
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

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SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

UNUSUAL AND OFTEN ODDBALL "HOLIDAYS" PROVIDE THE FRAMEWORK FOR CONTENT, ALONG WITH OTHER ITEMS OF NOTE. HOPEFULLY, THE PROCESS OF READING THESE PIECES WILL HELP INSTILL A COMFORTABLE WILLINGNESS TO BRING MORTALITY MATTERS OUT OF THE CLOSET FOR A CLOSER LOOK AT THEM.

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

National Preparedness Month

(from Finishing Touches blog: "Mind Makeovers")

What are we going to do with ourselves when we can no longer inhabit the earth? Or, more likely, what will those closest to us do with our physical remains? In what manner will the essence of our lives be recognized and commemorated? How can we be assured that the presence we embodied will live on in the minds of others?

These are questions that only the most undaunted, well-organized and well-adjusted members of our society have been inclined to ask themselves. What about everyone else? The inevitable reality of separation and loss... of life endings... of permanent departures... is excruciatingly intimidating and emotionally draining for escapists who prefer to "bury their heads in the sand." Denial and dismissal of thoughts about that last incomprehensible yet natural phase of life mask unrelenting truths, thereby perpetuating a state of rampant lack of preparedness.

Our attitudes toward death affect us throughout life. Quality of existence can be heightened through an appreciation of life's limitation. We have choices. We can live in fear of mortality and cowardly assume a posture of avoidance, or we can ease the potential for strain on ourselves as well as our families by addressing measures of preparedness now. We can either disavow the certainty of death or embrace it as a natural consequence of living. We can control certain elements of our endings. We can explore the possibilities. We can dictate our preferences and initiate plans for closing scenarios. We can eliminate many of the decision-making chores that would burden our distraught loved ones during their time of sorrow. We have the power to determine conduct and personalize details relative to the occasion of terminal transition. We can reconcile ourselves to this irrefutable reality by adopting an attitude of acceptance and even enjoyment of the planning process.

With revitalized perspectives we can find our way to a new comfort zone. We can travel along modern routes paved by emerging trends and opportunities. If we open our eyes to the possibilities, we can witness expanded horizons and paint our own exquisite sunsets.



September 19 – 23: **National Love Your Files Week**

Anyone who enjoys organizing and categorizing data is missing a golden opportunity if a funeral preplanning endeavor has not yet been tackled. Now, more than ever, there are all sorts of methods and resources at one's fingertips.

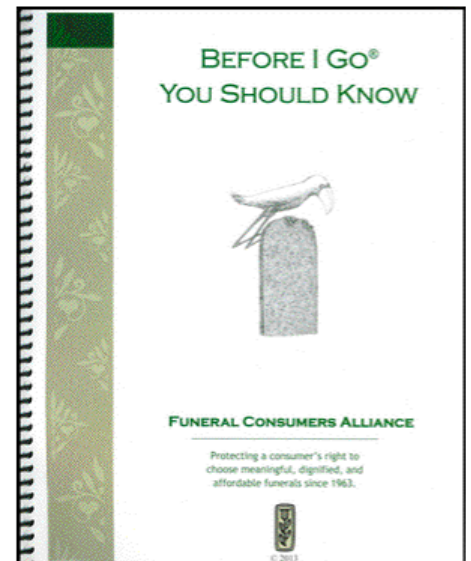
Of course, the simplest tool, a piece of paper for handwritten notations, by itself or within a notebook, is adequate for recording end-of-life preferences.

But to get the juices flowing and to stimulate engagement toward a sense of sublime satisfaction, more methodically discriminating means are readily available:

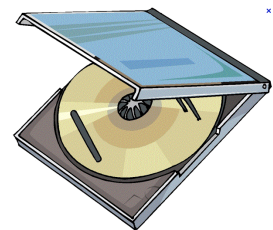
Forms with checklists or lines for writing details; found in funeral planning books, workbooks, as pamphlets, downloadable from funerary websites, or from relevant organizations and businesses, including funeral homes

Online questionnaires, available either as PDF files that can be downloaded and printed or formulated for responses that can be processed or stored online

Websites specifically designed to digitally store data and details for access by appointed individuals at time of death



CDs or DVDs, with documentation of wishes audio- or video-taped via interviews prompting responses to an interviewer's pre-determined questions.



Regardless of which method is chosen for recording preferences, the first logical step to becoming organized is acquiring information. That way, when at the point of documenting, mindfully rather than impulsively determined selections can be made. The funeral industry has changed, with an influx of new opportunities marking operations and merchandise. It behooves a planner to explore them and then make choices that can render enduring significance for their loved ones in the future.

September 2: **National College Colors Day**

For many, collegiate experiences are pivotal moments in time that permeate adult lives way beyond the college years. Academic anxieties, sleep deprivation, social complexities, and unwise indulgences may easily fade from memory, overtaken by recollections of burgeoning immersion into adulthood. So individuals often want to hang on to symbolic hallmarks of that pivotal era, throughout their lives and even unto death.

This is an especially propitious phenomenon for funerary businesses and manufacturers of themed, school-specific products. Pre-planners may declare that they want their last “rah-rah” to reflect their collegiate allegiance. Casket and urn designs, including linings and attachments, may provide the basis for proceedings.



Or planners may simply request a preponderance of their school colors or attire at funerary functions.



September 5: **Be Late for Something Day**



In preplanning their own end-of-life proceedings, some people have used the matter of timing to highlight their characteristic tardiness, humor, and maybe a trace of mischief.

In July of 2016, in spite of having died due to a terminal illness, a Scottish jokester, Mark Allison, had the last laugh. He had scheduled his funeral service for 9:30 in the morning, but specified that his coffin should arrive half an hour later. The officiating celebrant, who was aware of the intended prank, took note of guests' reactions. As the music played, their

quizzical expressions connoted confusion; they wondered what was going on. Once the coffin was in place, the officiant read exactly what Mark had written about his desire to be late for his own funeral, prompting laughter and an appreciation for what one guest called, "Classic Mark."

Similarly, a chorister by the name of Dai who belonged to a Welsh choir had the same idea in advance of his death. In this case, the car carrying his body was to drive around for ten minutes, just to assure that he'd really be late for his own funeral, thereby validating comments his choir mates had always made in reacting to his consistent tardiness. He had also left instructions and funding at a local social club where mourners would gather to have a drink on him. Upon arrival at the entrance, they found a note on the door: "In honor of our dearly departed friend, the LATE Dai, who has left money to buy everyone a drink, the club will open ten minutes later than indicated on the funeral service notes."

Maybe these men had been aware of Elizabeth Taylor's notoriously delayed funeral in 2011, when her service at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale, California and the arrival of her casket took place fifteen minutes after the scheduled time. Her publicist explained that the planned delay had been her parting wish, with a request to announce, "She even wanted to be late for her own funeral."

Quote: https://books.google.com/books?id=Cb_2CQAAQBAJ&pg=PT61&lpg=PT61&dq=who+arranged+to+be+late+for+own+funeral&source=bl&ots=yZskPY2V6b&sig=B4_LU8DHs_PV0eM2ByhO0zkbobg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiGspzOhp7PAhXMZiYKHYYfEDvcQ6AEIMDAD#v=onepage&q=who%20arranged%20to%20be%20late%20for%20own%20funeral&f=false

September 8: **Pardon Day**

Relationships pilot lives. Sometimes the process of dying presents a need to reconcile conflicts with one's close companions. Dr. Ira Byock has infamously identified four vital tasks that should be undertaken before death ensues; two of them pertain to forgiveness. Healing of emotional wounds entails cleansing by washing away toxic remnants tainting a relationship between two people.

The first task addresses any regret one might be harboring about having hurt someone, either intentionally or unintentionally. Asking for forgiveness can be a liberating overture to set the tone for further remedial dialogue. Also, to mitigate bruises of a deep-seated fissure, the second task of offering forgiveness can loosen or unleash the noose of anger, bitterness, or resentment, without necessarily excusing a person's offensive actions or behavior. Perhaps even more difficult, yet therapeutic, is forgiving oneself, which can be just as important. For both the dying person and the companion, gaining a newfound sense of self-acceptance may clear the rubble along the pathway toward death while paving the way toward peace.

As a tip for talking with someone who is dying it is suggested that, "There is no need to fuss over small injuries or insults. However, when you are preparing to say a final goodbye, you may be bothered by regrets about hurtful words or actions, or ways you may have disappointed the dying person. Deal with your regrets by saying something like, 'I've been feeling sorry about something that happened between us. I know I had a part in it and I'd like to apologize for it.' After describing the issue or incident in simple terms, say, 'Please forgive me.' Whatever the reaction, you will know that you have done what you could to address a painful part of your relationship." And you may be surprised by a response indicating that the person, likewise, wants to be forgiven by you for some reason.

On the other hand, this course of action isn't necessarily suitable for everyone. Circumstances may dictate otherwise. An individual may not be receptive to acknowledging the painful reality of the relationship. Forgiveness cannot be forced. But it is at least something to consider during the waning days of someone's life journey. And, regardless of interactive potential, one can at least pardon in thought by letting go of anger and the need to punish the person responsible for the emotional laceration. Doing so represents a gift of conciliatory resolution for oneself... a soothing balm amid the turmoil of loss.

"Tips for Talking with Someone Who is Dying, By: Glen R. Horst MDiv, DMin, BA, Canadian Virtual Hospice
http://www.virtualhospice.ca/en_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home/Topics/Topics/Communication/Tips+for+Talking+with+Someone+Who+is+Dying.aspx

September 11: **National Pet Memorial Day**

"He is my other eyes that can see above the clouds; my other ears that hear above the winds. He is the part of me that can reach out into the sea. He has told me a thousand times over that I am his reason for being; by the way he rests against my leg; by the way he thumps his tail at my smallest smile; by the way he shows his hurt when I leave without taking him. (I think it makes him sick with worry when he is not along to care for me.) When I am wrong, he is delighted to forgive. When I am angry, he clowns to make me smile. When I am happy, he is joy unbounded. When I am a fool, he ignores it. When I succeed, he brags. Without him, I am only another man. With him, I am all-powerful. He is loyalty itself. He has taught me the meaning of devotion. With him, I know a secret comfort and a private peace. He has brought me understanding where before I was ignorant. His head on my knee can heal my human hurts. His presence by my side is protection against my fears of dark and unknown things. He has promised to wait for me... whenever... wherever – in case I need him. And I expect I will – as I always have. He is just my dog."

- Gene Hill

The permanence of detachment from one's symbiotic relationship with a beloved pet can be as painful as it might be in response to human demise.



The expressions of sentiment and devotion witnessed at the Greenbriar Crematory and Pet Cemetery in Apopka, Florida blatantly announce how passionately the owners of these pets had treasured them as undeniably significant companions. The flowers, toys, photos, and solar lights garnishing memorial stones, statues, and benches on this property that's designed specifically for animals are just like the objects on burial grounds for human beings. Their presence drives home the point that loss of a partner, whether human or animal, can trigger profound grief. In acknowledging the death of a cherished pet, memorial measures such as these may be an important aspect of the healing process.



September 12: World Maritime Day

As cemeteries become saturated with underground occupants and mausoleum structures keep popping up to expand their offerings, a sea of opportunity awaits. Since water is so predominate both as a symbol and as an agent, its growing appeal as a final resting place is not surprising. For someone whose occupation, hobbies, vacations, or dreams have led to an aqueous milieu during life, burial of one's physical residuals in a similar setting may be particularly apropos. But for others, the lure of a final splashdown to the ocean floor may simply be motivated by an urge to return to an environment reminiscent of amniotic bliss.

There is no shortage of seafaring operations established specifically for scattering missions. New England Burials At Sea, though primarily engaged in disposition of cremated remains, also conducts eco-friendly, whole body burials on a regular basis throughout the year.

Services are provided from Maine to Florida on the east coast and through an affiliation with the scattering company, Ashes On the Sea, on the west coast from San Diego to San Francisco.

Most often, families and friends are on board for scattering and burial missions. Only about ten percent are unattended. There is a full menu of options from which they can select, determined fundamentally by the degree of involvement desired and the number of people who will participate; variations are available, including an unattended scattering with a ship-to-shore conference call enabling up to four family members to listen to the ceremony from a location on land.



Boats vary in size; for up to fifty passengers, one that is thirty to sixty-five feet long is used, but for larger groups of up to four hundred people, vessels up to one hundred and twenty-five feet are employed. The company has access to over forty-six boats around the country, which deploy from multiple ports.

Excursions typically last about two hours for scatterings and longer for whole body burials. In compliance with regulations established by the EPA, which oversees burials in American waters, cremated remains must be scattered at least three nautical miles off shore, whether deposited directly or in an aquatic type of biodegradable urn.

Instead of traditional wooden or steel caskets necessitating modification as required by the EPA and entailing additional expense, use of a locally hand sewn, company trademarked ocean-friendly burial shroud is encouraged as an eco-friendly alternative. This Atlantic and Pacific Sea Burial Shroud that's made of canvas and sailcloth has zippered access and is carried with ropes. It biodegrades in three to six months. Families may write messages on the canvas and a picture of the decedent may be slipped into a transparent pocket on top of the shroud. A chamber separate from the body contains four oversized cannon balls weighing almost forty pounds each; a federal regulation mandates at least one hundred and fifty pounds of additional weight to assure sinkage and stability on the ocean floor.



The boat captain officiates for ceremonial purposes unless a family chooses to have a clergy member or other representative serve in that role. Proceedings can be varied according to wishes for particular readings, poems, tribute videos, or other commemorative elements.



The boat may circle over the spot of a body's deployment into the water, often defined by flowers floating above it, in conjunction with a canon salute.

In nautical history, the sounding of eight bells rung after a sailor had died indicated the end of one's watch at sea and the beginning of another. This ritual, identified as an "Eight Bells End-of-Watch Blessing," is one of many optional "bells

and whistles" available to embellish the memorial experience. A common practice is the tossing of a single flower, rose petals, or an easily biodegradable wreath. Some others include a military honor guard, musical additions, such as a bugler, bagpiper in authentic garb, or use of a portable sound system, photography packages, and Internet simulcasting. Everyone onboard is encouraged to participate, often taking turns tossing a portion of the cremated remains.



The boat's engine may be shut down for moments of quiet reflection, enabling folks to drink in the surroundings and douse their senses in the sounds of winds and waves as well as the sight of gliding birds, bounding whales, cavorting seals, and whichever other creatures may happen to pass by.

Here, amid this final destination for a loved one, restful relevance can be realized.

September 23: Love Note Day

Remember the unconventional approach to after-life gift giving that was portrayed in the movie, *P.S. I Love You* (based on the novel by Cecelia Ahern)? A widow periodically received letters that had been written by her husband before his anticipated death. Each specified directions for guiding her to experiences that would support her welfare or enhance her life. The man had even gone to a travel agent to make arrangements for her to visit Ireland. One could easily take this idea and fly with it. As you consider your own personal relationships, what surprise gestures might you plan for the special people in your life to relish after your death?

September 24: National Museum Day

The National Museum of Funeral History contains America's largest collection of authentic, historical funeral service items. A visit there affords an educational overview of past practices and artifacts. Some of the points of interest on display include casket and coffin models and historical funerary vehicles. Information about past United States presidents as well as popes and celebrities is featured. Permanent collections are complemented by special exhibits. One such exhibit under development is a joint project between the museum and the Cremation Association of North America. Scheduled to open in 2018 and utilizing videos and interactive components, it will highlight historical aspects of cremation along with elements of memorialization.

<http://nmfh.org/>

National Museum of Funeral History



**19TH CENTURY
MOURNING**



**HISTORY OF
EMBALMING**



HISTORICAL HEARSES



**A LIFE WELL LIVED:
FANTASY COFFINS FROM
GHANA**



**COFFINS AND CASKETS
OF THE PAST**



**DAY OF THE DEAD / DÍA
DE LOS MUERTOS**



**PRESIDENTIAL
FUNERALS**



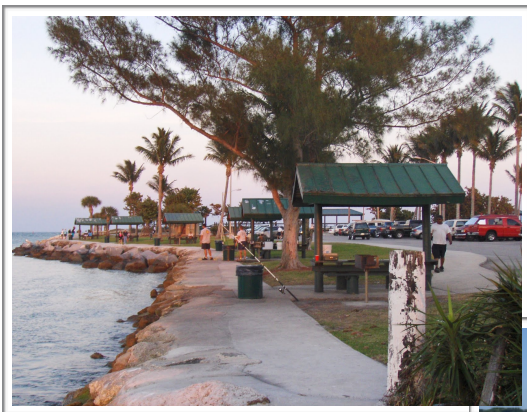
**CELEBRATING THE
LIVES AND DEATHS OF
THE POPES**

The PHOTO DEPOT

Images related to an aspect of death management, 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.

August 16: Collect Rocks Day

Sometimes memorial rocks are discovered in unexpected and unlikely places!



*Jetty Park
South Hutchinson,
Fort Pierce, Florida*



"EXITER UNIVERSITY"

A Series of Free Educational Programs

Available To Anyone Who Might Die Someday

Photo Slideshow and Discussion:

The Gift of Preparedness For End-of-Life Management

A Preliminary Overview of Preplanned Exit Strategies



Thursday, September 29: 6:00-8:00

First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Road South, Room 110



**COME FIND OUT
WHAT'S INSIDE THE GIFT BOX!**

An **OPPORTUNITY** to learn
about invigorating options
in the funerary realm!



A congenial way to find
the **FUN** in **FUNeral**
event planning!

A **GIFT** for your family...
planning well in advance
for the eventual end of life!



A pleasant way to design the **WRAP-up**...
getting together with other mortals
to explore the possibilities!

DEATH CAFES: SPONTANEOUS DISCUSSIONS ABOUT DEATH

Wednesday, October 26, 2016, 6:00-7:45 p.m.

Legacy at Clover Blossom,
Rochester, NY

Register at:

meetup.com

or

ponderingleaves@gmail.com

For Information about the
International Organization:
deathcafe.com



Signature Sunsets

Final Proceedings Reflecting Personal Style

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

ponderingleaves@gmail.com

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FINISHING TOUCHES

Customized Event Planning for Distinctive Proceedings Following Death



Beauteous As A Fallen Leaf

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PONDERING LEAVES

Colorful End-of-Life Pre-planning



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ABOUT ME



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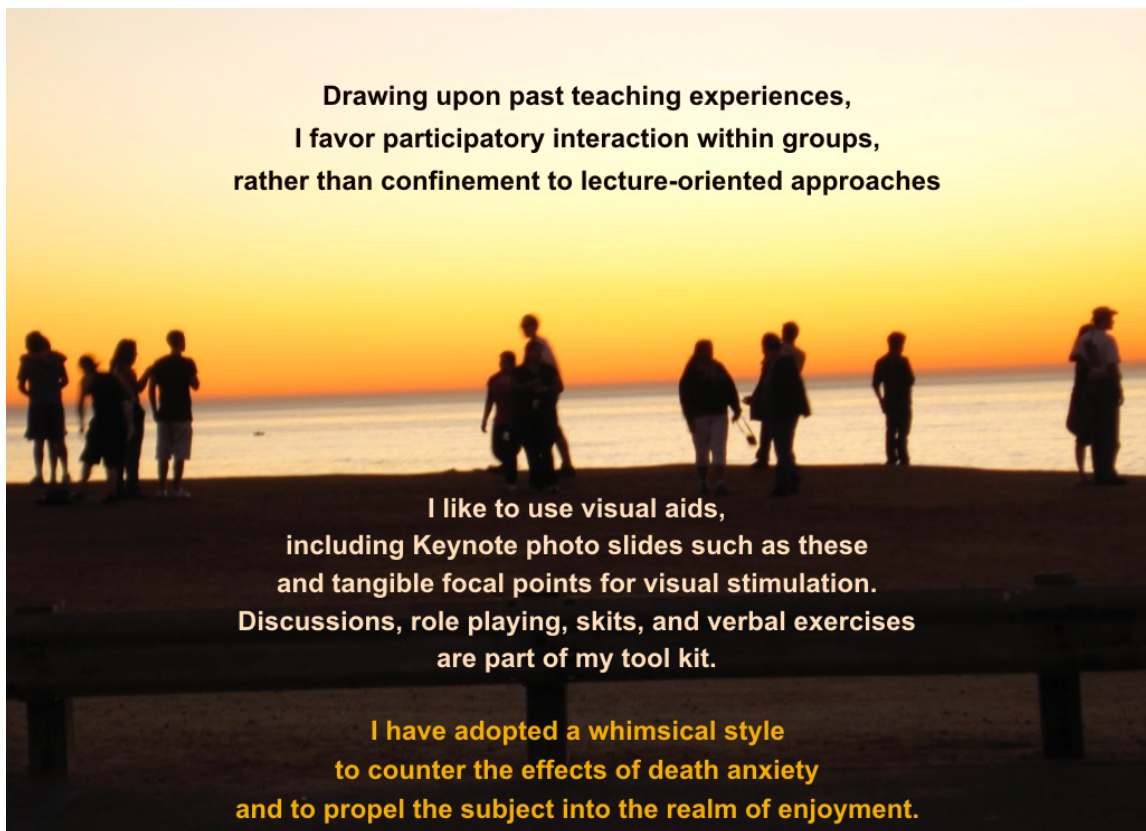


CONTACT

Seminars, Workshops, and Discussion Groups

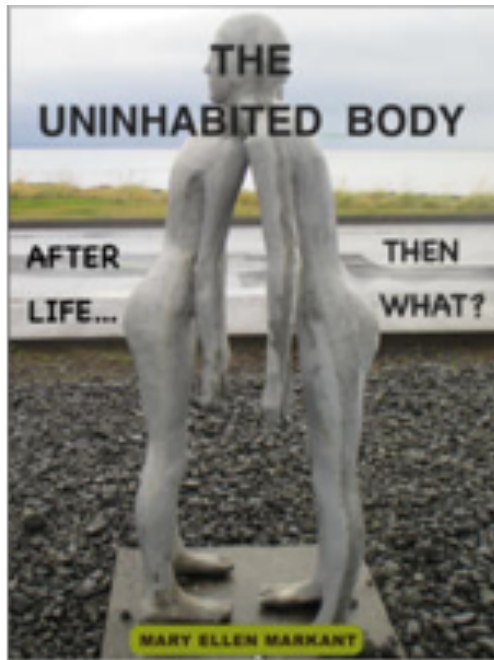
Introductory VIDEO

<https://www.educrations.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 addendums underlies this enlivened review of funerary matters. Dry bones of familiar standardization are augmented and revitalized with funny bones of novel practices and products.

For Descriptive Details or Purchase:

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

