

# THE QUEEN'S FUNERAL

By Ryan Helfenbein

Not long ago, a neighbor stopped me to ask if I heard about Queen Elizabeth II. He went on to tell me that on Sept. 9, Queen Elizabeth passed away. I was shocked, as she was known to have been carrying out her royal duties just a few days earlier. He went on to tell me that the Queen had noted before passing that she wanted nothing at all, not a ceremony, gathering or service ... nothing. She felt that it would be a burden on her family and community of subjects, world leaders and interested citizens from all over the world to do such a thing in memory of her. No need for 142 members of the Royal Navy to take time from their busy day or eight pallbearers to bear the weight of the custom lead lined casket. She wanted things to be simple and easy on everyone, and therefore disappearing when her time came was the obvious answer.

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What if this was the way history was written? What would the 11.5 million of us have watched on that remarkable Monday if this was the case? It would be unthinkable not to acknowledge the passing of a monarch. Those of us who've never traveled across the pond, lived under a monarch, or particularly cared

one way or another about the royal goings-on were glued to our screens to watch the remarkable ceremony. This was an event steeped in centuries of tradition. Religious and civil rituals were and continue to be celebrated to help her nation make this transition from life to death. Why do all of this? The answer is simple. Regardless of who the individual is, people have recognized for centuries that it's important to remember the life of the departed, provide a time for their community to participate in a ceremony of remembrance and ultimately gain strength from each other through the shared memories of the one they love. The old saying "it takes a village," can also apply to coping with the loss of a family member, friend or even a community acquaintance.

This experience provided the Queen's "community" a chance to gather and say goodbye. Her family was able to witness the outpouring of emotion from those around the world as books of condolences were signed, and flowers and gifts were left at the Buckingham Palace gates. People from around the globe stood in line for hours and hours to have a chance to view the flag draped casket.

Millions witnessed her funeral from all over the globe and so many visited the Royal Undertaker's funeral home website that it crashed due to the magnitude of visitors at one time. While most of us do not have a community of world leaders and royal family members, we, too, should consider that those important to us should have a chance to gather and grieve. Family members, friends, neighbors and those who may have

lent a hand or been given a kind word of advice along the way will need this time together to reflect on our lives lived.

While the Queen's final farewell was very much dictated by tradition, she also included elements of personalization through planning ahead. Her favorite horse was waiting along the route from the public ceremony to the private farewell with one of her favorite head scarves on its saddle. The bagpiper that played for her pleasure while she was alive offered his talent to honor her passing. Her casket had been custom designed since the 1980s and the family-owned funeral home was even selected well in advance. Yes, even the Queen understood the importance of not only a proper final farewell, but the advantage of planning ahead and adding touches of personalization. This foresight allowed her family to experience the support her community and not the burden of making once in a lifetime decisions during a time of grief.

Yes, most of us are not monarchs, but that doesn't mean that we don't leave an impact on our own community. Asking those around us to take a moment to reflect on our life should never be viewed as a burden, but rather a caring gift of support. Over 11 million of us took the time out of our day to witness the funeral of someone whom we've never met. Why not give the same opportunity to the people who know and love us?

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