

Mother's day 1984. As in every other year, the day when TV star Jack Hedley showers his elderly mother with flowers. "Because", says the British actor, "she has been a mother and father to me. You see, I never knew my father."

Alan Haldane from "Who Pays the Ferryman?"

"I never knew my father...."

Almost buried under a load of the most beautiful flowers, Jack Hedley goes to visit his 73 year old mother every year on mothers day. At times like that he is not a star but just an ordinary man, or rather more of a boy, a son who loves his mother dearly.

"I am grateful to her for everything", says Jack Hedley, "because I never knew my father. He left my mother before I was born never to be heard from again. Never. But, that's fine by me, as far as I am concerned, he doesn't exist. I wouldn't even want to meet him. My mother has always been a father and mother to me."

He goes on to tell all the things she did for him, how she worked her fingers to the bone to be able to afford to send him to an expensive school; how she was always there for him to help and advise him, in fact how she offered up her entire life for him.

"Heaven knows how hard that must have been for her", says the 54 year old actor.

"She was only a 19 year old girl when she had me and she had to do everything on her own."

Jack was sent to boarding school at a very early age and stayed there year in year out. Day after day. Not because his mother did not want to have him at home, but simply because she couldn't. She was always busy, busy making money. For her son, for his tuition, for his future.

"Actually I did not come home until I was 24", muses the actor, who can be currently seen in two series on Dutch television (Who Pays the Ferryman and One by One). "Before that I was in school, then in military service and when I was discharged in 1954 I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I realised I didn't have many skills. I had my schooling but what else could I do apart from reading maps and shooting? Who needs someone who can do that?"

My marriage broke up

At first Jack tried to find a job in Malaysia and Japan. One of these was at the Dunlop rubber plantation. But all his efforts came to nothing.

"My mother had started her own business by then and it was running very well. I could have stepped in at any time but it didn't appeal to me. Then, one day I was walking down a street past the RADA, the drama school. I saw masses of stunning looking girls walking around there and I thought to myself: if they are actresses then you should become an actor. And I succeeded.

In the middle of the 1960's Jack married one these beauties and the marriage, which lasted 17 years, made Jack the father of two sons.

"We broke up not so very long ago", Jack sighs, "it was inevitable. My work keeping me away from home for weeks, sometimes months at a time. It was bound to happen..."

But, even though I am no longer married, I am still the father of my sons. And I would never abandon them. Never. Because I will never forgive my own father who did exactly that to me."

**Translated from Dutch to English by Anna Pereboom
for the Michael J Bird Tribute Website**

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