

Opinion

Death is never easy

by Alicia Hartman
Co-editor

It was Saturday, January 24th, 12:00 noon. Great-Grandma, my aunt and uncle, and the community nurse were watching Mass on T.V. The Lord's Prayer was being recited - "Our Father, who art in heaven..." She gasped for breath and a tear ran down her cheek. She had passed away. Eighty-six years of life gone - in a split second.

The showing was on Tuesday from 2-4 and 7-9, and the funeral was on Wednesday.

On Monday I cut Great-Grandma's death notice out of the paper and copied it for teachers whose classes I would miss Wednesday. I felt stupid and morbid copying her death notice in order to be "legitimately" excused from class. Especially since I wrote about this attendance policy in my last column. Do any other students copy death notices for their teachers?

I wonder if teachers feel bad when you present a death notice to them at the beginning of class. Not that the death notice I had proved I was related to my Great-Grandma. You could cut

anyone's picture out of the paper and say that you are related to them.

This was only my second time in a FUNERAL HOME. In middle school we were supposed to be taken on a tour of a funeral home for "guidance" class. Of course my class was the only class that didn't get to go.

As I said, this was only my second time in a funeral home. The first time was a year ago when my paternal grandmother died.

Funeral homes are such interesting places. You walk in and everyone's dressed in black, which is the first thing that bothers me. Deaths are sad occasions, but if the deceased was sick, he/she is in better hands now and we should be thankful for that.

On the table to your left are brochures that tell you how to "explain death to children", complimented by a bowl of mints that look like imitation Easter M&M's.

Each family walks to the casket together. So many memories, thoughts, hopes, and fears race across our minds. Great-Grandma lies there, her hair all done up. I look at her

and it feels like a dream. My sister and I sit down, breathing in the music and aroma of the funeral home.

In groups of two and three the relatives and friends come. Funerals and weddings are also known as family reunions



because these are the only times that you see a big part of your family.

We were getting ready to head home at 9:00 when the family feud started. It was the Battle of the Limo: What lucky contestants would get to ride in it? Well, because the stepson

and his spouse wanted to ride in the limo, my mom and dad were shoved out.

I think "adults" act more like kids than children do. As for the Battle of the Limo, I think the people who rode in it should have been those who were closest to Great-Grandma instead of throwing a fit over this direct lineage thing.

Wednesday morning we had to be at the funeral home by 10:00. The music and aroma were still present, but there were more chairs set up. Once everyone had arrived, the funeral director informed us that there would be Mass at 10:30. We were then called by family to pay our last respects to Great-Grandma. I stood there for only a minute but it seemed like a lifetime. The realization that this was the last time I would see her (here on Earth) still hadn't sunk in.

Lucky me, I had to drive in the funeral procession. Because my knowledge of cars is a little less than desirable, it took four other people to help me get the flashers to work. (This is another story in itself.)

Mass lasted about half an hour. We then went to the cemetery. Great-Grandma's final

resting place. Huddled in a semi-circle in the wind and cold, the minister said a few words, we recited The Lord's Prayer, and Great-Grandma was blessed atop her burial ground.

Then of course was the dinner. There was tons of food. It looked like a picnic. I ate, ate again, and then ate some more. We all just sat around and talked to each other, trying to ease the pain of the day's events.

Death is strange. I don't know why I shared this story with you. Maybe just to set my feelings free.

I never cried once during the entire extravaganza. I feel somewhat guilty, but I know Great-Grandma is better off now.

Death makes you realize how important the people in your life are to you and how you shouldn't take them for granted.

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Results of the Bad Song Survey

by Dave Barry
Syndicated Columnist

I hope you haven't had anything to eat recently, because, as promised last week, today I am presenting the winners of the Bad Song Survey.

In analyzing these results, I had to make a few adjustments. For example, the Bob Dylan song "Lay Lady Lay" would have easily won as Worst Overall Song, with 17,006 votes, except that I had to disallow 17,004 votes on the grounds that they were cast by my Research Department, Judi Smith, who tabulated the votes, and who HATES "Lay Lady Lay."

To win, a song had to be known well enough that a lot of people could hate it. This is a shame in a way, because some obscure songs that people voted for are wonderfully hideous. One reader sent a tape of a song called "Hooty Sapperticker" by a group called "Barbara and the Boys." This could be the worst song I've ever heard. It consists almost entirely of The Boys singing "Hooty! Hooty! Hooty!" and then Barbara saying: "Howdy Hooty Sapperticker!"

Several readers sent in an

amazing CD from Rhino Records called "Golden Throats," which consists of popular actors attempting to sing popular music, including William Shatner attempting "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds," Leonard Nimoy attempting "Proud Mary," Mae West attempting "Twist and Shout," Eddie Albert attempting "Blowin' in the Wind," and -- this is my favorite -- Jack "Soul" Webb attempting "Try a Little Tenderness." You need this CD.

But now for our survey results. Without question, the voters' choice for Worst Song -- in both the Worst Overall AND Worst Lyrics category -- is... (drum roll...)

"MacArthur Park," as sung by Richard Harris, and later remade, for no comprehensible reason, by Donna Summer.

It's hard to argue with this selection. My 12-year-old son, Rob, was going through a pile of ballots, and he asked me how "MacArthur Park" goes, so I sang it, giving it my best shot, and Rob laughed so hard that when I got to the part about leaving the cake out in the rain, and it took so long to bake it, and I'll never have that recipe again, Rob was on the floor. He didn't BELIEVE those lyrics

were real. He was SURE his wacky old humor-columnist dad was making them up.

The clear runner-up, again in both categories, is "Yummy Yummy (I Got Love In My Tummy)," performed by Ohio Express. (A voter sent me an even WORSE version of this, performed by actress Julie London, who at one time -- and don't tell me this is mere coincidence -- was married to



Jack Webb.)

Coming in a strong third is "(You're) Having My Baby" by Paul Anka. This song is deeply hated. As one voter put it: "It has no redeeming value whatsoever -- except my friend

Brian yelled out during the birth scene in the sequel to 'The Fly' in full song, 'Having my maggot!'"

Honorable mention goes to Bobby Goldsboro, who got many votes for various songs, especially "Honey." One voter wrote: "Why does everybody hate Bobby Goldsboro's 'Honey'? I hate it too, but I want to know WHY."

Why? Consider this verse: "She wrecked the car and she was sad; And so afraid that I'd be mad, but what the heck; Tho' I pretended hard to be; Guess you could say she saw through me; And hugged my neck."

As one reader observed: "Bobby never caught on that he could have bored a hole in himself and let the sap out."

A recent song that has aroused great hostility is "Achy Breaky Heart," by Billy Ray Cyrus. According to voter Mark Freeman, the song sounds like this: "You can tell my lips, or you can tell my hips, that you're going to dump me if you can; But don't tell my liver, it never would forgive her, it might blow up and circumcise this man!"

Many voters feel a special Lifetime Bad Achievement Award should go to Mac Davis,

who wrote "In the Ghetto," "Watching Scotty Grow," AND "Baby Don't Get Hooked On Me," which contains one of the worst lines in musical history: "You're a hot-blooded-woman-child; And it's warm where you're touching me." That might be as bad as the part in "Careless Whisper" where George Michael sings: "I'm never gonna dance again; Guilty feet have got no rhythm."

Speaking of bad lyrics, many voters also cited Paul McCartney, who, ever since his body was taken over by a pod person, has been writing things like: "Someone's knockin' at the door; Somebody's ringin' the bell; (repeat); Do me a favor, open the door, and let him in."

There were strong votes for various tragedy songs, especially "Teen Angel" ("I'll never kiss your lips again; They buried you today.") and "Timothy," a song about -- really -- three trapped miners, two of who wind up EATING the third.

Dave Barry is a syndicated columnist from The Miami Herald.