

When my father died, she was 40. After battling his mistress for his life insurance, she spent it on a Mercedes and a mink coat and moved us to Vancouver, where she got a job in the ceremonies and protocol office at the University of British Columbia. For all of us, even though we teetered on the brink of financial disaster, it was a wonderful time. Only when her own mother became ill, did she reluctantly return to Belleville.



Eleanor Bone in 1934.

Every once in a while, my mother would inherit a windfall as another ancient relative died and she'd spend it immediately; once she frog-marched me, protesting loudly, into Holt Renfrew in Ottawa after hearing the title of a book I wanted to write about my years in that town: *The Only Cloth Coat on the Bed*. "Your finest fur coat for my daughter," she commanded, and the salesman happily snapped acres of black mink across the floor. She was enchanted and never asked the price.

My mother was the funniest person I have ever known. She always rejected any suggestion that she'd had a tough life. She was afraid of no one. She collected dirty jokes and told them with skill. She was outrageous, outspoken and she sang in restaurants. She read widely, was a passionate student of Jung and was, as we found after her death, deeply religious. A diary entry reflects her last sleepless nights as she sat looking out her window at the nearby mall. "God and I kept watch over Canadian Tire," she commented. "Bill them."

What finally did her in was smoking, even though she'd quit years ago. I wore the black mink to her funeral in the church where she married my infamous father and we lowered her ashes into his grave because she loved him until the day she died.

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