
SIGNATURE SUNSETS

PUNCTUATED
DISTINCTION
AT THE END OF LIFE



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PONDERING LEAVES:

Composing and Conveying
Your Life Story's Epilogue



WEBSITE

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NEWSLETTER

It's Get Caught Reading Month!

To celebrate, while embracing change, the Signature Sunsets monthly newsletter has been prepared in a different format and mailed directly instead of through Constant Contact. At any time, if your address is currently on a distribution list and you would like it removed, or if you receive this via social media channels and would like your address added, please send notification via: passages@ponderingleaves.com. Additionally, consider conveying comments or suggestions for future publications.

For many months these newsletters have been prepared as a means to provide snippets of funerary information in a manner intended to prompt interest and possibly even intrigue. They've been decorated with accents of color and mirthful components to offset the cheerless chill commonly associated with matters of death. Maybe surprisingly, reading about such issues – when outside the bereavement zone and disconnected from immediate planning exigencies – can be an enjoyable experience.

For the moment, unusual and often oddball “holidays” will continue to be the framework for content, along with other items of note. Hopefully, the process of reading these pieces will help instill a comfortable willingness to bring mortality matters out of the closet for a closer look at them. Consider sharing... by forwarding this material to help lift the veil of death and spur preemptive contemplation about preferences for managing end-of-life details.

It's Photo Month!

Starting with this issue, another new feature of the revised format will be inclusion of one or more showcased photos illustrating some aspect of death management. Images, often obtained by way of nationwide travels, will illustrate examples of merchandise, facilities, services, or concepts – often featuring novelties to broaden viewers' horizons beyond purviews of standard funerary fare.

The layout for funeral and memorial services at the Carey Hand-Cox Funeral Home in Winter Park, Florida was revamped to reflect a trend toward a more communal setting for guests.

The original stained glass windows and altar have been retained, with a central frontal space for a podium and the stereotypical funeral lamps flanking a bier for the casket. Now, though, instead of rows of chairs lined up symmetrically in a chapel-like configuration, a banquet-style collection of round tables has replaced them.

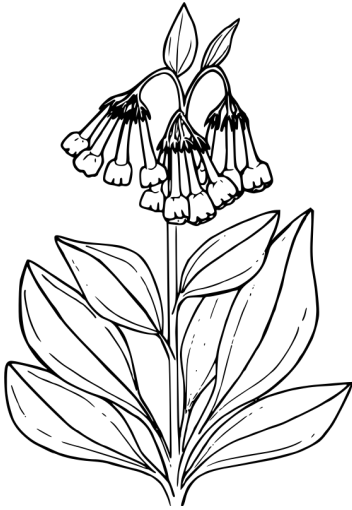


A few steps across the hall lead to an art gallery! Renovation of three former viewing rooms created what has been dubbed a “happy room.” Amid high-top round tables with tablecloths accented by sparkly netting, white walls are lined with stimulating artwork provided by community artists. In typical gallery fashion, ceiling track lights accentuate the individual pieces that can be



Photos: April 2013

Second Week In May: **Wildflower Week**



At the root of her funerary arrangements was **Lady Bird Johnson's** passion for flowers. Wildflowers had been associated with her through the years because of her devotion to preserving them, along with native plants. This was manifested partially by her efforts to promote natural beauty along Texas highways as well as her initiative to introduce legislation for a more beautiful America.



Having been dubbed “the true yellow rose of Texas,” the environmentalist’s private religious service was held in the wildflower center she had co-founded. The casket was positioned in front of a large portrait of her in a field of flowers, flanked by two vases filled with substantial arrangements featuring bluebells, her favorite. Along the road to her ranch where she would be buried, neighbors (some carrying flowers) stood in the midst of countless Texas and United States flags in addition to wildflower wreaths that served as guideposts for the funeral procession. Her grave was near a field of blooming wildflowers.

May 5: **Password Day**

Picture this nightmare... and then be glad you’re awake enough to take precautionary action!

Someone in your family has died. Although you are in the depths of despair, you must communicate to providers all the end-of-life decisions... quickly.

You know your loved one had made detailed arrangements with a funeral home and cemetery, but you have no knowledge of which ones. And she had recorded many ideas and requests for her memorial service, but the last time you had contact with

her was when she was still considering the options. She paid for as much as possible ahead of time, with contract data sent to her via emails. You knew of her desire for cremation, but that's about the extent of your awareness.

EVERYTHING... all of her intentions and arrangements were stored compactly in computer files for easy accessibility. But EVERYTHING right now is absolutely INACCESSIBLE because you don't know any of the passwords – to activate the computer or for entry into specific accounts so you can be apprised of the necessary information.

No matter how thoroughly someone plans ahead for management of life's ending, this small detail is readily overlooked. When making preparations, be sure to think about the ramifications of the modern-day electronic immersion for managing affairs. Be sure pivotal life companions know the whereabouts of passwords!

May 6: **No Pants Day**

How does this relate to the end of life?



If thoughts turn to attire for a viewing or bodily presence at a service, such contemplations can turn away from wearing dressy pants... or dresses, for that matter. There's no need to have one's body garbed in something "suitable" according to old societal standards.

Think in terms of an outfit that characterizes the person in some way. Why have someone who hated business suits wear one for his last public appearance? Why not choose something that would exemplify a certain trait and spark recognition

among guests... something that would become etched in their minds as a fond recollection of the affair?

How about a team shirt and khakis, a Hawaiian shirt and shorts, a farmer's overalls, a scientist's lab coat, or a familiar uniform? Whether particular duds are symbolic or simply preferred, there's no reason to dismiss individuality for the sake of conformity. Let true colors prevail!

May 14: **Train Day**

Here's a commemorative suggestion that's off the beaten track:

Many people have an affinity for trains, possibly because of enduring memories or maybe just as a special interest focus. It has been suggested that model trains coursing around a Christmas tree during simpler days of yore were to the soul what comfort food is to the appetite. For some people, from such childhood moments of warmth and excitement there developed a lifelong hobby, perhaps motivating generational bonds with grandchildren along the way. Trains are entwined in history, as a means of common transport for civilians as well as military personnel. Movies and music often have referenced them as well. People of advanced age generally have fond railroad recollections and associations with this mode of travel. For some folks, this may represent an element of life that could be meaningfully highlighted at the end of it.

You and your life companions may be located in one of the many places around the country where affordable fall foliage train rides are available. If so, consider inquiring about the possibility of utilizing a car for a “choo choo” aficionado’s commemorative service on board. The destination for such a trip geared toward family and close friends could be a site for scattering or burial of cremated remains, or it might be a place where seeds for a memorial tree could be planted.



May 14: **International Jazz Day**

“New Orleans Jazz Funeral Service Rituals”

Copy of A Comprehensive Article by Funeralwise LLC

<https://www.funeralwise.com/customs/neworleans/>

The tradition of the New Orleans jazz funeral has fallen away somewhat in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, but has not been forgotten. Although the wild music and dancing has, historically, flown in the face of prevailing sentiments about the required solemnity of the traditional memorial service, the New Orleans jazz funeral grew throughout the 20th century to achieve its own respected standing among the many ways to commemorate the passage of a loved one.

The music and dancing of the jazz funeral were intended to both help the deceased find their way to heaven and to celebrate the final release from the bounds of earthly life, which had, in the past, included the release from slavery. The call-and-response style of music and chant, coupled with tambourines, drums, music and dancing were elements of African funeral ceremonies which crossed the seas with captive slaves. In American culture, this type of funeral caught on among the African- American population of the deep south, but, as the tradition was not welcomed by the Catholic church, was restricted largely to the black Protestants of New Orleans and came to be the funeral of choice particularly among impoverished people and musicians.

Towards the middle of the 20th century, as the movement caught on more, social clubs and insurance policies arose to help the underprivileged afford these funerals, giving rise to the most celebrated of funerary jazz bands, the Dirty Dozen Brass Band. Over time, the jazz funeral tradition grew to become New Orleans' most honored of funeral ceremonies, with horse-drawn hearses and parades for fallen police officers, well-known musicians and other pillars of the community. In its final days, the traditional hymns, gospel, rock and r&b music of the jazz funeral began to fuse with influences from the funk and hip-hop world as street gangs and rappers adopted this style for honoring their dead. One of the last jazz funerals, that of rapper James “Soulja Slim” Tapp, drew a crowd of thousands.

Historically, the New Orleans jazz funeral could last up to a week and sometimes even included a parade. A typical funeral began with a slow march from the home of the deceased to the church or funeral home. During the march, the coffin may have been carried by a horse-drawn hearse and was accompanied by a brass band playing somber dirges and hymns. After the memorial service, the march would proceed to the cemetery and the tone

would remain somber until the coffin had been placed in the ground or until the group was out of sight of the church. People on the streets where the march passed were welcome to join in and go along with the mourners to the cemetery. This group was referred to as the “second line.” The brass band would play a couple more hymns, though these were played with a swing beat, to alert mourners that the mood was about to change, then would launch into wilder music with tambourines and drums. The music and dancing were both a cathartic release for mourners and a celebration of a life well lived. In this state of jubilation, the group would then march back to the location of their reception.

Perhaps the jazz funeral of the highest honor was held on August 29, 2006 in memory of the 1,700 victims of Hurricane Katrina in Mississippi and Louisiana. The memorial was held at the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center, where thousands were stranded without food or water just one year earlier. Led by Mayor Ray Nagain and Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, the procession included a horse-drawn hearse carrying an empty coffin, a brass band, fire trucks and the National Guard. There was a moment of silence in the small community where the hurricane first made landfall, tolling bells at 9:38 a.m. to commemorate the breach of the first levee and an interfaith prayer service. Many residents found the ceremony to be a beautiful and tasteful way to remember their many losses. Today, New Orleans has made great strides in restoring its native culture.

Carrying vestiges of African funeral rituals and originally intended to celebrate the new-found freedom of a departed slave, the jazz funerals of New Orleans evolved throughout the 20th century to come to be recognized as one of the most respected ways to exalt the life of a loved one. Musicians, police officers and African-Americans in particular have been remembered by this style of funeral and finally, those many victims of Hurricane Katrina were paid high tribute as well, New Orleans style. A symbol of life, a symbol of death and a symbol of re-birth, the New Orleans jazz funeral salutes a life well lived and the passage of a departed soul into a better world.

“Despite the forecast, live like it’s spring.”

~ Lilly Pulitzer ~

<http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/spring>

DEATH CAFE

Tuesday, June 14, 2016

6:00-7:45

Legacy at Clover Blossom

Rochester, NY

Register at:

meetup.com

or

passages@ponderingleaves.com



For Information about the International Organization: deathcafe.com

Signature Sunsets

Final Proceedings Reflecting Personal Style

For individual pre-planning assistance or to arrange a group planning session:

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Seminars, Workshops, and Discussion Groups

Introductory VIDEO

<https://www.educrations.com/lesson/view/end-of-life-pre-planning-to-die-for/29322450/?ref=app>



Drawing upon past teaching experiences,
I favor participatory interaction within groups,
rather than confinement to lecture-oriented approaches

I like to use visual aids,
including Keynote photo slides such as these
and tangible focal points for visual stimulation.
Discussions, role playing, skits, and verbal exercises
are part of my tool kit.

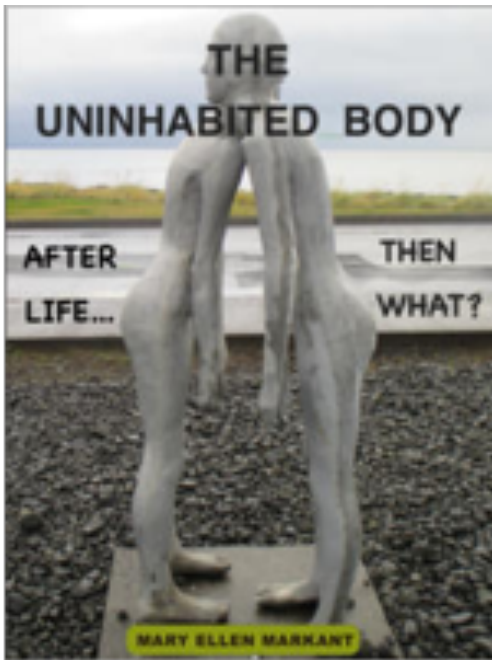
I have adopted a whimsical style
to counter the effects of death anxiety
and to propel the subject into the realm of enjoyment.

To Schedule A Photo Slideshow
Presentation

Contact:

passages@ponderingleaves.com

Publications



An eBook...

"You can't take it with you," including the most obvious of earthly possessions - one's body. What is to be done with this conspicuous leftover from life?

This resource provides specific information as a basis for making the most basic of funerary decisions: Given the choices, which of several possible means for bodily disposition and maybe even utilization best suits a particular individual?

By choosing a method for management of your body, you will have provided a foundation upon which other funerary decisions can be based.

iTunes store: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/the-uninhabited-body/id1100054732?mt=11>

A Two-volume Print Book...

Everything from soup to nuts is at this table of possibilities from which to choose one's own course of action.

An unusual format sprinkled with humor and surprising addendums underlies this enlivened review of funerary matters. Dry bones of familiar standardization are augmented and revitalized with funny bones of novel practices and products.

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