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FUNERAL HOMES

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Chapters

turning the pages through grief

A Lifetime of Memories... and the Days Ahead

by Paulette LeBlanc



Every year that my mother is gone, I find the realization setting in more and more that I'm getting farther away from the last time I saw her, laughed with her, or confided in her. I can still remember her voice, and even hear it very plainly, saying my name, or answering the phone when I would call her. Although it isn't healthy to live too much in the past, life holds a massive amount of memories. Without them, life would hold very little meaning for us. You likely have a lifetime of memories shared with the one for whom you now find yourself grieving. You find yourself wondering what the days ahead look like in their absence.

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the phone, before realizing your loved one is no longer there to call. Most of us have done this. It's okay to break a little, in that moment, but don't let it paralyze you. As we are all creatures of habit, those moments almost can't be helped. Many people talk about how they kept hearing a certain song after the death of a loved one, and

felt as though it wasn't a coincidence. I had the same experience. Years later I still feel particularly close to my mother when I hear that song.

In days to come, there may be something to comfort you through your grief that you find unmistakably reminiscent of your deceased loved one. I heard a woman talk about how she seemed to keep seeing butterflies everywhere after her daughter died. After one had literally landed on her shoulder,

continued...

**FEBRUARY
2020**



*To observe attentively is to
remember distinctly.*

— Edgar Allan Poe

...continued from front

she felt great comfort in seeing them, because they reminded her of her daughter.

There is nothing foolish about anything that you may find brings you comfort in your grief. Just as there is nothing foolish about the things you may find that cause grief you never saw coming. I find a bit of grief every time someone new comes into my life whom my mother would have enjoyed. When she first died, I missed her, and celebrated her life at her funeral along with everyone there who knew her. It never occurred to me that one of the hardest things I would encounter would be meeting people in the coming years who never knew her.

The days to come in grief look very different for us all. Just as your relationship with your loved one was unique, so will be the way in which you experience grief for that person. Even siblings, who share the same

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parent-child relationship type, will all experience different types of grief. I have two siblings and none of the three of us experienced any part of losing our mother in the same way. The harrowing nature of grief is that there may be things you never considered before now, that seem to cause a substantial amount of pain. The flip side of this is that there are bound to be things coming that will comfort and guide you that you likely also never saw coming. After my mother died, I found a relationship with her sister, my aunt, which was just waiting to be discovered in my mother’s absence.

There is no telling what grieving and healing will bring in the days to come for any of us. It’s important to consider that normal for you, will not look the same for others, and neither will your grief. Above all, remember to be kind to yourself in this time of grieving.

■ **Online communities and resources can provide new and fresh perspectives on grieving, coping, wellness, and allow opportunities for interaction with like-minded people. Your chosen funeral home’s website can also offer a variety of helpful information. We encourage you to start there.**

ON TWITTER

- **HealGrief.org @HealGrief:** Dedicated to creating a universal understanding of grief while offering a virtual place where individuals can connect, heal and memorialize their loved one.
- **The Griefcast @thegriefcast:** Comedians share stories about death and grief.
- **Compassion in Dying @AGoodDeath:** Helping you prepare for the end of life. How to talk about it, plan for it, and record your wishes.



*** footnotes**

Life Beyond Loss

Often, the journey through grief presents opportunities you would never have otherwise seen. And that’s the best part of traveling on this journey. Unexpected storms often produce the most fabulous rainbows. Unintended detours can introduce you to incredible vistas you would never otherwise have seen. Even being forced to slow down on this journey can give you time for looking inside yourself and reevaluating what you really treasure in life. Life is different now, and it promises many more changes in the months and years ahead. There is life beyond loss! Positive change and personal growth can be yours, even when you must say good-bye and feel grief’s emotions.

* Dr. Bill Hoy teaches at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He is widely regarded as an authority on the sociocultural history of funeral rites, the topic of his most recent book: *Do Funerals Matter: The Purposes and Practices of Death Rituals in Global Perspective* (Routledge, 2013).



by **Bill Hoy**



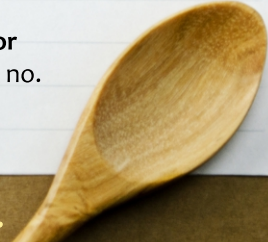
Studies of Flowers and Butterflies
by **Joris (Georg) Hoefnagel 1590**

Hoefnagel was a Flemish painter, printmaker, miniaturist, draftsman and merchant. He is noted for his illustrations of natural history subjects, topographical views, illuminations and mythological works. He was one of the last manuscript illuminators and made a major contribution to the development of topographical drawing.

Thinking Outside Your Grief
Feeling Fine Art

How to Eat When Grieving

- **Think Small:** You may not have an appetite for usual meals. No worries. Eat small portions of things you enjoy throughout the day. Nibble on fruit. Have a cup of hot chocolate or broth. Peanut butter toast is high in protein. Try smoothies or commercial brand drinks such as Ensure or Boost. Easy does it.
- **Take a friend up on an offer to bring or make meals:** Now is not the time to say no. People want to help, so let them. Invite them to eat with you.



recipe card