A DIY Eulogy:
Last Chance for Self-adulation!

Since by definition and according to tradition, eulogies typically extol a person, oozing praise and acclamation, probably you don't need to worry about the thrust of these declarations at your own funeral or memorial service. However, you have options if you wish to assume a participatory role.

Your first impulse might be to write your own eulogy or a modified version. One man simply gave his self-written message of key points and recollections to the pastor who would read it for him. He began with, *"Please bear with me. I know this is a bit unusual. The newly dead tend not to speak at funerals,"* while noting that he had a captive audience obliged to listen.

For added impact, words could be festooned with a visual presence. During a taped interview with a *New York Times* reporter, strategically prepared so the video would be posted after his death, the imposing columnist and political satirist proclaimed with a grin, *"Hi, I'm Art Buchwald and I just died."* In like manner, you could record or videotape your own rendition, complete with mood-setting musical accompaniment, to be unveiled when the time comes for its delivery.

Here's a sample self-composed eulogy (to be accompanied by a video of the decedent) that could serve as a prototype for narcissistic personalities:

"Greetings, folks! Sure enough, it's Al Bragnauseam, in the flesh (so to speak, with the help of technology) and here to haunt you a little. I figured you deserved one last chance to see me. Hope everyone is comfortable in this awesome cathedral, in spite of, presumably, having had to pack yourselves in like sardines. I certainly did have a lot of friends! And, as you all know, I packed so much into my decades of living that most people can achieve only in their dreams! Since you were privy to personal associations with me, I suppose it would help you feel good about yourselves if I elaborated about some of my accomplishments. So here goes... my parting gift to you.

You may not be aware of this, but I actually overcame a severe learning disability before amassing the highest grades in the history of the prep school I attended. Ivy League college courses were a breeze for me, resulting in a ticket to one of the best-paying jobs anyone could imagine. My classmates envied me, but that was true of all colleagues throughout my life.

I guess my middle name should have been Charismus instead of Erasmus! Oh, there I go again... my intractable sense of humor just can't be denied! But, seriously now,

people always flocked to my side, probably not only because of my suave demeanor, but just as much because of my astonishing talents. I'm sure you'll agree that I seemed to have had some kind of innate power to conquer any challenges that came along.

And having never surrendered to suffocating imprisonment of a wedded abyss, I was free to frolic with a bevy of pussycats. I loved petting them! Meow...! No matter where I hung out, there was no keeping them off of me. Oh, those frisky felines! They actually competed with each other to gain access to my quarters. In fact, whenever I was at my primary residence, every one of them gravitated to the main attraction. They all yearned to pounce on my swell organ. It got played often! Obviously, it wasn't just my assets they admired. They adored being around such an able-bodied mover and shaker!

But I didn't let any of those bootlickers accompany me on my globe-trotting excursions, preferring instead to stay on the outlook for new mammalian rustlings. What a lot of territory I covered! And did I ever find opportunities to impress people in other lands! When I was an ambassador to Alvainia, it was because of my unparalleled gestures of goodwill and assurances of national support that the Hollywood director took note of me and my confabulations, eventually offering me

that starring role in the blockbuster, 'Empty Promises.' After giving my acceptance speech at the televised awards ceremony, I was glad (though not surprised) that I had executed it flawlessly, realizing later that it was viewed by millions of my fans.

Before long, that personal jet of mine was absolutely essential! Between all of the appointments with heads of states, lunches with celebrities, television appearances, guest lectures, commencement speaking engagements, and book signings for my best sellers, my lifestyle became quite a whirlwind of mind-boggling adventures. I hardly had more than a few days now and then to spend time at any of my seven foreign haciendas and villas. But it was all worth it, being in a position to exert positive influences on diverse peoples of the world.

I only wish my parents had lived long enough to witness my astounding success. Naturally, though, they would have regretted their decision not to have more children, who, conceivably, might have been like me. However, we need to realize that there are genetic limitations to quality assurance, so it's quite possible that I would have emerged as the only outstanding specimen... perhaps a freak of nature, so to speak.

There is so much more to be told, but I'll allow my admirers to fill in the gaps. Let me just say that, indubitably, I must have been placed on this earth to make an indelible mark and, irrefutably, to change the course of history. Now that my work is done, I'll find out what kind of action the powers that be have in mind for me on the other side. So adieu for now, as I undoubtedly ascend to that majestic mansion in the sky. You can only hope that maybe someday you'll have the pleasure of meeting me again."

Indeed, writing and even speaking one's own eulogy is always a possibility (if you conclude that a "personal appearance" wouldn't be disturbing, objectionable, or traumatic for your mourners). However, wishing to avoid coming across as crassly egocentric, pompous, or messianic, you may dismiss that approach, favoring instead to tap your cohort channels. Of course, you and every other mortal would like to have attributes, accomplishments, and accolades laudably recognized. But you don't want your characterization to be so stellar that guests would be quizzically turning heads toward each other, wondering who the heck they're talking about, with confused frowns revealing concern that they might be at the wrong service.

Rather than attempting to be the one who toots your own horn, turning over the reins to surrogate spokespeople might accomplish the goal more tactfully.

Excerpt from the recreational pre-planning book,
Pondering Leaves: Composing and Conveying Your Life Story's Epilogue
(no longer available)

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