



Till Death Us Do Part

By Michael R. Lynch



*A civil celebrant guide to the creation
of memorable funeral services.*

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

On the day of my 50th birthday in December 1996 I came to the conclusion that I had lost my passion for broadcasting which had provided me with an uninterrupted income and a great deal of professional satisfaction both in Australia and New Zealand for more than thirty years. As I gazed at my computer screen that day, I realised with some degree of trepidation that if I didn't want to simply stagnate in my public service job with SBS Radio until eventual retirement, I had to bite the bullet and pursue an alternative career. I will not bore you with details of how that all unfolded, suffice to say that there is much to be said for being in the right place at the right time and that my second career has, over more than two decades taken me on an extremely challenging and most fulfilling journey .

It was at the invitation of the management of Tobin Brothers Funerals in Melbourne, Australia, that on the 24th February 1997 I took up the newly created position of Funeral Service Facilitator. For me, this was a giant leap into the unknown. The number of funerals I had attended at that point in my life could have been counted on one hand and I had absolutely no understanding of what was meant by leading a funeral service. However the powers-that-be at Tobin Brothers persuaded me that the skills I had acquired as a radio announcer and later as a broadcast journalist, writing, interviewing, editing, presenting etc., together with my forays as an actor in non-professional theatre productions over the years, were those I would be able to effectively employ in this new career. Twenty-two years on and close to 2,500 funeral/memorial services later, I would like to share with those of you thinking about embarking upon this very special vocation, or in fact anyone who has been asked to deliver a eulogy, some of my own experiences and observations, and more importantly what I hope you will find to be some valuable guidelines to the creation of memorable memorial services and life celebrations

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CHAPTER ONE

THE CIVIL FUNERAL SERVICE

The civil funeral service has become for an increasing number of people, a most agreeable alternative to that which had traditionally taken place in a church. Many of those who today elect to farewell loved ones with a civil ceremony do so because that had been the wish of the deceased who may have had no religious persuasion, while others have discovered that a civil service, while essentially 'life centred' can and often does, embrace some religious content, even if it is only the inclusion of such traditional recitations as *The Lord's Prayer* or *Psalm 23*.

What you need to understand is that a civil ceremony, even one that includes a religious component, is quite different from the very prescriptive protocols inherent in a church service.

Civil funeral ceremonies or 'celebrations of life' as many families frequently refer to them are those in which the family of a loved one has a significant input into the structure and design of the service which incorporates music, readings, tributes from family and friends, candle lighting, the screening of an audio visual presentation, and the release of doves of peace or helium balloons.

For many families arranging a funeral is something they have never been called upon to do before and therefore they are heavily reliant upon the guidance of the celebrant engaged on their behalf by their chosen funeral director.

The arrangement of a civil funeral service should be an 'experience' rather than a mere transaction and does not necessarily have to take place at a funeral

director's chapel, at a cemetery or crematorium. In recent years, funeral services have been held in botanical gardens, on beaches, at golf clubs, race tracks, theatre auditoria, secondary school assembly halls, on farms, and on football club ovals.

THE CIVIL CELEBRANT

Whilst a civil marriage celebrant must meet certain legal criteria laid down by the Department of Australia's Attorney General in order to be granted accreditation, there are at present no prerequisite formal qualifications required of a funeral celebrant. However, aspirants may if they choose, enroll in one of Civil Celebrant Diploma Courses being run in most state capitals of Australia.

To be a successful funeral celebrant you will need

- The capacity to draw upon your own life experience in order to empathise with others
- An ability to listen and hear what is being related by family members
- An excellent command of the English language coupled with ability to write an interesting, and sympathetic narrative.
- Clear Speech and excellent delivery
- A good musical knowledge
- A sense of theatre
- The capacity to work to tight deadlines without sacrificing accuracy
- A passion to be the best you can be

CHAPTER TWO

THE CLIENT FAMILY CONFERENCE

Having been engaged by a funeral director to lead a funeral service, the celebrant will contact a representative of the bereaved family, very often referred to as 'the responsible person' (i.e.) the person who has signed the contract and is authorised to make all decisions pertaining to the conduct of the funeral. During this initial contact it is appropriate to offer your condolences to the family and then explain that you need to reach a mutually agreeable time at which to meet with them to plan the service. In most cases, the client family conference takes place during daylight hours but in some instances owing to work commitments, a family may express a preference for an evening or weekend meeting. It is absolutely essential that you allow yourself adequate preparation time, usually 4-5 hours particularly as today's services often involve the provision of Orders of Service, Mass Books, Thank You Cards and the production of audio visual tributes, all of which must be finalised at least 24 hours in advance of the service time.

The meeting, or family conference as it is sometimes called, will usually take place at the home of a family member or on occasions at the branch office of the funeral director. Having introduced yourself to a client family on the day of the meeting, "How are you coping?" is an acceptable 'ice breaker,' but avoid at all costs, such asinine attempts at empathy as "I know how you must feel" because in reality you could not possibly know how they feel. As far as the family is concerned, the person they have lost and are mourning was, in their eyes, unique, and therefore only they know how they feel. At the outset of any client family conference, the first thing you must ask yourself is 'how is this death affecting this family' because the answer to that question will largely determine

the way you ultimately introduce and structure the service (more on that in a future chapter).

Sometimes you will arrive at a family home to discover that a bereaved family has already given quite a lot of thought as to the kind of funeral service they would like you to lead. They may have chosen the music to be played, invited certain people to speak, and in some cases they may have already written a eulogy (life story) which they will ask you as the celebrant to present on their behalf. There will be other, far less frequent occasions, when it is indicated that a member of the family will present the eulogy themselves and that your role as celebrant will be to coordinate the event, introducing speakers at the appropriate moment, and perhaps deliver a reading, poem or prayer – in other words, you will be called upon to act as an MC. However, it is important that the family for whom you are arranging a funeral understands the difference between the sharing of personal memories of the deceased and the eulogy, the latter being a chronological account of the major events in the life of the deceased. In those instances in which a family member has elected to write and deliver the eulogy themselves there is significantly less preparation time involved for you as the celebrant and therefore the deadline is not nearly as critical, but you must still be ‘involved’. As celebrant/master of ceremonies you will need to ‘set the scene’ before introducing the family member or friend who is to present the main eulogy. However, in the vast majority of cases, a bereaved family will not feel emotionally equal to the task of writing and delivering the eulogy and will be more than happy to leave it to you the celebrant.

A word of warning: It is never the role of the celebrant to ‘pretend’ to have known the deceased; equally, it is extremely unwise to tell mourners that you did not know the deceased personally because such an admission will immediately undermine your authority as a family’s spokesperson. “These are the memories his/her family has asked me to share with you” should leave no doubt in the minds of mourners, the context of your role as celebrant.

CHAPTER THREE

PAINTING A WORD PORTRAIT

To write an accurate and interesting eulogy, faithful to not only the memory of the deceased but to the achievements and accomplishments of his/her life, you must ask not only a number of important prepared questions (see below) but also those which suggest themselves from a previous response or impromptu comment. For example, a family member might say “Dad had a quirky sense of humour.” Whilst that statement could stand without elaboration, how much more weight would it carry if as the celebrant, you were able to provide mourners with a couple of illustrations of that “quirky sense of humour”. You could only do that of course had you asked the family to expand upon that assertion. The lesson here is that the celebrant must not only *listen* but *hear* what is being said by family members. In this way you will be able to elicit more colourful and descriptive responses from the deceased’s family to such issues as these.

- His/her predominant character traits
- His/her birthplace; siblings and position in the family
- Family background
- Childhood memories he may have shared
- Education/ Early ambitions and employment history
- Marriage/Children, Grand and Great-grandchildren
- Hobbies and recreational pursuits
- Group and/or club memberships
- Sporting interests
- Travel Experiences
- Animals as pets

- Favourite charities (if any)
- Music, Literature, TV and Movie preferences
- Favourite sayings, expressions or life philosophies
- Something generally not known about him/her
- The happiest times in his/her life

As a spokesperson for a bereaved family, the celebrant must have the capacity to relate the deceased's life story as it has been told to him/her and if that narrative is to effectively paint a word portrait faithful to the memory of the deceased and to the satisfaction of surviving family members I must reiterate how vitally important it is that the celebrant not only *listens* to what is being said by family members but *hears* what he or she is being told. Simply making 'notes', even in shorthand, simply will not cut it. Therefore I would strongly recommend that you always go into a family conference with a reliable audio recorder.

Very often there may be five or more members of a family sitting around the table and in their enthusiasm to contribute memories and recollections of the deceased, there is a tendency for them all to speak at once. Whilst you as the celebrant would have difficulty making copious notes on what they all have to say, the audio recorder will capture everything said and you will be surprised on listening to the playback at the 'little gems' that can be either lifted verbatim or paraphrased for inclusion in the service. By recording your meeting with the family, you are also able to verify the accuracy of important dates, place and people names all of which of course must be meticulously must be correct.

CHAPTER FOUR

WRITING A EULOGY

The Oxford Dictionary's definition of eulogy is "a piece of writing in praise of a person" but in fact, it is so much more than that. In the funeral context, a eulogy is what can be referred to as a potted biography. As the celebrant, you become a biographer who has been charged with presenting, albeit in a very condensed form, the life story of the person who has died. Essentially an effective eulogy should be limited to between 1500-2000 words. Containing a chronological account of the life being celebrated, it will include stories, anecdotes, experiences, milestones, quotations and references to the personal qualities and characteristics of the deceased that those present will be able to relate to or remember. As the funeral celebrant, you are not only the family's spokesperson you also need to be a creative and animated story teller. Do not be afraid to marry episodes in the life of the deceased to fleeting references of historical events of the time such as the First and Second World Wars, The Great Depression, Royal Weddings; a global sporting event, the Vietnam War and Moon landing. However, bear in mind that when employing such story telling techniques you are not at the lectern to provide mourners with a history lesson - so adopt the less is more principle. In your role as biographer/celebrant, you are a storyteller, actor and to some extent an entertainer, and your principle role is to share with mourners the memories the family has previously shared with you. To effectively reinforce your role as "family spokesperson" make effective use of lines such as ...

- (name) remembers that when Jack turned fifty".....
- "They recall that on one of (name's) most hilarious fishing expeditions...."

- “We’re told that whenever he played golf...”.
- No one in the family will ever forget....
- Some of you can probably still hear (name) saying.....”

By using such attributions you are subtly reminding mourners that you are not pretending to have known the deceased but are simply sharing memories on behalf of the bereaved family. Seize the opportunity to lift verbatim, the words of the deceased from a diary or journal he/she may have kept. This takes the eulogy from the realm of biography to autobiography and provides the service with a very special and personal dimension. Whether you refer to the deceased’s life story as a narrative, eulogy or biography, really doesn’t matter. You should attempt to write the eulogy in the family’s vernacular. For example, the language and general approach to a service for a 25-year-old labourer from a chapel in a largely working class suburb of Melbourne will be a little different to one for a highly regarded academic from a more salubrious locale. A note of caution here. In an attempt to better reflect the character of the deceased being remembered, there can sometimes be a temptation by the celebrant to use language he/she used in life which some mourners, particularly the elderly may find offensive. My advice: If in doubt, leave it out!

As already mentioned, a civil funeral service may be devoid of all religious content or at the request of a family it may contain hymns, scriptural readings and prayers. Other families will request the inclusion of a reading that simply underscores a family’s thanks for the life of the person who has died and which perhaps makes some oblique reference to ‘moving on’, being in a better place, or of being reunited with loved ones who’ve gone before. What a funeral celebrant must never do is to include scriptural readings or religious prayers without the express request of the client family. A funeral service should never be seen by a celebrant as a platform from which to push his/her own religious beliefs.

The scripted beginning of the service is the area that requires most consideration. There are some celebrants who use a generic opening and closing to their services which is the case in many church based funerals. In the context of a civil funeral

service this is a practice to be absolutely discouraged; it is vitally important that in penning the opening words of the service that the celebrant is mindful of the age of the deceased and the circumstances of the death.

For example, the parents of a teenager who has suicided by throwing himself under a train or who has hanged herself on the back balcony of the family home is going to be generating from the grieving family vastly different emotions to those of two adult children whose mother, having suffered Alzheimer's, had not recognised them for three years prior to her passing. Their grieving has taken place well before physical death had occurred, whereas the parents of the son who has suicided are likely to be utterly despairing and asking themselves what they could have done to have prevented such a tragic loss. The way in which you approach the latter circumstance will depend upon the wishes of the family. In some cases a family may have no qualms about referring to a death as being self-inflicted, whilst in others, the wish of the family may be that the death be referred to simply as a terrible 'tragedy'. Never at any stage in your eulogy imply any judgement on a person who may have taken his/her own life.

At the conclusion of your meeting with a client family, you should have a fairly firm idea in your mind as to what this death means to them and how they would like the service to be presented. They may be grieving deeply or they may be relieved that a long suffering relative is now pain free. You may be dealing with parents who are guilt ridden that their son has taken his own life; angry that their daughter has been murdered by a former partner; or shattered that a husband and father has been killed by a drunk or drugged driver. Remember, it is the age of the deceased, and the circumstances of the death, that will largely determine what your opening words are to be.

Another different and creative way in which to open the service is the inclusion of a quotation related to the deceased's career. For example, if the person whose life being celebrated was a greatly respected teacher, these words would make a most appropriate beginning. "A teacher affects eternity; he/she can never tell where his/her influence ends".

Having concluded your meeting with a client family and perhaps having subsequently made contact with one or two others by phone for their input, you are now ready to prepare the service. In the majority of cases, this begins with music or a song chosen by the family. One of the advantages for a family in deciding upon a civil funeral service is the freedom to play whatever music they wish. Whilst some religious institutions are becoming a little more flexible in terms of what music they'll allow to be played within their hallowed halls, it is only at a non-church venue would you hear such songs as *Highway to Hell*, *Born to Be Wild* or *Stairway to Heaven*. A funeral service without music would be like movies such as *Out of Africa*, *Dr Zhivago*, *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Schindler's List* without their powerfully evocative scores. The music played during a service of Life Celebration can so often be used to gently underscore the poignancy of that moment when family members are placing flowers on a coffin, lighting candles, watching as the casket silently fall from sight, or are symbolically setting free the spirit of the deceased with the release of helium balloons or doves of peace. The lyrics of the first song in a civil service such as *Unforgettable / The Wings Beneath My Wings/ You Are So Beautiful*, and *Gone Too Soon* can sometimes provide the celebrant with the opening lines of the service. Equally important, is the playing of music at a graveside committal but more on that in a later chapter.

There are at least three other elements you may need to consider when structuring the service, one of which is the audio visual presentation. This has become a very popular and powerfully emotional component in services of Life Celebration. Usually running 4-5 minutes and containing approximately 30 photographs and on occasions even some video footage, this pictorial montage serves as a time of remembrance and reflection.

Returned Services League (RSL) and Masonic Services are often presented during a civil funeral service. In both cases the RSL and/or Freemasonry representatives are invited by the celebrant, usually before the audio visual presentation is screened to deliver what are fairly prescriptive texts. In the case of a Masonic Lodge component, the celebrant would make reference to the deceased's significant contribution and commitment to Freemasonry and would then say

..... “And I now call upon his worshipful brother, Mr John Smith of Lodge 321 to pay homage to (deceased) on behalf of all his fellow brethren” During this service, Mr Smith will place a white apron and sprig of rosemary on the foot of the coffin both of which carry symbolic significance. The presentation of a Returned Services League service is not dissimilar to that for a Freemason. An appropriate introduction would be “As mentioned earlier (deceased) was proud to have helped defend this country in a time of war and to pay tribute to him on behalf of all his fellow comrades, I call upon the President of the Frankston sub-branch of the RSL, Mr Bob South.” During this service Mr South will place a poppy upon the coffin and he will invite all fellow returned service people to do the same. The RSL Service concludes with a recording of The Last Post and The Rouse.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION & DELIVERY

The greatest shortcoming in some celebrants is an inability to create the perception that they are not merely reading from a script. Whilst no one expects a funeral celebrant to speak extemporaneously (without a script) it is very important to make frequent eye contact with the family who will be in the front row of the chapel left and right, and with other mourners. By typing your script in Ariel 18pt. either on paper, tablet or laptop, and by making sure that your paragraphs are no more than six lines in length, you will be easily able to look up from time to time, and after making eye contact, find your place again without hesitation or loss of fluency. Whilst your role is not to pretend that you personally knew the deceased, you do have a responsibility to deliver the eulogy with warmth, sincerity, empathy, sympathy, and even at times with good humour. To help achieve a strong, confident delivery you must write short, concise sentences containing adjectives that allow the ‘actor’ in you, to deliver them as conversationally as possible. To do this, you must tell a story not simply read a script. The most creatively written script can totally miss its mark if the celebrant delivering it ignores selective emphasis, pace, and the power of the pause. A properly placed 2-3 second pause can sometimes be a profound reinforcement of the statement which has preceded it. (Listen to speeches by former US President Barak Obama)

If you are presenting a reading, (scriptural or otherwise) use the power of the author’s words to enhance delivery. Emphasise those words that should be stressed, discard those which should not, and try to avoid making the piece sound like a carefully rehearsed end-of-year school concert recitation. In the

case of all text, you don't have to believe what you are reading but you must sound as if you do, and the correct use of selective emphasis will help to achieve this. Selective emphasis, or vocal colour/light and shade, relates to the use of voice to emphasise those words which carry most meaning and to de-emphasise those words of lesser importance and are merely there as conjunctive devices.

Timing is also a very important delivery device. If you've decided to relate a funny story told to you by the family, mark the spots in the script which are likely to get a laugh and be sure to pause at those points, because failure to do so means that mourners who are laughing or applauding, may miss what you say next which could very well be the story's punch line.

The key to a strong, fluent delivery is to be as familiar with your text as possible. Always use two smaller words instead of a larger one that may cause you to stumble and always read your script aloud and at least twice before delivering it during the funeral service. You can never be too familiar with your narrative.

Two of the best exercises for practising the power of the pause and selective emphasis are *Sea Fever* by John Masefield and the closing sequences of William Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet*. Try speaking these stanzas into your computer or audio recorder and then play them back, listening as critically as you can to where you have paused, whether you have emphasised the right words, and have truly conveyed the intended meaning of each passage.

Sea Fever

*I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.
I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.*

*I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.*

Romeo & Juliet

*Where be these enemies? Capulet! Montague!
See, what a scourge is laid upon your hate,
That heaven finds means to kill your joys with love.
And I for winking at your discords too
Have lost a brace of kinsmen:
All are punished.*

*A Gloomng peace this morning with it brings
The sun for sorrow will not show his head
For never was story of more woe
than this of Juliet and her Romeo*

In the next chapter of this booklet are transcripts of four very different services and in deference to their families, the names of the deceased and their relatives have been changed. The first is a service for Mary, a troubled teenager; the second eulogy is for a 92-year-old man; the third celebrates the life of a former ABC broadcaster in which the celebrant plays the lesser role of MC – whilst the fourth service is for a centenarian and illustrates how creative you can be in making a service just a little different.

CHAPTER SIX

EULOGIES & LIFE CELEBRATIONS

FUNERAL SERVICE MARY JANE GRANTHAM

Celebrant - *“Mary was a dragon. She was strong, she breathed fire. Like a dragon, she was hounded by demons who ensured she could never find a home to rest her head. I’ll miss you Mary but I can’t be sad, because I know you finally have a place where you belong – where your demons can’t find you.”*

That poignant farewell message to Mary is from her sister Julie, who, together with every member of her family has been absolutely shattered by Mary’s death in a motor vehicle accident in the early hours of last Saturday morning. Compounding the tragedy for Mary’s family is that because her life on this earth was brought to such an abrupt and violent end they had no chance to say goodbye, no opportunity to tell her that despite everything, she really was loved by her parents Joy and Barry Grantham, her stepfather Jim, her sister Julie, her half-sister Courtney, by her grandparents Peg, and the late, Poppy Joe, by Fred and Nanna Ethel and by her Aunty Rose and cousins Aamon, Darcy, and Mick. For all of you, the words of the Michael Jackson song called ‘Gone Too Soon’, lyrics that must sadly reflect the tragedy of having lost someone so young.

Those of us here who are parents can only begin to imagine the sheer hell of losing a child who has been loved and nurtured and who’s fallen victim to the insidious world of drug taking and feelings of hopelessness. Understandably, you would be constantly asking yourself what more you could have done in order to replace despair with hope, tears with laughter, sorrow with joy. But the reality is

that sometimes we are conscious of negative forces so strong within the life of an individual, that to change or to enrich that life is simply beyond us.

Today you come here, united in your grieving for Mary, and in support of those who loved her and on their behalf I thank you for your attendance and your expressions of sympathy.

Someone once said that unfinished symphonies are often amongst the most beautiful. And as a very little girl, that's how her mother Marie remembers Mary; beautiful, adventurous and totally fearless. As a teenager, the photograph you see on her coffin, taken at a rave and techno party is the way Mary would want you to remember her. Nineteen-year old Mary, or 'Mare' as she was affectionately known, was born in Melbourne on Wednesday 30th January 1985, two years after her sister, Julie.

Even when she was just a year old she was a risk taker who could never swing high enough on the swing and the only thing that stopped her climbing the fence were the splinters she'd get in her fingers.

In another life, Mary could have had a career in theatre. Joyce remembers that one day when Mary was three years old, she picked her up from crèche and the person running it shook her head and said "I pity you, that girl's going to be such an actress."

After going to kindergarten at Essendon West, Mary went on to primary school where she played basketball, and with Julie she learned jazz ballet and tap dancing.

She completed the bulk of her secondary education at Wesley College where she proved herself to be a very intelligent, extremely clever student. She had quite a talent for painting as demonstrated by her portrait of Marilyn Monroe. Mary had always had a way with words, and as a little tacker she often came out with expressions that belied her age. For instance her Dad recalls that one day when she was only six years old she said, "That's catastrophic Dad!" Her command of

language was something she drew on at school where she demonstrated a real flare for writing essays, and poetry which I'm told could move you to tears.

Her sister Julie came across some of that poetry yesterday and she's going to read a piece now.

Poetry Reading - Julie

Celebrant - In the words of her family, Mary was "A free-spirited, non-conformist gypsy who was afraid of nothing." She was social butterfly whose physical appearance was characterised by her extremes in hair colours, her rave party clothes, her body piercing, tats and beaded bangles. She loved her rave parties and her Mum decided that as she was going to her 'farewell party' today, she should be dressed accordingly which is what she would have wanted. Extremely outgoing, Mary was a 'people person' who seemed to make an impact on everyone she met. She just blew them away! There seemed to be two extremes with Mary - very happy or very sad - but Joyce says she was someone you'd meet once and remember always.

Her favourite book was *White Oleander* by Janet Fitch who tells the story of a young girl's journey through a series of foster homes and her efforts to find a place for herself in impossible circumstances. Joyce says Mary must have read that book a dozen times, maybe because she was so easily able to identify with the book's central character.

Mary had a wonderful affinity with children and only recently said to Joyce "I really want to go back to school Mum; I've been thinking about it a lot and I want to do Certificate Three in Children's Services." Mary had formed a very strong bond with Julie over the past two years and she adored Courtney, her little half-sister. A week ago yesterday, Joyce, Linda and Mary went to Courtney's school to watch her and her classmates perform four songs as part of Education Week and Joyce says there was Mary proudly applauding and cheering Courtney on. Three years ago when the family was living in Canberra, Amanda would often go down to Courtney's primary school to help with the five year old 'preppies

group'. She'd listen to them read and help them with language and Julie says they adored her and she'll always remember one little boy in the class who said to her, "Mary will you be my girl friend". When Mary told this little boy she would, he walked around telling the other kids, "Mary's my girlfriend".

Just recently, Joyce picked Mary up from Camberwell Station, and they drove past a park. Joyce tells us that when Mary saw this park her face lit up and with an expression of absolute honesty and joy and she told her Mum that that was where she and Brian had their first kiss.

Brian was a very special friend, as was Jarrod to whom she was also very close. Both of those guys like her family will remember how much Mary liked going shopping, and both her Mum and Dad have vivid memories of taking her to Highpoint and spending a small fortune on clothes, shoes and handbags.

Someone who'd been a big part of Mary's life since she was seven was her stepfather, Jim, whom Joyce says was very loving and supportive to her and who copped her at her best and her worst but never turned his back on her. He loved her like she was one of his own.

Living on the edge, Mary was unable to settle whether it was in relationships or jobs, although she did work for a couple of months in hospitality at Crown Casino. Her former colleagues there will remember what a very generous person she was and that two of her favourite expressions were 'fully sick' and 'bite me'. Totally spontaneous, Mary was never backward in coming forward and was not afraid to give you a piece of her mind. She loved being the centre of attention and certainly attracted it in the way she dressed. If she wasn't going out on Friday or Saturday evening, she would sit up all night watching Rage on ABC TV, she loved her music. Techno was her favourite music, but she also liked The Beatles, David Bowie, and Nickleback, whose hit song 'How You Remind Me', we're going to listen to now. And as we do, members of her family are going to light candles in her memory.

Music - How You Remind Me

Celebrant - Mary continued to be hounded by her demons, but as she headed out of Melbourne in the early hours of last Saturday morning she was determined as she told Julie in a letter to put them behind her and start a fresh. That her plans and dreams were not realised is deeply saddening to all who knew her , but Julie says that we should take heart in the belief that in death Mary has at last found the happiness that eluded her in life.

And now with some very special words to close this service, Georgia's mother, Marie.

“Mary, I don't know where you were going baby girl; I don't know what was on your mind. There are so many questions I could ask, yet there is only one answer, I have lost you. It is so hard for me Mary, yet I know, or at least I think I can understand how hard it was for you to make that decision to get into the car and leave. I got your message, ‘Tell Mum I love her’. I cling on to that message Mare, it keeps you with me.”

I know at times we had no understanding of each other and we often thought that the other one was crazy, but I never stopped loving you and I never will. There's no more torment for you now, no more pain, no more heartache. You have your two special angels with you. My free-spirited Mary I love you enough to wish you peace and I love you enough to let you go to be free. Be happy my darling.”

FUNERAL SERVICE
ROBERT (BOB) CARLISLE

The Opening: ‘The Very Thought Of You’ - Nat King Cole

Celebrant - For Beverley and Bob - that Ray Noble classic sung by Nat King Cole song is a wonderful expression of the love they had for each other.

This afternoon we assemble here to celebrate the life of Robert Wandsworth Carlisle who passed away last Tuesday at the extraordinary age of ninety-two, although as you can see from his photograph, he didn't look a day over eighty.

A fairly natural reaction on hearing that someone has achieved great longevity is to think, “Oh well, he had a great innings” and of course Bob wouldn't deny that for a moment. He had a great journey, had done everything he wanted to do and accepted his cancer diagnosis last July very philosophically. The reality for all members of his family however is that Bob was a part of their lives for such a long time it's difficult to believe he has gone and even harder to say goodbye. And so may I begin by extending to Beverley, and all members of Bob's family our deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences.

Much has been written about death and dying down through the ages and one of the most profound quotations comes from the pen of John Milton who wrote: No one's death comes to pass without making some impression and those close to the deceased, inherit part of the liberated soul and become richer in their humanness.

Well I'm sure that every member of Bob's family feels richer for having been a part of his life, a life we celebrate this afternoon in words and music and through the memories that I and others would like to share with you. Those memories will be many and varied. Some will remember his passion for music both as a listener and as a performer; his grandchildren, will recall him playing footy with them in the back yard well into his eighties. Others amongst you will be remembering someone described by his family as compassionate, quiet, understanding and a perfect gentleman who had a magnificently, dry wit.

His daughters, Carol and Lesley say they used to call Bob their BHP man - their 'quiet achiever' and they'll also remember him as a mender of broken hearts.

Life for Bob, a leap year baby began on the 9th April 1915 during the first year of the First World War, and three years after the sinking of the Titanic. The second child and only son of Les and Edith Carlisle, Bob outlived his three sisters, Valma, Beverley and Janis but perhaps genetically he owes his own longevity to his mother who was 98 when she died.

Where actors are sometimes said to have had theatre in their blood, Bob always had music on his mind. By the time he started school during the so-called roaring twenties, Dixieland Jazz, which he came to love, was still popular, but a revolution in dance band arrangements was taking place.

Microphones were used by dance band singers for the first time, and composers like Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern and George Gershwin were churning out classics such as Always, My Blue Heaven, Tea for Two, Blue Skies, and Someone To Watch Over Me.

Bob's school days were happy ones. He was a very bright student who from memory and very accurately could draw a map of Australia and a World map. Being the only boy in the family, Bob didn't have too much in common with his three sisters and would retreat into his bedroom to learn to play music, much to the annoyance of his mother who would tell him "Don't make that noise, you'll worry the neighbours".

On leaving Collingwood Tech he got a job at a local garage and that led to an apprenticeship with an auto electrician. In that capacity Bob worked for Healings and Kew Chrysler and during the years of World War Two he was with Ansett Airways at Essendon Airport during which time he played cricket and did some fishing. By the time peace had been restored in Europe and the Pacific, Bob had become a self-taught musician.

He could not only play the double bass but had also learned to read music and was beginning to play professionally, part-time at dances.

He'd started off with an old fashioned big double bass and eventually progressed to an electric bass guitar. However the double bass remained his instrument of choice and he was I'm told a magnificent bass player.

One night in 1949 Bob was playing double bass in a band in which the singer was a 15-year-old girl named Beverley Brinkley whose father was also a musician. But it was to be another four years before Bob and Bev saw each other again. Beverly recalls that she was at a dance at the Melbourne Town hall and there playing double bass with the Reg Bloxham Dance Band was Bob Carlisle. The young 15-year old singer Bob had met four years previously was now a very attractive young woman of 21 with a daughter, Andrea from a previous marriage. Bob had been married and divorced but had no children. Well, he and Beverley very quickly discovered as the song suggests that "love is lovelier the second time around and on the 28th January 1956 they were married. On the 18th November that same year, the newly-weds celebrated the birth of their youngest daughter, Leslie and both she and Charlene were the apple of their Dad's eye.

Leslie says he was never heavy handed with discipline but they always knew where the boundaries lay. Charlene says the reason she loved Bob so much was that he not only gave her the privilege of being his daughter but he also gave her the right to love her biological father and she's very much at peace with that. Leslie and Charlene vividly recall with pride Bob playing bass at the opening of the Victorian Arts Centre in 1984 and they tell me he was also a member of the orchestra whenever the Moscow Circus came to town. But Leslie says that one of her most enduring memories will be of the night of her daughter, Carolyn's 18th birthday party when the band invited Bob to get up and play a bracket with them.

For ten minutes, 200 people sat mesmerised as this 83-year-old man on double bass joined the band as they played such 50s classics as Rock Around the Clock, In the Mood, Runaround Sue and American Patrol in which the double bass features prominently.

Bob brought the house down that night and one of the other musicians said to Lynley afterwards “Gee, the old guy can really play can’t he!” to which Leslie replied “He’s not an amateur, he’s a professional muso”.

But music wasn’t Bob’s only passion in life. He had always been a Motorbike and car enthusiast and as a young man he raced his Panther motorcycles at the Tracy Speedway at Brooklyn whilst three of the cars of which he was very proud were a ’74 Gallant, an FX Holden and a Sedro Wooley all of which he kept in pristine condition. Bob had an extremely organised mind as anyone who’s gone looking for anything in his garage will tell you. Everything had its place and when borrowed he expected everything to go back in its place. The same went for his huge record and CD collection which was all meticulously numbered and catalogued.

Beverley says that throughout their very happy marriage, Bob was a pillar of strength and that regardless of what happened he was always there for her which she suspects is why he hung on so long. He didn’t want to leave because he wanted to be sure that she was going to be OK. He had always said he wanted to remain in the home that he and his beloved Bev had shared and lived in for 52 years until the end. And so Bev cared for him at home right up until the last eleven hours of his life at which point he required specialist hospital treatment.

Bob was a man who neither wasted his time on idle chatter or who suffered fools gladly. He lived by his convictions and refused to compromise his beliefs and principles in any way. What it may surprise you to learn is that Bob was a real softy and quite a sentimentalist. For example, Beverley recently discovered that he had kept the hat and gloves she wore at their wedding fifty-one years ago together with all of the letters she had written him.

Bob was essentially a home and garage man, a man who was happiest when surrounded by his family, central to whom were Beverley and their daughters, Leslie and Charlene who have some special memories they’d now like to share with you.

Tributes - Leslie & Charlene

Celebrant - Bob was immensely proud of his grandchildren and great grandchildren to whom he was known as Pa and to pay tribute to him on behalf of them all is his eldest granddaughter Carly.

Tribute - Carly

Celebrant - Another member of the family who has some very special memories of Bob is his nephew, Ron Carlisle . Thanks Ron.

Tribute – Ron Carlisle

Celebrant - The last tribute in this celebration of Bob's life is from David Atkinson who was not only a very good friend but someone Bob came to think of as the son he never had. This is David's tribute which he's asked that I read on his behalf.

Tribute - David Atkinson

Celebrant - It's been said that one picture is worth ten thousand words and as part of this celebration of Bob's life his family invites you to take a look at these photographs and memories.

Audio Visual Presentation - 'Softly As I leave You' by Matt Monroe

Celebrant - Although Bob's very long life has come to its end, what his passing can never take from you are your memories, memories of his smile, his laughter, his wink and pointed finger and all of the many qualities that made him the very special person he was. I imagine that in his twilight years, Bob must have occasionally reflected with some amazement at the monumental changes that had taken place in the world during his nine-plus decades. Some years ago another 92-year-old gentleman got to thinking about the world into which he

had been born and the one he was soon to leave and he decided that as a gift to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren he would write about his world, now and then. He called it “A Nonagenarian’s Ode to Yesteryear” which I thought would provide a rather fitting conclusion to this celebration of Les’s life.

I was born in 1915. King George The Fifth was on the British throne, Australians were fighting the so-called war-to-end-all-wars in Gallipoli and around the piano in homes across the country folks were singing a morale-boosting song called ‘Keep The Home Fires Burning’. Because only the very rich had motor cars in the early twenties many kids travelled to school by horse and buggy and at night we read Snugglepot & Cuddlepie and Seven Little Australians by the light of kerosene lamps. We didn’t have a wireless until after 1925 but Charlie Chaplin made us laugh and cry at the pictures every Saturday afternoon.

Before the refrigerator came along, we stored all our perishable food in a thing they called the Coolgardie Safe, our milk in bottles, was delivered to the door, Mum washed our hair over the kitchen sink with a bar of Sunlight soap and at school we used nibs and ink wells. These days you take your photographs on digital cameras but we took ours on a Kodak Box Brownie. You play music on CDs, Mp3s and Ipods, but we played ours from ten-inch discs on wind-up gramophones. I grew up at a time when I felt rich if I had a shilling in my pocket because in those days you could buy two pies for a penny, a bag of broken biscuits for threepence and petrol was one-and-sixpence a gallon.

In my day you didn’t kiss a girl on your first date, let alone anything else and when I was a young man, we married first and then lived together. And you know something else, even some of the language has changed since I was a boy. In my day “grass” was something you cut not smoked, “hanging out” was what you did to the washing, a “mouse” was not something you clicked, but something you caught in a trap and being “gay”, well, that simply meant you were in a happy frame of mind.

Oh yes, during my 92 years I've witnessed an evolution of change in fashion, music and manners and most importantly in the advancement of medicine, science and technology. Wars have been won and lost, and Presidents, Popes and Prime Ministers have come and gone, reminding us all that the one thing we cannot change is change itself. And that's my Ode To Yesteryear.

Although Bob's life journey has come to an end, what will survive is a mosaic of memories – inerasable and indelibly etched into all of your hearts.

In a short time from now, we're going to accompany take Bob's coffin from this chapel to the hearse and then on to the Northern Memorial Park for a final farewell. And as he would have wished, we're going to do that to the strains of the Glenn Miller Orchestra playing, American Patrol but first, let me share with you the words of David Harkin – a poem he has called Moving On.

Moving On

*We can shed tears that he's gone
Or we can smile because he lived.*

*We can close our eyes
and pray he'll come back;
Or we can open our eyes
and see all the good things he's left behind.*

*Our hearts can be empty
because we can't see him;
Or our hearts can be full
because of the love we've shared
We can turn our backs on tomorrow
and live for yesterday,
or we can be happy for tomorrow
because of yesterday.*

*We can remember him
and only that he's gone,
or you can do what he would want
cherish his memory and let it live on*

**MEMORIAL SERVICE
EVELYN JANE RANDALL**

(This service begins with the voice of Evelyn Randall on ABC Radio.)

Celebrant - The unmistakable voice of Evelyn Randall from a radio interview on the occasion of her 60th birthday in 1989. Today, ten years later, we gather here to farewell 'Eve' as she was affectionately known – not only to mourn her death last Tuesday but to celebrate her remarkable life.

People I have spoken to over the past few days have told me that they will always remember Eve as she was affectionately known, as a gentle soul whose warmth, elegance, and thoughtfulness endeared her to everyone she met.

Eve was a pioneer broadcaster, music officiano, a singer, and a superb orator, and she is remembered with much love as the step-mum of Michael and David as the much loved friend and aunt of Angus and Prunella and their families, as Mum-in-Law to Jane, as the adored Nana Sue of Mary and Grant and good friend of Robbie and Lynda. To all of you here, we extend our heartfelt condolences. Today we celebrate Eve's 78 years in words and music, in photographs and memories, and by way of tributes from some of the people who were closest to her. We'll also hear again from Eve herself but to begin I'd like to introduce her nephew, Mr Gerald Ramsey

Eulogy – Gerald Ramsey

Celebrant - Whilst it was for the presentation of her popular classical music programs on Radio National which won Eve critical acclaim in this country, it was in 1954 that she became a very familiar voice on the ABC's overseas service, Radio Australia.

One man who frequently heard her voice on the short wave band in faraway Samoa is Mr Fred Buxton, a former broadcaster himself_

Tribute - Fred Buxton

Celebrant - Someone else who has very fond memories of Eve is former ABC her colleague, Prue Gregory-Jones. Prue who's unable to be here in person but whose most assuredly here in spirit, worked with Eve at Radio Australia and remembers her as a lovely colleague who had a voice like herringbone and lace. Prue says she and Eve were like sisters and she's deeply saddened by her passing.

On the 12th November 1982, a Melbourne Concert Hall audience, made up mainly of children, sat enthralled throughout a performance of Prokofiev's Peter and The Wolf , a charming introduction to the many instruments in the string, woodwind, brass and percussion families of an orchestra. And the narrator of this delightful orchestral piece was Evelyn Randall

Recording By Eve - Peter and The Wolf

Celebrant - And now ladies and gentlemen - a musical tribute to Eve. And to present it we are honoured to have with us this afternoon, distinguished soprano Marilyn Masters who has performed opera, oratorio, Lieder, chamber music and contemporary music to great acclaim throughout Australia and Europe.

Musical Tribute – Marilyn Masters

Celebrant - Marilyn Masters who says singing is her life blood and that she hopes to sing forever.

Eve was a very spiritual person who became a practitioner and then a teacher of Yoga, the ancient Indian art of unifying body and mind with universal spirit. Peter Williams is a Yoga teacher who also has some very fond memories of Eve.

Tribute – Peter Williams

Celebrant - During her ABC years, Evelyn made many friends, one of her dearest, is Barbara Worthing who has a tribute to Eve in music.

Tribute – Barbara Worthing ‘Fruhingsglaube’

Celebrant - Fruhingsglaube by Ludwig Uland, sung by one of Evelyn’s favourite singers, Fritz Wunderlich who was accompanied by Hubert Giesen.

It’s been said that one picture is worth ten thousand words and as part of this celebration of Eve’s life her nephew, Gerald Ramsey has put together this special collection of photographs and memories.

Audio Visual Presentation

Celebrant - Memories, like those depicted on the screen can evoke in us so many emotions and they also serve to remind us that memory is truly one of life’s greatest gifts and one that not even the death of a loved one can take from us.

In his book ‘Conversations With God’ the author, Neale Donald Walsch writes

“Death is never an end, but always a beginning. A death is a door opening, not a door closing. When you understand that life is eternal, you understand that death is your illusion”.

We conclude this celebration of Eve’s extraordinary life with words from a book she gave to Sondrina Shasti. The book was ‘Transitions’ by Julia Cameron and from it we read.....

“The one thing we cannot change is change itself. No moment, however perfect, can be maintained. Life moves on and moves us with it. We are all works in progress, all developing parts of a perfect plan. Only as we surrender to change can we find permanence and peace. Only by being open to the fierce flow of life can we find the steadying current. The one thing that remains the same is that nothing remains the same. As we accept and acknowledge life’s passing nature, we are free to cherish the moments that pass in bitter-sweet glory. No matter how difficult, life is beautiful. No matter how beautiful, life is difficult.

This is the great paradox that opens the heart and brings compassion. We are all travellers on the vast and shifting sands of time .We are all inconsequential and important, very small and very large. Our transitions are like octaves building brilliantly upon each other. We are life's music, so let us dance.”

FUNERAL SERVICE
RUBY MERLE HORWARD

The Opening - ‘Waltz Of My Heart’

Celebrant - Ruby loved to go dancing – and those Ivor Novello melodies were no doubt two that she and Harry would have danced to at such places as Leggats Ballroom and the Palais at St Kilda. But a great deal of water has flowed under the proverbial bridge since then – and as she approached her centenary year Ruby must have thought back upon the far less complicated times of that bygone era just a little wistfully.

One hundred years – what an absolutely remarkable achievement and what a phenomenal passing parade she must have been witness to. When someone lives to such a very great age, the fairly typical reaction of people is to say, “On well, she had a great innings” - and whilst that can't be denied, what I think we must acknowledge is that the longer someone has been a part of our lives the harder it can be to say goodbye. And so may I begin by extending to you Larry, Judith and Andrea the heartfelt condolences of everyone here, on the passing of a mother, mother-in-law and grandmother whom you told me you'll remember as a very strong and fiercely independent lady.

Today's service provides you with an opportunity to publicly mourn Ruby's death – but even more importantly it allows you a little time to celebrate her life in the sort of straight-forward, no fuss approach she would have liked – but with mention of some events and milestones that occurred during her lifetime.

And so, let's look back upon that life of 100-years-119-days which began on the 5th April 1908 - a birth year she shared with Don Bradman, Henry Bolte, and Harold Holt. King Edward the Seventh was on the British throne that year, Andrew Fisher was Australia's 13th Prime Minister, the Boy Scout movement was launched in this country that year, and a controversial painting called Chloe went on display at Young & Jackson's Hotel in Melbourne.

The daughter of Peg and Jerry James – Ruby Merle as she was named, was the second youngest of seven children – her siblings, Beryl, Mavis, Emily, June and Gary and Robbie all predeceased her and all of the girls in the family were teetotallers. Ruby grew up in Wagga Wagga where her father ran a hotel. And in fact she is survived in Wagga by a niece named Anita who is ninety. Ruby used to love telling of how she travelled to school by horse and cart

By the time she was ten, something like eight million had been killed in the war they said would end all wars. Emerging from that tragedy during the so-called roaring twenties Australia was enjoying a period of relative prosperity. Ford and General Motors began building cars here, work began on the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Hoyts launched its now iconic cinema chain - and when people weren't kicking up their heels to a new dance craze called The Charleston they were listening to a new form a family entertainment called the wireless.

One of the biggest life changing events for many people of Ruby's generation was the Great Depression that closed banks, factories and the wharves and threw tens-of-thousands of people out of work. It was during those years that Ruby's parents got out of the hotel business and moved to Middle Brighton where they bought a house.

When Ruby completed her schooling here in Melbourne she trained to be a milliner and finisher and had a lot to do with the clothing industry in Flinders Lane which was the home of the flourishing rag trade.

She then went to work at a knitting mills called Cummings where she finished cardigans and jumpers – and it was there her family believes she met Harry Horwood. She and Harry discovered that amongst their shared interests, including the fact that his family also came from the country, was a love of dancing, and it wasn't too long before they became regular dancing partners at Leggats Ballroom in Prahran. Opened in 1920, there would be many senior citizens and military service personnel around the world who would remember visiting this renowned icon of the dancing world, which at its height could accommodate the staggering figure of six-thousand dancers to the sound of a 20-piece band. Interestingly, Ruby's sister Mavis worked for a time as a housekeeper for the Leggat family

In 1938, Ruby and many people around the country found themselves singing along to a radio commercial featuring the voice of a five-year old girl named Joy King.

Aeroplane Jelly Song - Joy King

On Christmas Eve 1938, Ruby who was then thirty became Mrs Harry Horwood in a registry office marriage here in Melbourne. One Sunday evening nine months later, people across the country heard their Prime Minister deliver a devastating radio address to the nation.

Voice of Robert Menzies (Recorded 3rd September 1939)

“It is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that in consequence of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her and that as a result, Australia is also at war”

In the year following that dramatic announcement, Ruby and Harry's son Larry was born – and not long afterwards Henry joined the Royal Australian Air Force and was posted to Queensland. Like so many new brides, Ruby was left here in Melbourne with a young son to raise whilst Harry went off to do his bit for

King and country. However, Harry's absence didn't end with the war in 1945. He really enjoyed life in the service and decided that he could better provide for his family by remaining in the Air Force which he did until the mid-fifties. At this stage, Ruby's widowed mother and her sister were living at Lake Mulwala in the Murray Valley and Larry recalls that he and Ruby would sometimes stay there.

It was during Harry's years in the Air Force that Ruby rented a Housing Commission home in Altona – a home she and Harry subsequently bought and where she remained up until three or four years ago. By the time, ill health forced her to farewell that home and move into Aged Care she was known by virtually everyone in the street.

Larry says Ruby was a very caring and loving mother to him, and she made sure he was brought up with all the social graces including learning to dance. She was very supportive of all of his activities in and out of school and he remembers that she was not only a member of the School Mothers Club, she was also the Treasurer. Larry recalls that Ruby was an enormously resourceful and multi-talented lady who drawing upon her experience as a milliner made practically all of his clothes when he was a little boy.

He says she was also a very self-sufficient person who landscaped the garden in Altona and nurtured an amazing orchard of Lemons, plums and berries, together with a huge range of vegetables including green peas. She was really passionate about her garden and even mowed her own lawns.

To some extent Ruby's past very much dictated her future. Having lived through the very lean years of The Great Depression, the 'waste-not-want-not' philosophy was indelibly ingrained in her psyche and throughout her life she was a very prudent money manager.

Because her father, was English, Ruby was always very pro-British. She was a Royalist and a great admirer of the great English poets, John Milton, William Blake, and William Wordsworth who wrote.

*I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

*Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of the bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.*

And the full version of that Wordsworth poem is on your handout. Yes, Ruby was very proud of her British heritage, and she was a great admirer of English born TV icon, Sir Eric Pearce who was born three years before her.

Ruby's politics leant to the right and she thought a lot of Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies. She as a wonderful cook and her granddaughter Cassandra to whom she was very close, says she will never forget Ruby's delicious homemade flapjacks and scones, her homemade jams; her rissoles and her mouth-watering Sunday roasts. Cassandra says Ruby was a wonderful grandma to her and that she made her some exquisite hand-knitted jumpers, art-smocks and library book bags for school , together with some very imaginative home made toys such as the one she named Ruby Rabbit.

On the 27th March this year, Ruby celebrated her 100th birthday – an event that was commemorated with special greetings from her Majesty The Queen, The Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, and The Governor-General, Sir Michael Jeffrey.

Someone said recently that the one thing that remains the same is that nothing remains the same and that the one thing we cannot change is change itself. And so we must not pine for the past nor worry too much about the future but make

the most of every moment of the present which yesterday was the future. And now, please take a few moments to silently reflect and remember the Ruby Horwood you knew as we listen to a very appropriate song for this moment called The Very Thought of You from the Victor Sylvester Orchestra.

Given her love of all things British, her family chose that song because it was written by British band leader, RAY NOBLE.

Celebrations of life are all about memories, and memories are one of life's greatest treasures because they are the one thing that death can never take from us. Memories can not only take us back to another time or place in our lives but very often they re-awaken in us a feeling and emotion – and those inerasable memories become indelible handprints on our hearts. And these are some special memories from Gail

Tribute - Gail

“My dear friend Ruby.

I will hold forever fond memories of my childhood days with you. you showed so much kindness to others and you were always willing to lend a helping hand. I thank you so much for passing onto me the good qualities you had within you, I have also passed them onto my own children and grandchildren. You will live on in other people, that is something that makes me very proud to have known you and be your friend.

The stories i have told my family and friends are many. especially the call of a dove, you told me that if you listen very carefully. he calls (get off the road quick), I always think of you when i hear a dove. and many thanks for always making me feel better when I was ill. those are the sort of things that stand out to me as a child that i can still remember to this day the kindness you showed. it has been a privilege to have known you. but its not goodbye forever. till we meet again. Your loving friend always Gail.”

Celebrant - There are many who believe that far from being the end, death is simply the beginning of the next phase of a spiritual journey. Those who share that philosophy believe that whilst Ruby's physical life has ended, her soul, spirit, inner being or whatever you want to call it, lives on in some other dimension. For those left behind, a mosaic of memories will endure; they are the compelling reminders of everything Ruby stood for, everything she achieved, everything for which she was loved and admired – and those memories are her legacy to those who loved her.

The 17th century English poet John Milton wrote...

No one's death comes to pass without making some impression and those close to the deceased, inherit part of the liberated soul and become richer in their humanness.

Ruby Horwood made a huge and lasting impression upon all who knew her, and her family is indeed a great deal richer for having been blessed by her unconditional love. Today, they've chosen to bid Ruby farewell with some words written by David Harkin - words first heard in 2002 when spoken during the funeral service for Elizabeth, the Queen Mother

*We can shed tears that she's gone
Or we can smile because she lived.
We can close our eyes
and pray she'll come back;
Or we can open our eyes
and see all the good things she's left behind.*

*Our hearts can be empty
because we can't see her;
Or our hearts can be full
Because of the love we've shared.*

*We can turn our backs on tomorrow
and live for yesterday,
or we can be happy for tomorrow
because of yesterday.*

*We can remember her
and only that she's gone,
or we can do what she would want -
cherish her memory
and let it live on.*

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE GRAVESIDE COMMITTAL

Where a chapel service is followed by a graveside interment at a cemetery I would ask you to consider two things: the need for your words of committal to be heard at a cemetery in close proximity to a traffic-heavy arterial road and the importance of music at the point of committal. This can be purely orchestral and played and sustained as the coffin is lowered and as family members place sand or flowers into the open grave; It can be a hymn such as The Lord's My Shepherd or any of the deceased's favourite songs or musical favourites. As is the case in all services of Life Celebration there are no rules, no specific protocols for a graveside committal. Whilst historically, pastors and priests have uttered the words, "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust", the alternative of a prayer, a special reading and some music is no less reverential or dignified than the traditional words of committal. What is generally agreed however, is that the playing of music softens the sadness of those final moments of farewell and separation. It therefore follows that one of a celebrant's most essential 'tools of trade' will be a good Public Address system, capable of playing CDs and USBs and one that is equipped with a high quality microphone. It is not the responsibility of a funeral director to provide this equipment.

The graveside committal, unlike the chapel service that has preceded it, should be brief and reverential.

Celebrant - Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining Bob's family here for these final moments of farewell to him. This is a time when few words are

necessary but when in the tranquillity of this place and in the solitude of your own thoughts you are able to silently say to Bob anything you did not have the chance to say before he left you – if there is anything you would not have wanted to leave unsaid, this is an opportunity to say it now. (pause)

In his book ‘Conversations with God’ the author, Neale Donald Walsch writes Death is never an ending, but always a beginning. Those who share that philosophy believe that what we farewell here today is merely the physical remains of Bob Carlisle, that his spiritual self, inner being or whatever you wish to call it, has simply moved from one dimension to another, whilst here on earth, everything he stood for, every positive influence that characterised his life, will live on in present and future generations of his family.

And now, we commit his body to the earth from which all life comes and to which eventually it returns with the words of the 23rd Psalm.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

As a celebrant, you will be called upon to lead services for a diverse range of people. In the main however, they will be elderly folk, many of whom have lived long, productive and interesting lives, where there is undeniably some sadness, but not the gut-wrenching grief associated with an infant or child's death, a teenage motor accident victim, a suicide, or accidental drug overdose.

Much of what has been written in the foregoing pages is about the 'theatre' of life-centred funerals. But unlike a theatrical production, there is no opportunity for a full-scale rehearsal of the funeral service. We only have one chance to get it right and failure to do so will only succeed in compounding a family's grief and in all probability ruin a funeral company's chances of repeat business. To reduce the margin for error, an adherence to 'The Five-Ps' - prior preparation prevents poor performance, is vital.

If, in the midst of writing a service you become unsure of a name, a date, or the relationship of one family member to another, pick up the phone and check and be sure to tell the family that you will e-mail them a copy of the eulogy for their prior approval. On the day of the funeral, make sure you arrive at the chapel no less than 45 minutes before the service is scheduled to begin. This will allow you time to do a 'sound check' and to explain to the conductor any special features of the service he/she needs to be aware of.

Ideally, you should provide the funeral director/conductor with a duplicate copy of your script or at the very least a cue sheet which clearly indicates not only the CD/USBs to be played but the track numbers and also the running times. This is particularly important where the coffin is to be escorted from the chapel to a waiting hearse during a piece of specially chosen music. In all chapel services the funeral director/conductor becomes the 'stage manager' and the celebrant the 'actor.'

By accepting this theatrical analogy you can take your place at the lectern confident in the knowledge that you are about to deliver another memorable service of life celebration and that in doing so you have joined many other men and women who have discovered a most rewarding and fulfilling vocation.

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TOBIN BROTHERS
FUNERALS

Celebrating Lives

FOR OVER **80 YEARS**





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Modèle déposé
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