

Ingeborg Nielsen

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By Niels Nielsen



On the headstone which goes over the box with Mom's ashes in it are two dates separated by a short dash: 1926-2011. Such a short dash it is, for someone who lived as long a life as she did; that short dash cannot really encompass the 85 years between those dates- all the places she went, the things she saw, and the experiences she had. To the extent we witnessed those experiences with Mom or heard her tell stories about them, we will hold them our hearts and minds, memories much bigger than the short dash between the dates that mark her beginning and her end.

Under the Danish flag I wrapped the box in is a small, thin piece of paper bearing a picture of Mom at my Dad's 90th birthday party. The picture is made up of thousands upon thousands of tiny dots of ink that are individually too small to see, which nonetheless blend together in the eye to show her in fine form, healthy and happy and laughing as if she just heard the funniest joke of her life. Such a thin piece of paper it is, for someone whose spirit was so big; even in the process of blending together into a picture, the million tiny little dots on it can only suggest to the eye all the things we will remember Mom for during her 85 years here.

Then there is the box itself. Such a small box it is, for someone who had as many good years on this Earth as she did, whose journey took her so far from where she was born 85 years ago in Denmark. All that small box contains are millions and millions of tiny bits of ash which unlike those dots of ink cannot assemble themselves into anything that represents to us her journey, her happiness, the durability of her soul, or the unconditionality of her love for us. Now I hold the small box in my hands, and soon I will have to let go of it, but you and I will hold in our hearts and minds the remembrance of her journey, her happiness, all the things she was, the places she went, the things she did, the durability of her soul, and the unconditionality of her love. These things I will never let go of.