

SIGNATURE SUNSETS

Customized Event Planning
Highlighting Personal Distinctions
At the End of Life



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INSPIRED BY OFFBEAT HOLIDAYS

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January 19th - Popcorn Day

**POPCORN +
WINTER HIBERNATION =
HUNKERING DOWN FOR A _____!**

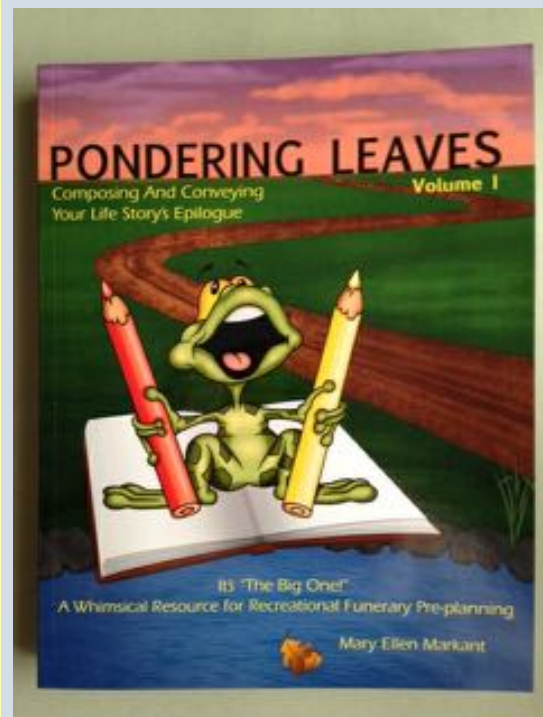
Suggested Flicks:

DIM SUM FUNERAL

A woman richly imbued with Chinese influences has died, following a bout of liver cancer. Having been unconnected for many years, her four Americanized adult children resentfully gather to go through the motions of a traditional seven-day Chinese funeral. Marked by separate lives of varying pursuits, they have not communicated with one another - even their mother.

One of them notes that it would be difficult to prepare a eulogy about a woman they didn't know. A close Jewish friend of their mother's who is familiar with Chinese customs assumes the role of enlightening them. During their week together they learn about their mother's history and become apprised of ritualistic and other cultural expectations. Everything occurs in accordance with traditions. On each of the days, the estranged siblings are schooled for participation in culturally designated practices previously foreign to them.

A READING ADVENTURE



QUICK LINKS

**[VIDEO About Seminars, Workshops,
and Discussion Groups](#)**

**To Schedule An Enlivening
Pre-Planning Presentation
for
A Group or Organization**

As a result, during this short period of time the family members become a family. They are reunited. Death made it happen. By the seventh day they have become fully engaged and appreciative of their cultural heritage as well as each other.

As the plot unfolds, toward the end there's an unexpected twist. It highlights the significance of the newfound camaraderie that this family, previously beset by dissonance, never would have imagined.

Viewer benefits:

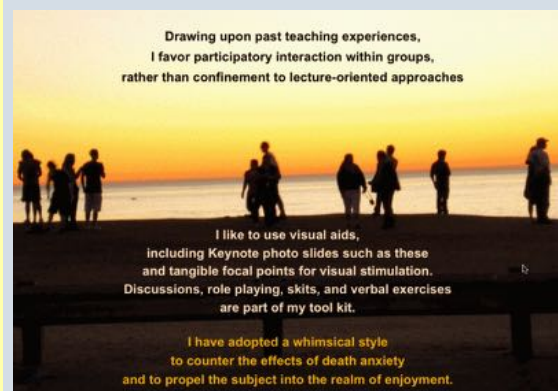
Insights into Chinese funeral practices
Captivating entertainment
Hope for a dysfunctional family's life after a death

DEPARTURES

Roger Ebert notes:

"The Japanese cinema reserves a special place for death... it is handled in terms of ongoing life. There is mourning, but not hopeless grief. The mourning is channeled into ritual which provides comfort. There is no great focus on an afterlife. Attention centers on the survivors and on the meaning of the life that has just ended."

The beginning scenes depict a couple in the throes of a financial crisis, brought on by the husband's loss of his position as an orchestra cellist. According to Ebert, "Looking into the employment ads, he finds a promising offer at what sounds like a



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BUG JUICE BLOG



FINISHING TOUCHES BLOG



UPCOMING EVENTS

travel agency. He gets the job and a cash advance. He discovers the agency handles travel, all right - to the next world. It is an 'encoffinment," or undertaking business."

Once the wife eventually discovers what her husband is doing, she wants to abandon the relationship, repelled by the thought of even being touched by someone whose hands come in contact with the dead.

The undertaker's gentle countenance as he fine-tunes his caring role is remarkable. It is as if he had been destined to perform the functions of death ministrations. Amid portrayals of other characters and sub-plots, the beauty of this story prevails. Elegance defines the exquisite artistry of this undertaker's work. The cinematography and musical accompaniment - often, cello renderings - lend to one's emotional absorption.

A viewer realizes that this film represents, in Ebert's words, "a journey of profound growth and discovery, brought about through the instrument of death."

Viewer Benefits:

Appreciation for Japanese funeral customs
Reflections on relationship challenges and resolutions
Riveting fascination

[Roger Ebert Review](#)

Rochester DEATH CAFE

Clover Blossom Legacy

Tuesday, February 2nd
6:00 - 8:00

Registration via:

[Death Cafe](#) or [e-mail](#)

PRE-PLANNING CLASS

Wednesday, February 11th
6:30 - 8:30

Community Learning Center
Greece Ridge Mall
Rochester, NY

Register via:

[Greece Community Education](#)

**"Yesterday is history,
tomorrow is a mystery,
and today is a gift;
that's why they call it the present."**

- Eleanor Roosevelt

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SIGNATURE SUNSETS...

Punctuated Distinction At The End of Life

A READING ADVENTURE

A Month To THINK RED!

*February 14th***Valentine's Day**

Something **RED**
for someone **BLUE**

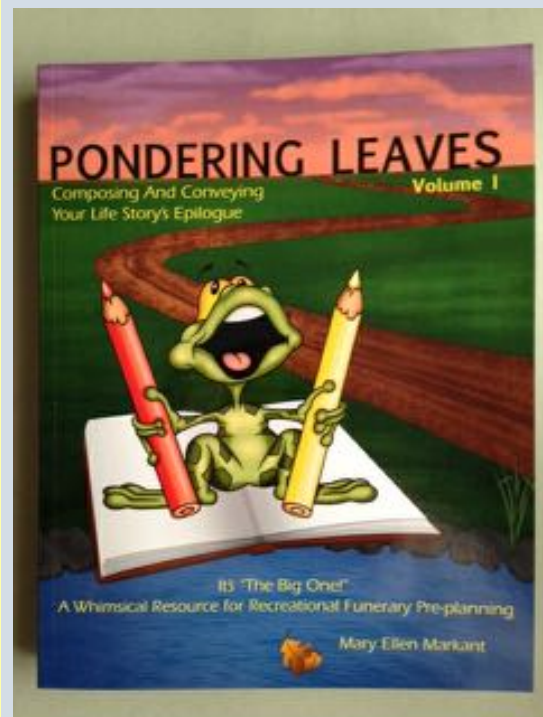
HAVEN OF HEARTS

*February 14th***National Organ Donor Day**

There is always an urgent need for organ donors. At any given time, in the United States alone, there are thousands of people with end-stage, irreversible organ diseases who are on the waiting list, with far more prospective recipients than available donors.

Organs that can be donated by someone who has died include the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas, and small intestines. But a human body has other resources, as well. Tissues for utilization include corneas, bone, tendons, ligaments, heart valves, skin, blood vessels, and connective tissue in the forms of cartilage, fascia, and the pericardium.

Thanks to donors, human tissue has replaced



QUICK LINKS

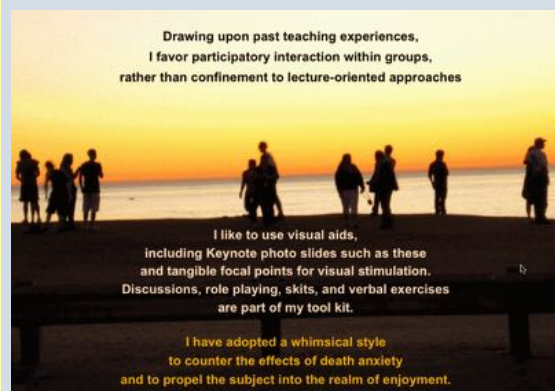
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bone, tendons, and ligaments impaired or destroyed by cancer, severe trauma, degenerative joint disease, arthritis, and other conditions. Transplants of long bones have averted the need for multiple surgeries and amputations due to disease and infections. Smaller sections of bone are used for strengthening and filling in areas where bone has been lost. Ground bone makes its way to dentists' stock of material for gum restorations. Damaged tendons and ligaments can be reconstructed this way, often replacing athletes' originals that were in debilitating disrepair due to injuries. Functional heart valves have served as substitutes for diseased or deformed ones that were defective, relieving recipients of the need for lifetime dependence on blood-thinning medications. People who had been immobilized by painful spinal conditions are able to walk again. Saphenous and femoral veins from legs may contribute to the success of cardiac bypass surgeries. Besides serving as a lifesaving measure for restoration after burns, skin is employed for hernia repairs, pelvic floor reconstruction, and breast reconstruction after mastectomies. Slings fashioned from skin correct bladder deficiencies by providing support where it is needed a lot more than just a wee bit!

It is said that a single donor has the potential to *save* up to eight lives and *improve* the lives of up to fifty people. One individual's bodily tissues could potentially be used for dozens of therapeutic purposes.

Anyone who feels inclined to "donate life" can access details through many sources. Either the [HRSA](#) or [UNOS](#) website is a good resource for information and donor cards. A local procurement organization or Board of Health can be contacted to learn about donor



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BUG JUICE BLOG



FINISHING TOUCHES BLOG



**"Ever has it been known
that love knows not its own**

registries and regional procedures.

There is no national donation registry; registration is managed through state registries. Most states have online electronic registries where information is amassed, drawing from links to other sign-up sources such as the Dept. of Motor Vehicles, the [DONATE LIFE AMERICA](#) organization, and many others, some of which are associated with specific maladies.

It is essential for relatives to know of someone's intention to donate. People who work with recovery networks consistently observe that previous communication of the decedent with family members has crucial bearing. That is, even if a donor candidate has not signed a donor card or has no documented confirmation, as long as wishes had been conveyed to them, they are far more likely to give consent.

Content excerpted from:

*Pondering Leaves: Composing and Conveying Your Life
Story's Epilogue*

February 20th

Cherry Pie Day

Here is something you may not know about that pipin' hot peach of a woman, Cherry Ovenworth. Throughout her life, she loved to bake pies. They were her favorite kind of dessert. She and her husband had even substituted them for the ubiquitous cake at their wedding reception. Instead of sending flowers to folks who were burdened by problematic

**depth
until the hour of
separation."**

~ Kahlil Gibran

**"Death leaves a heartache
no one can heal, love
leaves a memory
no one can steal."**

~ Richard Puz, The Carolinian

(from an Irish headstone)

**"Closed eyes, heart not
beating,
but a living love."**

~ Avis Corea

HEART TRANSPLANT STORIES

In South Carolina a man who had received a heart requested contact with the donor's wife. He reported that when they met it felt like he had known her for years. Nine years later they were married.

Sometimes if a characteristic in an organ recipient is one that had been exhibited by the decedent, families of

circumstances, she would deliver a pie. She had a reputation in the community. A story about her goodwill pie deliveries even appeared in the local newspaper.

After Cherry died, folks who attended her memorial reception still remember it well because pies were the featured type of food. Instead of contributing floral arrangements, guests had been asked to bring a pie - homemade, if possible. This was inspired by a realization that people invariably want to help in response to a death and they want to be involved somehow to feel a sense of connection.

Tables covered by cherry-colored tablecloths were replete with an amazing array of pies. Everyone was awed by the meaningfully relevant highlight of this life celebration.

Except for the cherry varieties that went home with family members, leftovers were delivered to a homeless shelter in tribute to Cherry's generosity. The pies disappeared quickly, but the memories of that event continue to linger in the minds of those who attended the commemorative gathering. Anyone who had known this woman felt gratitude for having been able to partake of her goodness.

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the donor feel a poignant connection.

In one case, parents learned that the heart of their son who had sung in a college chamber choir was given to a man who, following recovery, was then able to resume singing in a barbershop quartet, rendering an element of healing for the donor family.

**For information about
Death Cafes:
[International Website](#)**

**For pending notification of the next
Rochester, NY
Death Cafe:
[meetup.com](#)**

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PONDERING LEAVES

Colorful End-of-Life Pre-planning



HOME



CONCEPT



BOOK



ABOUT ME



BLOG



CONTACT

SIGNATURE SUNSETS...

Punctuated Distinction At The End of Life

A READING ADVENTURE

**INCIDENTAL HOLIDAYS
INSPIRING
COMMEMORATIVE POSSIBILITIES**

MEMORIAL MEMORABILIA

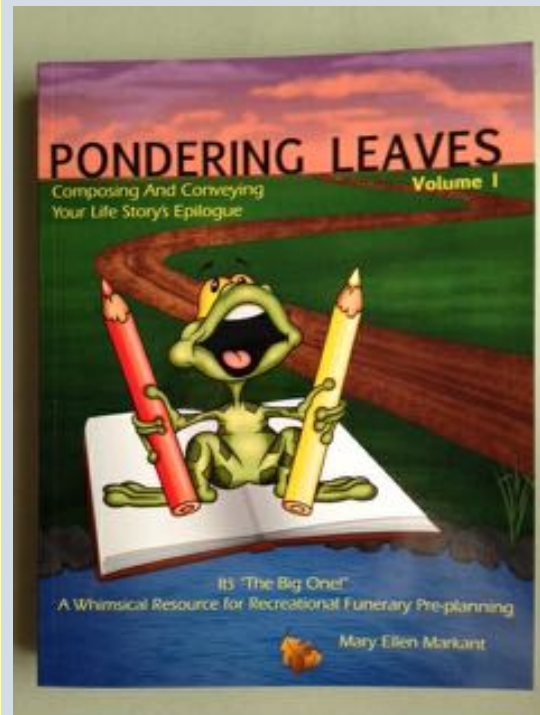
March 13 - JEWEL DAY

Websites abound with substantial arrays of costume-quality cremation jewelry affordable to the masses. Typically, they are designed with chambers to contain a token amount of human or pet residuals. Products are sent with a funnel, instructions, and glue for facilitating adhesion of cremated particles (the customer does the filling).

Alternatively, through simulation of natural processes over the course of a few months, remains can be transformed to create a real diamond. The result is a one-of-a-kind stone with the same characteristics (hardness, brilliance, fire, and luster) found in natural gems that required millions of years to materialize. Diamond cutters facet the gemstones according to specifications.

March 21 - National QUILTING DAY

Handmade memory quilts or wall hangings can integrate aspects of a decedent's past in fabric form, resulting in a personalized work of art. Using anything that belonged to the person, the story of someone's life can be unfurled.



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Garments might come to mind first. Among potential ones would be: old baby clothes, favorite socks, gloves, hats, pocketbooks, a prom or wedding gown, old ties, handkerchiefs, suspenders, aprons, work shirts with company or name labels, well-worn jeans, dresses with buttons or sparkly embellishments... any apparel that was special to the individual for some reason or representative of a phase during life.

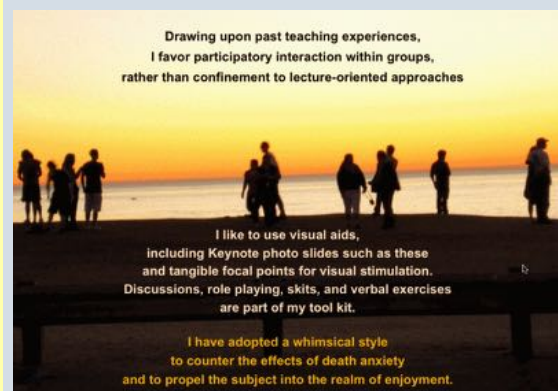
Perhaps there's a baby blanket or hand-knit item that has sentimental value, or maybe a sewing project was begun that was never completed. Upon sorting through graphic materials that have accumulated, one might find something of such importance that it warrants replication as an enlargement that can be transferred onto fabric.

IDEAS FOR MEMORIAL SERVICES

March 12 - PLANT A FLOWER DAY

Perhaps during a musical interlude as part of a commemorative service, a basket of flower seed packets may be passed around and offered to guests as a remembrance souvenir. Subsequently, after planting the seeds at their homes or at other meaningful sites, new life appears as a reminder of the person who died. This gesture, of course, is especially apropos if gardening had been a hobby or occupation that marked the individual's life. Seeds may be selected for this purpose that will produce blooms in favorite colors or species.

Many companies offer an alternative for containment of the seeds. Instead, they are embedded in small, shaped configurations such as hearts, butterflies, birds, and fish.



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**"I am going to notice the
lights of the earth, the sun**

These are made of biodegradable fiber and can be placed directly in the ground. A large quantity of them can be purchased at reasonable cost, sometimes in velveteen pouches, and may be accompanied by cards noting a name and dates. Other seeded paper products in the way of bookmarks, note cards, ornaments, and similar sundries can be obtained also.

Often customized designs may even include a personal photo.

If more substantial mementos are preferred, potted plants or bulbs would, likewise, treat recipients to colorful blossoms of reminiscent significance.

March 14 - Learn About Butterflies Day

Though butterfly releases are controversial because of risks and potentially adverse effects among the species, the practice at memorial services seems to be thriving.

Monarch and Painted Lady breeds can easily be obtained from mail-order businesses. Instructions that accompany them address suitable conditions and methods for release.

Small, individual boxes - each containing one butterfly - may be distributed to guests.

Or a single receptacle, namely, a basket with netting, a garnished cage, or a decorative box with trimmings and personalized inscriptions, can be used for dispatching the insects in mass.

Alternatively, something from the decedent's household belongings could be the container holding a collective group of single envelopes.

For the actual release, guests can be spectators or participants through a number of means. Individuals might be asked to open their envelopes in

and the moon and stars,
the lights of our candles as
we march, the lights with
which spring teases us,
the light that is already
present.

~ Anne Lamott

"Oh, give us pleasure in
the flowers today;
And give us not to think
so far away
As the uncertain harvest;
keep us here
All simply
in the springing of the
year."

~ Robert

Frost

(from a Prayer in Spring)

"No matter how long the
winter, spring is sure to
follow."

~ A

Proverb

***For Further Exploration
of***

conjunction with a reading or during the playing of a musical piece. They may choose to speak their own expressions as part of the process, in symphony with others or staggered so everyone can listen. Or the activity may be limited to family members. A mass liberation from a single source may have especially dramatic potential. An ethereal image coupled with spiritual interpretations that these evocative creatures inspire can be alluring, but ecological sensitivity warrants further exploration.

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Remembrance Embellishments:

34 Unique Memorial Service Ideas

Pinterest Memorial Ideas

"Remembrance restores possibility to the past, making what happened incomplete and completing what never was.

Remembrance is neither what happened nor what did not happen, but, rather, ... their becoming possible once again."

~ Giorgio

Agamben

*from Potentialities: Collected Essays
in Philosophy*

DEATH CAFE

April 15th
6:00

Clover Blossom Legacy,
Rochester, NY

For information about
Death Cafes:
[International Website](#)

For details or to register
for the
Rochester, NY Death Cafe:
[meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com)

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Punctuated Distinction At The End of Life

A READING ADVENTURE

A DAY of FUNERARY OPPORTUNITY**APRIL 6 - PLAN YOUR EPITAPH DAY**

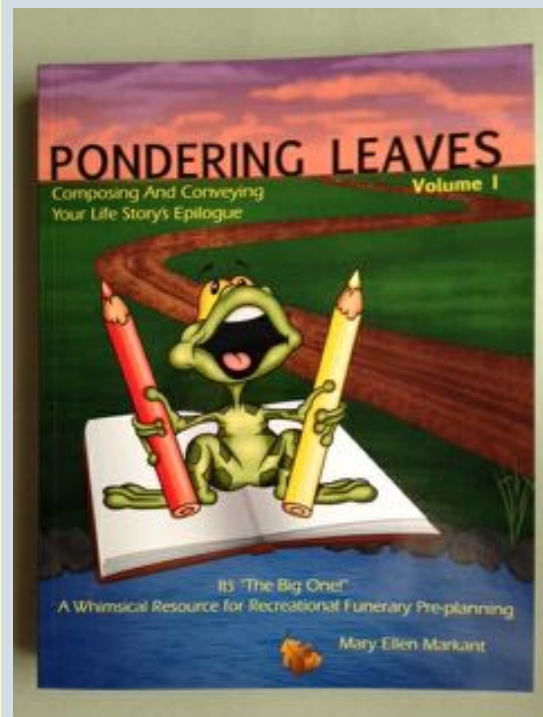
This activity may not generate unbridled enthusiasm at first glance. However, if one thinks of it as a creative crafting opportunity, it's apt to become more palatable... perhaps even fun. And it can be revisited periodically through the years whenever inspiration sparks new ideas.

Once a death has occurred, the process of choosing words to be engraved on a loved one's memorial stone could become a mindlessly barren, perfunctory task. A perk of dying is that one knows ahead of time it will definitely happen. So why not derive some preemptive entertainment from this aspect of its management?

A future decedent can go directly to the Internet and access standard lists of epitaph suggestions, which include commentary specific to gender and relationships, quotations from literature, religious notations with biblical verses, military jargon, and comical quips.

Alternatively, abandoning the computer for a trek through a cemetery will bolster circulation and maybe even the number of years one will have to contemplate this mission. For any epitaph wordsmith, the sight of so many constructs may instill a sense of playful absorption.

If ordinarily one likes to see how a garment



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fits before buying it, it's possible to "try on" proposed inscriptions online. Some monument company websites enable experimentation by way of selecting and viewing a pictured stone configuration with one's own words added. Realism may help cement a decision.

Simply by being exposed to a few examples, one may become enthusiastically engaged in word configuration calisthenics.

Epitaph Construction...

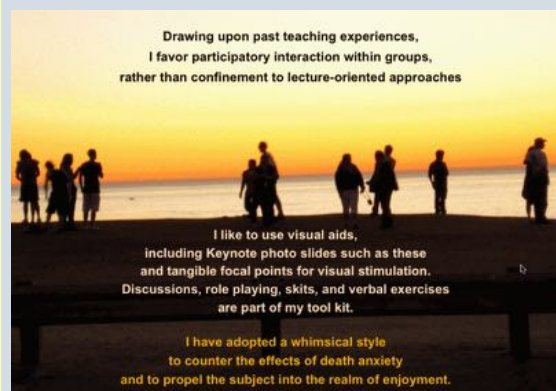
Another Way To Enjoy FUNeral Planning!

HISTORICAL DAYS of MORTAL SIGNIFICANCE

APRIL 15 - TITANIC REMEMBRANCE DAY

Since a few of the Titanic victims and survivors were buried at Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia, in 2012 a six-hour centennial event marking the 100th anniversary of the disaster was held there. It began with a walking tour to visit the grave sites of the doomed passengers and hear stories about them. A slideshow presentation followed whereby little-known facts and newly discovered information about the epic catastrophe were conveyed. The evening culminated with a dinner featuring courses that replicated the final meal served aboard the ship on the night when it sank.

APRIL 15 - 150th ANNIVERSARY of ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S DEATH



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BUG JUICE BLOG



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EPITAPH WORD PLAY

For an attorney:

Dateline 1865: In anticipation of Lincoln's body lying in state in the Capitol Rotunda, a catafalque was hastily constructed to support the coffin in which it reposed. The term for this raised platform derives from the Italian word, catafalco, meaning scaffolding. A catafalque is essentially the same as a bier, though sometimes it may be differentiated by the addition of ornamentation. But for Lincoln's, rough pine boards about seven feet long were nailed together and built upon a base that rested three feet off the ground. This primitive structure was then covered with black broadcloth.

Through the years since its original use, the base and platform have been modified to accommodate the remains of dignitaries who lay in state in the Rotunda and nearby locations. The fabric has been replaced several times, but its draping has always simulated the 1865 style.

Use of Lincoln's catafalque usually is determined by a decision to grant a deceased luminary the privilege of lying in state in the Capitol. The bodies of a number of Presidents have been viewed upon this same structure, including Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Reagan; the most recent was President Gerald Ford's.

After Lincoln's funeral, the catafalque was permanently stored in Washington's Tomb, a tiny cell two floors below the Rotunda. This basement space had been vacant since 1832, when plans to disinter the first president from his burial site in Mount Vernon were abandoned. Stored under glass here, the catafalque was on permanent display and was accessed as needed to hold the caskets of illustrious Americans. A few years ago it was moved

"He raised the bar"

For a jolly guy:

"Stop dead in your tracks!

Linger a while.

The spirit of this man

will make you smile."

For a meteorologist:

***"Showered lives with
the warmth of his sunshine."***

For a mountain climber:

"Ascended to heaven"

For a devoted mother:

***"Imbued with vigor,
propelled by passion,
accomplished many a goal.
But the essence of life
that meant the most
was the joy
of her motherly role."***

For an athlete:

"Had a ball before the game ended"

For a runner or racing enthusiast:

"On the fast track to heaven"

For someone who loved to socialize:

"Your house or mine?"

(Excerpts from *Pondering Leaves* book)

On the gravestone of the witty columnist,

Erma Bombeck:

"Big deal! I'm used to dust."

[Slideshow Presentation](#)

to Exhibition Hall in the new Capitol Visitor Center.

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Personalized Memorial Services

May 13th
10:30 - 12:00

MVP Health Care Wellness Center
Rochester, NY

For information about
Death Cafes:
[International Website](#)

Details for the JUNE
ROCHESTER DEATH CAFE
Pending
Register at
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A READING ADVENTURE

DAYS in MAY

INSPIRING FUNERARY RELEVANCE

May 5

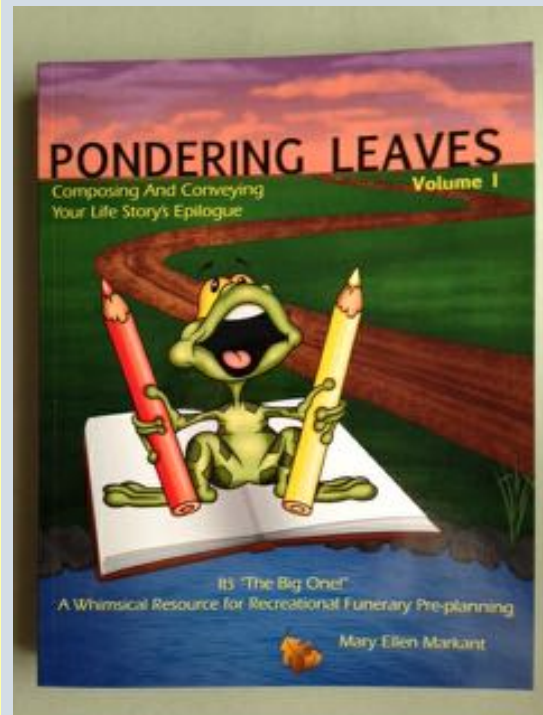
NATIONAL TEACHERS DAY

Since cremated remains are sanitary, odorless, and harmless if handled, teachers of the world can continue to provide instruction in spite of death. For instance, "die-hard" decedents could serve as instructional agents for a college class about death and dying. This is how Gerald Larue, the holder of a psychology professor's residuals, has maintained his former colleague's educational influence. Blended into the curriculum for a course at the University of Southern California, a small amount of his cremated remains has been circulated among students, year after year, to illustrate facts about the cremation process.

May 16

LOVE A TREE DAY

A regenerative concept has been cultivated by two Italian designers in the form of their "Capsula Mundi" creation. An egg-shaped, bioplastic capsule that accommodates a body in a fetal position



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is deposited in the ground as if it were a bulb, after which a tree is planted in a shallow, circular depression that has been dug over it. Symbolically, it represents cultivation of life by a sprouting seed born out of death, implying continued sustenance of the earth in spite of it.

"Forget Coffins: These Pods Will Turn You Into A Tree When You Die"

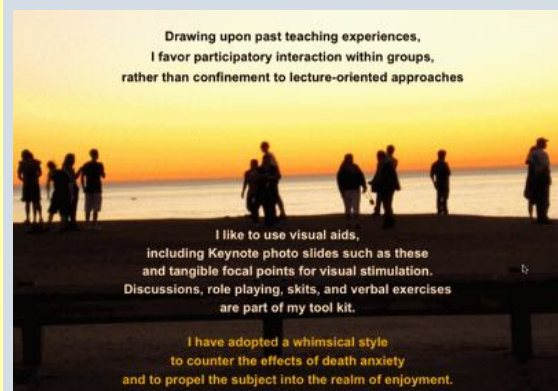
May 29

LEARN ABOUT COMPOSTING DAY

A Swedish biologist who wants to become a rhododendron has parlayed her knowledge of organics into an environmentally supportive, alternative method of bodily disposition. Like cremation, Susanne Wiigh-Masak's "promession" technique entails a rapid reduction in physical mass, but freezing rather than heating is at the root of the process. With the confined body submerged in a vat after freezing at minus eighteen degrees Celsius, a liquid nitrogen bath causes it to become firm and brittle. Ultrasonic waves then create gentle mechanical vibrations that effect disintegration within sixty seconds.

After freeze-drying, the shattered bodily elements become a powder that is freed of water content through evaporation in a vacuum chamber. A metal separator extracts extraneous matter such as mercurial dental fillings and surgically implanted replacement parts.

During a period of about two hours,



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BUG JUICE BLOG



FINISHING TOUCHES BLOG



DID YOU KNOW...

then, a body is transformed into an odorless powder that has been termed organic "compost" or mulch intended to support future growth in soil beneath the ground. A small coffin made of compressed corn starch serves as a biodegradable container for the substance. The filled receptacle is placed in a shallow grave, not far from the surface so oxygen can reach it, enabling aerobic bacteria to decompose the remains and turn the residuals into humus. Under the influence of moisture, with subsequent disintegration over the course of a few months to a year, the container and its contents become compost. Otherwise, the organic powder can be stored indefinitely, as long as it is kept in a vacuum-sealed repository.

The idea is for the deceased person subsequently to be represented by some form of botanical growth rather than a headstone. Now there's a literal meaning to the aphorism, "Bloom where you are planted"! Family members assume responsibility for providing a tree, shrub, or flowers to be planted over the grave, subsequently becoming a symbol or hallmark of the individual. The compost formed from the body underlies the new growth, accentuating the organic cycle of life. The powder, under the influence of moisture, is incorporated into this "rebirthing" activity, with the molecules that have been in the person's body eventually becoming part of the germination. The name of this form of disposition was inspired by the concept of a promise to

... that college courses about death and dying have become extremely popular?

In fact, waiting lists are necessary in some cases, as enrollments often must be capped.

An academic journal, *Death Studies*, that focuses on issues of death, such as bereavement and suicide, is published ten times a year.

"Why Students Are Dying to Get Into 'Death Classes' "

Death Studies Magazine

Anyone interested in the promession concept can stay abreast of its ongoing development.

The biologist who originated it posts comments regularly.

There is a world map indicating the breadth of interest.

Becoming a "friend" is recognized as a measure of support for the initiative.

Facebook: Promessa Organic - Ecological Burial

return to the the earth the human life that had emerged from it. Families who visit such grave sites over the course of time may be able to cut blossoms or leaves from the new growth to take home.

This new form of disposition is not yet available as a present-day option, but equipment for its inaugural trials is under construction in Stockholm, Sweden. Much interest has been generated among multiple countries.

"Freeze-drying the dead could help save the planet"

Above segments excerpted and adapted from
*Pondering Leaves: Composing and Conveying Your
Life Story's Epilogue*

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Death Cafe

Wednesday, June 3

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Clover Blossom Legacy
Rochester, NY

Register at:

meetup.com

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SIGNATURE SUNSETS...

Punctuated Distinction At The End of Life

A READING ADVENTURE

DESIGNATED DATES in JUNE

INSPIRING FUNERARY RELEVANCE

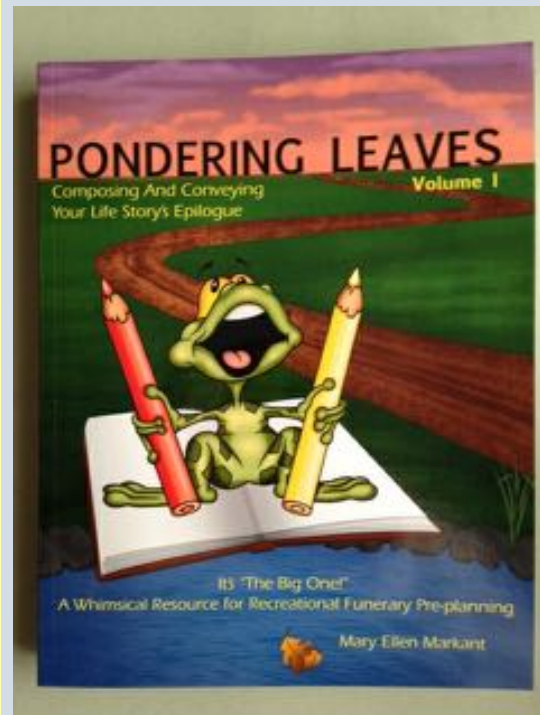
June 12

RED ROSE DAY

This is the month when blossoming roses are accenting country-wide gardens with color and fragrance. Beyond their tangible presence, though, they are imbued with symbolism. Having decorated wedding milieus for many years, they inspire enduring assignments of love.

Imagine the significance of this storied flower at someone's funeral or memorial service. A note in a program or an announcement could remind guests of its significance as a purveyor of love felt for the decedent and exuded by that individual during life. The effect would be magnificently compounded if the name of the person who died was Rose!

A florist can be commissioned to fashion the flowers in a configuration that bespeaks a person's identity or as ornamentation for a religious symbol, such as a cross. More conventionally, a large casket spray may be composed exclusively of red roses. This was the case at a funeral for a woman whose husband had always given her a bouquet of red roses on special occasions throughout their lives together. The type of flower and its placement over her body were infused with meaningfulness.



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Think, also, beyond images of a standard funeral arrangement. It could be riveting for folks to focus on a single blossom in a vase on an altar. Or a bunch in a vase would add a special touch, especially if the container had been part of the person's household collection or if the roses had been grown by that individual in a backyard garden.

During a committal service at a graveside, guests often drop rose petals in the grave on top of the casket or directly in the ground as part of natural burial proceedings. After an ocean scattering or urn burial of cremated remains, they may be tossed in the water over the site.

Sometimes it's possible to obtain rose petals from a florist, having been collected either from damaged or day-old, past-their-prime blossoms, scooped up as residuals from shipping, or even from the floor of a refrigerated unit. Contacting them ahead of time to issue a request is advisable. An alternative source would be grocery stores or other shops that sell flowers.

When someone has died and there's a profound need for a perceptible expression of love, consider the possibilities that red roses can inspire!

June 13

SEWING MACHINE DAY

Nowadays, as part of the trend to personalize events in funeral homes, guests may encounter more than photo boards when they attend a visitation or service.

Increasingly, funeral directors have been receptive to setting up a collection of lifetime representations. A visual display



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DID YOU KNOW...

may be limited to surfaces laden with pictures, trinkets, trophies, certificates, etc. But in many instances, the environment has been accoutered with props, rendering a stage-like effect.

That was the case for a woman who had been a seamstress throughout her life. Her full-sized, table-model sewing machine was the anchor item, poignantly accented by an empty chair angled as if ready for her to sit down, while exposing the well-used presser foot on the floor. A substantial piece of folded fabric lay alongside the needle plate of the machine, poised for action. A prominent dress form featured one of the decedent's creations and other articles of clothing she had made hung from additional stands and hangers. The woman's open sewing box revealed assorted tools of the trade. Large containers of ferns lent relevant ornamentation because she had many of them in her house. Framed photos embellished surface areas.

Conversation pieces such as these not only highlight a major component of someone's life, but also afford visitors an overture to conversation. Sometimes people reluctantly attend affairs in funeral homes for fear that they won't know what to say. The current tendency to incorporate life props helps break the ice by stimulating dialogues among mourners while celebrating hallmark features of the person who died.

June 14

FLAG DAY

One of the community initiatives sponsored by funeral homes in different parts of the country is a flag retirement program to honor veterans. Donations of worn-out American flags are solicited to implement

**... that June 26th is
Take Your Dog to Work Day?**

**At certain funeral homes, as canine
staff members, dogs are already
there... every day!**

GRIEF THERAPY DOGS

June 29

CAMERA DAY

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT...
WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?**

**IS IT ACCEPTABLE TO TAKE
PICTURES OF THE BODY AT A
VISITATION OR FUNERAL?**

It was common practice in a previous era and among certain cultures.

Likewise, pictures often were taken when bodies reposed in family homes. Perhaps it shouldn't be shocking if someone chooses to repeat this aspect of funeral history. In days gone by, photos would be shared with relatives geographically distant who were unable to attend the funeral.

**Some reactions gleaned from
Internet forums:**

PROS:

Grief is complicated. Maybe some people regard this as a last chance to get a final image of the person.

their respective versions of it.

Since burning is the preferred method for their final disposition, some places orchestrate an outdoor public event with military rituals complementing the incineration of either the entire collection or one representative flag (the rest are incinerated later).

Alternatively, at certain facilities a flag is placed over a veteran's casket prior to introduction into a cremation chamber, symbolically accentuating a history of service to the country under the national icon that represents it. At the Charlotte Memorial Home in Punta Gorda, Florida, the cremated remains (and ashes from the flag) are then placed in the Veteran's Garden of Honor within their memorial park.

FLAG RETIREMENT PROGRAMS

June 26

FORGIVENESS DAY

Forgiveness is a loaded word, compounded by a ton of baggage. Accusations and resentments borne of relationship complexities have a tendency to accompany folks to their graves, leaving life companions adrift in states of disgruntled disequilibrium.

Specialists within the realm of contemporary psychology, particularly bereavement support, have increasingly urged folks to discover the power of forgiveness, most acutely during the process of "dying consciously." In spite of terminal physical circumstances, personal growth and interactive resolution can be realized, even during the final stage of life.

Taking photos of the deceased person may be a declaration that the life companion is not ready to let him go.

Family members may not think of taking pictures at the time of a viewing, but if someone provides photos later they may be happy to have them.

It is acceptable because the tangible evidence of death may be a way of helping a person deal with the loss and move on afterwards, thereby conferring closure.

From a religious perspective, death is a celebration, like other milestones throughout life at which pictures are taken. It supports a celebratory attitude of appreciation for the person's life.

"Last minute" photos may compensate for lifetime pictures that were never taken.

It may provide comfort.

In some instances, taking pictures may be motivated by a sense of relief upon seeing someone finally at peace after having been ill for an extended period of time. If a ravaged physical being has been cosmetically restored and is free of tubes and medical paraphernalia, it may help to eradicate those images.

CONS

It is disrespectful.

No one would want to remember a person in a lifeless state. It is preferable to see pictures of the person when fully alive to prompt lingering

Release of long-harbored negative feelings and lingering grudges can help promote acceptance and emotional comfort.

Angela Morrow, a nurse who specializes in matters of dying and grief, has identified "The Five Tasks of Dying for Finding Closure and Peace at the End of Life." She refers to the teachings of Dr. Ira Byock, a palliative care physician who has written a book, *The Four Things That Matter Most: A Book About Living*, which advocates important final gestures of this nature.

#1... *Ask for forgiveness* - to wash away toxic material from the mind

#2... *Offer forgiveness* - to renounce anger and resentment toward others, while also forgiving oneself to gain self-acceptance and self-kindness

#3... *Offer heartfelt thanks* - to complete relationships

#4... *Offer sentiments of love* - to overtly express affection for others, rendering assurance and fulfillment

#5... *Say goodbye* - to acknowledge the impermanence of life by grasping a chance to wrap it up meaningfully

[About Health](#)

The venerable actress, Jane Fonda, has opined that "you don't want important things going unsaid before you die," (*AARP Magazine*, June 2015). In this manner, then, such words consciously conveyed may open doors of opportunity for closure.

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memories.

One wouldn't want to see a perpetual reminder that the person is gone.

There is no point in doing so. Once the soul has left a person, the body is nothing but an empty shell.

A photo traps the soul forever, so the camera prevents it from moving on to heaven.

It would be creepy to unexpectedly discover such photos in a drawer or envelope, even without having known the person. Who would want to see a random dead body in a casket?

CAVEATS

One should never take such pictures or post any on social media sites without family approval.

It is acceptable as a source of memories for oneself, but not for the whole world to see.

Even if personally opposed, exercise tolerance if family members are in favor of capturing photos. Realize that these folks are not in their normal state and a decision to do this may understandably be made impulsively.

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Punctuated Distinction At The End of Life

A READING ADVENTURE

DESIGNATED DATES in JULY

INSPIRING FUNERARY RELEVANCE

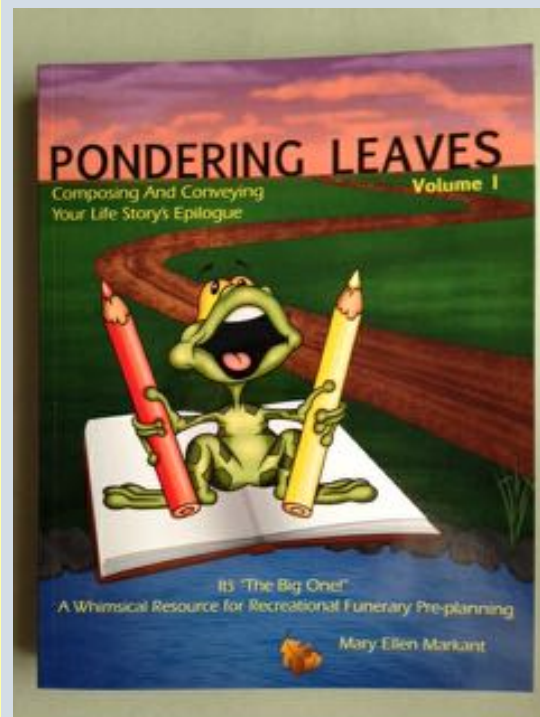
July 11

CHEER UP THE LONELY DAY

Do you know anyone who recently experienced the death of a family member or other beloved life companion?

During the initial period of upheaval, support typically flows freely in an effort to reach out and bolster the strength of a bereaved individual. Ministrations by peripheral mourners who are simultaneously feeling immediate shock waves may parallel their own personal tumult as a knee-jerk, empathetic reaction to the death. Once they have come to grips with the absence of the decedent and have moved on, it's important for everyone to realize that their supportive gestures would continue to be appreciated by those most acutely affected.

To offset someone's potential feelings of abandonment, isolation, and loneliness, consider following a regular schedule of sending e-mail messages or initiating phone calls, simply to inquire about the person's current status. Milestone days of the year, such as the decedent's birthday, anniversary, death date, or other noteworthy lifetime markers, are apt to be times when such gestures are especially appreciated. Even a "like" or a comment



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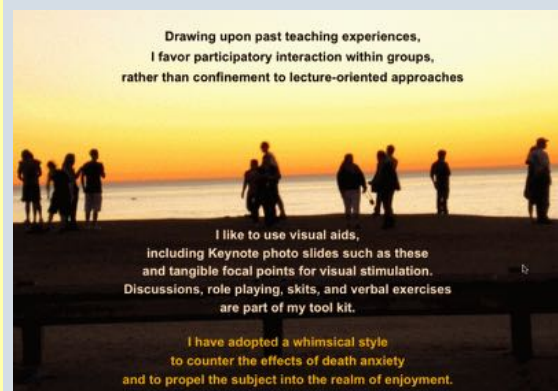
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under a Facebook posting that pertains to the decedent would indicate compassion though a virtual presence. Beyond such communications consider issuing an invitation for a personal visit or a suggestion for a conjoint outing of some sort.

Make contact not only to explore current circumstances, but also with the intention of focusing on recollections of the person who died - rather than avoiding any references to that individual. Be wary of a tendency to divert dialogue or messages away from the loss, justifying that trajectory as a way to avoid incurring further pain rather than acknowledging it may be motivated by one's own discomfort.

Chances are, anticipation of potentially awkward exchanges will evaporate as soon as the person responds to your authentic inquiries. Conversing meaningfully with someone who is grieving will likely be far more productive than contriving artificially formulated, superficial topics (such as the weather) to pass the time. By aiming straight at the bull's eye and targeting how a person is feeling or functioning in light of the loss, you may open up floodgates of much-needed discussion and emotional expressions. Authentic interest will be interpreted as genuine.

Avoid regaling the individual with renditions of all the splendid happenings in your own life, which might mimic ubiquitous holiday letters that can make recipients feel inferior. Maybe news of your family members' achievements, successes, or even vacations won't help someone who feels robbed of such opportunities at the present time.



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Instead, step mindfully into that person's shoes. How might it feel to experience the ramifications of this loss? What is different now? Have problematic nuances of relationships with family and friends emerged? How has the daily routine changed? If it is a spouse who has died, what tasks have to be tackled that had previously been handled by one's partner? What paperwork and household management complexities have surfaced?

After becoming aware of certain practical consequences of the death, maybe realization of a way to pitch in will become apparent, even if it is a minor detail that can be addressed. At the least, the loneliness factor is apt to be mitigated by awareness of a comrade who is receptive to ongoing communication.

Measures of comfort and caring can contribute substantially to helping someone adapt to the deprivations of loss and regain equilibrium, albeit according to an altered state of affairs. Certainly, all kinds of tools are available nowadays to facilitate grieving processes. Perhaps, though, the empowerment of personal empathy warrants emphasis for its potential as the most enduring means of support, possibly engendering a lifelong tie that binds.

July 19

NATIONAL ICE CREAM DAY

Harry Ewell had been a local ice cream vendor in Rockland, Massachusetts for several decades, attracting children who became like extended family to him. The truck that he drove around town represented the core of his life, so Bob

... that July is National Make A Difference To Children Month?

Childhood and adolescent phases ordinarily present challenges specific to one's age. A death in the family can potentially wreck the momentum of maturational growth.

Without intervention, the added stress of coping with the loss of a parent, sibling, or other pivotal figure in a young person's life can threaten stability and interfere with the progression from one developmental state to the next.

[MORE...](#)

July 24

NATIONAL DRIVE-THRU DAY

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT...
WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?**

IS THIS A DESIRABLE AMENITY AT FUNERAL HOMES?

Rare, but there: Funeral homes with drive-thru windows for viewing a body...

The most updated version of this amenity has been in operation during the past year at the Paradise Funeral Chapel in Saginaw,

Biggins, the funeral director responsible for making his arrangements, utilized it as a central feature for proceedings. During calling hours it was parked in front of the funeral home. It was also the lead vehicle for a procession to the church and, subsequently, to the cemetery. With its bells clanging and lights flashing, it made a celebrated statement about the life of its former driver. After the burial, everyone was given Popsicles from the truck.

(excerpt from Pondering Leaves book)

July 20

SPACE EXPLORATION DAY

July 14... Pluto At Last!

This month a fervor of excitement has skyrocketed as anticipation has given rise to realization of an objective to be accomplished by New Horizons, the fastest spacecraft ever built by NASA. The first mission of the agency's New Frontiers Program began on January 19, 2006 when the craft, described as the size of a piano, was launched from Kennedy Space Center (then, Cape Canaveral). Its nine-year journey would extend to the outer region of the solar system, known as the Kuiper Belt, where the dwarf planet, Pluto, is the largest known object among vast numbers of small icy bodies presumed to be remnants of the solar system's formations.

With instruments, namely, cameras

Michigan, having been installed at a cost of over \$300,000. Its state-of-the-art, automated system limits observations to occupants of vehicles, thereby averting visibility by passersby on foot. The actual presence of the body is an alternative to another manner of viewing at other funeral homes where a button is pushed to switch on a projector that projects an image from a different room onto the screen.

Here, wall-mounted metal components offer a prelude to visualization of the body at the window up ahead. The lateral door covering a small slot can be lifted to deposit cards, donations, or memorial items. Next to it is a larger, retractable unit that opens to extrude a guest registry book for signing. Once a vehicle has moved forward to reach the viewing window, sensors under the pavement recognize the weight of it and activate opening of the curtains so the body can be seen. The casket is situated on a raised and tilted platform. While music plays in the background, visitors have three minutes for viewing before the curtains close.

Motivation for the amenity at this funeral home was energized by an incident that compounded the owner's long-held desire to have one. In this community that serves many elderly folks, he purportedly

and spectrometers on board to enable the closest-ever observations of Pluto, on July 14, 2015 the probe flew by at 30,000 mph and captured photo images that are now circulating around earth's world. While a capacity for proximal contact of sorts with Pluto is thrilling for space specialists as well as casual observers, it is particularly meaningful for the children of the late astronomer, Clyde Tombaugh, who at the age of twenty-four discovered the outermost planet in 1930. His eureka moment occurred while working for thousands of hours at the Lowell Observatory in Arizona, examining millions of images of stars. This revelation led to awareness of the Kupier Belt, a previously unknown region of icy objects, thereby expanding mankind's comprehension of the universe and prompting a pivotal revolution in scientific studies of it.

It isn't surprising that Tombaugh had always wished he could visit the planets. Although it has been eighteen years since his death in 1997, the spacecraft for this first mission to the planet of particular interest to him bears remnants of his physical being on board. The two-inch- by one-and-a-half-inch aluminum canister containing a symbolic portion of his cremated remains was mounted on the inside of the craft's upper deck before the launch nine years ago. A medallion's inscription conceived by Alan Stern, head of the New Horizons mission, reads, "Interred herein are remains of American Clyde W. Tombaugh, discoverer of Pluto and the

regretted the fact that it wasn't available when a nursing home resident was unable to make it to the chapel inside the building for her husband's visitation and service.

Although this concept that mimics features of banks and fast-food establishments is offensive to many people, advantages are touted in response to aversive reactions:

Ease of accessibility for individuals with physical limitations...

Protection from inclement weather so people don't need to get out of their cars...

Visitation opportunities unrestricted by specified calling hours, possibly after work or at night...

Potentially greater turnout, indicating show of support for families...

Antidote for inhibitions of folks who are repelled by funeral homes and wouldn't visit otherwise.

So far, this uncommon service has not aroused substantial interest among funeral directors. But it is, for sure, a topic that's apt to arouse robust reactions among the general public.

solar system's "third zone." Adelle and Muron's boy, Patricia's husband, Annette and Alden's father, astronomer, teacher, punster, and friend: Clyde W. Tombaugh (1906-1997)."

The historic adventure of exploration will continue, with Clyde's remains along for the ride. After flying past other Kuiper Belt objects in succeeding years, New Horizons will leave the solar system and enter interstellar space, causing the particles of Pluto's discoverer to become the first to have been launched to the stars.

The first space "burial" took place in when 1992 when cremated remains of Gene Roddenberry, the renowned Star Trek creator, were aboard a shuttle for a Columbia mission, returning to earth afterwards. Two companies, Celestis, Inc. and Elysian Space, offer this type of service, with affordable opportunities even for folks of less than stellar means. Options include brief suborbital flights with returns to earth, orbital trips around the earth, extraterrestrial planetary destinations, or excursions deep into space.

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Colorful End-of-Life Pre-planning



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INSPIRING FUNERARY RELEVANCE

August 2

INTERNATIONAL FORGIVENESS DAY

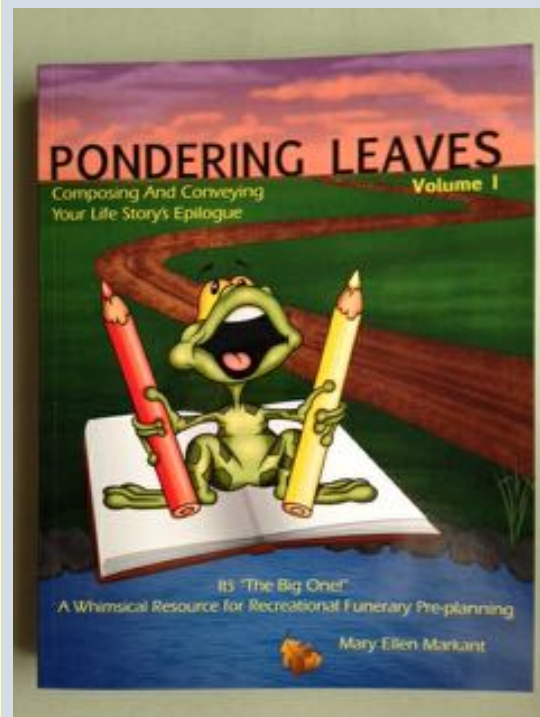
Excerpts from *The Grieving Heart* website
by Christine Jetta

"Grief can be complicated due to unresolved conflict, regret, or negative history with the person who has died.

Forgiveness does not mean condoning hurtful or ignorant behavior, but it does involve letting go of the past. Resentment literally means to re-feel or feel again. It saps our energy and allows us to be controlled by another - alive or dead. Our unwillingness to forgive attaches us all the more to the pain of grief.

Forgiveness is not a weak or passive act. The act of forgiveness cannot be forced, but once achieved, offers the freedom to grieve and heal in the present. Giving forgiveness will not change the past, but it will assuredly change us, and the possible future, forever.

Is there anything we can do to make peace with less-than-perfect relationships after a loved one dies? I believe that writing



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unsent letters to people who have hurt us - alive or dead - can be liberating. By knowing we are not going to post the letter, we have complete freedom to say anything we want in any language we want.

The letter writing described here is a means of letting go. The whole idea of letter writing is to fully express any negative emotion that you harbor so you can move towards forgiveness. We do not forgive others because it is the right thing to do. We forgive because it is the loving thing to do for ourselves as we grieve.

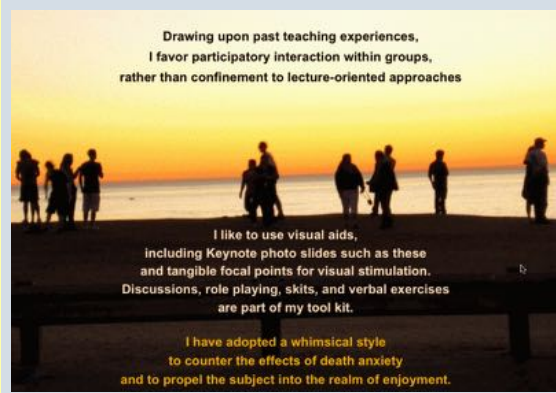
Try this: In the letter to your deceased love one, clearly state what happened, why it hurt you and how you felt about it at the time. Describe the ways this wound has had a lasting effect on your life. What have you missed because of it? State how you feel about it now. Don't censor your writing. Use powerful language and say everything you need to say to this person.

When you can write no more, read the letter out loud to yourself as if you were actually addressing the person face to face. You may also want to read it to a picture of your loved one, or at the graveside. Put as much anger and hurt into the reading as you truly feel. After you have done this, breathe deeply for a while to bring yourself back to a state of calm.

I suggest shredding the letter and throwing it away after you have read it out loud. You may need to read it more than once before you sense completion."

[The Grieving Heart](#)

August 9



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August 16

NATIONAL BOOK LOVERS DAY

This is a designated occasion when people are encouraged to pick up a book and spend the day reading it. The process of reading momentarily distracts one from the exigencies of life, thereby reducing stress and facilitating better sleep. One's mind is stimulated and sharpened by the activity.

And only words are required for adventures unfathomable in real life.

Public libraries may be bustling spots, but reading resources are available in less frequented territory as well. Some of them have memorial connotations:

Memorial Book Exchanges In Yards

August 19

AVIATION DAY

When choosing a place to hold a memorial service, any ordinary site can assume significance if it is associated with the decedent's life. By being in one's personal sanctuary - a place that had been special or meaningful for some reason - family and friends can understand more intimately why it meant so much to their life companion. It is apt to draw them closer to one's spirit and in doing so, foster endearing recollections that will help them process their loss.

Commemorative services in these types of milieus are certain to trigger enduring associations that will perpetuate visions of the individual's presence.

NATIONAL TELL A JOKE DAY

A famous heart specialist doctor died and everyone was gathered at his funeral. A regular coffin was displayed in front of a huge heart. When the minister finished with the sermon and after everyone had said their good-byes, the heart was opened, the coffin rolled inside, and the heart closed.

Just at that moment one of the mourners started laughing. The guy next to him asked: "Why are you laughing?"

"I was thinking about my own funeral" the man replied.

"What's so funny about that?"

"I'm a gynecologist."

An old man is lying on his deathbed with his children, grandchildren, and older great-grandchildren all around, teary-eyed at the approaching finale of a very long and productive life. The old man is in a terminal coma, and the doctors have confirmed that the waiting will be over within the next twenty-four hours. Suddenly, the old man opens his eyes and croaks: "I must be dreaming of heaven! I smell your grandmother's strudel!"

"No, grandfather, you are not dreaming. Grandmother is baking strudel now."

"I know I will never have another taste

A personalized tribute to a man whose passion was aviation exemplifies this.

During his childhood he had amassed awards for model planes he built as a hobby. Subsequently, throughout his life he had incessantly worked on and piloted small planes. One plane in particular, a World War I Standard, was his pride and joy because he had constructed it himself. Even as death approached, his wife courageously accompanied him for his last flight in it.

The modest, tin-roofed hanger that had been his "second home" was chosen as the site for his memorial service.

Simplicity prevailed, with no flowers or music. Guests were asked to wear warm, comfortable clothing. Folding chairs, a focal display table with memorabilia (including his model planes) and a table with refreshments (coffee, cider, and dozens of pies that guests had brought) occupied half of the space. His special plane that had meant so much to him during his life graced the remainder of the structure's interior.

At the end of the service, poignant moments were spurred as the plane was moved out to the grassy strip and with a pilot friend at the controls, it became airborne for a symbolic final flight. It had been an ideal tribute for an avid aviator.

One of the elderly guests, agog, remarked that this was the most unique memorial service he had ever attended.

of her delicious strudel after this one. Could you please go down and get me a piece?" the old man begs...

One of the grandchildren is immediately dispatched to honor the old man's last request. He returns empty-handed.

"Did you bring me one last piece of your grandmother's delicious strudel?" the old man plaintively queries.

"I'm very sorry, grandfather, but she says it's for the funeral."

A man and a friend are playing golf one day at their local golf course. One of the guys is about to chip onto the green when he sees a long funeral procession on the road next to the course. He stops in mid-swing, takes off his golf cap, closes his eyes, and bows down in prayer.

His friend says: "Wow, that is the most thoughtful and touching thing I have ever seen. You truly are a kind man."

The man then replies: "Yeah, well we were married 35 years."

Source of Jokes:

<http://jokes4all.net/funeral-jokes>

Death Cafe

Excerpt from

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SIGNATURE SUNSETS...

Punctuated Distinction At The End of Life

A READING ADVENTURE

DESIGNATED DATESINSPIRING FUNERARY RELEVANCE

September 5

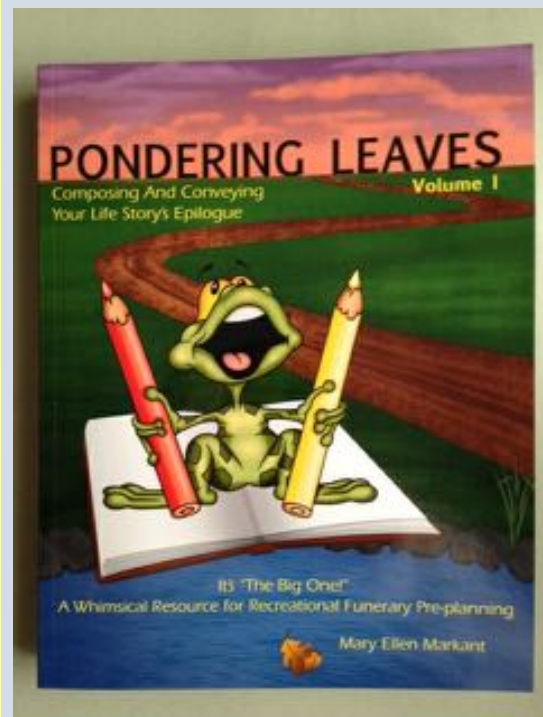
BE LATE FOR SOMETHING DAY

Customized funeral planning enables personal scrutiny and a realization of one's defining characteristics. With advance contemplation, small details can be considered. Elizabeth Taylor, the actress and legendary Hollywood celebrity, took that stance. When pre-planning her funerary proceedings she addressed the issue of timing as a way to accentuate her characteristically tardy arrivals at events. Her funeral service began fifteen minutes late - just as she had instructed.

September 9

TEDDY BEAR DAY

Memorial teddy bears seem to be popular, as a number of crafters specialize in their creation. Although many are designed with zippered back pockets for insertion of cremated remains or objects, others simply are intended to look cute and commemorative. The trend is to offer customers an opportunity to provide fabric, particularly swatches from clothing of a decedent. Instead of a monochromatic motif, a patchwork variety may comprise the "skin" of a single bear. These one-of-a-kind creations often are fashioned with a choice of eye color,



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embroidered or printed words, dates, and emblems on foot paws, sometimes a photo of a loved one or relevant insignia on the belly, or engraved metals hanging from necks. Dressed in garments reflecting roles, occupations, activities, depictions of special occasions, or typical manners of dressing, they epitomize personalization.

MEMORIAL TEDDY BEARS

September 13

PET MEMORIAL DAY

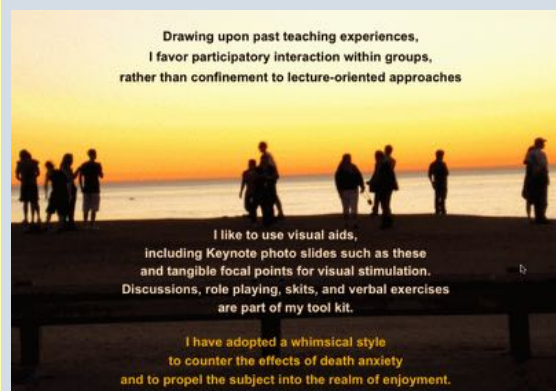
It can be exquisitely painful when the life of an animal buddy ends. Funeral directors have often asserted that people sometimes are more distressed by the deaths of these life comrades than their human counterparts. The demise of creatures that provide unconditional love without the relationship entanglements of complex interaction causes a penetrating blow to the human heart.

In recent years, much attention has been directed toward end-of-life management and memorialization of pets. Services have been incorporated as part of operations at many funeral homes. Often there are separate cremation facilities, with a designated pet hearse at some. There may even be viewing rooms for visitations. Product selection areas invariably have pet urns on display, and at some there may be caskets fit for four-legged occupants of varying sizes.

PET CREMATORY and CEMETERY

PET CEMETERY CIRCUS

MEMORIAL PARK PET BURIALS and CREMATION GARDEN



Contact:

ponderingleaves@gmail.com

BUG JUICE BLOG



FINISHING TOUCHES BLOG



September 25

September 21

MINIATURE GOLF DAY

In a suburb of Chicago, the Ahlgrim Family Funeral Services operates a horror-themed, haunted miniature golf course in the basement of their building in Palatine. The nine-hole course, dotted with obstacles in forms of coffins and headstones, is accented by background sounds of eerie music and screams. With free admission, organizations and community groups can seek ghostly good times there as long as a funeral is not in progress upstairs.

September 22

ELEPHANT APPRECIATION DAY

*From the trunk of collectibles:
a jumbo funeral story...*

Since the man's life had been marked by safari adventures and affection for animals, his funeral was held at a zoo. Guests were transported by tram to different sites on the grounds of the animal kingdom for varying forms of commemoration at each stop.

Afterward, a procession was established in the parking lot for a journey to the zoo cemetery. The casket bearing the body was conveyed slowly atop the man's beloved, seventy-five-year-old companion - an elephant named Tranzago. Guests followed the lumbering mastodon on foot.

After the graveside committal service, Tranzago refused to leave the burial site until the grave had been filled in with dirt and the process had been completed.

NATIONAL COMIC BOOK DAY

The trend toward personalized memorialization coupled with the rising rate of cremation have spurred offbeat ideas for incorporation of cremated remains into objects of significance.

Mark Gruenwald had been a longtime lover of comics and a comic book writer, which led to his role as a senior executive director at Marvel Comics, a well-known firm. He was characterized as "full of energy, ideas, and practical jokes... an instigator and ringleader" of office parties.

Upon reading the will after his fatal heart attack in 1996, his wife smiled and was not surprised by a declaration that he wanted his cremated remains integrated as an element of a comic book. He had made it clear to family and friends that this was what he intended.

The powers that be at the helm of Marvel were not immediately enthralled by the prospect. Eventually, Gruenwald's wife convinced them to proceed, based on the potential value of the idea as a novel means of publicity. In 1997, at a printing plant in Canton, Ohio, she was permitted to sneakily and secretly mix her husband's remains in ink. The ink was then used to print 5,000 copies of a one-hundred-page, twelve-part book comprised of the entire Squadron Supreme comic book series - as a reprint of a 1985 limited edition

NATIONAL MUSEUM DAY

The National Museum of Funeral History in Houston, Texas houses a substantial collection of artifacts and features a variety of exhibits and events. An overview of the funeral industry's history is complemented by specific focal points. Among them are coffins, caskets, and hearses from the past, fantasy coffins of Ghana, a review of proceedings for U.S. Presidents and popes, 19th century mourning customs, the history of embalming, Japanese funerals, rituals of ancient civilizations, the Day of the Dead annual practice, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

It's a "happening place" where an ongoing schedule of periodic events enlivens the environs. Recently, for a Robin Williams tribute affair an impersonator delivered some of Williams' quotes and familiar characterizations. The celebration included a photo display of the comedian's life coupled with a relevant trivia game. For Halloween, there's a haunted house, classic car show complete with hearses, and more. In September, to mark the anniversary of 9/11, firefighter and police funerals were featured. At other times, there are sporting events. Scavenger hunts are new to the venue as a way to learn while exploring the 30,000 square feet of museum territory. Scheduled to open in July, 2016, a "Cremation in North America" exhibit will highlight cremation through the ages, including forms of memorialization people choose.

collection of comics he had written.

In the forward section of the book, his widow wrote: "He remained true to his passion for comics, as he has truly become one with the story and blended himself in the very fiber of the book."

Source

Think about autumn - the color and beauty it represents - suggestive of opportunities and potential when planning a life's "grand finale."

Fall is "when everything bursts with its last beauty, as if nature had been saving up all year for the grand finale."

~ Lauren DeStefano, *Wither*

"Autumn... the year's last, loveliest smile."

~ William Cullen Bryant, *Indian*

Summer

Take heart and dive into the quiet maturity of autumn."

~ Kristian Goldmund

Aumann

"Leaves grow old gracefully, bring such joy in their last lingering days. How vibrant and bright is their final flurry of life."

~ Karen Gibbs

"It is a beautiful fall day. Gentle wind teases stubborn autumn leaves. Some defy the gentle wind and sway. A taunting dance. Come with me and

With abundant exhibition space and a large area available for meetings and dining, the facility can be utilized for corporate events and private parties. An auditorium, private boardroom, classrooms, and a business center render the site multi-functional beyond the purview of funerary paraphernalia.

But any funerary museum aficionado need not dash to Houston for sightings of tangible artifacts. Though on a smaller scale, there are other exhibits at various sites around the country.

Then, too, one need not activate the search engines to dig up a death-related museum. Simply amble on over to a local cemetery and with an observing eye take a walk through an outdoor version saturated with history.

[NATIONAL MUSEUM OF FUNERAL HISTORY](#)

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look at the magnificence of the last dance."

~ Fidelis O. Mkpuru, *Love's*

Affliction

"The tints of autumn... a mighty flower garden blossoming under the spell of the enchanter, frost."

~ John Greenleaf

Whittier

"Autumn is a classical music; when it begins, the gravity disappears."

~ Mehmet Murat

jldan

"Nothing dies as beautifully as autumn."

~ Ashleee Willis, *A Wish Made of*

Glass

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Punctuated Distinction At The End of Life

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DESIGNATED DATES**INSPIRING FUNERARY RELEVANCE**

October 9

WORLD EGG DAY

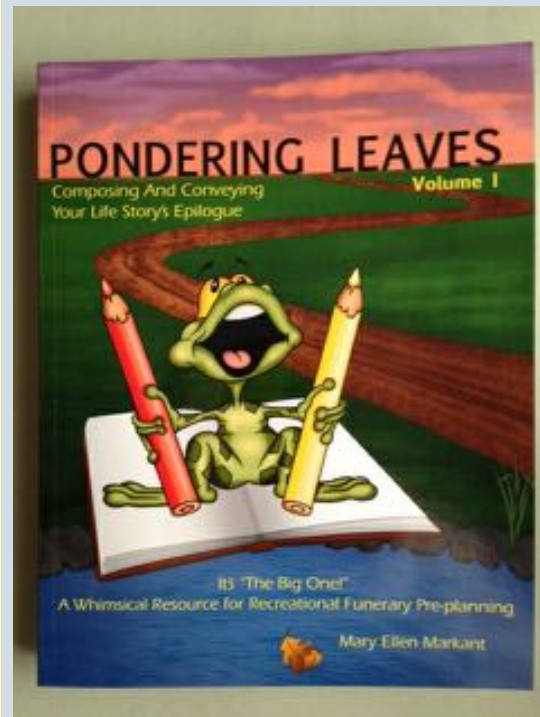
Innovation was at the root of a regenerative concept cultivated by two Italian designers in the form of their "Capsula Mundi" creation. An egg-shaped, bioplastic capsule container that accommodates a body in a fetal position is deposited in the ground as if it were a bulb, after which a tree is planted in a shallow, circular depression that has been dug over it. Symbolically, it represents cultivation of the earth by a sprouting seed born out of death, implying continued sustenance of the earth in spite of it. The egg-like encapsulation breaks down and new life appears.

October 10

NATIONAL ANGEL FOOD CAKE DAY

In a humorous vein, if someone opts for more than standard fare at a funerary reception, maybe a "dead-pan" approach could be adopted, with selections related to the context of the event: angel food or devils food cake, angel hair pasta, deviled eggs, ambrosia (food of the gods, conferring immortality), Death By Chocolate desserts, or Heavenly Hash ice cream.

October 19



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EVALUATE YOUR LIFE DAY

Sometimes certain measures geared toward life endings can be useful long before serving primary purposes. Planning ahead allows the planner to take advantage of their collateral benefits. A document known as an ethical will is one such resource. The process of formulating it enables a targeted assessment of one's life and the extent of contentment or disappointment stemming from its trajectory.

An ethical will is based on the same concept as a legal will that addresses utilitarian matters, but this type is composed by an individual rather than by an attorney. Instead of assigning property that has been amassed throughout one's life, this affords a chance to convey perceptions of intangible assets acquired intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually. It is a personal legacy that sheds light on signature perspectives, especially values. Motivation is derived from the belief that enlightenment passed on to others may improve the quality of their lives. Regardless of one's financial status, it can be offered to all by anyone willing to engage in introspection for the sake of expressing one's inner essence, or by anyone with an impassioned message to deliver. It's like taking your self - perhaps the core of your being - and wrapping it in a gift package.

With absolutely no standardization, the writer has free reign to expound on religious or moral values, feelings about issues that are deemed important, pitfalls and trials that have led to better ways, dreams that haven't been realized, or aspects of one's self to be remembered. An apology or letter to particular family members could possibly be an underlying incentive.

Eventually, after one's own death this



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BUG JUICE BLOG



FINISHING TOUCHES BLOG



October 12-18

document is apt to become a treasure that confers wisdom gained through lifetime experiences. At the time of writing it, though, it can easily rouse private awareness and personal enlightenment. By reviewing the course of one's life, certain unpalatable realities may surface. If written while still functional and healthy, the activity of thoughtful review can incite change... a call to action to conduct one's affairs differently in accord with one's values, based on an authentic life evaluation.

October 21

COUNT YOUR BUTTONS DAY

Somewhere among the Internet's chasm of vestigial gems lies a full-sized casket completely covered with small buttons of varying sizes and colors. An astounded viewer can only surmise that it must have required a long lifetime to complete the artistic mission. Indeed, it did entail a lot of man-hours and repetitive motions, but the activity of applying thousands of buttons to common items led to celebrity and a roadside museum.

The decorating projects were inspired by states of insomnia. Sometimes Dalton Stevens was unable to sleep for as long as four or five days and nights, so he conjured up a means for combatting frustration by summoning his artistic flair. This man, born in 1930, has engaged in the hobby since 1983 and long ago adopted the title of "Button King." His works of art are on display in a building next to his home in Bishopville, South Carolina, which opened in 2008 after having been built by his children to serve as their dad's own "Button Museum."

NATIONAL FOOD BANK WEEK

Many individuals volunteer their services at established food banks or during organizations' food drives. They coordinate programs within communities, soliciting, organizing and distributing donations to needy recipients. Engagement in such activities often is undertaken during retirement years, sometimes becoming a long-term preoccupation and source of personal satisfaction. For instance, probably everyone knows of someone who has made regular treks to homes, possibly for many years, to make deliveries for Meals On Wheels.

So this may be one of many defining hallmarks of someone's life. When the time comes to recognize the value of that life once death has occurred, the person's former participation can be sustained during commemorations. As part of an announcement for a memorial service, include a request to bring a canned item for deposit in a bin on the premises. While emphasizing an aspect of the decedent's volunteerism, this initiative would not only benefit people in need, but would also offer guests a purposeful opportunity to feel a sense of connection with the event as well as with the other mourners.

October

HEALTH LITERACY MONTH

The Conversation Project is a venture

Through the use of thread, glue, or other means of attachment, Dalton has accoutered suits, shoes, a grandfather clock, outhouse, bathtub and sink, a 1983 Chevrolet Chevette, piano, and a guitar he uses to convey renditions of songs he has written, including "Insomniac Shuffle" and "Poppin' Buttons." Each of two caskets was adorned with about 600,000 buttons. One will serve as his own burial containment, but the other will remain on display as a legacy item defining his lifetime avocation. A button-covered hearse complements the funerary provisions.

A wall within his museum depicts Dalton's notoriety, highlighting media coverage along with his triumphs on the Johnny Carson and David Letterman shows in addition to appearances with other television personalities.

His fame has taken him around the world to tout his unusual hobby and he is in his museum regularly to chat with guests. Fortunately, one time when he locked himself in his casket his son was able to free him. Apparently, the casket is not airtight since the Button King lived to tell the story!

[Button King History](#)

[A Look At the Button King](#)

October 25

WORLD PASTA DAY

that provides tools and guidance to help people communicate their wishes for end-of-life care. Within health care milieus, medical ministrations can easily become fuzzy matters in terminal situations. Technology poses dilemmas. Would the incapacitated individual want mechanical interventions to extend physical functions or would a natural course toward death be preferred?

Health literacy is defined as an ability to understand and act on health information. This month the organization is promoting a call to action... an opportunity to be a "Health Literacy Hero" by downloading a guide, the "Conversation Starter Kit." This implement comprises questions that enable contemplation of what matters to the individual. Beyond treatment considerations under varying circumstances, attention is directed also to interpersonal and interactional details, such as the extent of information a doctor should reveal and which family member should be appointed as the primary decision maker.

Preemptive communication can be the key to a more comfortable transition from life to death, as well as a major source of support for family members.

***On Friday, October 30th,
think about opening a door to
opportunity...***

By addressing the special needs of children during funerary events, the groundwork is apt to be laid for their future impressions and attitudes toward death experiences. Imagine the distorted images and perceptions that could be construed if they were ignored... a state of affairs that may have been all too prevalent in the past. Instead, nowadays, modern psychology has taught support personnel about the wisdom of involving children in age-appropriate ways during such events.

Besides actual participation in services, other means may help them feel like they are being recognized as valuable members of the grieving community. Give them choices for involvement. Maybe they could help decide on the apparel to be worn by the decedent, or an item of food, musical selection, or a type of flower for display. They might like to pass out programs to guests. Consider the usual tasks that could easily be assumed by younger folks. Older kids might want to write a story or poem, sing, play an instrument, or even present a skit.

On a more tangible level, creating art in some manner affords a means of expression as well as a product for display, deposit in a casket or grave, or retained as a keepsake. Or some characteristic of a loved one might prompt ideas. For someone whose Italian heritage had been a pivotal feature of life, children could string pasta to make macaroni necklaces they would wear, drawing attention to a personalized feature while feeling specially designated during proceedings.

It's "Create A Great Funeral Day"

The holiday was registered about a decade ago by Stephanie West Allen "as a way of attempting to relieve the pressure of having to decide what a loved one would want for their final send-off." It was "founded with the hopes of getting loved ones to sit down together and talk about what they would want at their funeral so their loved ones know when the time comes and do not have to juggle their grief with trying to plan a funeral and guess what they would have wanted..."

[Source](#)

The pleasure of event planning for lifetime milestones can readily be experienced during contemplations of end-of-life arrangements. Variety and color have permeated the funeral industry. It is different in many ways these days. Exploration of options can be intriguing!

The domain is rich with resources, many of which are novel. By waiting until a death occurs, a "ho-hum" funeral is more likely than would be an occasion featuring customized and preferred approaches determined ahead of time. Pre-planning affords a way to make a difference. For family members, the distress of loss can be soothed by feelings of fulfillment coupled with meaningful recollections of the occasion.

October 24th is

Don't let kids feel like the "forgotten ones" at funeral gatherings. A hug or passing pat on the head is not enough. Engage them. Allow their presence and their sorrow to be respected. Let them feel connected to the event and the assemblage of adults sharing their bereavement.

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National Make A Difference Day!

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Death Cafe

Wednesday, November 4th

6:00-8:00

Legacy at Clover Blossom

Rochester, NY

Register at:

meetup.com

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November 2

PLAN YOUR EPITAPH DAY

Sometimes websites of monument companies include ideas for epitaphs. But did you know that there are certain ones that enable you to dabble in word construction and actually view what your composition would look like on particular headstones? If ordinarily you like to see how a garment fits before you buy it, you can use your imagination and "try on" your proposed inscriptions using templates. If composing a memorial masterpiece for yourself, choose a random (perhaps even ridiculous) death date to complete the picture; added to your name, birthdate, and customized text, your entries will instantly be applied and available for visualization. Realism may help you make a decision or at least be entertained by this epitaph-generating activity.

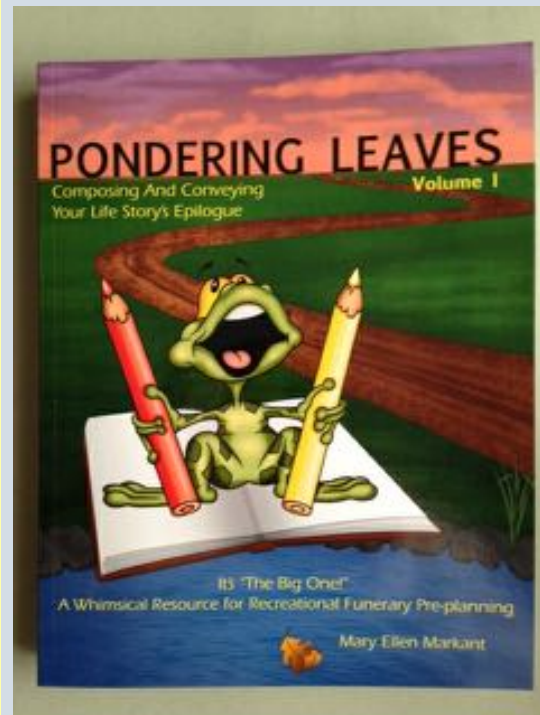
Try it:

[Tombstone Builder](#) [Gravestone Maker](#)

November 10

FORGET-ME-NOT-DAY

Probably somewhere on everyone's end-of-life wish list is a desire not to be forgotten. Seed packets can easily and inexpensively be



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procured for distribution to guests at a commemorative event, with an intent for them to plant the seeds in their own environments as a memorial to the decedent. A selection can be made from a variety of floral or tree species, including a most relevant choice of forget-me-not flowers. Printed words on the back of each envelope relate to the person who died, serving as a tangible keepsake. But when the blossoms conspicuously appear, memories in the minds of observers are apt to come alive.

November 12

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL DAY

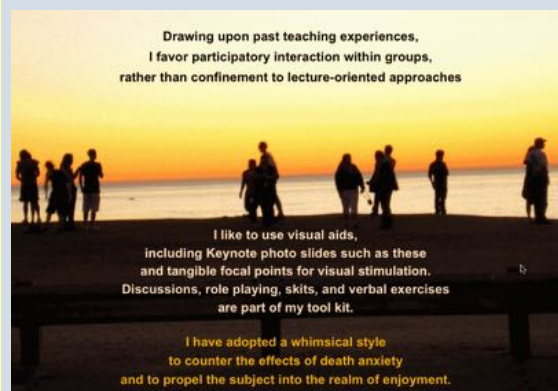
According to the creators of the book series, this designated day was created as "... a celebration of who you are, where you've been, where you are going, and who you will be thankful to when you get there." ([SOURCE](#))

One contributor in a section about death exemplifies thankfulness. Tom Krause, a teacher, reflected upon sentiments toward his father in response to his sudden death. Still feeling the pangs of grief, he was awakened to a sense of consolation one day while supervising a first-grade class recess on the playground. When a boy grabbed his hand and held it by the last two fingers, just the way his dad had held it when he was that age, instantly he felt his father's presence and was infused with a renewed outlook. He realized that in spite of his absence, his dad had left him not only the gifts of his smile and his compassion, but also his touch.

November 15

AMERICA RECYCLES DAY

The word "recycle" ordinarily evokes



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FINISHING TOUCHES BLOG



November 14

images of inanimate objects being reused or repurposed, often by someone other than the original owner. But it can aptly refer also to the physical constituents of a human person that are still functional in spite of bodily demise.

The urgent need for organ donors is common knowledge, as many thousands of individuals on waiting lists have irreversible, end-stage diseases. Instead of relegating one's entire body to prompt disappearance, portions of it can be made available for utilization. Organs that can be transplanted following death include the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas, and small intestines. Donated organs afford a means of survival, adding an immeasurable quality of life to an afflicted person's existence or even to the lives of multiple folks.

It is said that a single donor can potentially *save* up to eight lives and *improve* the lives of up to fifty people. While organ donation is a familiar concept, the fact that other bodily components can be "recycled" in like manner may not be recognized to the same extent. One individual's bodily tissues could potentially be used for dozens of therapeutic purposes.

Thanks to donors, human tissue has replaced bone, tendons, and ligaments impaired or destroyed by cancer, severe trauma, degenerative joint disease, arthritis and other conditions. Transplants of long bones have averted the need for multiple surgeries and amputations due to diseases and infections. Smaller sections of bone are used for strengthening and filling in

LOOSEN UP, LIGHTEN UP DAY

"According to most studies, people's number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you're better off in the casket than doing the eulogy."

"Time is a great teacher, but unfortunately it kills all its pupils."

[SOURCE](#)

"If a woman is born in Italy, grows up in England, goes to America and dies in Baltimore, what is she? Dead!"

"When a knight in armor was killed in battle, what sign did they put on his grave? Rust in peace!"

"What is the difference between a musician and a dead body? One composes and the other decomposes."

[SOURCE](#)

"When you are in your casket and your friends and family are mourning you, what would you like to hear them say about you?"

The first guy says, 'I would like them to say that I was a great doctor and a loving family man.'

The second guy says, 'I would like them to say that I was a caring husband and a school teacher who

areas where bone has been lost. Ground bone makes its way to dentists' stocks of material for gum restorations. Damaged tendons and ligaments can be reconstructed this way, often replacing athletes' originals that were in debilitating disrepair due to injuries. Functional heart valves have served as substitutes for diseased or deformed ones that were defective, relieving recipients of the need for lifetime dependence on blood-thinning medications. People who had been immobilized by painful spinal conditions are able to walk again. Saphenous and femoral veins from legs may contribute to the success of cardiac bypass surgeries. Besides serving as a lifesaving measure for restoration after burns, skin is employed for hernia repairs, pelvic floor reconstruction, and breast reconstruction after mastectomies. Slings fashioned from skin correct bladder deficiencies by providing support where it is needed a lot more than just a wee bit.

So dying need not imply total decay and complete physical dissolution if conditions are suitable for reallocation of viable remains. An opportunity for this ultimate form of recycling may be a possibility. It's a matter of thinking ahead and planning accordingly.

November 19

CHILDREN'S GRIEF AWARENESS DAY

Read about a Boston-area facility that addresses the needs of bereaved children:

[The Children's Room](#)

made a huge difference to kids.'

The last guy says, 'I would like them to say -- LOOK, he's moving!' "

[SOURCE](#)

November 22

NATIONAL GAME and PUZZLE WEEK

Want to test your knowledge of funerary terms?

1. Cloth covering a casket _ _ _ _
2. Cremation chamber _ _ _ _ _
3. Trained officiant who conducts a personalized service _ _ _ _ _
4. At Jewish funeral, a piece of family member's garment is _ _ _ _
5. Type of service where a body is not present _ _ _ _ _
6. A concrete casket enclosure used to prevent ground depression in cemeteries _ _ _ _ _
7. Compartment in a mausoleum that holds an urn _ _ _ _ _
8. Most common type of rock currently used for stone memorials in cemeteries _ _ _ _ _
9. Removed from a body before cremation to prevent an explosion _ _ _ _ _
10. Type of casket, used repeatedly, that accommodates a body in a fabric-covered cardboard insert that slides through a drop-down door at the end of it _ _ _ _ _
11. Institutions where whole body donations are accepted

November 27

NATIONAL DAY OF LISTENING

FAMILY STORIES MONTH

Sponsored by the Story Corps, the National Day of Listening is a day to set aside some time for listening and documentation of the life stories of close life companions. SOURCE

Story Corps is a non-profit oral history venture that has enabled thousands of individuals to record biographical data during forty-minute interviews by people familiar to them. A stationary, sound-proof recording studio, a "StoryBooth," is permanently based in Brooklyn, NY, while its counterparts, two "MobileBooth" Airstream trailers - each equipped with a recording studio - travel around the country for limited engagements in various locations. Alternatively, businesses, organizations, or institutions can sponsor the installation of a StoryBooth in existing rooms at their own sites; these are quiet places called "sacred rooms" that are leased for a year. In the stillness of a recording chamber outfitted with two microphones, two people who are important to each other (within any context, be it family, friends, or associates) engage in a conversation, with one asking the questions and the other responding.

Facilitators are available for support, and a menu of trigger questions can be obtained online in preparation for a taping appointment. There also is a listing of

for educational purposes

12. Often outdated, submitted with obituary content _____
13. Pallbearers who accompany a casket, but don't carry it _____
14. Function and type of dogs on staff at some funeral homes _____
15. Gradual descent of casket into the grave accomplished through use of a lowering _____
16. Equipment that transmits video of a funeral service to distant locations _____
17. Name of movable platform on which a casket is placed or carried _____
18. Intention to donate organs after death can be noted on a _____
19. For green burials, bodies may be wrapped in natural fiber _____
20. Section of land allocated for an interment _____
21. Customary religious or ethnic element at a funeral service _____
22. Document always required before burial or cremation _____
23. Concrete ocean structure embedded with cremated remains _____
24. Natural burial products must be _____

ANSWERS: pall, retort, celebrant, torn, memorial, vault, niche, granite, pacemaker, rental, medical

scheduled stops at various places. Professional recording equipment is employed to produce compact discs that preserve the interactions. They are given to participants and copies are sent to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., thereby retaining portraits of Americans from this era for future generations. Only a nominal contribution is solicited to help maintain operations.

Details of a life can be easily documented this way. Content via the compact disc might be used at a future funerary event. Through this means, someone who has been interviewed may be reminded of the significance of one's life, perhaps an uplifting prospect that could potentially alleviate the pang of inevitable physical departure.

Portions of content excerpted from
*Pondering Leaves: Composing and Conveying Your
Life Story's Epilogue*

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schools, photo, honorary, grief therapy, device, webcam, bier, driver's license, shrouds, plot, ritual, permit, memorial reef, biodegradable

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January, 2016

(date yet to be announced)

6:00-8:00

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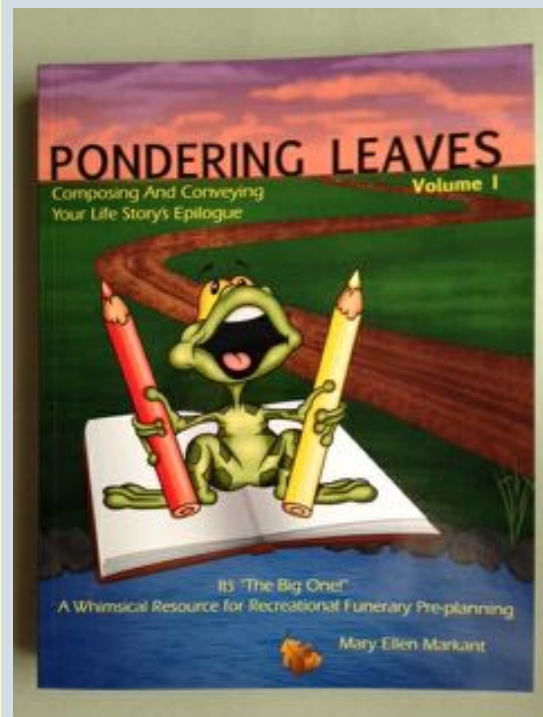
DESIGNATED DATESINSPIRING FUNERARY RELEVANCE

December 8

PRETEND to be a TIME TRAVELER DAY

Maybe this would be a relevant day to consider cryonic preservation as a means of disposition. For anyone willing to pay the price, this choice could potentially enable re-entry into the living world at some point in the future once science has laid the groundwork. Participation in a cryonics endeavor stems from a desire to resurrect one's life within a different era... perhaps categorized best under the label of "great expectations."

It's based on the belief that technology will eventually make it possible to cure all diseases and repair damaged organs, tissues, and even cells that have deteriorated or have been destroyed by aging, freezing, or other physical insults. The swiftly emerging field of molecular nanotechnology is offering prospects of such possibilities. Utilization of nanomedicine with DNA manipulation may even result in the ability to regrow amputated limbs or remediate the effects of severe trauma. The prospect of regenerative capabilities suggests that physical problems might no longer bring a halt to life, so one's existence theoretically could continue for hundreds and thousands of years. The goal, then, for any current resident of this earth who wants to benefit from these accomplishments, is to be around when they become a reality.



QUICK LINKS

[Introductory VIDEO About Seminars, Workshops, and Discussion Groups](#)

**To Schedule An Enlivening
Slideshow Presentation
for
A Group or Organization**

A cryonic process has been developed that allows a person to become a subject in a long-term experiment, a novel approach to cold storage. It is a way to maintain a physical being over an indefinite period of time under extremely chilly conditions, in hopes that someday the person can be re-introduced into an earthly domain, resuscitated, and restored to complete health. This type of disposition requires greater expense and more advance planning than others. Although cryopreservation appeals especially to scientifically inclined futurists who seek answers to the mysteries of life, it offers anyone an opportunity for a shot at re-entry into a second round of existence.

Upon making a decision for this type of preservation, a candidate must choose from one of a limited number of cryonics companies and proceed with preliminary arrangements. By way of either an annual payment or a substantial one-time outlay, membership is attained in a community of believers consisting of scientists, administrators, cryopreserved subjects, and aspiring participants. Throughout life, members stay abreast of current developments via publications and a network of cohorts committed to cryonic endeavors.

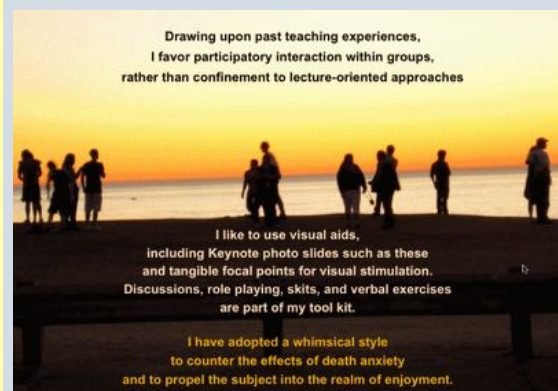
[Alcor Life Extension Foundation](#)

[Cryonics Institute](#)

December 11

NATIONAL NOODLE RING DAY

Before a commemorative service for an individual of Italian descent, consider involving children in preparations by enabling them to string pieces of pasta for a necklace to wear at the event.



Contact:

ponderingleaves@gmail.com

[BUG JUICE BLOG](#)



[FINISHING TOUCHES BLOG](#)



December 4

December 13

VIOLIN DAY

A violin can help establish a tone at end-of-life events. Imagine a single violinist or even a quartet playing softly in the background at a visitation or featured at a commemorative service. It would assume particular significance if the instrument had been part of the decedent's life in some way - even if the journey to death had been accompanied by its soothing melodies, perhaps at a hospice bedside.

Musical literature specifically geared to this instrument can be explored while fully alive to identify preferred pieces for one's own affairs. In contemplating the possibilities, one might even find someone online who advertises availability for funerary functions:

[Graceful Passages](#)

December 21

(or sometimes celebrated on Dec. 22)

FOREFATHER'S DAY

The concept of forefathers may evoke an image of past national leaders who helped dictate the country's trajectory, or maybe the term inspires thoughts of one's own ancestors. But does anyone ever think about being in that role oneself during future eras?

What type of information will our descendants want to glean from our previous presence on earth? Perhaps most importantly, they'll likely want to know about biological similarities, along with the sorts of physical tendencies that were passed on to them.

NATIONAL DICE DAY

Nowadays, proprietors of funerary establishments who have hopped on the personalization bandwagon are more likely to engineer events that reflect individuality. Caskets may be situated amid thematically staged items that punctuate personal proclivities, such as cooking, gardening, sports, performing arts, and the like.

If lucky enough to die in Las Vegas (before the sale of a family-owned funeral home to a corporate owner), a decedent could have an affair with rented props in the form of oversized playing cards, casino chips, dice, and a spinning slot machine. Perhaps the effect suggested that the person had gambled his life and lost!

December 13

WORLDWIDE CANDLE LIGHTING DAY

All kinds of design options for funerary candles include a choice of scripts, poems or scriptures, inspirational messages, and an array of images. Some have embedded flowers, lace, crystals, pearls, and other glittery enhancements. They may be hand painted or have images of scanned pictures from an individual's collection. Certain vendors accept customized requests.

Perhaps an especially alluring feature of memorial candles is the availability

Because of the availability and simplicity of DNA kits, anyone can act upon a desire to deliver genetic information, either independently during life - possibly through a funeral home when there for a pre-planning conference - or at the time of death. Some funeral homes offer this service of fairly recent vintage that enables future decedents to "drop off" some cells before "leaving."

If a sample of someone's DNA hadn't already been obtained and stored by the time of death, an embalmer might be the one to procure it. The process is quick and as simple as getting a drop of fingertip blood or, in this type of situation, it entails swabbing of the buccal mucosa inside the mouth. A minimal sample from any bodily fluids or tissue is all that is ever needed for a profile analysis. With that in mind and with a bit of forethought, pre-planners can eschew the last-minute approach and arrange for a DNA sample to be stored while they are still alive, probably a little less expensively by obtaining the samples themselves.

DNA kits can be accessed online for obtaining samples to be kept at home, in a safe deposit box, or via a number of companies that provide analysis and storage. People may want a record of their genetic histories on file for practical reasons. New genes are being discovered along with new technologies that, eventually, are apt to render testing and analyses more affordable.

By tapping stored DNA resources, families will be able to learn of ancestral diseases, including predispositions to inherited metabolic disorders and genetic cancers that might affect them.

After someone's death, a bodily sample might even prove useful for family members stricken with ailments of unknown causes. Medical researchers also analyze DNA material in

of fragrance oils that can be integrated to reflect personal characteristics. A whiff of banana bread, hot apple pie, autumn leaves, or fresh cut grass might bring back memories of a particular decedent - maybe a chef or gardener. Someone's favorite holiday could be recognized by the scent of candied yams, pumpkin, evergreen, or a burning fireside.

December 18

NATIONAL ROAST SUCKLING DAY

Test Your Knowledge:

Suckling pigs are part of Cajun cuisine in the southern region of the United States. Elsewhere they may be slow roasted, either in ovens or by way of a Hawaiian-style pig roast in a pit.

On what continent are roast suckling pigs popular menu items at events, such as wedding and funeral receptions?

LOOKING BACK...

Dec. 1, 1955

In Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks, seated in the black section of a city bus, was arrested after courageously ignoring an order by the bus driver to give up her seat to a white passenger. In response to her arrest as well as in reaction to segregation laws, protesting Black Americans spearheaded by the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. boycotted

developing pharmacological agents. If necessary, questions of identity and familial relationships can be resolved since this fundamental element of individuality is the most authoritative source of positive identification. Sometimes it comes in handy for legal purposes. With an eye toward replication, later utilization of a person's reserved DNA could be extended to other applications if cloning processes become a more plausible reality. One can speculate about scientific marvels yet to transpire.

If a sample is retained while still alive, it would be important for family members to know about it, along with awareness of where it is stored. Otherwise, this funerary opportunity of the modern era can be included in documented plans. A sample would have to be obtained before the permanent destruction of a body's building blocks that occurs as a result of cremation (prolonged exposure to fire destroys DNA) or before their disappearance as a result of burial or entombment.

As an alternative, at the very least, a simple act of communication could convey genetic insights at no cost to anyone. In fact, the results of a Cleveland Clinic Genomic Institute study suggested that information about health histories passed on from one generation to another might even trump some genetic tests in predicting what illnesses descendants are apt to encounter. Beyond discussions at family gatherings, the data can be formatted as part of a health tree record. The U.S. Surgeon General's office operates a website that enables people to record a family health history and share it electronically with family members and medical providers.

Regardless of the preferred method of relaying information, any such initiative could represent a valuable and enduring keepsake provided by

public transportation for almost a full year afterward. Their resilience and determination led to a Supreme Court decision to desegregate public transportation in Montgomery.

The strong-willed woman became a symbol of the civil rights movement. This was her historic legacy. The goal of racial equality motivated her activism throughout her life. When she died in 2005, the pivotal incident in history was featured as a focal tribute to her.

Symbolically illuminating, the motorcade that transported her body from the Capitol's rotunda included a vintage 1950's bus draped in black bunting. Following the funeral, her celebrity body was conveyed seven miles to its burial site by an antique horse-drawn carriage trimmed in gold.

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

ponderingleaves@gmail.com

Death Cafe

January, 2016

(date yet to be announced)

6:00-8:00

**Legacy at Clover Blossom
Rochester, NY**

Register at:

[meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com)

or

future forefathers.

ponderingleaves@gmail.com

[Family Health History](#)

Portions of content excerpted from
*Pondering Leaves: Composing and Conveying Your
Life Story's Epilogue*

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