
SIGNATURE SUNSETS

PUNCTUATED
DISTINCTION
AT THE END OF LIFE



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BOOK

PONDERING LEAVES:
Composing and Conveying
Your Life Story's Epilogue



WEBSITE

ponderingleaves.com

NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER

TRADITIONAL, UNUSUAL, OR OFTEN ODDBALL "HOLIDAYS" PROVIDE THE FRAMEWORK FOR THIS FUNERARY CONTENT. HOPEFULLY, THE PROCESS OF READING THESE RANDOMLY CONNECTED PIECES WILL HELP INSTILL A COMFORTABLE WILLINGNESS TO BRING MORTALITY MATTERS OUT OF THE CLOSET FOR A CLOSER LOOK AT THEM.

CONSIDER SHARING... BY FORWARDING THIS MATERIAL TO OTHERS IN AN EFFORT TO LIFT THE VEIL OF DEATH AND SPUR PREEMPTIVE CONTEMPLATION ABOUT PREFERENCES FOR MANAGING END-OF-LIFE DETAILS.

THANKSGIVING



"How easily we can forget how precious life is! So long as we can remember, we've just been here, being alive. Unlike other things for which we have a good comparison— black to white, day to night, good to bad— we are so immersed in life that we can see it only in the context of itself. We don't see life as compared to anything, to not-being, for example, to never having been born. Life just is. But life itself is a gift. It's a compliment just being born: to feel, breathe, think, play, dance, sing, work, make love, for this particular lifetime. Today, let's give thanks for life. For life itself. For simply being born!" ~ Daphne Rose Kingma

<http://www.movequotes.com/top-50-be-thankful-quotes/>

National Model Railroad Month

A chemistry professor veered off the beaten track of his vocational orientation by adopting a sideline hobby as an acclaimed builder of model trains. One of Wayne Wesolowski's most notable productions is a replica of Abraham Lincoln's funeral train.

Following two years of historical research, construction of the fifteen-foot-long model was completed in four and a half years. Seven hundred and twenty-five tiny parts compose the wheels and undercarriage. About twenty different locomotives were used on the actual journey, but the Nashville engine that pulled the train between Cleveland and Columbus was chosen to be replicated as part of the model.



The funeral train facsimile serves as an enduring representation of a significant passage in American history. In 1865, the original train had carried the body of the assassinated sixteenth president on a twelve-day, sixteen-hundred-mile journey from Washington, D.C. to Springfield, Illinois for its hometown burial. Stops were made for formal funeral ceremonies in twelve major cities. Numerous other memorial services were held in smaller communities along the train's route.

This railroad conveyance, according to military order, consisted of no fewer than nine cars, including the funeral car, officers' car, six passenger cars, and a baggage car. Originally designed to be the official presidential railcar akin to modern-day Air Force One transport, it was never utilized in that manner. Having been constructed and then delivered early in 1865, its first usage was for this funerary purpose. Oddly, Lincoln had been scheduled to test-ride the train on April 15, 1865, the day he died.

Afterward, the opulent train was sold to railroads and used for storage, but later was displayed at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis before being refurbished and eventually destroyed by an accidental 1911 fire in Alexandria, Virginia.

A traveling exhibit of the Abraham Lincoln Funeral Train has taken it to many of the cities through which the real train passed, and has been on display in numerous other locations as well. The model is now owned by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield, Illinois. Wesolowski has built two additional models of the Lincoln funeral train, including one on display at the National Museum of Funeral History in Houston, Texas.



<http://www.history.com/news/chemist-solves-lincoln-funeral-train-mystery>

<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/news/train.htm>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wayne_Wesolowski

PHOTOS:

<http://civilwarmed.blogspot.com/2015/04/150th-anniversary-abraham-lincoln.html>

<http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/news/train.htm> engine photo

Native American Heritage Month

Due to varying religious and spiritual beliefs, funeral practices differ among the five hundred and sixty-four Native American tribes in America. Yet they all share a conviction that a person's spirit never dies, living on in an afterlife. Death marks the beginning of a migration to another world. The importance of assisting a decedent reach that point dictates many funerary activities. Assuring comfort and protection in the afterlife is a primary goal.

Each tribe uses its own familiar languages, symbols, and ceremonial measures. Ancient rituals from previous generations may still be observed in contemporary milieus. Prayers offered by medicine men or native spiritual leaders may be combined with the participation of Christian clergy. In contrast to standard proceedings among the general population, activities typically engage people more inclusively and continue for a few days.

Families make all the arrangements. They may transport the body, manage the bathing and dressing, and use a shroud or wooden casket for containment. Embalming, regarded as an affront to the sanctity of the body, is avoided; dry ice for preservation is preferred for the duration of visitation and proceedings, which may take place in a church or at another spiritual site.



Photo Source: Billings Gazette
April, 2016 "Sending-home Ceremony" for Dr. Joseph Medicine Crow

<http://www.thedickinsonpress.com/news/nation-and-world/4003896-celebrated-native-american-chief-laid-rest>

For a few days before the funeral service, people visit and dine together. Children are included in all activities in order to learn that death is an acceptable part of life and intrinsic to nature, which is revered.

The body of the decedent is never left alone during this time of communal interaction because, according to traditional tenets, one's spirit needs the comfort of familiar people in close proximity. It is believed also that prior to reaching the afterlife the spirit travels to places known during earthly life, a process that requires up to four days or longer. A favorable spirit journey is an important objective for those remaining on earth. Otherwise, the soul could potentially return as a ghost to haunt them.

A burial site is chosen carefully to assure comfort for the decedent. Personal items may be placed in the coffin and the grave. Food, tools, pots, weapons, and jewelry are among the items that might be provided for use in the afterlife. Cemeteries are often decorated with memorabilia to promote a satisfactory spirit passage.



*Photo Source:
Chuck Coker*

Navajo Cemetery
in Lukachukai, Arizona

A year of mourning follows the funeral and burial. Family members may speak about their departed loved one for the duration of that year, but on the anniversary of death must refrain from making any verbal reference to that person.

<http://peopleof.oureverydaylife.com/native-americans-beliefs-burials-souls-2752.html>

<http://agoodgoodbye.com/religious-traditions/native-american-funeral-traditions/>

<http://traditionscustoms.com/death-rites/native-american-death-rites>

November 4: King Tut Day

November 4th in 1922 was the day when a British archeologist, Howard Carter, and his crew discovered the entrance to King Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt. Considered one of the greatest archaeological revelations of the twentieth century, it continues to inspire worldwide intrigue.

Photo Source: Everett - Shutterstock.com



This year, interest piqued as further exploration was conducted to determine whether or not hidden chambers might exist behind the interior walls of the edifice. Specifically, a call to action was intensified by the popularized premise that a doorway within the north wall could conceivably lead to another chamber – possibly, the as-of-yet undiscovered burial site of Queen Nefertiti, King Tut's stepmother.

Egypt's Minister of Antiquities summoned scholars from around the world to attend a conference for an international debate about the possibility. Meanwhile, an investigation supported in part by the National Geographic Society was undertaken, using high-powered radar scanners operated by their technicians. Data analyses from the scientific testing in April failed to yield positive results. The conclusion was that King Tut's tomb has no hidden chambers.



The findings, however, have not satisfied the Minister of Antiquities. Further testing is anticipated. The mystery of the matter persists.

*Photo Source:
Kenneth Garrett, National Geographic*

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160401-king-tut-tomb-radar-scan-nefertiti-archaeology/>

November 5: **Bank Transfer Day**



Photo Source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bank_Transfer_Day#/media/File:Bank_Transfer_Day_poster..jpg

According to Wikipedia, Kristen Christian, an art gallery owner in Los Angeles, California, created this designated day after having become dissatisfied with Bank of America's "ridiculous fees and poor customer service." She posted a "Bank Transfer Day" on Facebook with an invitation for friends to close their accounts at big for-profit banks and move their money to credit unions by November 5, 2011. The day is still observed in this context, but the matter of transferring funds has a funerary application as well.

If someone dies without having prepaid for funeral products and services, it is up to the family to cover potentially hefty charges expeditiously. A wise planner may anticipate this scenario by opening a "payable on death" (POD) account, often in the form of a Totten Trust, with money deposited in a passbook savings or money market account, or a certificate of deposit. This type of savings account that is available through a local bank is marked by flexibility and accessibility, and is regulated by state laws. It can be individually or jointly owned, with one or more appointed beneficiaries identified, and the account can be modified with deposits and withdrawals or even closed, without any fines. Upon death, ownership of funds automatically gets transferred to the beneficiary without the need to go through a prolonged probate process. And, theoretically, accrued interest (for which the holder is taxed) could offset progressive price increases for funerary purchases. Naturally, when this type of account is established, price guarantees cannot be secured from providers. But at the time of death, family members have the freedom to compare current costs for merchandise and services. If there is surplus from a fund after meeting contractual obligations, the surviving beneficiaries rather than the funeral director are paid the remaining amount. The customer has optimal control.

November 10: Forget-Me-Not Day



Photo Source:
<http://symbolism.wikia.com/wiki/Forget-Me-Not>

As a symbol of faithful love and memories, Forget-Me-Not plants represent a hope that the recipient will not forget the giver. At the end of life, this species or any other imbued with personal significance can be especially evocative in calling forth associations with a decedent.

Is there a particular flower you associate with your life for some reason? It might be one of your favorites or maybe it exudes an especially favored color. Or it might be a staple in your own garden – a testament to your enduring planting initiatives through the years. Maybe it was the primary focal point of your wedding bouquet or boutonniere. Or perhaps a composite of this species has been given to you on birthdays, anniversaries, or other special occasions.

Whatever the reason for its significance, consider noting the flower in your end-of-life advance planning document. It is bound to be a welcome insight for family members when arranging funerary proceedings.

November 16: Have A Party With Your Bear Day

Certain funeral homes host memory bear workshops that unite community volunteers with individuals healing from the loss of a loved one. Together, they fashion soft and huggable stuffed teddy bears. Pieces of fabric from a decedent's clothing compose the "skin" of the new creations that are cut, sewn, stuffed, and decorated in the company of helpers and bereaved cohorts. After a few hours, folks leave with their cuddly cloth companions that evoke visual associations with the missing loved one.



Photo Source:

<http://funeralfund.blogspot.com/2014/04/mattson-funeral-home-provides-comfort.html>



During the holidays maybe these fabric surrogates deserve a place at the tables where families gather together to dine. Instead of overlooking the departed decedent, why not acknowledge him or her through the presence of this reminder? Why not have a place setting at the table to represent the absent family member, with the memory bear positioned in this place of honor to evoke memories?

Photo Source: <https://www.facebook.com/Heartley-Bears-102660979804581/>



Photo Source:
<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2014/04/14/inspiration-nation-teddy-bears/7702851/>

<http://signaturesunsets.blogspot.com/2015/04/memory-bear-workshops.html>

November 28: Make Your Own Head Day

This annual craft day is intended to promote personal artistry, specifically for the sake of replicating one's own head using any medium that inspires creativity. However, the originator of this earmarked day may not have imagined the kind of handiwork that has evolved in the funerary realm.

Containment for cremated remains is available in all sorts of configurations. "Personal urns" sold through Cremation Solutions have captured attention and probably prompted head-turning double takes. A customized replica of a person's head is created by using photos of the individual along with facial recognition software, transforming a two-dimensional image into a detailed, three-dimensional sculpture. A wig can be added to augment authenticity of long-haired individuals. Verde marble bases that resist tipping have a plugged opening in the bottom.

Full-sized, eleven-inch-high urns that accommodate the total amount of an adult's remains currently cost \$2600. The price for smaller, six-inch keepsake versions that hold a portion of them is \$600.



<http://www.cremationsolutions.com/cremation-urns-for-ashes/personal-cremation-urns-for-ashes>

http://www.gone-ta-pott.com/make_your_own_head_day.html

November 25: National Day of Listening

This is a day of observance where Americans are encouraged to set aside time to record the stories of their families, friends, and local communities. Originally launched in 2008 by the national oral history project, StoryCorps, it recurs every year on the Friday after Thanksgiving Day, when families are more likely to spend time together. The occasion was proposed as an alternative to the annual "Black Friday" shopping frenzy.

If you are not familiar with the independent, non-profit venture that exemplifies listening, this day that recognizes Story Corps may be a good time to learn about it. The lifetime stories of individuals whose utterances will eventually be muted by death can be recorded for posterity... the epitome of enduring remembrance.

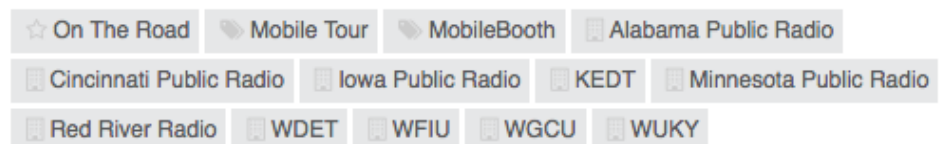
"StoryCorps is America's oral history project. Since 2003, StoryCorps has collected more than 60,000 interviews with over 100,000 participants from all backgrounds -- the largest single collection of human voices ever gathered. Recordings are archived at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress so that future generations can hear the stories -- and the voices -- of today. We share stories online and through our popular weekly NPR broadcasts, podcast, animated shorts, and best-selling books. StoryCorps is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization."



Announcing the 2017 StoryCorps MobileBooth Tour

Posted on Tuesday, August 30th 2016, 11:46 am EST

The journey begins on January 5 and won't end until December 20. During that time, the MobileBooth will travel more than 4,000 miles from the... [Read more](#)



History of Story Corps

October 2003:

StoryCorps is born with the opening of a StoryBooth in Grand Central Terminal in New York City.

2005:

StoryCorps launches two MobileBooths from the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.
Weekly broadcasts debut on NPR's *Morning Edition*.

2007:

StoryCorps receives a rare Institutional Peabody Award.
The first book is released: *Listening is an Act of Love*.

2008:

The Griot Initiative becomes the largest collection of African American stories collected in history.
Launching of the National Day of Listening, an effort to encourage recording with loved ones around the Thanksgiving holiday.

2010:

Second book is released: *Mom: A Celebration of Mothers from StoryCorps*.
First series of Animated Shorts premieres on public television and online.

2012:

Third book is released: *All There Is: Love Stories from StoryCorps*.
StoryCorps receives a Peabody Award for animations and audio commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.
StoryCorps, NPR, and POV share the Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award for the series, *StoryCorps 9/11*.

2013:

StoryCorps wins a \$1 million MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.
Fourth book is released: *Ties That Bind: Stories of Love and Gratitude From the First Ten Years of StoryCorps*.

October 2013:

10th anniversary is celebrated with an inaugural gala hosted by Stephen Colbert.

2014:

Launching of Outloud, an initiative to collect the stories of LGBT people in America.
StoryCorps founder Dave Isay is named the recipient of the 2015 TED Prize.

2015:

The \$1 million TED Prize is used to launch the StoryCorps App, an all-new tool for collecting the wisdom of humanity. The Great Thanksgiving Listen commences as StoryCorps works with teachers and high school students across the country to preserve the voices and stories of an entire generation of Americans over a single holiday weekend.

2016:

Fifth book is released: *Callings: The Purpose and Passion of Work*

<https://storycorps.org/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Day_of_Listening

November 29: Square Dance Day

Here's a commemorative twist reported a few years ago:

“We recently came back from our second memorial this year in the town of Helvetia, in the West Virginia Appalachians. It was a party, really, to celebrate the big fat life of our friend Eleanor Mailloux, who passed away recently at the age of 94. Out in the meadow next to her house, two make-shift cookers were going, grilling spatchcocked chickens and corn, and a 20-foot table held huge bowls of Eleanor’s favorite foods. Beer from her grandson Willie’s brewery flowed alongside homemade wine her friends had brought. Music blared at just the right pitch.

Often in Helvetia after a family has buried a loved one, the community puts on a covered-dish supper, and a square dance may follow, as it did for our friend Rogers McAvoy. Dancing and stomping and swinging and drinking out on the porch of the community hall helped Rogers’ friends to find their way back to living, as he would have – and did: dancing in the face of sadness and the unpredictability of life. It reminded us of the jazz funerals that are a tradition in New Orleans that we saw beautifully rendered in HBO’s drama *Treme*. It also reminded us of the amazing Eleanor, who at age 92 had lived through just about EVERYTHING, dancing at the Fasnacht festival in the community hall a couple of years ago.”

<http://www.improvisedlife.com/2011/06/21/saying-goodbye-jazz-funerals-and-square-dances/>



Photo Source:

<https://www.behance.net/gallery/3897559/The-Square-dancers>

The PHOTO DEPOT

Images related to an aspect of death management or commemoration, sometimes obtained by way of nationwide travels, illustrate examples of merchandise, facilities, services, or concepts – often featuring novelties to broaden viewers' horizons beyond purviews of standard funerary fare.

November 11: Veterans Day

**Sampson
Veterans
Memorial
Cemetery in
Romulus,
New York**

**Flags in place
for Veterans
Day**



**Venture Scouts in the wind and cold,
removing Veterans Day flags
from gravesites**

Photo Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/614186088648601/photos/pb.614186088648601.-2207520000.1480604676./1192376167496254/?type=3&theater>

Visit the new Facebook PAGE:

<https://www.facebook.com/Signature-Sunsets-1392754611000775/>



Join the new interactive GROUP:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ExiterUniversity/>



**Attend a free classroom presentation, held every other month,
alternating with Death Cafe gatherings, also held every other month.
Next session will be in February; date pending**

**For information, email ponderingleaves@gmail.com
or visit**

<https://www.meetup.com/Rochester-End-of-Life-Event-Planning/>

DEATH CAFES: SPONTANEOUS DISCUSSIONS ABOUT DEATH

January date pending, 6:00-7:45 p.m.

Legacy at Clover Blossom,
Rochester, NY

Register at:

<https://www.meetup.com/Death-Cafe-in-Rochester-NY/>

or

ponderingleaves@gmail.com

For Information about the
International Organization:
deathcafe.com



Visit the new Facebook PAGE: <https://www.facebook.com/deathanddessert/>

Join the new interactive GROUP: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/deathcaferoc/>

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## Signature Sunsets

*Final Proceedings Reflecting Personal Style*

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

ponderingleaves@gmail.com

Blog

signaturesunsets.blogspot.com

FINISHING TOUCHES

Customized Event Planning for Distinctive Proceedings Following Death



Beauteous As A Fallen Leaf

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Pondering Leaves Book

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Sunset Photo Gallery

Website: www.ponderingleaves.com

PONDERING LEAVES

Colorful End-of-Life Pre-planning



HOME



CONCEPT



BOOK



ABOUT ME



BLOG

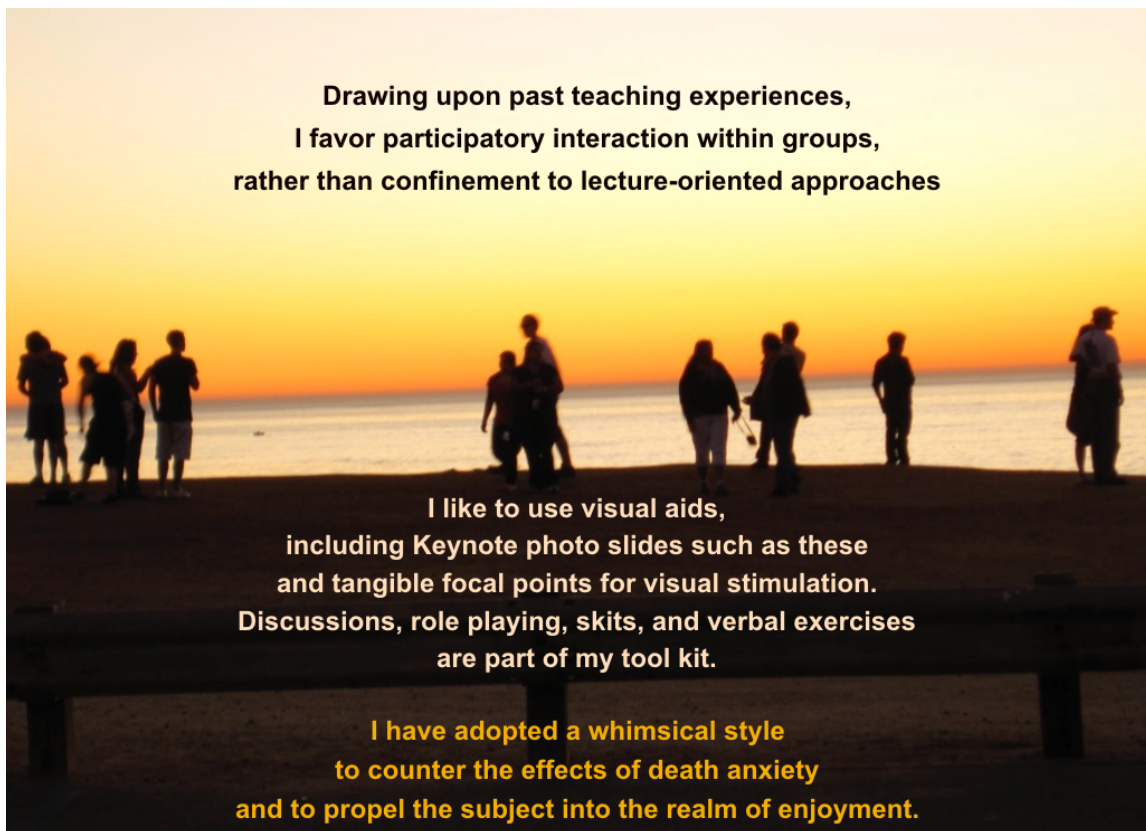


CONTACT

Seminars, Workshops, and Discussion Groups

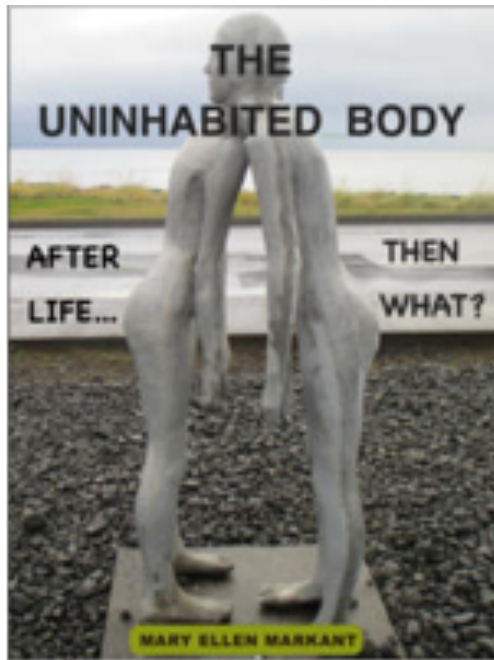
Introductory VIDEO

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



To Schedule A Photo Slideshow Presentation

Contact: passages@ponderingleaves.com



Publications

An eBook...

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

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

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

FREE via the iTunes store:

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

A Two-volume Print Book...

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

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

For Descriptive Details or Purchase:

<http://ponderingleaves.com/book.html>

