

Reflection

By Noah Kynaston-Evans

I'm old now. Not in my head - in my head I'm still a young man but my body does not feel the same way. I know, realistically, that the clock of time, my own doomsday clock, is now about two and half minutes to armageddon. So I realise it's time for reflection. Has it been a life well-lived? There is a question.

Was I good son? I loved my parents, of that there is no doubt. But a good son? They were kind, humble people whose only fault lay in the wanting of their son to "do" better than they did in life and because I did "do" better perhaps I became judgmental of their lives and a little embarrassed at their simplicity. Yes I looked after them once the money started coming in, but was I good with my time? No I was not. Was I there for them at their end as they were for me at my beginning? No - I was busy bettering myself, busy with work and a life "well-lived", if you think that "well-lived" should be judged by how many fancy dinners and good wines you have enjoyed that week, and how many holidays to exotic countries you have experienced, and how big your bank account is.

My father died and my Mother was alone. I got her into the best home that I could pay for. Could she have lived with me and my wife? Of course - we had the room but not the time, or if I'm honest the inclination. She died alone, apparently, calling for the son who rarely came to visit.

Was I good husband? Yes I was: no affairs. I never even looked at another woman and I was very generous with money, but in truth I didn't have any time for affairs because I was so busy making money. That meant I also didn't have time for my wife, a lovely lady who gave me two beautiful children and kept me, my children and my house so well for so many years that she just faded into the wallpaper, became part of the furniture.

My wife died in hospital. She may have been ill for many months but I hadn't seen, hadn't noticed her fading away. The meals, when I was at home, were always on the table, my clothes always laid out carefully on the bed, and I was happy for the silence at the table because my life was so busy outside the house that I just didn't need the distractions at home.

How lonely she must have been, how sad she must have been, my lovely wife. How now I miss her.

What about my boys - my greatest achievement but my greatest grievance as I sit here now? Two handsome intelligent boys who don't really know nor relate to their father because he was never there. But who knew that all I wanted was for them to "do better" than me?

And they have done better: good grades, 1st class degrees and high-paying jobs in other countries. It's a skype call at Christmas and birthdays because they have become me. I have grandchildren I have never met and will never meet unless I take these reflections of my past and try to change what little there is left of my future.

Reflecting upon these reflections, I have found that yes - I was and still am a fundamentally good man; I have never raised my hand to my boys, wronged my wife in any conventional sense of the word and I've been a generous son to my parents. I have been ruthless in business and consumed with making money because I believed that money was the route to happiness.

But how wrong I was and am. Time and generosity of time is the thing that brings happiness to people and as my time is rapidly running out, I want to use what little time I have left spending it with those that I have left. Has reflecting on my past been good for me? Only time, that word again, can tell but whilst I still have the strength in my old bones, I am going to skype my boys and pack my bags and take the time to get to

know those I've never had the privilege to truly know. And to tell my boys, not to "do better" than me, but to "be better" than me.

By Noah Evans