Rob took to his feet to recall his memories of his parents and launched into a family quiz, which reminded everyone of the wonderful moments that would not have been but for their life choices.

As the laughter subsided others took to their feet to render heartfelt touching words of thanks, sharing just how much the couple had done and meant to them over the years.



Alex witnessed the power of family story-telling

Finally, this led to a wonderful joke-off with different characters standing in turn to share the most politically irreverent jokes they could remember, making fun of pretty much every societal grouping from

scousers to Bruce and Sheila. It was hilarious.

There is nothing quite as wonderful as a diminutive, kind 84-year-old gran standing to tell an edgy joke as a nod to her husband, no longer there to

do it himself.

It reminded me of how important it is to be able to stand up and share with people, a skill we seem to be losing with the advent of so much screen time.