

# Funding the Future

Article URL

<https://www.taxresearch.org.uk/Blog/2024/02/19/reflections/>

Published: January 12, 2026, 5:31 pm

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I often say that I write this blog primarily for my own benefit, to work out what I think about things. If others happen to find what I write of use, that's an advantage, but the fact is that I work out what I think and feel by writing about the issues of the day.

My biggest issue of this day is a personal one. The woman who one of my brothers describes as our stepmother, which is a term I never felt inclined to use, died over the weekend. Jean had outlived my father by five years, and reached a good age. She had suffered two significant strokes, and as can be the case, her release from suffering means there is no real cause for grieving.

My mother died more than 40 years ago. My father remarried about a decade later. Jean was a part of my life for more than thirty years but I admit I never had a close relationship with her. I suspect there was much that we did not have in common. Politics was a subject I think wisely avoided, for example.

However, I suspect that no death of someone in a family happens without reflection being demanded. I realise now that I got on with Jean because my father loved her, and that was sufficient reason. I also had absolutely no doubt about his devotion. She made him happy. That was a good thing.

Today, though, I might still need time to reflect on the relationships that were impacted by losing my mother whilst relatively young, by my father remarrying and what that meant for the idea of our family. I thought all those issues were long gone. Perhaps they are. But somehow they seem recalling right now.

Most of all though, Jean's death represents the last of the generation that preceded me across the extended family with whom I am still in touch. That is a poignant moment.

There is another thing to mention to it in that case. Not long after I first got to know Jean, when she was probably still in her late 50s, and therefore younger than I am now, she was determined to tell me that one day I would need to slow down, and that aches, pains, and physical deterioration would demand that I live my life more sedately than I did in my thirties. What is more, she thought I should take seriously those activities to which she and my father seemed dedicated through much of their relationship, from

cruising onwards.

I assured her all those years ago that I could never see that happening. I cannot still. I admit, when doing so, that I enjoy good fortune because, so far, I suffer from no chronic conditions, and I am aware of how lucky I am to be able to say that.

I suspect, based on her comments, that Jean thought I was afflicted with drive and determination. I would, of course, disagree. I have never been interested in having an old age of the sort that she and my father enjoyed, which appeared to be mainly dedicated to activities designed to use up their time without ever achieving very much. That, quite literally, seems like a waste of time to me.

But that has left me asking a question, just a month before I officially become an old age pensioner, as to just what the rest of this life is about as far as I am concerned, for however long it lasts. Jean had a clear and certain vision for me. It's a strange thing to say, but it was the thing I knew best about her.

What I need to reflect on is what my own very different version of that vision is.

As I noted above, no death can pass without reflection. Jean's will make me think, although not in ways she might have predicted.