

## Personal

Monday, 16 January 2006

I have a load of family, and friends. Nothing too close, thank God. No appalling wives or children. They are so expensive and make a lot of unnecessary noise But I was surrounded by The King Mother until she sadly died on August 24th 2007 (see Attitudes & Opinions), two brothers, Jamie and Andy, dozens of nephews and step nephews (thanks to AK who clearly has rabbit blood in his veins) and god daughters and other near relatives far enough removed to be pleasant company in very small doses but not irritatingly constant.

My friends are valuable. They are the people who really know me, as opposed to those who think they know me because they have seen me on TV or in the papers and decided to form personal opinions without ever managing to meet me in person. I cannot understand people like that.

Imagine liking Bert Bloggs because of his music or acting roles or social statements or writing â€“ itâ€™s mad. I adore the work of Dickens and Shakespeare, my idols, but I have no idea whether or not Iâ€™d have liked them in person. In fact, I suspect I would not. But that doesnâ€™t affect my adoration for their art and achievements.

As mass media has grown, people have muddled up the real thing with the image. It causes great problems for all concerned. Since the bizarre events of this new decade - century - millennium - I've discovered that I've lost not one single friend.

The only area of significant drift has been that of casual acquaintances, willing or even keen to get in touch and return calls when I appeared to be useful or influential. Many of them are now less keen to be associated. Fine by me! My only reasons for contacting them were the same: practical professional needs. Those will expand or contract according to my own activities.