

Excerpt from *Frog*

By Matthew Taylor

- Page 4 -

Our usual human response to confronting the myriad of confusions we call our lives is to pigeon hole them, or to put it another way, we conveniently place them in a box. We confront death in a similar way. Some choose to bury the box; some choose to burn the box. For the latter the sprinkling of the ashes is the final farewell to the physical.

Apart from my somewhat unnecessary concern as to what I was actually sprinkling, I was now haunted with a much greater concern. As I was helping my seven year-old daughter and five year-old son with their sprinkling duties, uneasiness swept over me. I realized that there was potential for committing what would have to be considered one of the world's greatest faux pas: To sprinkle the last of the ashes and not leave a serving of Mother for another guest.

My mind raced to Christmas dinners and Thanksgivings where the smallest portion of mashed potatoes was halved and halved again and again just so no one became that greedy, unmannered, inconsiderate pig who gobbled up the last portion. That was just mashed potatoes. This was my mother!

The problem was there was just no way of telling how much of Mother was left to go around. The urn itself was heavy, combined with my inexperience as a sprinkler, there was no way of knowing. Perhaps a small gauge on the side of the urn with an orange needle and a well marked "F" and "E" would be a nice touch. As it was, the ashes may peter out at any moment and unwittingly the deed would be done, leaving an eager-to-sprinkle second cousin ashless, heartbroken and bitter.

With this immense risk looming over me, I erred quite understandably on the cautious side. A little sprinkle here, a little sprinkle there. All parties that participated did likewise and this left us with something else of a dilemma. A bit too much of Mum to go around. Everybody who had wished to sprinkle had. And there was still a considerable amount of Mother left.

Since nobody was forthcoming I took it upon myself to have a second turn and this time gave it a bit of what-for. There was something quite freeing knowing that my simple goal was to sprinkle every last glorious ash. I decided to enjoy it. I am sure I was not the only one to be surprised at just how much was left. By the end I was creating elaborate patterns while spinning the urn at such a speed it surprised me that Mom's ashes didn't vomit.

Eventually, like all good things, it came to an end. I handed the urn back to the minister and a still, peaceful, loving silence followed. And with it, the sobering realization that my mother was physically gone forever...

[Hear the whole story at www.MatthewTaylor.com](http://www.MatthewTaylor.com)