

## A figure in the sand: one woman's search for her father lost in WW II

Jane Cochrane

Eastbourne: Antony Rowe Publishing,  
2011  
£11.99  
366pp  
ISBN 978 1 90757 102 2

As the daughter of an American fighter pilot killed in World War II, Jane Cochrane's exquisite homage to her father brought me comfort and deep connection. Hers is a story of father-loss overlooked in the literature and rarely acknowledged for its mysterious and powerful impact. Her exacting historical research, gathered and pieced together to create a picture of her father in life and in death, defines the lived-experience of countless others who have experienced the war death of a parent. The careful mapping of her father's journey into the battle that killed him begins with the 'deeply regret to inform you' telegram received by her paternal grandparents. With the announcement of their son's death, the author, barely two months old, was swept into a vortex of grief. Grief amidst war is without resolution when survival is primary. Instead, her legacy is a mystery surrounding her father's death accompanied by 45 years of mandated silent wondering. The book illuminates the life of a child, adolescent, and adult woman as she seeks resolution. In the process she must deconstruct the mythology and silence that surrounds her father's life and death by defining her place as his daughter.

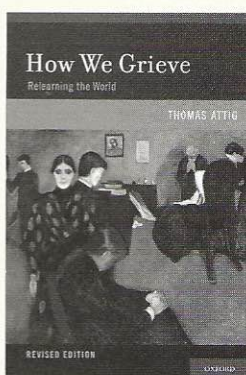
Cochrane's writing style is not only engaging and compelling but includes the adept touch of a fine weaver – interlocking her father's life story, his military family history which dictates the certainty of patriotism and a birthright to serve, with her parents emerging love story – all cut short by a landmine. It is a rare book that provides a place in time on a personal and historical level, with the unspoken truths of war, and a daughter's mission and tenacity to know her father. Jane Cochrane's story moves elegantly between these levels, seeking to include the reader on an incredible adventure. While *Figure in the Sand* is autobiographical, biographical, historical, and reflective, it manages to plumb the depth and breadth of father-loss in war. The subsequent emotional loss of mother; the replacement father deemed necessary for post-WWII women in order to maintain their children's legitimacy; the ever-present unspoken sorrow; the forbidden questions; the absence of information, result in disenfranchised grief. This book profoundly contributes to the literature of grief and loss while addressing the trauma of war-loss as it impacts

even the youngest child. This is childhood bereavement understood and healed. Jane Cochrane's brilliant and beautiful book draws a 'figure in the sand' as a map for us to follow as we accompany or experience grief. While this book is meaningful for the professional, it captivates even a casual reader seeking a tale of yearning, mystery, renewal, discovery, and recovery, that defines the power of the father-daughter bond, even in death.

[www.myphantomfather.com](http://www.myphantomfather.com)

## Sharon Taylor

Professor of Psychology; Relational Therapist



## How we grieve: relearning the world (2nd edition)

Thomas Attig

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011  
202pp  
£17.99  
ISBN 978 0 19539 769 7

The revised addition of this book differs only from the first in its extensive introductory chapter (35 pages). In this prelude to the original text, Attig sets out developments in his own thinking, and reflects on current grief perspectives. He extends his own way of looking at the 'relearning' process by reconsidering the emotions of grief. He proposes and names three dimensions – 'ego emotion', generated by a need to be effective; 'soul emotion' related to the deep needs for connection and love; and 'spirit emotion', resulting from the need for courage, meaning and adventure. No doubt this reframing of the emotions of grief will be the basis for much future discussion. Attig also asserts the need to distinguish between passive, and active elements of grief. **Grief reaction**, the dimension of grief triggered reflexively by a loss and characterised by a sense of powerlessness, and **grief response**, the dimension of grief characterised by active engagement with the challenge to rediscover oneself and one's place in the world. Attig locates notions of revisions of the assumptive world, disenfranchised grief and continuing bonds, firmly within his own conceptual frame. He is less convinced of the place of oscillation within the dual process model of grief and challenges the moves to include complicated or prolonged grief within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual.

Attig writes, 'Personal stories are "the heart of the matter," both in responding to the bereaved and in developing thinking about grieving.' (p xxiv). Exploring