



The Funeral Celebrant

A Guide For New Celebrants.
Revised - 2004

by
Ken Woodburn CFC



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ISBN 0-9756005-0-8

Published By:
The Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants Inc.
ABN: 891 923 893 29

Distributed by
Australian Celebrants & Celebrations Network
ABN 31 202 566 788

ACCN Shop
PO Box 113
Robertson NSW 2577
Ph: 1300 781 444

www.accn-celebrants.com.au



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Acknowledgement

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to those seeking excellence in this profession.*

The contributions by Funeral Celebrants to the community at large has increased tenfold since the nineteen eighties and it is important for new celebrants entering this field to be aware of the duties and responsibilities of this profession. It is also important to illustrate, in some form of a 'job description', the obligations that one should be aware of before taking the step into this growing industry. This is therefore a guide for new Celebrants in the approach to their new undertaking.



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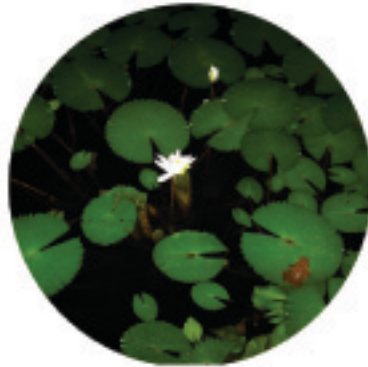
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INDEX

Acknowledgements

FUNERAL CELEBRANT VOCATION	1
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS	1
* Attitude	2
* Being an extremely good Listener	2
* Maturity	3
* Compassion & Understanding	3
* Appearance	3
* Presentation	3
* Dedication	4
* Fitness (and ‘Burnout’)	4
* Religious Rites & Ceremonies	5
* Being Yourself	5
THE INGREDIENTS OF A CEREMONY	6
* Recording	6
THE INTERVIEW	6
* Ingredients a family may or may not wish to include	6
* Readings, prayers, music, speakers and written tributes	7
* The duration of a funeral ceremony	7
* “ The deceased did nothing”	7
* Prepared history by the family	7
* Personal tributes	7
* Special readings - religious or otherwise	7
* Emotional Speakers and Emotions	8

THE INTERVIEW continued ...	
* Prayers	8
* The eulogy prepared by family	8
* Use of a Checklist	9
* Family or friends not present at the interview	9
* No love lost between the family and the deceased	9
* Bereaved family must come First, Second and Third.....	9
* Person responsible for agreement	10
* Ensuring an accurate and acceptable eulogy	10
* Families written notes of reflections	10
* When family is very divided, or in dispute	10
* Use of a tape recorder for interviews	10
* The task of compiling the eulogy and preparing the ceremony	11
* Form of Service	11
* The Interview by Telephone	11
THE PREPARATION OF THE CEREMONY	12
* Notices	12
* The Introduction	12
* The Eulogy	13
* Chronological sequences of the deceased's life	
* Personal aspects of the deceased's life	
* Speakers	14
* Readings	14
* Reflection	14
* Music	15
* Prayers, Religious Readings and Hymns	16
* First Cardinal Sin - being late	16
* Second Cardinal Sin - using wrong name for deceased	16
* The Final Preparation	16
* The Committal	17
* Relationship with Funeral Director	17
* Conclusion	18
APPENDIX	20
* Using an Interview Sheet together with prompters or prompters	20
* Quoting words spoken to you by a family member or friend ...	20
* Read all the names of the family survivors	20
A SAMPLE EULOGY : John Peter 'Jack' Citizen 1.2.1920 - 2.7.2003.....	21
EULOGY CONTENTS	24
* Chronological, Personal, Relationships Checklist.	24
* Major Areas of Person's Life Map	25
EXAMPLES OF FUNERALS	26
* Overview	26
* Kathy Hurley	27
* Deborah Mary Marquez	33
GLOSSARY	37



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INDEX

Acknowledgements	
FUNERAL CELEBRANT VOCATION	1
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS	1
* Attitude	2
* Being an extremely good Listener	2
* Maturity	3
* Compassion & Understanding	3
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* Presentation	3
* Dedication	4
* Fitness (and ‘Burnout’)	4
* Religious Rites & Ceremonies	5
* Being Yourself	5
THE INGREDIENTS OF A CEREMONY	6
* Recording	6
THE INTERVIEW	6
* Ingredients a family may or may not wish to include	6
* Readings, prayers, music, speakers and written tributes	7
* The duration of a funeral ceremony	7
* “ The deceased did nothing”	7
* Prepared history by the family	7
* Personal tributes	7
* Special readings - religious or otherwise	7
* Emotional Speakers and Emotions	8

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* Prayers	8
* The eulogy prepared by family	8
* Use of a Checklist	9
* Family or friends not present at the interview	9
* No love lost between the family and the deceased	9
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* Person responsible for agreement	10
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* Families written notes of reflections	10
* When family is very divided, or in dispute	10
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* Form of Service	11
* The Interview by Telephone	11
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* Notices	12
* The Introduction	12
* The Eulogy	13
* Chronological sequences of the deceased's life	
* Personal aspects of the deceased's life	
* Speakers	14
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* Music	15
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A FUNERAL CELEBRANT DOES NOT HAVE A JOB BUT RATHER - A VOCATION.

One of the important and most basic ingredients required to be successful is TIME. TIME required for visiting families of the deceased. TIME for the preparation of the eulogy and the ceremony, and finally TIME to conduct the service at the given venue. This is a seven day a week dedication NOT a part-time job. Interviews with a bereaved family are certainly conducted seven days a week as, on occasions, are funerals.

If you are engaged in full-time employment and considering RESIGNING to take up the reins of a Funeral Celebrant, you should consider asking yourself the following:

1. Am I prepared to conduct my own business?
2. Am I equipped to conduct my own business considering;
 - (a) I will have no assured income.
 - (b) I will have no holiday or sick pay.
 - (c) What are my chances of regaining full-time employment should my new venture not be successful?

You must, of course, have reliable transport to convey you to appointments for family interviews and to places where the funeral ceremony is to be held. It is acceptable for the family and even the mourners to be late for the funeral. It is frowned upon for the Funeral Director to be late for a funeral - but NEVER EVER the Celebrant. For a Celebrant to be late for a funeral ceremony is one of two most cardinal of sins.



THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

You don't have to be an extraordinary human being, by any means, to be a funeral celebrant BUT hopefully you should possess the following attributes I shall call The Ten Commandments.

- (1) The right ATTITUDE
- (2) Be a good LISTENER
- (3) Have MATURITY
- (4) Have COMPASSION & UNDERSTANDING
- (5) Be presentable in APPEARANCE
- (6) Have a degree of public PRESENTATION
- (7) Have DEDICATION to your purpose
- (8) A high standard of FITNESS
- (9) A general knowledge of RELIGIOUS RITES and CEREMONIES
- (10) Have the ability to be YOURSELF

Let us discuss each in turn.



ATTITUDE

You must have a positive attitude to the needs of a bereaved family. This will be demonstrated in a number of different forms during the interview with the family and at the funeral ceremony. However, let us get this straight at the very beginning - you are NOT a Grief Counsellor, unless so trained, so do not enter into this phase of expertise. Leave this to the professionals.

As Funeral Celebrants do not adhere to a set form of ceremony, (as do the clergy when conducting a funeral service as per their denominational prayer book), your task is to conduct a funeral ceremony that reflects the life of the deceased, is compatible with the requirements of the family and hopefully is of comfort to the mourners.

A funeral ceremony is perhaps the most important ceremony that each and every one of us will attend during our lifetime. It is a time when great pressures are placed on family and on friends. The ceremony should be focused on the 'celebration' of the deceased's LIFE. We all agree that death is an extremely sad time for the deceased's family and we should indeed recognise this in the ceremony. The pressures placed upon the bereaved family can be enormous as they struggle with a situation that many have not experienced before. We must not dwell upon the death of their loved one but rather upon his or her achievements, work, family, hobbies, contribution to the community and the like.

Therefore, every time you enter a bereaved family's home, do so with the positive attitude that you are going to give 'your family' 101% of your expertise to help them in their grief and to quell their fears of the day of the funeral that they are dreading. Leave them with the confidence that the ceremony will be conducted in a gentle and dignified manner to reflect the achievements and the nature of their loved one.



YOU MUST BE AN EXTREMELY GOOD LISTENER

There are a number of theories upon what amount of time you should spend with a family to obtain the requirements for the ceremony. This depends on a number of factors. Some Celebrants spend about an hour to one hour and a half which is probably about the average. The Celebrant's interview techniques will have a big bearing on the time spent with the family. Some families are easy to interview and the time that you spend with them may be shorter. Other family members drift away from the track and have to be continually brought back to the point of the interview. These interviews, of course, take a lot longer. Do not let family members take over the interview. You must keep control. However, you must be a good listener and allow the family to express themselves freely.

Try to strike this happy medium.

It is not always easy. It is very important therefore to program your daily itinerary to allow yourself sufficient time between your appointments so that you leave 'your family' with the feeling that you have given them a good hearing that will result in a service that does credit to their loved one. A Celebrant's interview can be of great therapeutic value to a bereaved family when handled correctly. If you allow one and a half hours to two hours for each interview, for the purpose of your daily itinerary, you cannot go far wrong.



MATURITY

To become a successful and acceptable Funeral Celebrant it is desirous that you have a bit of 'mileage' behind you in the journey of life. If you cannot relate to the bereaved family's problems this will cause a feeling of inadequacy in yourself and will undoubtedly be reflected to the family of the deceased.



COMPASSION - UNDERSTANDING

This takes little discussion as it is obvious under the circumstances of this vocation that, although the deceased may be ninety nine years of age and lived a full and wonderful life, there may be a great amount of grief suffered by loved ones who are 'left behind'. I have witnessed a seventy three year old son weep openly at the death of his one hundred and three year old mother. The death of babies, children and adults due to accident or suicide and sometimes murder, have to be handled in a very delicate manner. However, The Ten Commandments still apply.



APPEARANCE

The moment that you walk through the front door of the bereaved family's home you will be approved of, disapproved of or watched with a sense of apprehension by those with whom you have come to interview. First impressions are vital! If your appearance is good and you present yourself well, you will give the family a great deal of confidence in your ability to represent them at a time when they are desperately looking for guidance and support. We all have to attend our first interview, conduct our first ceremony and undergo some sort of 'apprenticeship' in our craft.

Let us all try to get off on the right foot from the very beginning. I do not believe that gentlemen should dress in an expensive Italian suit nor the ladies in a costly creation, but you should always be *presentably* dressed that includes a tie and a jacket for the gentlemen. Obviously your appearance and presentation at the ceremony too is equally important.

Caution Here: I strongly suggest when addressing, particularly the adult members of the bereaved family, you do NOT take the liberty of addressing them by their christian names UNLESS invited to do so. Many find this presumptuous.



PRESENTATION

The delivery, the manner YOU present the words and any ceremonial proceedings must be clear, precise and in a manner that reflects to all the mourners that you mean what you say and your oratory is not just a play on words! We all conduct our ceremonies in a different way and the words of one Celebrant often do not suit the manner in which another Celebrant may express the same sentiment. That's normal! You must nevertheless, show sincerity in all aspects of your work with both the bereaved family at the interview and during the conduct of the service.

The ceremony should NOT be presented as a ‘theatrical performance’ by the throwing around of arms and the ‘spurting of brimstone’, but rather as a well co-ordinated and flowing ceremony often including speakers, readings and music previously arranged. I do not think it always necessary to confirm EVERY reading that you believe will contribute to the ceremony, but perhaps the main ones. It is often a joy to families to hear special readings that give comfort to the mourners, without prior arrangement - but be careful.

No doubt over the years you have heard eulogies that are not an accurate account of a persons life or disposition. Your eulogy, later to be presented to the family, will be a perpetual record of the highlights of the life and times of the deceased for the record of their descendants.

See that it is a true and honest account with nevertheless the thought in mind that the dictionary refers to the word ‘eulogy’ as, ‘a speech or writing in praise of a person or thing, especially a set oration in honour of a deceased person’.

This is a time when we should really recall the good and happy times and certainly not dwell on the inadequacies of the deceased. DO NOT write a ‘flowery’ account of a deceased’s character or disposition either, as it sounds hollow and insincere. Certainly tell of the amusing anecdotes.

Sadly, funeral Conductors seem to avoid constructive criticism of Celebrants. So much the pity. We may be doing things that we should not be doing or doing things that can be done in a better way. Invite suggestions from your Conductors. Do NOT say to the family, “Were you happy with the ceremony?” This is soliciting a “Yes” answer.



DEDICATION

To do any job properly you must have a high degree of dedication. You will come into contact with families from all walks of life and with different sets of needs and values and grieving in different sorts of ways. You will have to adjust your way of thinking from time to time, in order to give them the kind of ceremony that suits them. On many occasions when you are up until the late hours preparing the eulogy, the following morning will herald a telephone call, usually just before you are leaving home, to make some amendment to what you have already prepared. This is all part of the vocation and part of the ‘dedication’.



FITNESS

To approach any task professionally you MUST have good health. A person cannot carry out the duties required in their interviews, preparation and the conducting of ceremonies if suffering poor health. The family is relying upon you to present their final tribute to their loved one and poor health cripples your attitude to the task ahead. We also hear of this word ‘burnout’. What it means, of course, is that if you drive yourself into a stressful situation generally, as a Celebrant, you will initially lose a lot of that dedication and motivation in your vocation and subsequently this will be reflected in your work and later your health. Take a break and be assured the industry will still be there when you return. David Treloar, of the Tobin Brothers Group of Companies is the author of an excellent article entitled ‘The Caregiver and Burnout’. An extract from this article and with his permission reads:-

THERE ARE THREE FACTORS THAT NEED TO BE NOTED:

- (1) Our emotional pain experienced by witnessing what grief can do to our 'clients' - the bereaved person.
- (2) Working with the bereaved will often get us in touch with our own grief and losses.
- (3) Our concerns about our own feared losses.

BURNOUT has been defined as physical, emotional and mental exhaustion marked by physical depletion and chronic fatigue, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, and by the development of a negative self concept and negative attitude towards work, life and other people.

One does not have to experience all of that to recognise that there may be some warning signals being flashed in relation to burnout. Burnout is most likely to be experienced by people who are dedicated and committed in an enthusiastic way to their work. Such people are often described as being idealistic, over committed, perfectionist, often with rigid standards. They are people who try to satisfy everybody and often in the process are unable to draw personal boundaries.

Some of the ways that burnout can be prevented are: take holidays, days off and enjoy relaxing times. Keep physically fit and alert. Be able to 'switch off' from the demands of work. It doesn't mean that you don't care! It does mean that to survive, we cannot carry another person's grief or distress on our shoulders 24 hours a day. If we are in a situation where we move from one individual to another, from one family to another, the accumulation of grief can be quite overwhelming."



RELIGIOUS RITES & CEREMONIES

Because a Celebrant's funeral ceremony frequently contains some religious content it is very important that the Celebrant has some general knowledge of religious ceremonies, prayers and hymns in order to be able to assist families in their requests for any of these to be included in the ceremony. It is also of great benefit to be familiar with a number of well-know readings both religious and otherwise. Families will often say, "I don't know what it is called but it goes something like...." and they will be able to give you a few words of a reading or story in the hope that you will be able to identify the item that they wish to include. It may be in the Bible or written by Kahlil Gibran, Helen Steiner Rice or a multitude of other writers. It is a great advantage to have a copy of the 'Oxford Dictionary of Quotations' or similar, together with the writings of the well known authors as mentioned above, in your bookcase for the purpose of reference.



THE ABILITY TO BE YOURSELF

This is the last of the 'Ten Commandments' but by no means the least. If you aspire to be a Pope John Paul or a Billy Graham, I would certainly not recommend it. You would do yourself a greater service to yourself to be YOURSELF and be *guided* by the Rick Barclays, Dawn Dicksons, Lyn Knorrs and Max Ashbys, together with others, whose experience and expertise in this field is endless and who have laid the foundation stone for Funeral Celebrants in Australia.



THE INGREDIENTS OF A CEREMONY

Firstly, of course, the general details of the ceremony will be conveyed to you, by the Funeral Director. Prepare a 'particulars' sheet on an A4 and have a number run-off by photo copier to leave near your telephone. This way you will not forget to ask, or be given, all the required information you need before you start.

YOU MUST RECORD

- (1) Name of Director and the Arranger with whom you are speaking.
- (2) Date, time and place of the funeral AND if going on for a committal elsewhere. Ask if only one venue given, "Is this a FULL ceremony at?" Be sure of this!
- (3) Full name of deceased.
- (4) Name, address & telephone number and mobile telephone number of the contact (the family member or friend responsible) and their relationship to the deceased.
- (5) Date of birth of the deceased.
- (6) Date and place of death.
- (7) Enquire into the cause of death. If tragic, it may have been reported in the daily newspapers, and
- (8) Enquire if the Arranger is presently with the family as you may wish to arrange a time for the interview immediately. This may save you a great deal of time in contacting the family later on.

With this information you should make contact with the family member or person designated as soon as possible in order to arrange a suitable time and place for your interview. The sooner you make this contact the better as the family has many responsibilities to contend with at this time and if left until later you may be unable to get the timing for the interview that is suitable to yourself.

Even if you have been appointed to conduct a ceremony a week in advance, get that interview as soon as you can, as you do not know what the next few days will bring. Remember, the person nominated is **IN CHARGE**, and all your instructions and confirmations should come through that person.



THE INTERVIEW

Before you enter the bereaved family's home turn OFF your mobile phone.

Nothing is more aggravating than a ringing mobile telephone at this time and, in my opinion, it is rude to be answering a telephone during the interview.

The conduct of a service, apart from the eulogy itself, embraces many ingredients that a family may or may not wish to include. It is important firstly to ascertain the general requirements of the family after which you should discuss other facets that may be most acceptable to them.



A family will usually tell you early in the interview the deceased's involvement in religion, if any, and whilst conducting your interview a very clear picture will appear on the type of ceremony that will be acceptable to them.

Talk to them about readings, prayers, music, speakers and written tributes to be read on behalf of family and friends, especially grandchildren.

In many instances, grandchildren love to speak.

Does the ceremony include other parties such as the R.S.L., the Masonic Lodge or others? With this information you are able to balance your ceremony accordingly. By this I suggest, don't have all your readings, music and even speakers bunched up together - spread them out and balance your ceremony. On the other hand, DON'T overload your ceremony with too many readings. Ask if family or friends would like to deliver readings or prayers.



There will be times when a family has no wish for prayers, readings, music or a moment for reflection. This will tend to greatly shorten the length of the ceremony. However, it is better to have a short but meaningful 'celebration of life' rather than a ceremony that is 'padded' with a lot of meaningless material.

The duration of a funeral ceremony can be fifteen minutes to one hour if you have lengthy speakers.

A long ceremony does little for the bereaved family and mourners. Twenty minutes to half an hour, I think, is ideal. Be aware that few funerals start on time for many reasons. If you have booked an interview or another funeral too close together and your earlier ceremony is running late because the family are waiting for others who have had a breakdown on the freeway or perhaps the grave has caved in at the cemetery, you will be a mass of nerves when you arrive at your next appointment.

Some families will tell you that a eulogy will not be any good as the deceased did nothing during his or her lifetime and the latter years were spent just sitting in front of a television set.



Well, of course, the deceased did do a lot of things in life and it is up to the Celebrant to access his or her interview skills to ask the right questions and produce a satisfactory eulogy despite earlier predictions. In fact, you will surprise the family with the many things their loved one has done.

On a few occasions you will be given a prepared history of the family in note or in book form for you to precise for the eulogy. Usually the latter are pretty hefty documents but at least you will get the facts right first time.

Invite family and friends to prepare a *personal* tribute to the deceased if they feel so disposed, apart from the general eulogy, which may be delivered by themselves or be read on their behalf by another member of the family, a friend or yourself. Grandchildren are frequently very good speakers or they will write a few lines for you to read on their behalf. You will not always obtain these tributes BUT they do add a great deal to personalising the ceremony. You may carry a verse or two in your briefcase about grandparents that you can offer to the grandchildren to read or to have read.

Family or friends may wish to deliver special readings, religious or otherwise, and may ask you for suggestions. It is a good idea to carry some of the more popular with you.



You can even carry a few A4's with a number of the most popular family readings typed on each side to leave with the family. This gives them time to think what they would like and perhaps encourage others to do a reading themselves.

In regard to speakers, some feel that with the progression of the service their emotions will become so acute that they may be unable to deliver their tribute or reading.

There are two ways in which we can overcome this problem.

- (1) Suggest to the speaker that they can be invited to the lectern early in the service just after your introduction, or
- (2) Prior to the commencement, inform the proposed speaker that after a particular reading or a person has spoken or music has been played or whatever, you will then be about to invite them to the lectern.

However, tell them you will look at them for some type of signal - generally a nod or shake of the head. Should they feel disposed at the time to accept your invitation - you make that invitation. If they do not feel they could cope with the tribute, you would announce that you had a tribute to read on that person's behalf and so read that tribute.



Although not following a 'set down' form of service, we nevertheless, as individuals, have some sort of general format for the funeral ceremonies we conduct. A family will often ask, "What is the format for the ceremony?" When you have informed them of your recommended format they may wish to change this entirely for a number of reasons. This, of course, is their decision and we must adjust our usual format accordingly.

Be careful with prayers.

You may be told that the deceased was not religious - 'full stop'. However, when talking about the ceremony I find it prudent to casually say, "*So you do not require anything religious like the 23rd Psalm or The Lord's Prayer?*". I say this because quite often I have received the reply similar to, "*Oh Yes, we want the Lord's Prayer (or 23rd Psalm or both) because 'Aunty Elsie' is a keen church goer and she will be there. I would like a prayer too, but we don't want any of those religious readings from the Bible*" The moral of this is - DON'T TAKE ANYTHING FOR GRANTED - check it out! Conversely, families who are NOT religious have their rights which must be observed and therefore we must NOT 'sneak in' anything that may offend.



On the other hand a family may wish to relieve you of the responsibility of preparing the eulogy as they wish to prepare and deliver it themselves. This will save you some considerable time at home. Carry copies of a 'word-prompter' for families wishing to do this themselves and run through it with them. (See Appendix). However, don't just get up and leave after discussing the ceremony itself, but ask questions of the family about the deceased as if you were, in fact, going to prepare the eulogy in the normal manner.

This will give you the insight into the deceased's life and disposition so that you are able to suggest suitable readings, music, etc. and in order that you do not say anything during the service that is inconsistent with the deceased's character. An inconsistent eulogy and/or ceremony destroys the genuineness of the ceremony and the Celebrant's credibility.



One other thing in regard to prayers is the comment (by a very few persons) that funeral celebrants should not include religious prayers or readings in their ceremonies. There is no legislation whatsoever that forbids Funeral Celebrants the right to use religious prayers at a funeral ceremony. Surely, our prayers and our Bible belong to the people and not to any select group of persons, be it the Government or otherwise, who will regulate their use. However, do not push onto families something that they do not really want.

When attending the interview with the bereaved family, you should refer to a check-list that is either on a separate piece of paper or in very small print on your interview sheet where you can just 'tick' some of the items as well as writing comments. This is the professional way to conduct an interview in order to cover ALL the aspects of the deceased's life. You are there as a professional Celebrant NOT as a memory genius. You cannot use prompts for every single item but one 'keyword' leads to others. For example, the prompt 'sport', opens up playing football, cricket, golf, lawn bowls, etc. and so on. After more than fifteen years as a Funeral Celebrant - I still use it.



Enquire if there are any other members of the family or friends, not present at the interview, that you could contact by telephone that may wish to contribute to the eulogy. Brothers and sisters, particularly sisters, usually have a store of information that is well worth including.

From time to time you will conduct an interview where it appears that there was no love lost between the family and the deceased. This makes the preparation of your ceremony difficult.

'What am I going to say?' is the first thing that comes to mind. You may feel that the majority of your material may not 'fit' the deceased under these circumstances. I have usually found in this case, when conducting the ceremony, there is at least one mourner who deeply grieves. I believe that, similar to the school teacher that must teach the class to the degree of the slowest pupil, the Celebrant must conduct the ceremony to the satisfaction of the mourner who grieves deepest. I have an introduction entitled 'NO LOVE'.

Each time I have been prepared to deliver it, I have had to amend it greatly to satisfy a relative, previously unknown to me, in deep state of grief and who thought the deceased was a wonderful person contrary to all other family members. Be aware of this.

On some occasions a family may inform you that the deceased had a particular request that he or she wished carried out during the funeral ceremony. It may be the screening of a video that the deceased made for the particular purpose of being shown after death. It may be an audio recording made by the deceased or an audio recording other than music.



As an example: I recall a deceased being a movie buff. He was a cinema projectionist by profession and loved the films featuring 'The Marx Brothers'. It was the family's wish, on this occasion, to have a number of sound tracks from their films played at the funeral. They were all very amusing tracks and this gave the ceremony a very light-hearted vein. You may think a particular request is in bad taste.

If so, it is NOT your place to say so. However, you could suggest it is handled in a different way. After all, you can always decline politely to conduct the ceremony if, in your opinion, it is that bad! I have not heard of a Celebrant ever being put in this position.



It is obvious that the bereaved family must come First, Second and Third.

There is only one person from whom you take your instructions - the family member who your Funeral Director informs you to contact. That person is usually the person responsible for paying the bill. Everything that you write in your eulogy should be CONFIRMED by this person. You MUST allow the family to confirm the contents of the eulogy you have prepared. This can so easily be done by e-mail today, by fax or even on the telephone. Convey your draft eulogy as soon as possible. This gives the family the opportunity to correct, add to, remove or make any additions to your eulogy. Should the person responsible for the funeral not have e-mail or fax facilities, no doubt other members of the family will, or friends or perhaps facilities are available at a business venue of a family member or even at the local newsagency.



In regard to these e-mails is the fact that a number of the family members may request that you e-mail your draft eulogy to more than just one family member for perusal. Caution here. By all means do so but point out that it would be most expedient for the other family members, on receipt of their e-mails from you, to liaise with your 'contact' (person responsible for the service) and, after such liaison, the person responsible then collates all the suggestions into ONE document and returns the amended e-mail to you for reading at the service. This stops you receiving a number of e-mails from different members of the family, all with dissimilar amendments that you have to 'plough' through and finally get the agreement of the person responsible. Allow the family to sort this out between themselves. This saves a great many headaches for you.

Families frequently think of last minute amendments prior to the commencement of the service that may include names or events that they forgot to mention or sections they have decided not to have read after all. You therefore have to make last minute adjustments to the service and perhaps the eulogy also. Take time to ensure you have this right. Should this effect the eulogy itself, do not offer an amended eulogy to the family at the conclusion of the service. Make the amendments on your return home and post copies of the modified eulogy to the family a few days later. I say again - you must have the contents of the eulogy confirmed by the family. I do not apologise for re-inforcing this point time and time again. Unless strictly adhered to, you will find yourself walking in a 'minefield' and may be exposed to embarrassing remarks after the ceremony together with the family's unfavourable comments to your funeral director. As your conduct, in the eyes of the family and mourners, is directly connected to that of the Funeral Director, your Conductor/Arranger may never recommend your services again - and, you can be assured, he or she will tell others in the industry. If however, you feel that your powers of concentration and literary prowess is beyond examination - Press On! But you can be assured, the 'Big Bang' is on its way.



Families will often give you written notes of reflections that they wish to be included in the eulogy. Never destroy these notes or other documents for the time being. For example: a returned e-mail, fax or copies of an amended eulogy handed to you just before the ceremony should be retained by you in case you should have to make reference to them in the event of any dispute that may arise after the service

Should there be anything else regarding the family or the deceased that the arranger thinks you should be informed of or forewarned about, for example: the family is very divided, the deceased had been married three times before, etc. the Arranger will no doubt convey this to you.



An Arranger may ask you if you are prepared to interview TWO families due to a long standing dispute between them. Confirm with the 'primary' family, the family paying the bill, if they are happy to accept what the second family wish to include for the service together with any speakers, music or readings they request. They may set down guidelines, for example: there will be no speakers or prayers etc. When you arrive at the second family's home you should inform them of this together with the fact that you have been INSTRUCTED by the Funeral Director to comply with the 'primary' family's wishes implicitly. You have been placed in a very difficult situation here - the ham in the sandwich, and may be being 'used' by either family to bring pressure to bear upon the other. Not an envious position to be in but Press On - you will sort it out.

The use of a tape recorder for interviews is very restrictive as, I believe, it inhibits people from relaxing and saying what they think, which in turn makes the interviewer's job more difficult. I would imagine many would not be happy to be interviewed in this way.

Without written notes that the eye can scan, can you imagine how difficult it would be for you to be playing backwards and forwards a tape to pick up a particular comment. YOUR questions may be in some set order but the family's comments on other areas of the deceased's life are spontaneous when they flash into their mind. You cannot put these in their right order on a recording. Certainly do not record your interview secretly. However, I see no problem using a lap-top computer but, here again, if your interview is conducted to a set pattern, spontaneous comments will again tend to complicate matters. It is a great idea to use a lap-top between interviews or interviews and services that you may have on the same day during a period of waiting time. In fact, it saves a great deal of time on arrival home later at the end of the day.



After your interview is complete, the task of compiling the eulogy and preparing the ceremony is at hand. However, before you leave the family home ask to see a recent photograph of the deceased. Suggest to them that they may like to bring a nicely framed photograph of the deceased to the funeral to have placed near the Memorial Book and/or at the casket during the ceremony.

Do not be 'mortally wounded' if you have been engaged by an Arranger and are contacted by your Funeral Director on your way to the interview and informed that the family you have arranged to see has either, decided that a member of the family, friend or other person will conduct the service after all. Another family member or friend perhaps knows and has recommended a Celebrant. It happens. It has happened to me and if you are in the profession long enough - it will happen to you. It is not personal.

Form of Service

The bereaved family may ask you about a 'Form of Service', These forms, the 'program' of the ceremony if you like, depicts each step that the ceremony will take from your Introduction to the Committal. It may also embrace the words of hymns, prayers and special readings that will make up the ceremony. On occasions a photograph of the deceased will be displayed and the names of ALL the surviving family.

The Form of Service can take the form of a four page leaflet - an A4 folded and printed on four sides. It may take the form of a multi-paged document or a single card. This task is the responsibility of the family that can be done by a professional printer or perhaps by a friend or member of the family on a personal computer.



You may suggest to a bereaved family that, where a carry or wheel-out of the coffin to the hearse is required at the end of the service, or from the hearse to the graveside, that members of the family may like to do this with the assistance of the Conductor's staff. Grandchildren quite often do this. It is an extremely loving and final gesture. This is a matter that should be arranged by the family with the Conductor prior to the commencement of the service.



The Interview by Telephone

There will be a small number of ceremonies where you will be unable to interview the deceased's family in person due mainly to the fact that they are situated a long distance from your home, either in the country or interstate. Make contact with the family as soon as possible and make a time which suits them for you call on the telephone in order to conduct your normal interview by this means.

THE PREPARATION OF THE CEREMONY

NOTICES

It is courteous to open your ceremony by introducing yourself and perhaps remarking upon the number of people who have attended the ceremony and the beautiful flowers that may surround the casket or be displayed in the foyer.

Inform the mourners -

- (1) On matters pertaining to any further ceremony to be held and the venue.
- (2) The presence of a Memorial Book and a request to everyone to sign the Memorial Book for the deceased's family before departing.
- (3) Any invitation the bereaved family extends to those present to partake of refreshments after the service and the venue thereof.
- (4) Any invitation by the family for mourners to speak during the service, apart from those pre-arranged (see 'Speakers') and
- (5) Any other announcement that the family or Conductor requests or other announcement for the benefit of the mourners, (i.e.: car headlights on - the hearse will be travelling along and driving past the family home at....and so on).

I suggest you give your Notices at the BEGINNING of the ceremony and NOT at the end - after the words of committal. I believe that, during the ceremony, you as the Celebrant and any others taking part, weave a web, create an atmosphere if you like, that should leave your mourners in a state of some tranquillity, particularly if a special piece of music is played at the committal, that softy 'rounds off' proceedings. Now, if THEN you boldly make these announcements, it has the effect of bursting this 'bubble' and will shatter this serene atmosphere you have created.

THE INTRODUCTION



The introduction informs the mourners the purpose for which they are gathered. (i.e.: to 'celebrate' and/or 'give thanks for' the life of.....), and to reinforce the importance of support to the bereaved family. This often heralds the reading of the Eulogy.

A Celebrant should have at least five prepared Introductions.

- (1) For general use. One that you are really comfortable with and change from time to time.
- (2) Should you be requested to conduct another ceremony for the family within a reasonably short period of time, a similar Introduction but not the same as (1) above.
- (3) For a tragic death, (i.e.: accident, suicide, murder).
- (4) For a child.
- (5) For a baby or still-born infant.
- (6) For the Interment of Ashes that you may be requested to conduct at a later date.

To have these special Introductions filed, saves a great deal of time when called upon to prepare such a ceremony.



THE EULOGY: - consists of two general parts -

- (1) the chronological sequences of the deceased's life should embrace:
 - (a) date and place of birth
 - (b) names and occupations of parents including maiden name of mother, and brothers and sisters in order of their birth, if possible.
 - (c) where the deceased was brought up, the family home and where educated.
 - (d) early employment including any military service.
 - (e) when and where met spouse - date and place of marriage.
 - (f) where couple settled and children born.
 - (g) more recent employment and other places lived.
 - (h) date and place of death of one partner, if any.
 - (i) recent years and hospitalisation if any.
 - (j) any other pertinent information.
- (2) the personal aspect of the deceased's life should include;
 - (k) the disposition and character of the deceased.
 - (l) sporting achievements and later sporting interests.
 - (m) hobbies, past times and other interests.
 - (n) social interests.
 - (o) travel and holidays as a family.
 - (p) clubs associations.
 - (q) names of close and long standing friends.
 - (r) those amusing anecdotes all will remember.
 - (s) all family members who survive.
 - (t) expression of thanks to persons/organisations by family if any.



If the deceased is a stranger to you, and usually is, NEVER state “I did NOT know, John” Your eulogy should be so comprehensive that it would reflect to the mourners that you must have known the deceased all your life. However, if you have known the deceased, certainly say so.



Be careful in cases of a divorce.

For Example - When John, the deceased, and Barbara were divorced in 2001 and John remarried, John’s second wife, Jennifer, who is arranging John’s funeral, may want as little said of this first union as possible. She may wish no reference to be made of the marriage BUT if there were children involved it is extremely difficult to exclude them. However, a eulogy may state, “...*John had two children by his previous marriage; Peter and Diane,*” and leave it there. (The same goes for a gentleman marrying a widow or lady marrying a widower.)

In relation to the *actual* divorce, the eulogy can just state, “*In 2001, John and Barbara went their own ways and were subsequently divorced*” and perhaps something like, “*and two years later John met Jennifer at*” If handled in this manner, the reference to the other is soft and it recognises the ‘third’ person involved who may, in fact, be present at the service.

A sample of a basic Eulogy appears in the Appendix



SPEAKERS:

Speakers, either family and or friends, at this point will usually complement the basic eulogy and will relate the personal times the speaker has shared with the deceased. If you have a number of speakers do not bunch them up but rather distribute them throughout the ceremony for a balanced tone.

At the request of the family you can make an invitation in your NOTICES, that anyone who would like to say a few words would indeed be very welcome to do so, either from the lectern or from where they sit or stand. I suggest you inform them that any speaker would be requested to speak AFTER the Reflection as this gives those, who would be inclined to speak, time to think about it.

After announcing the Reflection, if any, make the request again, as a prompter, and say something to the effect of - “*If there are any among us who would like to share their thoughts of John with us AFTER the Reflection, which will embrace a special piece of music for him, would you please indicate to me at the conclusion of the music.*” If, after the Reflection, you see NO such indication, GO STRAIGHT ON with the ceremony. This avoids the embarrassing silence of waiting for someone to volunteer - if having no response.



READINGS:

There are a great many readings available in your local library and via the internet, and you should attempt to record as many of these as possible for future reference. Try a Bible Book Shop for material pertaining to funerals and for suitable readings. Some suggested titles are:

- (1) ‘Ceremonies for Today’ - Dally Messenger.
- (2) ‘Funerals to Celebrate Life’ - Marion Barnes.
- (3) ‘Funerals and How to Improve Them’ - Dr. Tony Walter
- (4) ‘Funeral Liturgies’ - Flor McCarthy
- (5) ‘Funeral Homilies’ - E.J.Dwyer
- (6) ‘Civil Rites & Ceremonies’ - Hilary Hudson (NZ)



REFLECTION:

A Moment of Reflection during the ceremony, a time to spend thinking about the good times the family and friends have had with the deceased, is usually well accepted by the family as an important time during the ceremony. It is always a good time to have your organist, if any, play a short selection or play taped or CD music that the deceased enjoyed.

Failing this, a piece of music that the family thinks would be suitable is always well accepted or just a soft piece of music. For those families who do elect to have just silence during this time, you will find that a full minute is ample. However, that is up to the family to decide. Should the family give you a particular piece of music to play or request a special piece of music, do NOT shorten it by fading it out early because YOU think it is too long. If I requested a special piece of music for my own loved one and the Celebrant cut it short, I would be most upset, to say the very least, and I would be looking for his or her scalp after the ceremony. If you feel the music requested goes for too long, ask the family beforehand if they wish to hear all the selection. They will usually be happy for it to be FADED after a shorter period of time.



MUSIC:

Music at a funeral is of great advantage. I would not be without it. It gives feeling to a ceremony - BUT music can be the one single ingredient that, if not properly prepared and monitored, will cause more problems for both celebrant and mourners than any one other element.

Beware! SOME music downloaded from the internet and burnt onto a CD have not been able to be played on some sound systems. I am informed that this is a technical laser alignment problem due to the marginal (variable) incapacity between the writing device, at the family home, and the playing device and can also occur due to cheap CD discs being used. Furthermore, a technical 'plug' may be employed by the company producing the music to prevent unauthorised use. Check it out!

Music gives a wonderful 'lift' to a funeral ceremony. You may have just one special piece or a number of pieces to play. For example:

- (1) a segment whilst mourners are gathering prior to the ceremony,
- (2) to open the ceremony whilst everyone is being seated,
- (3) during the moment of Reflection,
- (4) to close the ceremony, and
- (5) elsewhere if requested by the family.

If the family asks you to select what you think is suitable music for the service, you must ask, "Is there any music or songs that you do NOT want played?" This prevents a piece of music that, for some reason, may cause distress to any family member or playing a song by an artist the deceased did not like. However, there are a few traps for both young and old starters that you should be aware of, so here are a few suggestions -

- (a) If you prepare the music yourself, at least you will know that it is right and ready to go.

Play it through at home and at the very least give it a bit of a run at the Chapel before the ceremony to determine the volume you require. For home prepared audiotapes, it is important to leave at least seven to eight seconds between each piece of music to allow for systems that 'fade in' and 'fade out'. This ensures that you are not going to run into the next selection.



(b) It saves a Celebrant a great deal of time if the family is able to prepare the music themselves BUT then you loose control of its preparation. . Often it is O.K. - at times it is NOT. It may have been recorded too low or perhaps just chopped off rather than faded out to give a smooth performance. Give it a quick check before the ceremony too. When accepting the music from the family open it immediately and make sure the CD or tape is in the container and not still in the family's music system at home.

(c) There are many different types of sound equipment at various venues. Check it out before the ceremony as your Conductor may not be conversant with that equipment either. This can herald a musical disaster.

(d) It is a good idea particularly when you have a number of items to play, to write instructions down for your Conductor. It makes life a lot easier for him or her.

(e) From time to time a bereaved family requests organ music and, depending on the venue, you will have to ascertain from the Funeral Director if an organist has been appointed for a ceremony.

Furthermore, should a special piece of music be requested, to be played on the organ, you should, via the Director, forewarn the organist of this request. This music may have to be obtained by the organist and it may take a little time to do so.

PRAYERS, RELIGIOUS READINGS and HYMNS

If prayers are to be read at the ceremony the requests are usually: The 23rd Psalm and/or The Lord's Prayer. Both prayers have also been put to music and song and may be a nice alternative for the family to consider. If singing a hymn is requested, ensure the words are available to distribute to the mourners. Inform the Director if an organist is required, who can lead the singing.



Ask if any members of the family or friends would like to read the prayers or religious readings. When reading The Lord's Prayer it is nice to lead the mourners in the prayer by saying, "*For those who would like to join us, let us say TOGETHER, The Lord's Prayer*". This allows the mourners to become involved.

Once again, place your prayers throughout the ceremony, perhaps leaving the only prayer or one of the prayers just before the committal. If there are two ceremonies, a main ceremony and a committal elsewhere, leave a prayer for the committal too. Check with the family.

With any religious matter in particular, ensure the family is conversant with what you plan to say and subsequently approve. Should you forget to say a prayer and suddenly it comes to mind at the last minute, even if the Director's staff have arrived to wheel out - calmly introduce and read the prayer at that juncture.

It's Better to be Safe Than Sorry.



We mentioned the first Cardinal sin - a Celebrant being late for a funeral service.

The second cardinal sin for a Celebrant is to refer to the deceased by the wrong name. It is INEXCUSABLE to do so. The fact that you may have had a number of ceremonies that day and got the names mixed up is certainly no excuse. It will always be a Celebrant's nightmare that the wrong name may be used if one's concentration is lost.



There is no guarantee that you will not make this error, but there are two ways in which you can minimise this transgression:

- (1) If you place the pages of your ceremony within the confines of plastic pockets, write in RED non-permanent ink, the deceased's name at the top of each page, for example: STAN -JOHN - WENDY and so on, or
- (2) On a small piece of paper write in bold letters the deceased's name and with scotch tape adhere it to the lectern face where you can refer to it frequently.

THE FINAL PREPARATION

All the hard work is behind you when you have completed the interview with the family, confirmed the eulogy and prepared the ceremony. I cannot stress too much the extreme importance of confirming the contents of the eulogy with the deceased's family after its draft preparation.

THE COMMITTAL

Your final words, the words of committal, should be thoughtfully selected.



Initially, ask everyone to stand. This is a mark of respect for the deceased. This will indicate to the mourners that this will be the end of the service. Although we do not wish to 'camouflage' the fact of death with the choice of softer words, I suggest that you do not use words that include 'fire' or 'ashes' as this will give no comfort to the grieving family. Ensure that your words of committal are soft and reassuring, giving some hope to us all.

The words used by myself at the committal are well known within the industry and words that I have always used since my very first ceremony. They are -

Tenderly and Reverently we return to Mother Nature, earthly body.

From which all life comes and to which all life must return.

We are so glad that he/she lived -

So glad that we saw his/her face and felt the touch of his/her hand.

We cherish the memory of his/her words and his/her deeds -

And may his/her spirit go on - to enrich and beautify yet another place.

At the conclusion of these words, close your book and step back from the lectern. This will indicate immediately to the Conductor that your service has come to an end.

Your Relationship with the Funeral Director



Your Arranger and Conductor are your best friends. Keep them in the 'know' if something straying from the usual is to happen during the ceremony. For example: the ceremony will be a lengthy one and this may require some time adjustments by the Director, or perhaps an organist is required rather than taped music is to be played. Anything that you believe your arranger or Conductor should know - inform him or her. This ensures your Conductor will not receive any sudden surprises at the last minute and that all will go according to plan.

It is important that you do NOT try to take over any of the responsibilities of your Conductor.

They are the specialists in their side of the ceremony preparations and you are the specialist in your side.



If you are asked a question that relates to the duties of the Arranger or Conductor, refer this to them. This also applies before and after the ceremony. Do not carry out the duties of the Conductor unless he or she requests your help - you can certainly offer. However, once you commence to open the ceremony - YOU are in charge, BUT ONLY until such time that the service comes to a close - then your Conductor again takes over the control of the proceedings.

Arrive at your appointed time at the VERY LEAST twenty minutes early. There could be a lot to do from the checking of music to the final discussion with family and friends, and perhaps further instructions. Nothing gives a celebrant greater satisfaction than a funeral ceremony that runs smoothly, after which the family indicates their delight in the manner in which it was presented.

HOWEVER....You must remember, before you take too many bows and pat yourself on the back, that you are a 'team-player'. Your team consists initially of the Arranger. It includes the bereaved family who, with your expertise, selects the ingredients of the ceremony that surrounds the eulogy and, of course, the eulogy itself. The team includes your organist, if you are using one, who plays the music the right way, at the right time and at the right volume, together with the Conductor who works very hard prior to the commencement of a funeral ceremony and usually plays the taped music and directs his or her staff at the service and at the graveside.

The team often consists of the Director's transfer staff as well, who, some two to three days previously, and who are on standby twenty four hours a day, have carried out duties that we, as Celebrants, would find extremely distressing.

So we are part of this team that embraces a wide facet of procedure. Perhaps we can liken ourselves somewhat to a football full-forward who, to the appearance of those present, is generally in the limelight and 'kicking all the goals'. BUT - without the supporting team, the Celebrant, like the full-forward, cannot carry out the task to its desired conclusion.

CONCLUSION

As a person keen to take up the mantle of Funeral Celebrant, we must be prepared to put a great deal of effort into our new vocation. There is a lot to learn and a lot of research ahead to obtain material that will be your stock in trade.



We must not become complacent or blasé. Do NOT let each funeral you are about to conduct be 'just another' funeral. It is an extremely important event for the deceased's family and very often a horrendous experience for many. As it can only be conducted ONCE - make every one a special one!

You are going to make mistakes. Hopefully, small ones.

But what of the ceremony that you have 'botched' and you have only realised an omission AFTER the ceremony has taken place when it is far too late to announce the hymn, prayer, special reading, speaker or played the music that the family so desperately wished to include?

Well, no doubt errors and omissions are committed by the very best of us all - BUT, at this stage you cannot go back and do it again!

What can you do but to make your deepest apologies and, if it has been a **SERIOUS** omission, inform the family of your intention to return your fee to them.



Inform your Conductor straight away and when returning home sit down before your typewriter or word processor and write **IMMEDIATELY** to your Director through the Manager of the branch for whom you were working, informing him or her of the situation with an apology and that you have also written to the family and returned your fee by personal cheque.

The importance of this action is to inform your Director **BEFORE** a complaint hits their desk. Your letter will reflect your good faith and professionalism. Should you try to ignore the situation your credibility is certainly at stake.

When furnishing the deceased's family with a written copy of the ceremony it is also prudent to furnish them with a taped audio copy of the ceremony. This allows members of the family who are unable to be present due to sickness or because they live at distances which do not enable them to attend, to listen to the service which will include all the speakers and the music. A number of Directors and some crematoriums are now supplying the families with taped video copies of the service.

Do not be disheartened, when your Funeral Arranger requests your services and you discover, with amazing regularity, that a number of these requests clash with other ceremonies that you have been appointed for. This is merely 'Murphy's Law' taking its normal course. Don't forget, there are quite a lot of ceremonies that **YOU** have been able to do as a result of your colleagues suffering the same 'law'. What goes around - comes around. What you lose on the swings - you gain on the roundabouts!



Do not be disgruntled if you feel that other Celebrants are being contacted for work **BEFORE** yourself and you are getting the 'last hope' telephone calls. This may happen in the early years before you become well known. Remember, Confucius was most adamant when he said, "*It is not being the first Celebrant to be contacted by an Arranger that is important - but rather he or she having the palm upon which the cheque is placed.*"

Furthermore, if you have to refuse a funeral due to other commitments and you meet the Celebrant that is about to or who did conduct that funeral, do **NOT** remark that it was yourself who was initially requested to perform the ceremony - that's being 'tacky' and most unprofessional. How do you know that a recent funeral you conducted may have first been offered to that same Celebrant and you may receive a response that will embarrass you - and justly so.

Get to know as many Celebrants as you can. They understand the problems we face from time to time. They will stand by you in the event of a double-booking (heaven forbid), a sudden sickness or an accident beyond our control.

When entering the funeral industry you are going to meet a great many people. I refer to employees of Funeral Directors. For quite some time you will be unable to remember all their names. Write their names down in the back of your diary that you carry with you, under each Funeral Director's branch where you are working in order when you call again, you can refer to those staff members by their name. Your hearse driver today may be your Arranger tomorrow.

I would suggest it is rather nice to write to your families a few days after the ceremony to



thank them for sharing with you their reflections of their loved one and perhaps referring to the many who were present to pay their last respects. Furthermore, they will think of YOU when next requiring a Celebrant.

There are a thousand different stories out there in the world of the Funeral Celebrant. Your Training Programs will cover each subject closely. Although books and lectures are indeed a wonderful and necessary training aid, the essence of a good Funeral Celebrant finally lies within the *personal* YOU!

* * *

APPENDIX

When using an Interview Sheet together with prompters or prompters on a separate piece of paper, ensure you place your prompters in the order in which you think is desirable to write your Eulogy. Your Eulogy will then flow from one subject to another as shown on your Interview Sheet which will ensure a reduced time element for this task.

When QUOTING the actual words spoken to you by a family member, or friend, for inclusion in a eulogy, particularly the children of the deceased, make every attempt to quote them ALL if possible, as quoting for example, two out of three children tends to leave the other sibling out. Perhaps say - “The boys remember...” or “John and Andrea recall...”, even if Andrea was not present at the time of the interview Be aware of the feelings of those listening.

Take particular attention to the phrases used by members of the family. Record them on your Interview Sheet and use them in the Eulogy. They are invaluable as they reflect the exact sentiment of the family member.

Also, read all the names of the family survivors. The young grandchildren especially love to hear their name mentioned. Many children are attending funeral ceremonies today. You may decide to go only as far as grandchildren and great grandchildren and not continue as far as nieces and nephews unless specifically requested, as some do play an important part in the deceased’s life. You can always use the phrase ‘and all their families’ to cover those not mentioned. Do NOT forget the names of brothers and sisters and check on any SURVIVING PARENTS too. Some live to a very ripe old age. And - ALWAYS but ALWAYS double check with the family any dates you refer to in the eulogy.

A sample eulogy overleaf.

EULOGY

John Peter ‘Jack’ Citizen
1.2.1920 - 2.7.2003

Jack was born on 1st February 1920 in Raywood, Victoria, some twenty eight kilometres north of Bendigo. He was the son and eldest child of Wilfred James Citizen, a bootmaker by trade from Colchester in the County of Essex in England, and Mary Ann Citizen, formerly Mary Ann Moloney, a seamstress from the little town of Tulla in County Clare in Ireland.

Wilfred was only twelve months old when he and his parents migrated to Australia shortly after World War 1. Mary Ann too had accompanied her parents and brother to Australia during the depression years.



Jack was one of four children. His younger brother Walter is now deceased and he has two sisters; Lorna who lives in Sydney and Elizabeth who resides in Perth.

The family home, a farming property, was only a few kilometres outside Raywood as Jack was growing up. He was a student at Raywood State School and later at Bendigo High.

After completing his studies at school, Jack worked on the family farm for two years until the advent of World War 11 when he joined the Army on 4th March 1940 and subsequently served with the A.I.F. He was attached to the 2nd/14th Light Anti-Aircraft Unit in the Middle East and later served in the Islands north of Australia.

On Jack's return to civilian life after his discharge from the Army in December 1945, he returned home to the family property at Raywood where he met, through a mutual friend, a very special young lady, Shirley Patricia Andrews, a Bendigo girl who worked for the local newspaper, the 'Bendigo Advertiser'. Pat, as she has always been known to her family and friends, was Jack's wife to be.

In the meantime, Jack had been offered a position with the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works in Melbourne, a position which he accepted. He resided with his Aunt Millie, on his mother's side of the family, and Uncle Bill in St. Kilda for some eighteen months during which time he frequently visited his parents in Raywood and Pat in Bendigo. Jack and Pat were married in the Church of England in Bendigo on 17th February 1948 and they settled in Elsternwick in Melbourne.

A short time after they moved from Elsternwick to Academy Drive in Glen Waverley their firstborn a son Michael was born that same year, later to be followed by their daughter Alice in 1950 and second son Rodney in 1953.

Jack continued to work for the M.M.B.W. until 1982 when he and Pat purchased a milk bar in Berwick near Dandenong and lived on the premises. They remained in their business for eight years and in 1990 Jack and Pat retired. They bought a lovely unit at the Bonnie Doon Retirement Village at Sandringham where Jack and Pat have been residing to the present time.

Jack is described by his family as a very happy and cheerful man with a tremendous sense of humour. He always had a joke to tell. He was a most loving and caring husband, father and later grandfather and great grandfather, whose family was his life.

He was also a independent and determined person who was very forthright and who called a 'spade a spade'. He was extremely supportive of the children when they were growing up and always involved himself in their school and sporting activities.

Jack was an outgoing man, a 'people person', who mixed well and was always available to help other people where he could. As a local Government Councillor from 1984 to 1987, Jack was very outspoken for his electorate. He was very popular and well respected by all who knew him.

Rodney said of his father, "He was the best Dad. He was our best friend too. We're going to miss him a lot."

As a sportsman, Jack played Australian Rules football as a teenager for the Waverley Wanderers, and supported the Carlton Football Club in the League. He played tennis and squash as a young man too but in later years, apart from a round or two at golf from time to time with his sons, he became an 'arm chair' spectator and followed most sport on television.

Jack and Pat were involved in ballroom dancing for some years after they were married for which they were awarded a trophy in 1952. Jack has always been a keen billiard and snooker player with family and friends and many Sundays have been spent over the billiard table at home.

To really relax, Jack loved fishing. Many family holidays for years were taken at Lakes Entrance and on the Murray which enabled both Jack and Pat, who enjoyed her fishing too, to bring home many delicious lunches and dinners for all the family. Jack also enjoyed a punt on the horses from time to time.

Jack was very skilled with his hands and as Pat remarked, "He could make anything out of nothing - and he could fix anything at all." One of Jack's hobbies was collecting and repairing old clocks. He also had a passion for old motor cars and restored a 1956 Vanguard and later a Triumph Mayflower.

He loved his garden where he spent many happy hours among his shrubs and 'vegie' patch. Michael said, "Dad had a green thumb. He grew the biggest tomatoes I've ever seen. Most of them he gave away to the neighbours."

Jack was an avid reader of a wide range of material. He enjoyed the works of 'Banjo' Paterson and Henry Lawson. He loved history too and being a member of the Victoria Railways Historical Society, read just about every book available on steam trains. Both he and Pat enjoyed many outings to places of steam train interest, particularly in Victoria, and had been looking forward to a Society overseas trip on the Trans Siberian Railway in June of next year.

Jack was also a keen newspaper reader in order to keep up with current affairs and the political scene of which he had very strong views. He enjoyed to solve the daily crosswords too and current affairs programs were one of his favourite television shows together with English comedy films. Jack was also keen on live theatre and he and Pat were regular attendees at the 1812 Theatre productions in Ferntree Gully.

Jack's taste in music embraced light classical to the orchestra of Mantovanni and the songs of Frank Sinatra and Harry Secombe.

As a 'performer' in the kitchen, Jack was no Chef in the normal sense of the word, however, he could make a delicious Pizza and his macaroni cheese was magnificent.

Jack and Pat have travelled quite extensively both in Australia and overseas. A five month around-Australia trip by four wheel drive in 1991 was a wonderful holiday and they have since visited Europe, the British Isles and the United States, together with many 'ports of call' in Asia including Singapore, Hong Kong and they visited Fiji only last February.

Alice, who accompanied her parents to Fiji said, "Dad really loved Fiji. He enjoyed relaxing on the beaches and the food was beautiful. He said that it was the best holiday that he ever had."

Jack loved the Australian countryside and the bush and he had a special place in his heart for animals. The Citizen family have always had pets at home but 'Simba' his German Shepherd followed him everywhere he went. They were great mates.

Jack's sister Lorna said of her brother, "He was a bit of a larrikin in his teens but he always looked after his sisters, myself and Elizabeth. He had a motor bike before he joined the Army which was a great worry to Mum. He would wake up the whole neighbourhood when coming home late from a dance as he only ever rode it flat-out and it didn't have a proper exhaust. I remember one night, or rather early one Sunday morning, he must have had a few drinks in town. Anyway, he missed a turn on the way home and ended up in the creek - bike and all. He pushed it home for miles because he couldn't get it started. It took him about a month to get it going again."

Jack has made so many friends over these past years. Many friends were made when working for the M.M.B.W. and at the Historical Society. Two of his long standing friends have been Wally Simmons from Army days. They have always kept in contact with one another. Peter Shaw has been a very close friend of Jack's for some forty years. They usually got together at least once a month and enjoyed a beer or two at home.

It was with very great sadness that Jack died so suddenly and unexpectedly at home on Sunday 2nd March 1994. He will be missed so very much by his family and by his friends.

Jack is survived by his wife Pat. By his sons; Michael and Michael's wife Beth, Rodney and Rodney's wife Cindy and by his daughter, Alice and Alice's husband Tom. Jack is also survived by his grandchildren who he loved very much and was very proud of; Brett and Brett's wife Cathy, by Alex, Charlene and Tom, who Jack affectionately referred to as 'Tommy-the-Tank-Engine', and by Jack's great grandson, James who is just six months old.

Jack is further survived by his sisters; Lorna and Lorna's husband Ken; by Elizabeth and Elizabeth's husband Matthew, and by Walter's wife Vivien, and their families.

Pat and her family would like to express their appreciation to the crew of the Ambulance; John Winter and Peter Holmes who attended their home after Jack's collapse, together with the staff of the Sandringham Hospital for their immediate response when Jack was admitted to their care. Jack's family would also like to thank all their neighbours for their concern and their support during these very difficult days.

(Name of Celebrant)

* * *

Sample of Eulogy prompters sheet for families wishing to compile their own eulogy:

Eulogy Contents

For family members or friends wishing to undertake Eulogies, the below mentioned topics are for your assistance.

Chronological

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Date and Place of Birth | <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs/promotions | <input type="checkbox"/> Where/when married |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Son/daughter of | <input type="checkbox"/> Military service? | <input type="checkbox"/> When/where children born |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Name of brothers and sisters | <input type="checkbox"/> Settled | <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Where family home | <input type="checkbox"/> House moves | <input type="checkbox"/> Illness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Where educated | <input type="checkbox"/> Where/when met spouse | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospital/other accomm. |
- Employment

Personal

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Happy/cheerful | <input type="checkbox"/> Determined | <input type="checkbox"/> Sense of humour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outgoing/generous | <input type="checkbox"/> Loving/caring | <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Quiet/reserved | <input type="checkbox"/> Family oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Independent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friendly/popular | | |

Interests

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sporting -youth/adult | <input type="checkbox"/> Cricket/golf/bowls | <input type="checkbox"/> Club membership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horse racing | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Pool/cards/chess |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dancing/bingo/'pokies' | <input type="checkbox"/> Motor cycles/cars | <input type="checkbox"/> Skilled with hands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Opera/concerts | <input type="checkbox"/> Live theatre/ballet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knit/sew/crochet | <input type="checkbox"/> T.V. | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other hobbies | <input type="checkbox"/> Travel | <input type="checkbox"/> Holidays |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building things | <input type="checkbox"/> Outings/groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Gardening |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walking | <input type="checkbox"/> Reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Newspapers/cross words |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Close friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Animals/pets | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tribute expressing the support of friends, hospital staff etc. ? | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Try to tell an amusing story. | | |

Survived by:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Husband or Wife | <input type="checkbox"/> Children and their spouses | <input type="checkbox"/> Grand & Great Grandchildren |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parents of deceased, if any | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brothers/sisters and spouses | <input type="checkbox"/> Nieces/nephews. | |



EULOGY CONTENTS

Sample of Eulogy prompters sheet for families wishing to compile their own eulogy: For family members or friends wishing to undertake Eulogies, the below mentioned topics are for your assistance. NOTE: Try to tell an amusing story as death is also about life in all its facets

CHRONOLOGICAL (Historical)

- Historical Context
- Date and Place of Birth
- Nationality/ Cultural Influences
- Son/daughter of
- Name of brothers and sisters
- Where family home

PERSONAL (Individuality)

Other Shaping Influences

- Interests -youth/adult
- Where educated
- Military service
- Employment
- Job Promotions
- House moves
- Settled
- Retirement

Goals

- Achievements
- Losses

Personality

- Happy/cheerful
- Determined
- Sense of humour
- Outgoing/generous
- Loving/caring
- Thoughtful
- Quiet/reserved
- Family oriented
- Independent
- Friendly/popular

Health

- Fitness / Illnesses
- Hospital/other accomm.

Interests - Sporting

- Cricket/golf/bowls
- Horse racing
- Fishing
- Pool/cards/chess
- Dancing/bingo/ 'pokies'
- Motor cycles/ cars
- Outings

Interests - Arts & Crafts

- Music
 - Opera/concerts
- Live theatre/ballet
- Skilled with hands
- Building things
- Knit/sew/crochet
- Cooking

Interests - Relaxation

- Travel
- Holidays
- Walking
 - Gardening
- T.V.
- Reading
- Newspapers/cross words
- Other hobbies or Interests

RELATIONSHIPS

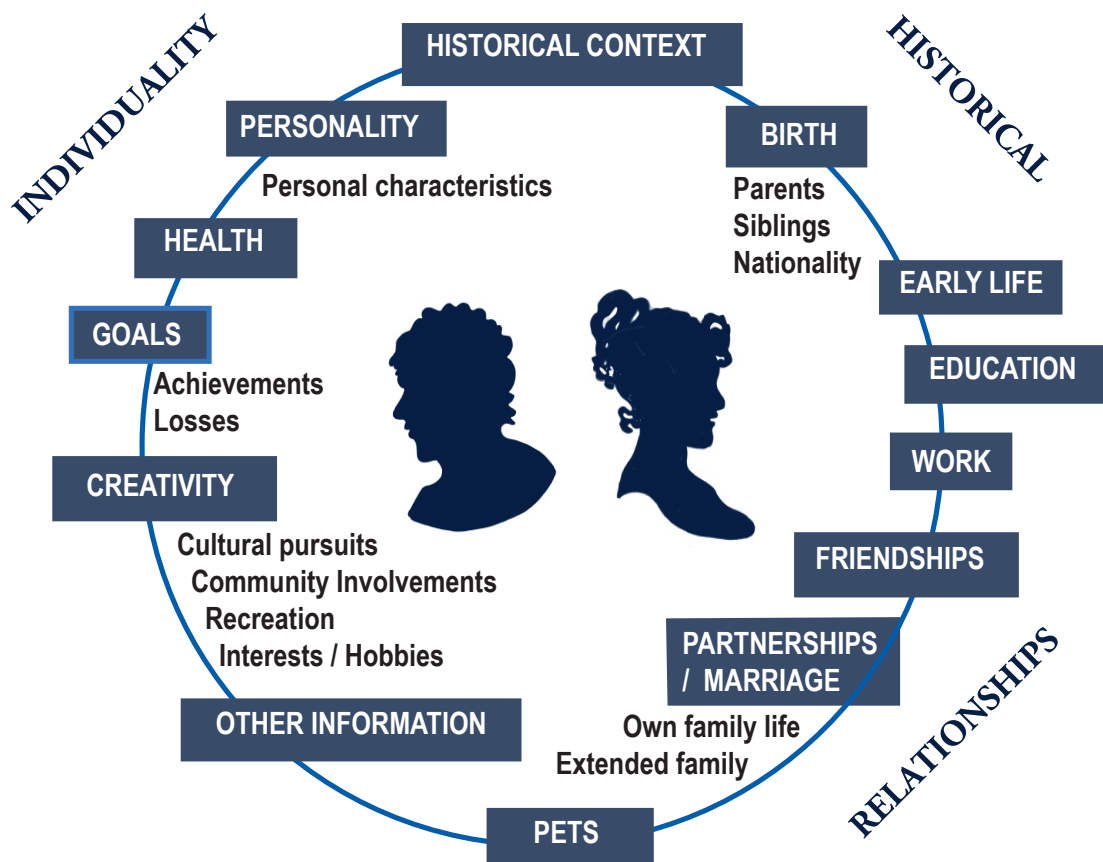
- Family and extended family
- Friendships
- Close friends
- Marriage/ Partnerships
- Where/when met spouse
- Courtship
- When/where married
- When/where children born
- Groups
- Club membership
- Animals/pets

Survived by:

- Husband or Wife
- Children and their spouses
- Grand & Great Grand children
- Parents of deceased, if any
- Brothers/sisters and spouses
- Nieces/nephews.
- Tribute expressing the support of friends, hospital staff etc. ?



MAJOR AREAS OF A PERSON'S LIFE



With this method you can focus on some areas in detail whilst doing a little or leaving sections out if not relevant¹

¹ Adapted with Permission
From Recording Our Lives _A Guide For You and Your Family
R Goold Our Lives 2002



FUNERAL CEREMONIES

The following two ceremonies are ones prepared and conducted by two AFCC Accredited Funeral celebrants. They are included as they document the Funeral Ceremony, showing a Eulogy in its context and the other elements included to celebrate life and support people in grief.

As readers, we have been very privileged that permission was granted to have these included in this book. Normally we would participate in person as guests of the spouse/ partner or family of the deceased because we had a relationship with the person who had died. As such, all our physical, emotional and spiritual facilities would be involved. The ceremony would also have been to a private closed audience, for which the ceremony was designed to meet the needs of the mourners present, not a wider audience of scholars removed in relationship and time to that unique life and its celebration.

Thus we need to come to the following, pages with our imagination in top gear and our hearts open and uncritical of the style and the details the black words on a white page document. We need to give these bare bones flesh and clothes, colour, movement, sound, scents and life. To imagine ourselves present and touched by the compassion, honesty and integrity of the celebrant's delivery and to be thankful we have been given the gift of a peep into someone else's world. It could be easy to say - these ceremonies could have been done differently, different words chosen, different music, different symbols, different metaphors etc. Perhaps true, if a different celebrant had been chosen. We each bring something of our own uniqueness to our vocation. On the other hand, perhaps not. For if we could dialogue with the celebrant about the reasons why each component was chosen and expressed in the form it was, then we might have prepared and delivered the ceremony in a very similar way.

[Kathy Hurley's Funeral Ceremony](#)

Kathy Hurley's ceremony is included because Kathy was a fellow celebrant who would have been pleased to think her funeral was used this way. Kathy contributed in a major way to the development of celebrancy in Australia, so it is good to be given this piece of our history too. As a large number of the mourners at Kathy's funeral were celebrants and her death sudden, her ceremony was over an hour in length, and included both a 'chronological' as well as a 'major areas of her life' approach.

Lyn Knorr, shared with the permission

[Deborah Mary Marquez's Funeral Ceremony](#)

Deborah Marquez, was a beautiful blond, bubbly, 13 year old girl who drowned, while swimming, at a local beach during the summer holidays, on a happy family outing. The circumstances were traumatic and tragic and the whole local community was saddened. Her family was shattered, but having the privilege of being the family celebrant for Deb's funeral I was struck by their strength. I was also amazed by the generosity they showed in the thought they were able and willing to give her ceremony so that it "worked" for everyone present.

On paper the ceremony appears to be quite short. We did, however, book the chapel for two hours and we would have used at least one and a half hours of that time. Mindful that we would have many 13 year olds' present, the ceremony was full of the music of the day, and during activities and also for quiet time we probably played up to 12 songs.

Perhaps 5 of those songs were played during a time when we handed out a few dozen “texta” pens so that everyone had an opportunity to sign Deborah’s white coffin or write a message. This was a VERY positive time and embraced by all present, young and old. It was a very symbolic gesture to acknowledge all the days Deb came home from school, like all kids that age, with notes and autographs written all over them. Another chapter of her ceremony was a dance time, when her wonderful mother led and encouraged the kids to join in the latest dance craze Le Ketchup. They joined in with great enthusiasm: up and down the isle and across the front of the chapel.

All this activity did not detract from the quiet and respectful time of silence and committal, “a time to weep and a time to dance” as it were. There were many wonderful reflections shared, by those who knew Deb the best.

We concluded the ceremony on a beautiful grassed area outside the chapel and released balloons, in a gesture of “letting her go” but also sending her some “party” material for “her latest gig” .

This was a long ceremony, a tribute to a courageous family who wanted it to be perfect and not just “get it over with”. In itself, this is an indication of their love, their commitment, and their willingness, in the face of tragedy, to celebrate life. There were a couple of hundred people at the funeral including local parliamentarians, (country community) I know that the family struggle with their enormous loss, but when I see Deb’s mum, we smile, and they know, they gave her a wonderful farewell.

Rob Lenehan, shared with the permission of the family.

**A Service to Celebrate the Life
of
Kathleen Mary Hurley
16th October 1946 – 21st October
2001**

***“I mourn thee and say Ah! Loveliest
friend!***

**at The Melbourne Chapel 101
Victoria Parade
South East Melbourne Victoria
25th October 2001
Celebrant Lyn Knorr**

MUSIC: As people gather in the chapel
Bird songs

MUSIC: To start the service
Imagine – John Lennon

WELCOME:

Celebrant: Hello everybody, my name is Lyn Knorr, and like all of you, I'm a friend of Kathy's. We're here today to celebrate Kathy's life as she would have wished - with style and flair, good talk and good humour.

PRACTICALITIES:

At the conclusion of our service, you are invited to Spargo's Café Bar at 288 Bridge Road, Richmond – opposite the Richmond Town Hall, and family and friends of the Hurleys can join the family at John's home from 1.00pm – 6 Holroyd Court, Blackburn South. Can I encourage you to make a donation in Kathy's memory to the scholarship fund being established by the Federation, or, if you prefer, to plant a tree or a bush at your home, so that Kathy's memory lives on with you. And if anybody has a mobile phone, will you please switch it off now. Thanks.

INTRODUCTION:

Kathy had friends everywhere - no one who encountered her failed to be warmed by her capacity for affection and friendship, and no one who knows of her tragic death will remain untouched by it. She was an exceptional woman – colourful, energetic, thoroughly devoted and passionate. She was full of life, she was fun to be with, she was a good friend, and she died before her time.

We could say that Kathy had what T S Elliot called an “experiencing nature”. She was vulnerable to

life, she was affected and altered by it, and she had – in larger measures than most – compassion for her fellow human beings. It is this last quality, compassion, that attracted us all to Kathy.

It is not our hands that make us human, nor our legs. It is not the shape of our face, nor the thickness of our hair, or the texture of our skin. We are human because of our hearts, and the souls that fill our hearts. Kathy's soul filled her heart.

KEY MOURNERS:

These few words today will not tell us all that Kathy's life means to those who will love her for the rest of their lives. Her family members - her children, Peter and Julia, her husband, John, her sister Carolyn and brother in law, Paul, her sister in law, Janet, brother in law, Graham and nephew, Glen, her father in law and stepmother in law – John and Noreen, her Uncle and Aunt, Sandy and Bev, and cousins, Russell, Jillian and John. Her friends, Kai and Jill, Jill Phillips and Gary, Wayne and Kylie, Max and Marg Phillips, the Nelsons – Joan, Michael, Maria, Peter and ? and Dick, Marg and John Powell, Merrin and Kathy's godson Ryan, Tony and Artie Gray, Joyce Marshall and Graham Midgley, Jenny Jones and Harry Charalambous, Rhiannon and Culum Brown, Pauline Bride and Diane Toward, her celebrant colleagues and work friends, and especially her treasured Dally. But they can remind us again of a wonderful life, and a precious friend.

**KATHY'S LIFE HIGHLIGHTS &
CHALLENGES - CHRONOLOGICAL
ORDER:**

When I visited John, Peter and Julia the other night they told about the highlights and challenges of Kathy's life. It was a warm and affectionate tribute to a woman who is obviously much loved. And as we spoke the shock and sadness of the last few days fell away and they were telling me of their love for the woman who has affected them in such profound and enduring ways.

It's 1946 and Kathy is born on 16th October in Maffra, the first child Bill and Mary Burley. Carolyn, Kathy's sister, joins them three years later.

Bill is a farmer, a butcher, a shopkeeper and a farmer again. He is a marvellous man, totally devoted to Kathy, they are best mates.

Kathy attends Maffra Primary and then Maffra High School. She is a champion swimmer and still holds the record in backstroke.

She could beat all the boys in those days, and was champion of Gippsland. Later on she played a bit of netball.

She leaves school in Year 10 and starts her first job at Fulton's Garage in Maffra.

1962 and John Hurley is visiting his cousin, Tony Gray, in Maffra. They are sitting in Tony's car as Kathy walks by. "Who's that," demands John. John said Kathy was the most spectacularly beautiful person he'd ever seen - absolutely beautiful. But it was some time before they went out on a date - Kathy's mother warns her against John on two counts - first, he was one of those fast talking fellows from the city - Box Hill actually, and second, he was a Catholic!

9th of the 9th 1964 arrives - Kathy and John finally go on their first date - dinner at the Wurruk Hotel. Wurruk is a little town just outside Sale.

1964 and Kathy decides to move to Melbourne. She boards at Moonee Ponds and works in the Accounts Department at St Vincent's.

1966 Kathy contracts TB - she is treated for two years and finally recovers.

1968 is quite an extraordinary year of ups and downs - Kathy joins Remington as a programmer for their mainframe computer. In February she and John become engaged. In April she is diagnosed with ovarian cancer. In June she has a hysterectomy - she is heartbroken. On 22nd August 1968 Kathy and John are married and spend their honeymoon in New Zealand.

In 1969/70 she continues working with Remington and she and John set up home in a flat in Mont Albert.

On the 5th January 1971 they board the Fairstar with John's sister, Janet, and sail for England. They spend the year in Europe, travelling all around the British Isles and on to the Continent. For sixteen weeks they travel all over Europe, living in a Ford Transit Van called Fred, named after Tony Gray, and eating the 120 tins of Tesco Savoury Mince they'd bought for the trip. John did most of the driving and Kathy and Janet shared the cooking. The things those two could do with mince - they devised the most amazing recipes. They had just enough money to book into a caravan park once a week for a shower.

There were lots of adventures - in Southern Italy they were parked by the side of a road where, unbeknown to them, only prostitutes loitered.

Janet was cooking and Kathy sat outside writing a letter. Little cars started buzzing her with great interest until John appeared with the shovel. The shovel, of course, served a couple of purposes - it was a very compact little van - you could sit on the loo and cook at the same time, so they tended to use the outdoors whenever possible - and it was also excellent protection.

Their friends, Mary and John Powell, join them in England.

They were back in Australia in time for Christmas 1971, living with Bill and Mary above their shop in Carnegie.

Between 1972 and 1974 they look after Ken and Jill's place in Nunawading while they are overseas.

In 1974 they build their house at Guy's Hill. They live on site in Sandy and Bev's caravan and do a huge amount of the work themselves. How Kathy loved that house.

1997 Kathy's passion for motherhood is finally rewarded. They joyfully adopt Christopher. His tragic death, six months later is devastating for them both.

1997 They are given another chance; they adopt Peter and decide to go farming.

1977 - They visit Mary and Bill in Perth and talk to them about coming back to Victoria to retire to the farm. They sell Guy's Hill and buy 170 acres with a one hundred year old house on it at Ripplebrook. In late December Bill and Mary join them in that farmhouse, and John and Bill work the farm together.

1978 is another year of great sadness and enormous happiness. Tragedy strikes in May when Mary dies suddenly at fifty-three, and later in the year they adopt Julia. They were petrified that the agency wouldn't allow them to adopt her because they hadn't yet completed the floor coverings on the new house. Kathy's introduction to farming occurs when she has to help the local vet with a cow that is calving.

The inappropriateness of Mary's funeral upsets Kathy enormously and she decides to do something about it. She returns to school, to Drouin High School, and then to Gippsland TAFE to study loss and grief. She becomes a funeral celebrant working from Ripplebrook, and applies to become a marriage celebrant. Her work involves a huge amount of travel - all over West Gippsland and the Latrobe Valley.

Peter and Julia often accompany her as her car buddies.

1984 and Sam, the Golden Cocker Spaniel comes into their lives. For a woman of such a generous nature there would have to be animals. Kathy just loves Sam and he loves her. Sam snuggled up under Kathy's chin was a common sight.

1997 The family go on a trip to Fiji. On the day they leave Kathy and John sleep in. When the kids wake they rush into their parents' bedroom demanding to know why they aren't taking them to school. Would you like to go to Fiji today, said Kathy. Julia said that trip was such a happy time for them.

1987, they buy their house in Glen Iris.

1988 – they spend four months travelling around Australia in a caravan, calling in at Expo in Brisbane.

In January 1989 they move down to the house in Glen Iris - for the kids schooling, and to allow Kathy to further develop her celebrancy work - and Bill moves with them. Kathy loves living in Melbourne, developing relationships with other celebrants, enjoying life.

1995 – Kathy's dear father, Bill, dies. Theirs has been a particularly close relationship. Kathy nurses Bill at home for two years before reluctantly allowing him to go to a nursing home. She continues to visit him every day until his death.

1997 - In June Mandy O'Brien goes overseas, and Kathy works voluntarily for the AFCC, eventually developing the job into a part time one, and then, as the membership increases, into a full time one. She gives up funeral celebrancy, warning other celebrants to be wary of the burnout she suffered.

In July 1997 Kathy and John separate. It's a very civilised separation. They remain close friends and absolutely committed to their children. They continue to celebrate family occasions together.

1998 – Kathy buys her own bolthole in Richmond. It's a beautiful unit overlooking the Yarra, and she finds there the refuge she's seeking. She surrounds herself with beautiful things and beautiful music.

KATHY'S LIFE - MAJOR AREAS :

In the ensuing years she's been busy doing the things she's wanted to do for a very long time, but was unable to pursue because of her commitment to her role as wife and mother. She made those lifelong dreams come true. She travelled overseas every year, she attended the theatre with her mother in law, Noreen, she ate out, collected artworks, pursued excellence in her wedding ceremonies, she nourished her friendships - and she found her soulmate.

Death usually strikes at two times in the human cycle – when we are very young and when we are old. That it should come to Kathy at this time – she was so happy, her life was opening up for her yet again – is a terrible tragedy.

People all over the country join us in mourning Kathy today. Some have come from interstate and overseas to be here to say goodbye to Kathy.

It's a very sad day for Kathy's sister, Carolyn. They have loved each other all their lives, and saw a lot of each other when their father was alive. Carolyn has lived in Northern New South Wales since the early seventies. She was planning a visit at the end of November and they were both looking forward to that. Kathy was the person she turned to when things went wrong in her life. They were great scrabble mates - playing scrabble was what they did when they were together – they laughed a lot and had a lot of good times. Kathy always did the cryptic crossword in The Age on Saturdays, and she and Carolyn used to see who would be first to get out the word puzzle. They were both good with words, an attribute inherited from Bill. Carolyn said she was really proud of Kathy – Kathy was a country girl and she went out and created a life for herself. They were proud of each other actually – Carolyn is a very talented jeweller herself.

John Hurley has a great love for Kathy. They have grown together over the years. She always supported John in whatever he wanted to do. She'd type the job applications for him, she encouraged him to have a go at farming and they were successful at it. They built two houses together, and travelled the world. He told me that random things had happened in Kathy's life. The girl of the early sixties had a wonderful life ahead of her but fate put a lot of challenges in her path.

She was forced to harden herself to some things for her own protection. He is so pleased that Kathy experienced so much joy at the end of her life.

Peter and Julia told me Kathy was a wonderful mother – and a great cook. She made the most wonderful roasts, and Christmas pudding with coins. She was really supportive of who they wanted to be – and had told them that if what you want to do makes you happy, go and do it. She gave them her unconditional love and support.

They reminisced about the U2 concert she and Peter went to, and visits to the Casino, an earlier visit to the pokies at Milawa, where, while John lectured Peter and Julia on the futility of playing the pokies, Kathy slipped in and won a couple of hundred dollars, enabling them to buy a painting they'd had their eyes on.

Peter said his relationship with Kathy had improved so much in the last five years – they spent quite a bit of time together, and she was pleased his life was turning around. And she was so proud of Julia's commitment to changing her life.

They recognise how very lucky they have been in so many ways: the quality of their parents, the advantages of their upbringing. Someone once told me a person takes death seriously only when one of their parents dies, and I think there is some truth in that. To be young is to think you're immortal, but to see someone so close to you die eradicates the myth of immortality immediately. Kathy's death will be an enormous adjustment for Peter and Julia.

They've had their issues with her, as all kids do, and sometimes they saw the world a bit differently. But as they look back with more distance on their mother's character and life they will only have more love and respect for her. She was a devoted wife and mother, she lived selflessly for her children, she never stopped growing spiritually, emotionally or intellectually, and she was truly loved by an enormous range of people for the spirit with which she lived her life. Not everybody can say that. They'll look back at the totality of her life with great pride. They were privileged to share such an experience. She was not perfect, but she did the best she could – she raised her children well and she loved her husband.

Jenny Jones reminded me that Kathy did have a life outside celebrancy - Kathy, Jenny and Margaret are old school friends from the beginning of primary school.

Diane and Pauline she met through the other two.

Jenny told me that they were in the swimming club and the lifesaving club. Jenny and Marg spent all their time down the shallow end of the pool flirting with the boys - while Kathy did the laps. Like many of Kathy's friends, they expected her to be around to marry their kids, bury their parents and them too, if required. She had done a fair bit of that for them already – she married Jenny to Harry, and buried her brother, she is godmother to Marg's son Ryan, she did the funeral service for Diane's father.

They shared long lunches, visited each other frequently, were an important part of all the milestone celebrations, she dragged them along to witness her ceremonies if she needed them. These were friendships Kathy nurtured throughout her life and her death will leave an enormous gap in the lives of her friends.

Fortunately, Kathy caught up with many friends last week as she celebrated her fifty-fifth birthday.

She has special friends among those who shared her life and work at the office in Richmond - Janet Hussey, Natasha Messenger, Lily Li, Jenny Jones, Carol Huish and her family, Dippo and Girlie. With Dally came the added bonus of the Messenger girls – Genevieve, Natasha and Julia. Kathy was tenacious in pursuing Lily's residency, and she loves her like a daughter. She nagged Janet to do the celebrancy course to formalise her wonderful talents.

I, too, shared Kathy's love and friendship, and I thank her for that.

Our dear friend and colleague – she's made an incredible contribution to celebrancy over the past decade, not only as a friend and generous mentor to hundreds of celebrants; she was, too, a highly articulate champion of our cause.

She pushed the boundaries. In 1995, Kathy and I established a little business called Celebrants at Southgate. We hired some space in the Stuart Gertsmann Gallery overlooking the river at Southgate and interviewed couples and conducted wedding ceremonies there. We offered a wide range of ceremonies, and our brochures, designed by Dally, publicised the fact that ceremonies could be held for all life's milestones. We didn't make any money from our venture but we had a lot of fun and dreamt a lot of dreams.

Her next venture was Funeral Planning. She was well ahead of her time as usual.

There are many couples who owe Kathy a great deal for her efforts on their behalf. When it was not possible for couples of faith to marry in their church, Kathy and Fr Gonzales Munoz would provide a service to meet their needs. This working relationship developed into a precious friendship.

And here we are today in The Melbourne Chapel – Kathy’s Chapel.

Her friendship, initiative, vibrancy and vitality will be sorely missed by the celebrant community.

Such a lover of life – so active – so involved. She was a great inspiration to me. If I had been preparing for a funeral service such as this, she would be the person I’d ring to try out some thoughts and phrases. Just last week, we joked as I asked her for some words for the warming of the rings for a wedding ceremony. I don’t do tricks, said I, and she replied that she had a big bag full of tricks. I will miss that enthusiasm for embracing the new, the difficult, the old, the unconventional, the ordinary.

She and I had eaten lamb shanks in many restaurants around the town, certainly all of them in Williamstown. Michael always cooked lamb shanks when she came to dinner. My dog Baci, loves her dearly, and would spend Kathy’s visits sitting in her lap. When I look around my house I find many reminders of her presence – I’m wearing a shirt she gave me just a few weeks ago – we are both big shirt girls. And Michael and I have one of those beautifully prepared wedding certificates – Kathy’s calligraphy. As I reflected on our friendship, it occurred to me that I got the bargain.

I will desperately miss those long conversations full of sparkling wit, intelligent questioning, gentle chiding, fullsome praise and deep affection. Her gorgeous smile, ready ear and mischievous wit saved many a grey day. I love her joy, her humour, her anxieties, her contradictions, her giving, her worrying, her strength and her smile. I will miss her phone calls, her visits, our shopping trips, the sharing of news and gossip. There is an immeasurable emptiness in my heart today.

I’ve left the most significant of Kathy’s relationships till last. Dally Messenger has been Kathy’s mentor, colleague, friend, employer, partner and lover. Theirs was a relationship

that so enriched them both. They were alike enough to share common interests, goals and philosophies and different enough to intrigue, amuse, explore, and learn from each other. They had embarked on a new chapter in their lives, experiencing the excitement of learning about all those little nuances of each other’s personalities and behaviours in these early days of their relationship. They had found a very special place, and they loved each other dearly. They were each other’s closest friends, most intimate confidantes, strongest supporters and most sensitive and honest critics. Kathy brought newness and freshness into Dally’s life and she offered him motivation and the most generous encouragement to pursue his dreams. But most of all, Kathy gave Dally trust and loyalty and love. She is his best friend and he will hold her deep in his heart for the rest of his days.

All the people here today have woven strands in one way or another in the tapestry of Kathy Hurley’s life. Her love, warmth, humour, and generosity of spirit brought joy and inspiration to your lives and you will miss that. You were so lucky to know her. She charmed you, inspired you, taught you, and has given you all a sensational friendship. The measure of her life is not in its length, but the depth of her impact on you. She drew you all close to her with her warmth, her humour and her zest for life.

SPEAKER:

Celebrant: Kathy’s children (Peter and Julia) want to share some thoughts with us about their treasured mother. First we’re going to hear from Peter, and then from Julia with a poem that Kathy used to explain death to her.

Peter shares

POEM:

Julia reads Poem ‘One At Rest’

Celebrant: When Peter and Kathy went to the U2 concert, Kathy wasn’t expecting to become a fan – but she did become one. Here is U2 with The Ground Beneath Her Feet ...

MUSIC:

U2 – The Ground Beneath Her Feet – Track 12

SPEAKER:

Celebrant: Barbara Hilshorst is a fellow celebrant and close friend of Kathy’s. They’ve travelled the world, these two.

Barbara Hilshorst speaks

SPEAKER:

Celebrant: Many Hancock has come over from New Zealand to honour her friend. Mary was one of the first guests we had at the Palotti Conferences, and has shared a close friendship with Kathy since then.

Mary Hancock shares a poem she has written then reads Page 197 from Remembering Well; Rituals for Celebrating Life by Sarah York (Jossey-Bass San Francisco 2000)

SPEAKER:

Celebrant: Another guest at the following Palotti Conference was David Oldfield from the Centre for Creative Imagination in Washington. He has sent this moving tribute ...

Celebrant reads David Oldfield Tribute:

SPEAKER:

Celebrant: Our dear Dally needs no introduction
Dally Messenger speaks

Celebrant: Kathy was a country girl, and she loved country and western music. This song, by Don Williams – You're my best friend – reflects the tone and essence of the relationships Kathy shared.

MUSIC:

You're my best friend – Don Williams

SPEAKER/S:

Celebrant: I am sure there are some of you who would like to share some thoughts about Kathy. I know that it is difficult for celebrants to be brief, but please – just two minutes each. I fortunately have Anne Cowden's crowd control bell here and I won't hesitate to use it.

POEM:

Ruth Van Gramburg has composed a beautiful poem in tribute to Kathy.

Ruth Van Gramburg reads her tribute

SPEAKER/S:

Celebrant: Is there anybody else ?

Janet Hussey reads Dirge without music - Edna St. Vincent Millay

Celebrant: Kathy's life was full of music, her ceremonies were full of music. This next piece was her very favourite love song ... A love until the end of time – Placido Domingo and Maureen McGovern.

MUSIC:

A love until the end of time – Placido Domingo and Maureen McGovern

CONCLUSION:

Celebrant: Grief remains one of the few things that has the power to silence us. More than love, more than faith, even more than death itself, grief is unspoken. Maybe we do not speak of it because death will mark all of us, sooner or later. Grieving is painful and demanding, but given a chance a profound transforming healing will come.

It's time for us to say goodbye to Kathy. She has touched many of us deeply. We will remember her as a woman who acted according to her beliefs, whose many achievements were accomplished with grace and intelligence, who was full of life, warmth, charm and good humour, and whose tragic death is a terrible loss to us all.

And in the final analysis, when the votes are tallied about your life, you are remembered for what is important. Did you have a heart? Did you love people and did people love you? Did you give more than take? Were you thoughtful, kind, easy to be with? Did you have an impact on people's lives? Were you fun? Did you have a sense of humour? And ultimately will you be missed?

To all of these you can say Yes, a resounding Yes, about Kathleen Mary Hurley. She will be remembered for the richness of the memories you share and the depth of the feelings she evoked in you. She has enriched your lives, and for that you will always be grateful. She will always hold a special place in your hearts.

And now, as we leave Kathy in peace to continue on our own journey, let us listen to these lines of hope from the poet, Cecil Day Lewis –

“Her laughter was better than birds in the morning,
her smile

Turned the edge of the wind, her memory
Disarms death and charms the surly grave.

Early she went to bed, too early we
Saw her light put out; yet we could not grieve
More than a little while,

For she lives in the earth around us, laughs from
the sky.”

Please stand everybody

CLOSING MUSIC: I'll take you home again,
Kathleen – Josef Locke

COMMITTAL CEREMONY AT SPRINGVALE

Celebrant: Maybe death is a gift, a blessing, a ceasing from struggle and pain, as sleep is. We've been conditioned to think of death as an enemy, but that's because we, the survivors, haven't gone through the doorway, and all we know of it is what's on this side of the door - the loss, the separation, the grieving ...

This is not the end for Kathy. Kathy will live on in the memories of those who love her for as long as they live. The essence of Kathy Hurley is not here in this place, but will continue on in those memories. Many men and women will miss her because she was kind and compassionate and thoughtful. Those who knew her can be thankful she lived.

What remains though are two strong feelings – deep sadness at Kathy's death and the knowledge that we have only the present. We are not promised tomorrow. The past can teach us, nurture us, but it cannot sustain us. For all of us she has left an important legacy – the knowledge of the unnerving fragility of human life, a reminder to appreciate the present.

Our lives are richer today for having had Kathy pass through them. Our hearts and souls are permanently caressed with Kathy's love. Echoes of her spirit, her laughter and her love will resound through our lives and keep her with us forever. She will never be gone, for a small part of her lies within each of us.

This message is for Kathy's children – Peter and Julia ...

Your mother is always with you...
She's the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street.
She's the smell of bleach in your freshly laundered socks.
She's the cool hand on your brow when you're not well.
Your mother lives inside your laughter.
She's crystallised in every tear drop...
She's the place you came from, your first home..
She's the map you follow with every step that you take.
She's your first love and your first heartbreak.... and nothing on earth can separate you.
Not time, not space...not even death.... will ever separate you from your mother....
You carry her inside you....

COMMITTAL: Tenderly, lovingly and reverently we say our last goodbye to Kathleen Mary Hurley. We remember with gratitude her deep love for her family and friends, and her generous heart.

Dear Kathy - strong, courageous, beautiful to the end, and always overwhelmingly generous. Your love lives on in all of us. A wonderful woman, thoroughly devoted and passionate, now at rest. We bid you farewell with all our love.

CLOSING MUSIC: I'll take you home again, Kathleen – Josef Locke

**A Service to Celebrate the Life of
Deborah Mary Marquez
5th July 1989 – 20th January 2003**

**at The Chapel
Shoalhaven Memorial Gardens
Worrigee Nowra New South Wales**

January 2003

Celebrant: Robyn Lenehan

INTRODUCTION: My name is Robyn Lenehan. I am a civil celebrant for Nowra Funeral Services.

We have come together as a community of family and friends. We have suffered an enormous hurt and a tragic loss. We are here to seek comfort and healing. We are here to farewell Deborah Mary Marquez known to all as Deb and lovingly to her family as 'ditzzy Deb'.

Debbie was the beloved daughter and step-daughter of Rhonda and David and Sam and Sharon. She was a dear sister to Andrew, Michael, Mathew, Daniel, Kumara, and Michael. She was a loving grand daughter to Tom and Helen and Marta and Rupert. A loved god daughter and niece to Brenda, Allan and Pablo, Linda, Donna, Sean, Jamie and their partners. She was cousin to many. And a dear and entertaining friend in her group.

A funeral service is held for a number of reasons. To make real a loss, to gather support, to share memories, thoughts and concerns. It is also the last gift that we can all give Debbie. The last physical thing you can do for her. And her family have prepared a wonderful tribute today. A tribute that is rich in the music she loved, memories and photos.

MUSIC: The first musical contribution we have is Angel by Shaggy.

ABOUT LOSS AND GRIEF

There are no words of comfort that can cushion the shock experienced when one is faced with death. Even more so when that death is the death of one so young. There does not seem to be any point in searching for meaning and sense, rhyme or reason, in such a death. Rather one feels anger and pain and hurt and deep, deep sorrow that such a thing as this can happen.

We cannot deny the grief that death brings regardless of our faith or the circumstances. We must let it spill from our hearts. Our clouds of grief can be hammered by conflicting emotions. Despair that Debbie is no longer with us, remorse for things left unsaid, the frustrating fantasy of the "if only this or if only that". Don't deny your emotions. . We must let our sorrow have its' time.

What we really know is that in death we still stand here face to face with life. We shall never fill the place that has now been vacated, at least not in the flesh. Against such a void we can only exert courage and remember that inside us all we have the makings of what we need for survival.

Deb would not want you to judge her life by it's length but by the value her life gave to you and indeed to herself. So for her, be wise enough and brave enough to celebrate those precious 13 years.

So gratitude for Deb's life, the joy you have felt in the time you have shared with her and for the future when her memory will refresh you hearts, let us bow our heads in prayer.

PRAYER: 23rd Psalm

APPRECIATION FOR LIFE LIVED: You will always remain grateful for the time you have known Debbie and for having known her in the richness of hers personality. Nothing now can detract from the fun that you shared with her, nothing can affect the happiness and the depth of experience that she has known. And I think Debbie did indeed have a depth of feeling and experience that was uniquely her own. What has been, has been, forever. The past, with all its meaning, is sacred and secure.

Your love for her and hers love for you, cannot be altered by time or circumstance.

It's important to realise that Debbie's influence need not end with hers physical death. Her spirit will now become a living part of every life she touched. Her life has now been added to your history, and the way this girl has touched your own lives will now become a part of who you are. She is not just a part of the past, or your memories. But very much a part of your future through what you have gained from her life. Through you she can continue to live and achieve.

Speak your thoughts to Debbie. Speak them to her, or to a star, to a piece of paper,
They may be:
I'm sorry you have gone

I miss you

I'm angry about what's happened

I love you

I wish I could tell you

I'm so glad we knew each other

I'll always remember you, because

EULOGY:

Deborah Mary was born on July 5th 1989 in the new Fairfield Hospital at Wetherall Park. She was the middle child and only daughter to Rhonda and Sam. Deb was a happy baby and eager to get around. So as soon as she was able she was off and exploring. Debbie was a real girly girl right from the start, As a toddler she always wore a dress and more often than not, her mothers shoes and was attracted to the biggest brightest beads. She adored her many barbie dolls and would spend hours with them cutting and, she thought, styling their hair. Her favourite fella was Thomas the Tank Engine. Deb, also held no fear of her surroundings and was always first down the slippery dip, head first. Her first sentence, "shub ub not not," translated that says, "Shut up Donna".

Debbie was always a beauty and was entered into a competition when she was toddler. It was a Spanish Baby Competition and Deb was the only blond haired blue eye baby in sight. She won. Her family tells me that it was Deb who started the spate of blond sayings and blond jokes we have today. The was the original Dizzy Blond. Her whole character was a constant giggle, she always retained an absolute innocence that meant she would believe what ever you told her.

Debbie started school at Nowra East when she was four and a half and this began many years of her true forte in life, socialising. Deb was never a great academic at school, but it was not for want of trying, and she missed many days through asthma. However she excelled in happiness, brightness and friendship. And she has hidden talents, she, for example was an inbuilt answering service for the telephone.

More recently Debbie has taken her constant bopping around the house more seriously and completed her bronze medals in Latin Dancing with a highly commended. Andrew and Rhonda received their medals the same day.

Of course one of the great attractions to the dancing was the never ending range of dresses to be memorised, admired and worn.

Debbie started to dress up in Rhonda's clothes at a very early age and this love continued with her right up to high school.

She also loved her craft and there will be loving legacies of gifts she's made around forever more.

PATICIPANTS SHARING: I'll call upon different family members at this stage to share some thoughts and poems

1. David
2. Andrew
3. Kamara
4. Catherine
5. Marta (grandmother)
6. Rhonda and Leanne

COFFIN SIGNING: During these songs.....

MUSIC: Born to try. Avril Lavign

MUSIC: I'm With you

MUSIC: 1,000 miles Vanessa Carlton

LES KETCHUP DANCE:

Who's going to be brave enough to come up and join in the Les Ketchup dance for Deb?

NOTICES:

Before we begin our final farewell on behalf of Debbie's family I thank you all for joining them here today. You are all invited to join the family for refreshments after the service at the Shoalhaven ex-servicemen's sports club on Greenwell Point Road at Worrige, which is quite near by.

READING: I called her name in the silence – from the depths of my lonely grief..... She did not speak but a bird sang out..... and my heart knew a strange relief.

I sought her face in the forest...where we walked in days gone by.....She hid from me but then I saw a birch, green and silver against the sky.

She comes like this, in the beauty of a song, or a flower.... Or a tree. Who am I to attempt to solve... so great a mystery.

CONCLUSION:

It takes time to accept a loss, but it can also reveal strengths and recourses we never knew we had. In time our pain subsides, our wounds heal and we discover an all important truth: what remains after all is the most valuable thing we possess, life itself. Make a pledge today to Debbie and live up to your own expectations.

As we prepare for our final goodbye for those of us who pray let us join together in the Lord's Prayer.

PRAYER: The Lord's Prayer

Shortly we will tenderly and reverently commit the body of our precious Deborah Mary Marquez to the elements, grateful for the life that has been lived and for everything that her life has meant to us.

COMMITTAL: Together we farewell Debbie at the end of her journey here on earth. With admiration we acknowledge her laughter, With a smile we acknowledge her sense of humour. With gratitude we acknowledge that Debbie has been a part of your life. With faith we trust that her spirit will always be there. With love and respect we commit her earthly body to the elements.

As we say goodbye, may Debbie take her place like a star in a region of purity and peace.

READING:

Farewell, this day has ended *by Kahlil Gibran*

READING:

Footprints

We are going to conclude Deb's tribute today over on the grassed area, where the family are going to let loose some balloons, in a gesture of release and also in a gesture of faith, that Deb is watching down from her big party.

So remember that in one of the stars she will be smiling and in one of the stars she will be laughing and so it will seem that all of the stars are laughing when you look into the sky at night.



GLOSSARY

Arranger (Funeral): He or she, as an employee of the Funeral Director, initially visits the bereaved family and assists them in the organization of the funeral service, i.e. the time and place of the funeral service, the selection of the casket and the flowers, together with the type of Celebrant the family requires – a Civil Celebrant or member of the Clergy and prepares the legal paperwork as stipulated by the State.

Committal: The final words that conclude the service either at the chapel or, if a second service is requested, at the crematorium or grave side. See item, ‘The Committal’.

Conductor: He or she, as an employee of the Funeral Director, is in charge of the funeral service at the time and place designated, who, together with his staff, should be closely allied with by the Celebrant who will inform the Conductor of the contents and step-by-step proceedings of the service. The Conductor is often the Arranger.

Eulogy: About the deceased. Usually takes two parts – (1) the chronological events of the deceased’s life – (2) the personal side – the type of person he/she was – sporting achievements – interests etc. The Macquarie Dictionary states: “A speech or writing in praise of a person or thing – a set oration in honour of a deceased person” See the item - ‘The Eulogy’.

Form Of Service: A ‘program’ setting out, step-by-step, the progression of the service.

Funeral Director: The Undertaker

Interview: By the Celebrant embraces the preparation of the eulogy, suggestions and requirements of the family regarding the service that will surround the reading of the eulogy (speakers, written tributes, readings, music, prayers if any, special announcements re refreshments) and other matter the family may wish to discuss.

Reflection: A ‘quiet’ time during the service when the family and mourners can reflect upon the good and fun times spent with the deceased and during which a selected, or just soft, piece of music can be played.



NOTES



NOTES

The Funeral Celebrant: A Guide For New Celebrants. Revised - 2004
by Ken Woodburn CFC ISBN 0-9756005-0-8
Published By: The Australian Federation of Civil Celebrants Inc. ABN: 891 923 893 29

Distributed by:

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