Eulogy n. a funeral speech in praise of a person

Or, looked at another way…

Eulogy n. 1. a chance to help you and others to share, enjoy and re-live the happy times, positive memories and warm feelings which have made a person who they really are. 2. an opportunity to honor a person, to recognize the lasting impression they have made on us all, and to express gratitude for the times you have had together. 3. a funeral speech, the writing and delivery of which is a very special honor.
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Bath
BA2 3JH
United Kingdom

support@eulogymadesimple.com

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Acknowledgements

Firstly, a big ‘thank you’ to you for being prepared to undertake something very special and extremely rewarding – the writing and delivery of a eulogy. Rest assured that your fulfilment of this role will help create a funeral which is truly personal to the person who has died, which is as it should be.

Thanks also to all the bereaved family and friends I have worked with over the years in the planning and carrying out of funerals and eulogies for their loved ones. Through this I have learned many things, including that what matters most in life is living it fully. And special thanks to those relatives who have given permission for eulogies to their loved ones to be included in this book.

Thanks too to my wife, Julia, for her love and support and for allowing me to include personal material in this book.

And thanks to our little girl, Imogen, for being a daily and irrefutable reminder that joy is every human being’s natural state, that love is ever-present in the world, and that, whatever happens, life goes on.
Dedication

Dedicated to Anthony John Cookson, 1969 – 2005

Anthony, you warmed so many hearts, and you are forever remembered.

This book is further dedicated to those professionals, all across the world, who work to make the experience of death and dying as personal, meaningful and dignified as possible, both for those who die and for those who live on.
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Foreword

Why this book?

Firstly, there is a need. Speaking to you as someone who appreciates what it is like to be planning a eulogy, I know you will understand this.

In 1999 I wrote and delivered my first eulogy, for my grandfather, Tom Westfallen. How I wish a book like this had been around then! It would made my job a whole lot easier, and it would have helped me do an even better job than I did.

And these, my friend, are the same two things that this book is written to do for you…

1. make your job a whole lot easier for you, and
2. help you do an even better job than you would already

Why me writing it?

My grandfather’s funeral was a very personalized affair – music was chosen by his children, a poem was read by his son-in-law, I delivered the eulogy, and Tom’s written wishes were completely respected and honoured. It was truly a day about Tom.

Inspired by this, I decided to undertake training that allowed me to preside at funerals, so that I could help others have the kind of personalized ceremonies that they and their families wanted. Since then I’ve conducted around a hundred funerals and written, advised on and delivered almost as many eulogies. And I’ve done this for people of all ages, of all backgrounds, and in all circumstances. This book is a distillation of that experience and more.

So I give you my condolences, and also my best wishes for a eulogy and a funeral which is as fitting and memorable as it can be. Death is part of life, and I trust this book will be a great help to you both now, and in the future when the need arises.

And, with me, it’s also good to know that this book is, in its own way, a contribution to the growing trend for people to make funerals more personal, more meaningful and more memorable for all concerned, for all the right reasons.

Best wishes

Kevin Burch

How to Use This Book

There are two ways you can use this book:

1. **Express emergency option**

If time is short, and you need a eulogy finished and ready-to-read in less than 60 minutes, go straight to the section Express Emergency Eulogies on page 41. There you will find some fill-in-the-blanks eulogies which you can quickly and easily make your own.

2. **Step-by-step option**

If you have a little more time and want to create a highly personal eulogy which will be remembered and appreciated for years to come, follow the simple six-step process which follows.

And whichever of these ways is right for you at this moment, the example eulogies, poems and bonus material may also give you ideas, support and inspiration, both now and in the future.

By the way, as you look through the examples and illustrations in this book you’ll notice that some come from the UK and some from the US – and some from a combination of the two. However, please know that the steps this book describes apply equally to any eulogy, in any cultural or religious tradition, anywhere in the world.
How to Write and Deliver a Great Eulogy in Six Simple Steps

Preview Chapter:
Six steps to a wonderful eulogy

This Chapter is an overview of the whole of How to Write and Deliver a Great Eulogy in Six Simple Steps, and in a few pages will in itself give you a clear picture of what you need for a smooth and successful eulogy.

The Six Steps

Step 1 – A Moment for Yourself
At a time of sadness and loss, things often seem harder than they would at other times. And as well as the emotional side, there are also many practical things to deal with. And yet, writing a eulogy is far simpler than many people at first think.

For example, if you and I were to sit down and discuss the person who’s gone, and you were to tell me about them, their character, their life, and perhaps throw in a few stories about happy and funny times they had, then you could probably do that easily. It would be a natural conversation to have.

And the fact is that a eulogy is just like that. All you need do is gather some ‘building blocks’ of facts, stories, and examples of the person’s character and approach to life, and put them in an order that flows.

To make this easier, before you start writing it’s worth remembering something important. Which is that when you deliver the eulogy you will have an extremely sympathetic audience, a group of people who want you to do really well, who are 100% behind you, and who appreciate that by giving this speech you are helping them to remember the person who’s gone. Many of them will thank you afterwards, that’s for sure.

Another really useful thing to do is to set aside some time for yourself, without distractions (tell other people they’ll need to leave you alone for a while), and spend a while connecting with your memories of that special person. Every writer
needs to connect with their subject in this way, and in Chapter 1 you’ll find some really useful exercises to make this easy for you, even at the saddest of times.

**Step 2 – What Kind of Eulogy?**
There are two kinds of eulogy – the short biography, and the personal view. You simply need to choose one and stick to it. Chapter 2 describes each type, and tells you how to quickly decide on the right one for you.

In a nutshell, the short biography is where you talk about someone’s life as a whole. One benefit of this approach is that it acknowledges the many different aspects of someone’s life, and it can also be very personal, especially when you include true stories and memories.

The personal view is more a series of snapshots of the person’s character. It can be purely your own experiences, or can include other people’s memories too. This can be very immediate and personal, especially if you decide to write it as if you are talking to the person who has gone.

**Step 3 – Collect Your Building Blocks**
What if you could imagine floating up in a balloon, and looking down on someone’s life as a series of photographs and video clips laid out below you?

This step is about collecting those photos and clips, those ‘building blocks’ of your eulogy speech. In Chapter 3 you’ll find examples of areas you may like to cover and even a checklist of questions you can use for this process. You’ll also see a case study of building blocks collected for the eulogy for John, who grew up in the UK and moved to California via Canada.

**Step 4 – Bring Them Together**
Every eulogy has an opening, a middle and a closing.

For the opening and closing, certain conventions can be followed – if you want to follow them – and you’ll see short templates for opening and closing words in Chapter 4.

For the middle, you simply put your building blocks in order, usually chronological, and then link them together.

Chapter 4 shows you how to do this, and includes lists of suitable joining words and phrases you might use.
The case study of John’s eulogy is also taken further in this chapter, showing examples of bringing those blocks together for a short biography (by John’s daughter) and for a personal view (by John’s good friend).

**Step 5 – Rehearse and Refine**
This could be your single most important step.

You can read the eulogy through inside your mind, or say it out loud. As you do so you will hear where you want to make improvements.

And once you have made changes and refined the eulogy a couple of times, it’s **absolutely crucial** that you rehearse the delivery of the eulogy. This will make a huge difference to you, because a great speech, poorly delivered, is NOT a great speech.

The very best, most effective way of rehearsing is called ‘mental rehearsal’. This is the approach used by athletes when they run a race, or play a game inside their minds before the actual event. A famous example is the boxer Muhammad Ali, who was famous for successfully predicting which round he would win his fights. One reason for this was that he rehearsed each fight, in his mind, many times in advance, so he almost ‘knew’ in advance how things would go.

You can use this same approach to make sure you feel confident and relaxed about giving the eulogy, so that you both do a great job and you also don’t have to worry about it on the day. Chapter 5 shows you how.

**Step 6 – Delivering the Eulogy**
This is naturally the shortest of the six steps, because it will only last a few minutes.

Chapter 6 recommends some things to find out in advance if you can, e.g. approximately how many people will be there. This is because the more familiar you are with the situation you are going in to, the easier you will find it.

Plus there is a checklist of things to do on the day itself, so you leave nothing to chance and everything goes well, e.g. make two copies of the eulogy just in case, take a small bottle of water with you so you can keep your mouth and lips moist during the service and your speech, etc.
And Beyond...

In the chapters which follow the six steps, you’ll also find…

- Templates for Express Emergency Eulogies (Chapter 7). If you need a eulogy in less than 60 minutes, or you are really stuck, these templates have been carefully crafted so that you can simply print them off and fill in the gaps, giving you a eulogy which *sounds like* it has taken a lot longer to write.

- A good number of real-life Example Eulogies for all sorts of people of all ages and circumstances, you to model and get ideas from (Chapter 8).

- Advice on how to decide whether to write your speech out word-for-word, or speak from notes (you’ll choose which works best for you).

- Because poetry can capture and express emotion so well, it can be a great idea to include a short poem as part of the eulogy. You can of course scour the internet and find funeral poems, or buy a book of funeral poems for perhaps $30. Or you can simply turn to Chapter 9, where 21 of the most poignant, enduring funeral poems have been collected and reproduced for you.

- And sometimes an appropriate quote can add depth and color to your speech, which is why 71 of the most profound, and the most humorous, quotations about funerals, about death and about life, are gathered in Chapter 10, from sources ancient and modern, the famous and not-so-famous.

In addition, in Chapter 11 you’ll find advice on children and whether or not they should attend the funeral, plus Chapter 12 includes words and poems which might be appropriate in even the most challenging or difficult of circumstances surrounding a death and a funeral.

Finally, after the end of *How to Write and Deliver a Great Eulogy in Six Simple Steps*, are your two bonus guides, *Quick and Easy Public Speaking Confidence*, and *Famous Eulogies, from JFK to Princess Diana*. Your bonus On-the-Day-Checklist is at the end of Step 6.
1. Step 1: A moment for yourself

Writing and delivering a eulogy may be easier than you think. It can certainly be an honor and something you’ll find very rewarding.

You yourself know how these things can change over time – what seems difficult and even traumatic one day, can feel like a warm and special memory later on, as you look at it from a different point of view. And as you read the words that follow, you may find it easy to see yourself, say in six months time, looking back at this week and at a job well done, and knowing that you did something very special, and very important, both for the person who had died, and for those who lived on. And that can be a wonderful feeling, wouldn’t you say.

Firstly, it’s okay to cry and feel powerful emotions. That means now, that means while writing the eulogy, and that means while delivering it. Maybe you will cry, and maybe you won’t. It doesn’t matter, simply do what is right for you. To grieve is human and every human being knows that.

Secondly, there’s no such thing as a perfect eulogy. You could write ten different eulogies for this person, and each of them would be memorable and do the job wonderfully. So if you had any ideas of it having to be the perfect eulogy, of it having to meet some kind of fixed standard, now is the time to let them go.

You see, by following these six steps you will create and deliver something personal and special, which is what really matters, isn’t it.

How simple it can be

Perhaps you are experienced in writing and speaking, or perhaps you haven’t done either of these things since you were at school. It really doesn’t matter, because a eulogy is very simple.

If you can tell someone about your day, you can write a eulogy. That’s because a eulogy, like anything we say or write, is just a series of building blocks linked together by a phrase or two. The building blocks are the facts, stories and memories of a person’s life, and the linking phrases are simply words which help it flow, so that the listener moves smoothly from one building block to the next.
You do this already!

For example, imagine you went to a shopping mall and these were the plain facts, the building blocks…

- I went to the mall.
- It was sunny.
- I drove with the roof down.
- I saw Jane on the way.
- Jane has a new car, a blue Ford
- I met George at the mall.
- George and I had a salad for lunch.
- George told me a funny story about the basketball team.
- One of the kids had taken a really long shot from…
- I bought some black shoes.
- I bought some groceries.
- I got home at 4 o’clock.

If you were telling someone about your day, would you just list these facts like that? Of course not. You’d naturally and easily say something like this (linking phrases in italics)…

I went to the mall today. It was a beautiful day so I had the roof down on the car, and on the way I saw Jane in her new blue Ford. When I got there I met George and we went for lunch. He told me a funny story about the basketball team, which was that one of the kids had taken a really shot from… After that I went round the shops and bought some myself some black shoes, plus of course picked up some groceries. In the end I was home around 4.

Now, this is just a story of a day at the mall, but notice how easy and natural it is for you to link these facts together. In fact, you can’t avoid doing it, you do it every day.

Writing a eulogy is the same.

**Feeling right emotionally**

One question you may have is, “How can I feel the way I feel, and at the same time have the clarity and focus I need to do this job well?”

Here are two simple relaxation exercises which you may find extremely valuable in just a few minutes (read each through completely before you start). You can use these exercises now, and later, and at any time when they are useful to you.

You’ll find these exercises easiest and most effective when you sit with both feet flat on the floor, one hand on each thigh, and your head up and shoulders gently back. Or you can do them standing up if you prefer, with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands by your sides. Naturally do them somewhere you won’t be disturbed, and close your eyes if that makes it easier for you.
Connecting with the person who has died

You’ve probably been thinking a lot about the person who has died. But I wonder how you have been thinking about them.

Here is a simple process you can do to help you both feel good about the person, and your task at hand.

Read everything through before you start.

1. In your mind’s eye, picture the face of that special person.

2. Because the picture is in your mind’s eye, imagine that they look healthy, and younger, and that they are smiling at you. Give them a happy, calm face, and notice the love in their eyes for you.

3. Take a few moments to enjoy your sense of connection with the person as it grows inside you, seeing them happy and calm. You can also say a prayer if that works for you.

Putting yourself in the right frame of mind

Here is a really good exercise used by top athletes who want to run a great race – and it’s just as easy for you to use because you want to give a great eulogy. Remember to sit with your feet flat on the floor and your hands on your thighs, or to stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands by your sides, because this will give you the best results.

Read everything through before you start.

Part 1 – practice this on its own first

1. Think of a time in the past when you felt really calm and clear and focussed.

2. Now, take a moment to pretend you are back in that time and see what you saw, hear what you heard and feel how good you felt.

3. Make the colors in your mind’s eye brighter and bolder, and notice how that makes the good feeling even stronger.

continued…
Part 2

4. Now, while keeping the good feeling from Part 1 (do Part 1 again to get the feeling back if you need to), imagine you are in a movie theatre. You’re the only one there, and on the screen is a short movie about you, made up of highlights of you very successfully researching, writing and delivering the eulogy.

5. And guess what? Because you are the director of this movie, you can actually change and edit it so it goes just the way you like it.

6. So jump back to the beginning of the movie and watch it from there, seeing yourself doing everything right, and having everything go well. This means the research, the talking to other people, the writing and, naturally, the delivery on the day, all going great. If you don’t like a bit of it, stop, rewind a little, and change it so that you do like it.

Part 3

7. Now, once you’ve finished ‘editing’ and have watched the movie going well all the way through, it’s time for you to float up into that movie screen and experience the movie from the inside.

8. So step into the movie and run it again from the beginning, this time seeing through your own eyes, hearing through your own ears, and feeling how good it feels to be doing everything right and having everything go well.

9. If you want, repeat step 8 again, as many times as is right for you.

10. And when you’ve finished, open your eyes and notice how good you feel.

Once you have done this once, you can repeat it whenever you want just by doing Part 1 and Part 3.

And here are three more points to remember to help you feel good about what you are doing...

- Everybody who is at the funeral wants to remember the person who has died, and your eulogy will be helping them do exactly that. They will be very glad that you have spoken.

- Everybody who hears your eulogy wants you to do well. Whereas in other, very different speaking situations there might be people who could criticize or challenge what you say, this isn’t the case at a funeral. In short, a bit like at a wedding, you have
a most friendly, sympathetic and supportive ‘audience’. They will be willing you on all the way.

- You are doing something practical to help. Other people may be feeling frustrated and powerless, which is a natural reaction because death cannot be undone. Yet you are in a position to do something practical which you know will make a real difference to many, many people. How wonderful is that?

Now you are ready to really begin…
2. Step 2: What kind of eulogy?

Let’s keep things simple. There are essentially two kinds of eulogy...

1. **the short biography**, which tells of the ‘highlights’ of the person’s life, their relationships, achievements, passions, qualities, etc., plus can include memories and stories and personal experiences.

2. **the personal view**, which tells of stories, qualities and memories of the person, whether your relative, friend or colleague. These memories can be your own, or you can include ones from other people.

Let’s compare the two kinds...

*N.B. The two kinds are NOT completely separate, and a short biography will tend to also include personal memories, plus a personal view may include elements of biography and life story.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Short Biography</th>
<th>Personal View</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can be highly personal and moving and succeed in reminding everyone of the person they have come to honor and remember.</td>
<td>Can include stories – funny or otherwise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Includes the basic facts of someone’s life, e.g. their date of birth, names of parents, their first job. This can lend a fitting dignity to the eulogy.</td>
<td>Paints a picture of the person through personal memories and experiences, perhaps of yours and of other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gives you a framework to fit everything into, which helps the writing process.</td>
<td>Is less structured, though you may still tend to start at the beginning and end at the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There can only be one short biography at a funeral, perhaps on its own, or perhaps complemented by some personal views.</td>
<td>There may be one or more personal views at a funeral, perhaps in addition to a short biography.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is probably fairly comprehensive.</td>
<td>Can be very short, just a slice of how you feel, especially if a couple of other people are also speaking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So which kind is best for you and your situation?
If anyone else is speaking, find out what they are intending to say. If someone else is covering the short biography aspect, then your choice is made and you can provide a personal view.

If you are giving the only eulogy, or have been asked to deliver the main eulogy, then you are free to choose. Remember, a short biography does not have to cover everything – that would be impossible – and it gives you a clear framework to work with. Plus, some people would say that a funeral that doesn’t include the person’s date and place of birth, names of their parents and siblings, etc., is missing something.

Whatever you decide, you can do a great job.

**Real Life Example – More than one eulogy**

My brother-in-law, Anthony, was 36 when he died. At his funeral I delivered one eulogy, which had been composed by my wife on behalf of her family. My wife had made this of the short biography type, with lots of stories and personal memories set in broadly the order they happened in Anthony’s life. Two other eulogies were also given: Anthony’s wife read a personal and moving letter which she had written to Anthony in the days after his death, and one of Anthony’s work colleagues described a series of snapshots of the memories that he and his other colleagues had of Anthony.

This combination worked very well.

And here are a couple of other questions you may be asking yourself…

**How long should my eulogy be?**

There are no rules here. As a guide, between five and seven minutes is a good length, but longer or shorter can still make for an excellent eulogy. If there are multiple eulogies, you may decide to make it shorter than if you were giving the only one. Focus not on length, but on what you think is important to say.

Naturally if the service has a time limit to it (common in crematoria in the UK, but unlikely in a church or funeral home), then speak to the person co-ordinating things and find out how long you have.

**Is it okay to tell funny stories?**

At a funeral people do generally want to laugh and remember the good times. So yes, it’s perfectly okay to tell funny or even outrageous stories of things the person has said or done. Only you can judge what can be included, and what is best left out. If in doubt, you can always consult someone else whose opinion you trust.
If a person was generally agreed to have weaknesses or faults, should I mention them?
Because people want to remember the good times, the fond memories and the positive qualities a person had, these are definitely the things to focus on. At the same time, people do want to hear about the real person they knew and loved, and for most people that includes some quirks and shortcomings. So yes, it’s okay to mention gently, in passing, someone’s faults or weaknesses, as appropriate. This makes for a rounded eulogy that is true to the real person. If in doubt, err on the side of caution and keep those references very gentle and very brief.
3. Step 3: Collect your building blocks

Now you know the kind of eulogy you are creating, you can collect your building blocks together.

Bear in mind that at this stage you are collecting blocks – you won’t use them all, so just go ahead and gather as many as you reasonably can. We’ll sort them out and choose what to include in step 4.

**Short biography**

You can think of writing a short biography as like going up in a helicopter, or a balloon, floating above the person’s entire life, which you can see stretched out in pictures and video clips below you. Certain times stand out as important, key or funny moments in that life, don’t they, and your role is to simply see them, bring them together and share them with others.

You may find asking and answering the following questions helpful. Of course these are only suggestions – you can use them all, or just the ones which sound best to you. You may know many of the answers already, but it’s likely that a few phone calls to relatives and friends will help enormously, and give you new ideas for things to include. That way you’ll probably even discover things about the person that you never knew before.

Another thought is to bring key members of the family together and ask them for their ideas as a group. That way one memory will trigger another memory, so bringing out lots of great material, plus any uncertainties or contradictory recollections can be identified and resolved. (Sometimes this will mean being vague enough that you please everyone, which will be discussed more in the next step.)

**Birth**

Full name
Date and place of birth
Names of parents
Number of siblings, birth order, names of siblings
How did parents and/or siblings feel about the new baby?
How to Write and Deliver a Great Eulogy in Six Simple Steps

How name chosen
Funny stories, adventures, strong memories

Schooling
Which schools, where
Attitude to school in general, favorite and least favorite subjects, teachers, etc.
Funny stories, adventures, strong memories
Friends, first boy/girlfriends

College or university
Which, where
What studied, what enjoyed most about it
Social life
Funny stories, adventures, strong memories

Work
First job, where, how it went, what liked/disliked about it
Other jobs, career, career changes – when and why
Friends
Role of work in the person's life, e.g. their passion, to pay for more important family life,
gave their life great meaning, etc.
Successes, achievements, perhaps disappointments especially if they shaped a further
course of action
Funny stories, adventures, strong memories

Character and attitudes
Main character traits
Formative experiences
What did they think of the world, people, helping, giving, family, friendship, etc.
How they will be remembered

Friends and the family they were born into
Special friends, particularly close relations
Funny stories, adventures, strong memories

The family they helped create
Main partner – who, when and how met, nature of romance, time to marriage/setting up
home, the strengths in their relationship
Children – who, when, role in person's life, greatest joys and rewards of parenthood
Grandchildren – as above
Funny stories, adventures, strong memories
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**Interests**
What, when, where, with whom – from sport to crafts to politics to church to music, etc., etc.
Role of these in life
Funny stories, adventures, strong memories

**Holidays**
Favorite holidays, where, with whom, why loved it
Place would have loved to visit, and why
Funny stories, adventures, strong memories

**Plans**
Future plans unfulfilled, why held
Life long and full, achieved many things

Plus, remember that a short biography can include many aspects of a personal view too, so the questions which follow may also be of great use to you.

Here’s an example of the sort of building blocks you might gather.

---

**Case Study Part 1 – John’s short biography building blocks**

Some building blocks John’s daughter Mary has collected about him...

- Had happy childhood. Went to Fairfield Grammar School (same school as Cary Grant), loved sports and running in particular. Had good friend Peter who stayed his friend for life. One summer day he and Peter cycled 15 miles to Bath and went fishing. Set off home late afternoon and Peter got buckled wheel and had to leave his bike. John cycled with Peter sitting on the back of his bike all the way home, then cycled back with him the next morning so he could repair his bike and bring it home. Typical of John, who would do anything for a friend.
- Left school aged 16 to work in printing works. Told of bombing of Bristol by German planes, one night factory was bombed and he had lucky escape as the giant rolls of paper went up in flames around him.
- At 18 moved to Canada and worked on railroad construction. Loved the camaraderie and the pioneering feeling of being outdoors in remote areas, and seeing the mountains.
- In 1955 moved to Los Angeles for the weather and got maintenance job at MGM studios. Enjoyed his work, and over the years met many stars. Became head of maintenance by retirement in 1996.
In 1957 met Monica at work restaurant, married the following summer. Mary born 1959, Malcolm 1961. Loved his children deeply, very practical in helping them however he could, very proud when Malcolm joined US Army and became an officer.

Happiest days as parent were my wedding to Bob, and Malcolm’s marriage to Betty. Grandchildren Charles, Claire, Catherine and Christopher, loved taking them to Disneyland whenever they came over to visit.

He didn’t miss England, but did enjoy occasional trips back to see his brother and sister.

A kind and patient man, always with a smile and a friendly word. Loyal to his friends and family. Traditional view of fatherhood, so the children always knew where they stood. He wasn’t very affectionate physically to his kids, especially with Malcolm being the boy.

Peter followed to LA in 1961 and he and Pat stayed friends with John and Monica.

Etc.

**Personal view**

A personal view pulls together a series of snapshots and highlights which between them give a real flavor of who the person was.

It may be purely your own personal view, which is fine, or it may include stories and memories held by other people too. Either way here are some questions to answer which will help you generate building blocks for the finished eulogy. If you are presenting other people’s stories too, show them these questions and have them write or tell you their answers. You won’t be able to include everything, but this will give you lots of great material to choose from.

- What are my fondest memories of the person?
- How did we first meet?
- How and when did I decide that this person was special, the kind of person I’m glad to have known and spent time with?
- What funny stories do I know about them, including ones which they themselves loved to tell?
- What adventures did we have together, or do I know they had?
- What were their best qualities?
- And perhaps their most difficult qualities or habits?
- What will I miss about them most?
- If I could say one thing to them now, what would it be?
And once you’ve collected your building blocks, it’s time to move on to the next step.
4. Step 4:
Bring them together

Every eulogy has a beginning, a middle and an ending. It really is that simple.

But before we move on to that, here’s another question…

Are you going to write the eulogy out word for word, or are you going to use notes, for example cue cards?

Either way can work well, it’s up to you. Writing the eulogy out word for word has some advantages:

- You know exactly what you’re going to say before you say it.
- You can read it out easily, without having to think on your feet at all.
- The eulogy is recorded for posterity and copies can be given to relatives and friends who’d like them.
- Someone else could read it if for some reason you decided not to.
- You could still go off-script, and talk more conversationally or put in an extra story, if you wanted to.

(If you do write it word for word, I suggest you do so double-spaced (i.e. with a blank line in between each line of writing), as this makes it easy to keep and find your place when speaking.)

On the other hand, if you prefer speaking very naturally, you can speak entirely from notes or cue cards. I only recommend you do this if you are a confident speaker, though. And if you use cue cards, a good idea is to number them in the top right corner, and punch a hole in them all in the top left corner, and tie them all together with a piece of string. That way if you dropped the cards you would quickly and easily have them back in the right order, no problem. Also useful to color code the key words on the cards, making it easy for your eye to pick out each separate point you want to make.

Now, back to our structure…

For the beginning, opening words
You may wish to
- thank people for coming
• say how you know the person who has died and what an honor it is for you to be speaking
• remark on what a sad day this is (but perhaps also a day for celebrating a life?) and, for a short biography
• say when and where the person was born, etc.

Here’s an opening words template you can use and adapt.

Firstly, thank you for being here today. It means a lot to [me / us / the family] that you are here, and it would have meant a lot to [Name / my father / my brother…] too.

[Name in full] was born on [date], in [place]. [Name] was the [oldest / youngest / middle / only] child of [parents’ names], and had [one / two / three] brothers, [names] and [one / two / three] sisters, [names]. It may be easy for many of us, used to thinking of [Name] as a man in his [forties and fifties / fifties and sixties / sixties and seventies…] to forget what he must have been like as a vulnerable, new-born baby boy. And yet, of course, that is exactly what he was…

For the ending, closing words
You may wish to
• sum up the person’s main qualities
• say how much they will be missed
• thank people who have helped in recent days or months
• invite people back somewhere to continue sharing their memories

Here’s a closing words template you can use and adapt.

[Name] was a beloved [wife / mother / grandmother / daughter / sister / aunt / niece / friend / colleague… include all that apply], and she will be greatly missed.

As you know, [Name] had been ill for some time, and so the end, when it came, was [a shock but not entirely unexpected / in some ways welcome, relieving her as it did of her pain].

OR
As you know, [Name’s] death came suddenly and unexpectedly, and so is perhaps all the more hard for us to adjust to and accept. And yet the same time, we can perhaps be grateful that she did not suffer any prolonged illness, and was living a full life [right up until the end / until very near the end].

On behalf of the family I would like to thank [the medical staff at hospital/hospice, carers, anyone else who has helped] for what they have done for [Name] and the family in recent [days / times]. And I’d like to invite you to come back to [house / hotel / reception] after the service for refreshments, and to continue sharing your memories of [Name].
For the middle
This is where you pull your building blocks together.

When you look through them, it will be clear to you that some things simply must be included. Mark those things on your paper, and you have made a good start. What you ask yourself next will depend on the kind of eulogy you are creating, as you’ll see on the next page.

What about building blocks which contradict each other?

If you find that people you talk to have different opinions about the facts of the person’s life, or about their character, you may be wondering what to do.

The main thing is to honor what everyone says, without offending or flatly contradicting anybody.

With regard to disagreements over facts, your best approach here is to be vague.

For example, if someone says Rose moved to Ohio in 1947, and someone else says it was 1949, in your eulogy you can say, “In the late 1940's, Rose moved to Ohio.” If yet another person believes it was 1951, make it, “A few years after WWII, Rose moved to Ohio.”

Similarly, if someone says Alan’s first job was in a gas station, while someone else thinks it was in a convenience store, you can say, “Alan’s first job was in retail, serving the public.”

For disagreements over character, it’s often wise to explicitly acknowledge the differing points of view, as otherwise some people may feel that their experience is being totally ignored.

For instance, my grandfather Tom was a great grandfather to me and my cousins, but not always that warm towards his own children, our parents. So I said things like, “It may be true that Tom was not always the warmest of fathers, but it’s also very clear that he loved his kids, and wanted nothing but the best for them.” And later on I said, “And it was as a grandparent that, like some others of his generation, Tom perhaps found it easiest to be warm, and he certainly made the most of his time with the younger generation.”

In the same way, if one of Jane’s sisters is convinced she was loyal and trustworthy, while her other sister swears she was disloyal and two-faced, it would be unhelpful for you to represent only one of these views. Rather, something like, “Jane was a complex character. At her best she was extremely loyal and trustworthy, someone you could rely on wholeheartedly. And then at other times she could quickly switch allegiances when it
suited her purpose to do so.” Or you could keep the mention of this very brief, noting for example that, “Jane was often loyal, and sometimes not.”

So long as you speak with the intention of including and acknowledging everyone’s point of view, you will strike a good balance.

**Short biography**

Look at the unmarked building blocks you have remaining, and ask yourself, “Which things are most important to include to give a rounded view of the person’s life?” Mark those too, perhaps in a different color.

Now, take a moment to look at the parts that are marked, and then at the parts that aren’t. Ask, “Are there any times or aspects of their life which are not yet represented? Am I missing anything out?” For example, if you find that there is no mention of their first career, you may decide to include something about it, or just mention it in passing. Either way this is another building block, to be added to the “marked” group.

Next, ask, “What else would it be good to include, which would make the eulogy warmer, funnier or more loving?” Mark those things, perhaps in a different color again.

And finally, check, “Am I missing out anyone’s perspective or strongly held opinion here?” For instance, if the person had four children, three of whom loved him dearly, and one of whom never forgave him for the beatings he received as a child, it’s probably not best to simply describe him as “a wonderful father”. Rather, you might say that “he could be both a loving father, and a stern one, a disciplinarian”. That way everyone’s point of view is acknowledged and included, which is a very important thing for close family members.

Now you are ready to put things in sequence. Arrange your building blocks in broadly the order that they happened (this is unlikely to be perfect, as work and family are almost bound to overlap in time, for example). Now it is simply a question of joining the blocks together, and fine tuning things so that the story flows. For instance, at the end of this section is a list of linking phrases you can use to join blocks together. You’ll find that some blocks will easily flow from one another, while some will be a bit more of a jump – for these, you can say things like, “Moving to another time…” or “Meanwhile, another aspect of [Name’s] life…”

Take a look at the first part of John’s eulogy below, which is based on the building blocks laid out in the last section. From this example you can naturally begin to see how things can fit together for you too.
Case Study Part 2a – John’s short biography, by his daughter Mary

How Mary might put some of those building blocks together…

“Hello and welcome. I'd like to thank you for being here today. As John’s daughter I can say on behalf of the family that it means a lot to us to see you here, and I know it would have meant a lot to Dad too.

John was born John Robert Johnson, on April 7, 1931 in Bristol, England. He was the second child of Jason and Jane, and a young brother to Janice. It may be easy for many of us, used to thinking of John as a strong, adult man in his 50s, 60s and 70s, to forget what he must have been like as a vulnerable new-born baby boy, but of course that's exactly what he was.

Dad had a happy childhood, and went to Fairfield Grammar School which, as he was fond of saying, was the same school which Cary Grant had been expelled from some years earlier when he was still known as Archie Leach. It was at school that he met Peter, who was to become a lifelong friend. Peter tells of one time when at the age of 13 they both cycled off the 15 miles to Bath to go fishing for the day. As they set off home after a day in the sun, Peter buckled his front wheel and couldn’t ride his bike. So John gave him a lift on his bike the whole way home, and then gave him a lift back the next morning with a spare wheel so he could repair the bike and bring it back. And such kindness, such loyalty to friends was of course a feature of John for the rest of his life too.

John left school at 14 and went to work in a printing works. At this time there was still occasional German bombing of Bristol going on, and one night he had a lucky escape when a bomb hit the factory and the giant rolls of paper went up in flames around him. Perhaps this explains why in later life John wasn’t afraid of things that seem to cause fear in most normal people.

A few years later he first moved to Canada and got a job on construction on the railroad. During this time he loved being outdoors, working physically hard, and seeing the mountains and the wilderness. And he also greatly enjoyed the camaraderie, the bond which exists between men working in those kinds of situations. After a few years, though, he got fed up with the cold winters, and moved down to Los Angeles for the warmth and sunshine, where he was lucky to get a job at MGM studios almost immediately. He liked his work on the maintenance side, and stayed there right up until he retired in 1996, by which time he was heading up that side of the studio.

continued…
However, work was never the most important thing in Dad’s life – that, clearly, was family. John met Monica at work one day in 1957 in the staff restaurant, took her out dancing that evening and swept her off her feet. He always said that when he saw her long blonde hair, the rest was history. So they were married the next summer, and in 1959 I was born, with Malcolm coming along two years later in 1961. As a father, Dad had a traditional view, so as kids we always knew where we stood. Although he wasn’t the most physically affectionate man, he showed his love for us in many ways, including the way he was always there for us, ready to lend a practical helping hand whenever we needed it, either as kids or as adults. In that he never changed. I know he was particularly proud when Malcolm joined the US Army and the day he graduated the officer training program. I also know he loved our wedding days, mine to Bob and Malcolm’s to Betty – I’ll always remember the modest speech he made at my wedding, and the generous and kind way he welcomed Bob into the family.

And as you would expect, grandchildren were a major part of his life in later years. When we came to town with Charles and Claire, or Malcolm and Betty came with Catherine and Christopher, Dad was always so excited and would take the kids to Disneyland whenever he could. And I know that going with Dad made the visit all the more special for the kids.

Also important to Dad was friendship. And this is shown so well by the way he talked about Peter’s decision to move out here in 1961. After nearly 12 years apart, and just letters between them, they were reunited at last, and Mom and Dad have stayed best friends with Peter and Pat ever since. I know that they will miss him just as we will.

etc…”

**Personal view**

With a personal view, choosing what to include is even simpler.

You have marked the building blocks which you feel must obviously be included.

Look at the remainder, and ask, “Which things are most important to include to give a full impression of the person I knew?” Mark those in a different color.

Next, ask, “What else would it be good to include, which would make the eulogy warmer, funnier or more loving?” Mark those in another color.

And finally, if you are presenting other people’s memories as well as your own, ask, “Am I missing out anyone’s point of view here, and if so what can I include to make sure they are acknowledged and represented?” For instance, if the eulogy is for a work colleague,
How to Write and Deliver a Great Eulogy in Six Simple Steps

and you gather stories from three other people who worked with you, it’s probably best to include at least one story from each person, even if that means cutting a good story in favor of a weaker one, because a good eulogy makes everyone feel included.

Case Study Part 2b – A personal view of John, by his friend Peter
(see Parts 1 and 2a for background to this)

“John and I have known each other for a long time. As Mary has said, we grew up together in Bristol during the war, and he has been a special friend to me ever since.

You’ve already heard about the time when we were lads and he gave me a lift back from Bath on his bike, and then a lift back to Bath the next day. And that was just one story, I could tell you a whole lot more. Like the time when…[tell story]

After the war, when John left for Canada I was very sad to see him go, and I made a promise that I’d follow him out later, when the time was right. He kept me updated with his letters, and when he settled in Los Angeles and met Monica and had the kids, my determination doubled, and off I went.

Well, moving to a new country is always hard, but John made it easy for me. He and Monica welcomed me into their lives in LA, introduced me to their friends, and really helped me settle down. Since then of course we’ve enjoyed many wonderful times. I’ll always remember the day that…[tell story]

And as Monica says, John was a fun guy to be around. One of her best memories is how he used to keep her doubled over with laughter when we went to…[tell story]

Real friendship is a precious thing. For me, John was the best friend you could hope for. He was always there with a helping hand, always loyal, and always reliable. And, for that, I will remember him, and be forever grateful.”

Finally, on the next page are some other useful linking phrases. There are many more you can use, of course, and if a word appears in brackets below, it means that phrase can be used with or without that word, e.g. “In addition, John enjoyed football…” or “In addition to his family, John was also passionate about football…”

But all this is only guidelines – simply say what feels right.

The first thing I’d like to say is…
Firstly…
To begin with…
Secondly…
The next phase in [Name’s] life was…
This is illustrated by…

For example…
In other words…
Furthermore…
In spite of (that)…
While it may be true (that)…
Soon after…”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Therefore...</td>
<td>With this in mind...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result / consequence...</td>
<td>In addition (to)...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the same time...</td>
<td>For this reason...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarly...</td>
<td>Above all...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As you would expect...</td>
<td>In fact...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As you (probably) know...</td>
<td>Next (came)...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Later...</td>
<td>Finally...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home...</td>
<td>In conclusion...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However...</td>
<td>In closing...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the other hand...</td>
<td>I’d like to close by / with...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the contrary...</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5. Step 5:
Rehearse and refine

Now that you have the eulogy mapped out before you, in sequence, you can rehearse it in different ways.

Throughout this step you may see and hear things you want to change and improve. That’s good, and by all means go ahead and make those changes, so long as you realize that you have to stop changing it sometime. It will never be 100% “perfect”, there are many ways you could do this right, and there will come a point when you stop and think, “Yes, this is good enough.”

If you decide the eulogy is too long, for example, you can take things out. This is where the different colors you used to mark the building blocks can be useful, because the things that were least important to include are naturally the first things to remove if you do need to do this.

Ways to rehearse

Read the eulogy through in your head. This is the simplest way of rehearsing it and spotting things you’d like to change. A useful first step, but if you have time use some of these other approaches too, especially mental rehearsal.

Read the eulogy out loud. Guess what, it will sound different out loud than it did inside your mind. Plus you are practicing saying the actual words.

Read the eulogy out loud to someone else. This can be useful provided you choose someone who you know will give you positive, constructive feedback. If you have someone you can trust to make perhaps two or three suggestions, and who will also tell you what they like about the eulogy, that’s useful. Whereas if the person you have in mind is likely to pick apart what you’ve written, then you are better off keeping it to yourself.

Read the eulogy out loud and record it, then play it back and listen. This too can be useful. If you like the sound of your recorded voice then go ahead, as it’s like hearing the eulogy with fresh ears. If you have never recorded yourself before, by all means try it out too. But if you don’t like the sound of your recorded voice, turn it off and forget this approach. Remember, you will sound different inside your mind than you do outside, to others. That’s true for everyone. And the vast majority of people do not like...
the sound of their own recorded voice, because it is different. So if this method doesn’t work for you, leave it and move on.

**Mentally rehearse.** *This is the best way to prepare yourself.* In a famous example of the value of mental rehearsal, a basketball team was split into two groups to practice ‘free throws’. One group went on court and physically practiced taking the shots, while the other group sat down and mentally rehearsed doing it in their minds.

What happened next was very interesting. When the two groups came back together and competed with each other to see who did best, the mental rehearsal group actually outscored the group who had physically practiced. How so? Because the practice group had got some practice shots in the basket and missed some others, whereas the mental rehearsal group, in their minds, had naturally scored every single basket – they had never missed a shot! They had conditioned their minds for things to go well, and this positively affected their performance.

This works because your unconscious mind – the part of you that lets you do things without thinking about them, like beating your heart, walking down the street, and tying your shoelaces – cannot tell the difference between a real experience and one that is vividly imagined. And anyone who has had an extremely vivid and realistic dream at night naturally knows just how true this is.

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**Mental Rehearsal**

What follows is very similar to the *Putting yourself in the right frame of mind* exercise in Step 1.

And once you are familiar with the process, you can do this in just a few minutes.

It’s best to sit with both feet flat on the floor, one hand on each thigh, and your head up and shoulders gently back. Or you can do the rehearsal standing up if you prefer, with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands by your sides. Naturally choose somewhere you won’t be disturbed, and close your eyes if that makes it easier for you.

Read everything through before you start.

**Part 1 – practice this on its own first**

1. Think of a time in the past when you felt really calm and clear and focussed.

*continued...*
2. Now, take a moment to pretend you are back in that time and see what you saw, hear what you heard and feel how good you feel.

3. Make the colors in your mind’s eye brighter and bolder, and notice how that makes the good feeling even stronger.

Part 2
4. Now, while keeping the good feeling from Part 1 (do Part 1 again to get the feeling back if you need to), imagine you are in a movie theatre. You’re the only one there, sitting in the front row, and on the screen is a short movie showing you very successfully delivering the eulogy on the day of the funeral. The movie runs from you setting off for the venue, right through to you being with people after the service. It’s a highlights movie, and includes scenes from you setting off for the funeral, you making your way there, your arrival, you being there during the service, you walking up and delivering the eulogy, you sitting down afterwards, and you leaving at the end with everyone else. And because delivering the eulogy is the most important part of the movie, it’s also the part which is shown in most detail, the part which gets most screen time.

5. Now, because this is your movie and you are the director and the editor, you can easily change it and make it just the way you want it to be

6. So, keeping the feeling from Part 1, go back to the beginning of the movie and watch it from there, seeing yourself going through all the parts of the day again, and making the movie even better this time. Perhaps you will see yourself sometimes calm, and sometimes grieving in the right way for you – you decide. And make sure that for the eulogy part of the movie, you can see yourself delivering it with confidence and feeling, all while breathing naturally and easily. You may see yourself looking up at the audience, and really connecting with them, and you can see your audience looking moved by your words, and appreciative of you and what you have said. You may even notice people afterwards going up to you and thanking you for what you have done to make the day so personal and memorable. And if for some reason you don’t like a section of the movie, stop it, rewind a little, and change it until it’s good for you.

Part 3
7. Now, once you’ve finished ‘editing’ and have watched the movie going well all the way through, it’s time for you to float up into the movie screen and run the movie from the inside, seeing it all through your own eyes.

8. So step into the movie and run it again from the beginning, this time seeing things through your own eyes, hearing everything through your own ears, and continued…
feeling how good it feels to be doing everything right and having everything go well.

9. If you want, repeat step 8 again, as many times as is right for you.

10. And when you've finished, open your eyes and notice how good you feel.

You can perform this mental rehearsal as many times as you want, including on the morning of the funeral itself, just by doing Part 1 and Part 3.

And as any of the notes and questions in Step 6, below, bring you new information, you can anytime include them in your movie to make it even more realistic and useful to you by going through all three Parts again, i.e. 1, 2 and 3.

And remember, throughout this entire step you are getting more and more used to breathing naturally and easily, all while delivering the eulogy naturally and easily too.

The bonus section at the end of this book, Quick and Easy Public Speaking: Confidence, contains more exercises and tips you can use to feel confident and assured in this and any other speaking situation.

And once you have rehearsed in this way, actually delivering the eulogy becomes a natural next step.
6. Step 6: Delivering the eulogy

There are some questions you may be asking in advance...

- **Where** will you be speaking? If possible, take a look a day or two beforehand, or arrive in good time on the day so you can orient yourself.

- **How many people** will be there, approximately?

- Will there be a **microphone**? The chances are that yes, there will be a microphone, and it will be the kind of microphone where you just stand normally and talk normally and it will pick up your voice in just the right way.

- Will there be a **lectern**? Again, chances are that there will be. And if so this will almost certainly be where the microphone is, which makes it the best place to stand. Another advantage of a lectern is that it gives you somewhere to put your notes and keeps them steady.

- **When** are you speaking? If you know in advance, great. If not, you can look in the printed Order of Service when you arrive, or you can at least ask the person presiding for some indication of when you are up.

**Practical Steps**

- On the morning of the funeral, be sure to take some **time for yourself**, even if only a few minutes. If you’ve been mentally rehearsing, you can sit quietly and do so again. At the very least, take some time to close your eyes and breathe deeply, and remember why you are doing what you are doing today.

- If it’s right for you, say a prayer and connect with your higher power, asking for and receiving all the guidance and help you need to have things go really well.

- **Make two copies** of the eulogy and pack them both early on.

- Have the eulogy printed or written **double-spaced**, i.e. with a blank line in between each line of writing. This makes it easy to keep your place in what you are reading, particularly as you look from the sheet, to the audience, and back to the sheet while you are talking.
• You know how children use a finger to guide their eye when they are reading? Well, you may find it useful to do the same, and this is especially easy when you are using a lectern. Again, as with double-spacing, this allows you to look up at the audience, pause if you need to, etc., and still come back to where you were in the eulogy, easily and seamlessly. Remember, no one will notice your finger and no one will care. What they will notice is you delivering a fluent and meaningful eulogy. This is a technique I often use myself.

• If you want extra confidence, you can ask someone to be your back up person, someone who could take over the eulogy if you decided not to deliver it. Give this person a copy of the eulogy in advance, or at least as soon as you arrive for the funeral, so they can become familiar with it. And remember that, in my experience of hundreds of funerals, I have never, ever known anyone to be unable to deliver a eulogy. In other words, however you may feel beforehand, the fact is that everyone I’ve ever seen has found that they didn’t need the back up person, and were able to deliver the eulogy themselves. This even includes my sister-in-law, who was widowed in her mid-thirties and left with two small children. She was naturally upset at Anthony’s funeral, but she did stand up and read her personal letter to him, and she is pleased to have done so. The point of a back up person is not to step in and read the eulogy, but to give you the security blanket, the comfort of knowing that there is someone there for you if you need them. In my experience, this is enough.

• Remember that it’s okay to show emotion – if you need to pause during the eulogy, do so. Everyone will understand. Have some tissues on your person (i.e. not in a handbag left back at your seat) in case you need them.

• Take a small bottle of water. You can take sips throughout the service to keep your mouth and lips moist, and take the bottle up with you if you like.
How to Write and Deliver a Great Eulogy in Six Simple Steps

Bonus:

On-The-Day Checklist

Your other “bonuses” are at the end of this document, but it makes most sense to include this one here...

On the Day

- Clear on times for leaving here and getting there
- Two copies of eulogy/notes
- Small bottle of water
- Handkerchief/tissues
- Back-up person in place
- Time for yourself to reflect/pray/get centered
- Final run-through and/or mental rehearsal
- Get present to the huge difference you are making by doing this today

Finally, I acknowledge you for your commitment and love. Please know that you giving this eulogy today will have a ripple effect far beyond what you will ever imagine. Really.

∞∞∞
7. Express

Emergency Eulogies

If you need a eulogy in 60 minutes or less, this section is for you.

On the following pages are two fill-in-the-blanks outlines – one for a woman, one for a man – which you can complete with the words that fit your situation.

The lines have been spaced out so that, if you’re really pushed for time, you can simply print out the appropriate pages and write in your relevant facts above and between the lines. Then pop the pages in your pocket and you’re ready to go.

Remember that if a particular phrase, paragraph or sentence doesn’t apply, or you don’t know the information, you can simply change it or leave it out altogether.

If the person you are eulogising died young, see the Unusual or Difficult Situations section for more words you can include.

At the end of this you will have a personal and meaningful eulogy, which will be appreciated by all who hear it.
Eulogy for a woman...

Firstly, thank you for being here today. It means a lot to [me / us / the family] that you are here, and it would have meant a lot to [Name / my mother / my sister...] too.

[Name in full] was born on [date], in [place]. [Name] was the [oldest / youngest / middle / only] child of [parents’ names], and had [one / two / three] sisters, [names] and [one / two / three] brothers, [names]. It may be easy for many of us, used to thinking of [Name] as a woman in her [forties and fifties / fifties and sixties / sixties and seventies...] to forget what she must have been like as a vulnerable, new-born baby girl. And yet, of course, that is exactly what she was.

At school [Name] [excelled / was dedicated / was bored / did well without trying hard...] because [she loved to learn / she valued education and what it can do for you / she preferred to do practical things / of her natural talent...], and the things she loved most about that time included [history / sports / annoying her teachers / spending time with her friends [names] / dreaming about her plans for the future, which were...].

[She / someone else] used to say that when she was growing up, [she/they would get into all sorts of adventures like one time when... / she/they would spend lots of time playing games / riding bikes / dressing up...], and [Name] was known as someone who was [always ready to have fun / play sport / dress up extravagantly...].
At home, family life was [loving and secure / lively and competitive / tough for [Name] because...], and it’s [easy / surprising] to see how [much / little] this shaped her attitudes in later life, when he was such a [loving / helpful / strong / supportive / tenacious / private...] woman.

Later, [Name] went on to [university / college / training] at [name of institution]. This was a time of change and new independence, and she really enjoyed the [freedom / learning / parties / people...] of that part of her life. One story from that time is how she [tell story which illustrates some aspect of her personality, and yes it can be a funny story...]

[Name’s] first real job was as a [job title] at [place of work] in [location], which she [loved / hated / was happy enough with], and she went on to [work there for life / switch jobs and careers every 2 years / become an actress...]. Work was [an important / only a minor] part of [Name’s] life, and [gave her... / much more important to her was...].

[Name] had [many / a small number of] close friends over the years, and [someone / some people] who [was / were] to be particularly significant in her life [was / were] [name(s)], who she met [at school / at university / in home town / in big city]. One time she and [name(s)] [went travelling to... / took the bus to... / organized a party at...] and [tell story]. This of course [was / was not] typical of [Name].
As you would expect, one relationship which was central to [Name’s] life on this earth was the one she enjoyed with [name]. They met at [a dance / work / a train station / through friends] in [year] and were married [within 6 months / in year]. Together they went on to build a home, and of course to have [one / two / three] children, [names], who [Name] cared for and loved deeply and was so proud of. Plus in later years [Name] was lucky enough to have [two / three / eight] grandchildren, [names], who were naturally a source of such joy to her.

[Name] was passionate about [dancing / kids / politics / life / gardening], and this was never more clear than when [tell story to illustrate].

And as many people have said to me recently, [Name] was a [list character traits] woman. Personally, one of the things I’ll always remember, and always carry with me, is [that Name was describe special quality / how Name describe memory of yours...].

[Name] was a beloved [wife / mother / grandmother / daughter / sister / aunt / niece / friend / colleague... include all that apply], and she will be greatly missed.

As you know, [Name] had been ill for some time, and so the end, when it came, was [a shock but not entirely unexpected / in some ways welcome, relieving her as it did of her pain].
As you know, [Name’s] death came suddenly and unexpectedly, and so is perhaps all the more hard for us to adjust to and accept. And yet the same time, we can perhaps be grateful that she did not suffer any prolonged illness, and was living a full life [right up until the end / until very near the end].

On behalf of the family I would like to thank [the medical staff at hospital/hospice, carers, anyone else who has helped] for what they have done for [Name] and the family in recent [days / times]. And I’d like to invite you to come back to [house / hotel / reception] after the service for refreshments, and to continue sharing your memories of [Name].

Now go back to step 6, Delivering the eulogy, for practical things to check before you leave for the funeral.
Eulogy for a man...

Firstly, thank you for being here today. It means a lot to [me / us / the family] that you are here, and it would have meant a lot to [Name / my father / my brother...] too.

[Name in full] was born on [date], in [place]. [Name] was the [oldest / youngest / middle / only] child of [parents' names], and had [one / two / three] brothers, [names] and [one / two / three] sisters, [names]. It may be easy for many of us, used to thinking of [Name] as a man in his [forties and fifties / fifties and sixties / sixties and seventies...] to forget what he must have been like as a vulnerable, new-born baby boy. And yet, of course, that is exactly what he was.

At school [Name] [excelled / was dedicated / was bored / did well without trying hard...] because [he loved to learn / he valued education and what it can do for you / he preferred to do practical things / of his natural talent...], and the things he loved most about that time included [history / sports / annoying his teachers / hanging out with his friends [names] / dreaming about his plans for the future, which were...].

[He / someone else] used to say that when he was growing up, [he/they would get into all sorts of adventures like one time when... / he/they would spend lots of time playing games / riding bikes / chatting to girls...], and [Name] was known as someone who was [always ready to have fun / play sport / meet the young ladies of the area...].
At home, family life was [loving and secure / lively and competitive / tough for [Name] because...], and it’s [easy / surprising] to see how [much / little] this shaped his attitudes in later life, when he was such a [loving / helpful / strong / supportive / disciplined / private...] man.

Later, [Name] went on to [university / college / training] at [name of institution]. This was a time of change and new independence, and he really enjoyed the [freedom / learning / parties / people...] of that part of his life. One story from that time is how he [tell story which illustrates some aspect of his personality, and yes it can be a funny story...]

[Name’s] first real job was as a [job title] at [place of work] in [location], which he [loved / hated / was happy enough with], and he went on to [work there for life / switch jobs and careers every 2 years / become a lion tamer...]. Work was [an important / only a minor] part of [Name’s] life, and [gave him... / much more important to him was...].

[Name] had [many / a small number of] close friends over the years, and [someone / some people] who [was / were] to be particularly significant in his life [was / were] [name(s)], who he met [at school / at university / in home town / in big city]. One time he and [name(s)] [went travelling to... / took the bus to... / organized a party at... ] and [tell story]. This of course [was / was not] typical of [Name].
As you would expect, one relationship which was central to [Name’s] life on this earth was the one he enjoyed with [name]. They met at [a dance / work / a train station / through friends] in [year] and were married [within 6 months / in year]. Together they went on to build a home, and of course to have [one / two / three] children, [names], who [Name] loved deeply and was so proud of. Plus in later years [Name] was lucky enough to have [two / three / eight] grandchildren, [names], and they were naturally a source of much joy to him.

[Name] was passionate about [watching football / playing golf / politics / life / gardening], and this was never more clear than when [tell story to illustrate].

And as many people have said to me recently, [Name] was a [list character traits] man.

Personally, one of the things I’ll always remember, and always carry with me, is [that Name was describe special quality / how Name describe memory of yours...].

[Name] was a beloved [husband / father / grandfather / son / brother / uncle / nephew / friend / colleague... include all that apply], and he will be greatly missed.

As you know, [Name] had been ill for some time, and so the end, when it came, was [a shock but not entirely unexpected / in some ways welcome, relieving him as it did of his pain].
OR

As you know, [Name’s] death came suddenly and unexpectedly, and so is perhaps all the more hard for us to adjust to and accept. And yet the same time, we can perhaps be grateful that he did not suffer any prolonged illness, and was living a full life [right up until the end / until very near the end].

On behalf of the family I would like to thank [the medical staff at hospital/hospice, carers, anyone else who has helped] for what they have done for [Name] and the family in recent [days / times]. And I’d like to invite you to come back to [house / hotel / reception] after the service for refreshments, and to continue sharing your memories of [Name].

Now go back to step 6, Delivering the eulogy, for practical things to check before you leave for the funeral.
8. Example Eulogies

Eulogy for a grandfather, Thomas Owen Westfallen, 1925 – 1999

This is the first eulogy I ever wrote, for my grandfather Tom. In gathering my building blocks I spoke to my mother, my aunts and uncle, and my cousins, as well as drawing on all the memories I had.

Tom could be both wonderful and giving, and also a difficult person to know, so it was important for me to acknowledge and include the varying views and experiences that people had, as you’ll see.

Because I originally delivered this eulogy from notes on cue cards, some years ago, it is bound to differ from what was actually said, but the broad brush strokes remain the same.

This is an example of a short biography eulogy.

I’m feeling pretty nervous about this, so please forgive me if I say the wrong thing.

Tom was born Thomas Owen Westfallen on 29 March 1921, in Streatham, south London, the brother of Barbara, Dolly, Violet and Eric.

It’s probably fair to say that Tom’s childhood wasn’t as easy as it might have been, as money was tight, and his father was a distant man who could sometimes be cruel. For example, when Tom was 11 he took the “11-plus” entrance exam for the local grammar school. Before the exam, his dad told him that if Tom got into the school he would have to go there in his normal clothes, as his dad wouldn't pay for the school uniform. So the young Tom went into that exam room and failed the exam on purpose, because he wouldn’t have been able to stand the humiliation. I think the frustration, the anger he felt at having his potential thwarted like this stayed with him for the rest of his life, and perhaps helps explain the resentment he sometimes felt towards aspects of the world.

After school, Tom joined the Navy during the war, which was naturally a time of change and of danger. I remember as a kid asking him, “What was the nearest you came to dying in the war?” and him telling me about a time when the ship was torpedoed and he ended up swimming in the water, with the sea around him ablaze with flaming oil which had spilled out from the ship's engines. But of course he survived. He did pick up one injury though, which was to his hearing when he was standing too close to a gun when it went off. As anyone who had a conversation with Tom in the following 55 years well knows, that bang made him deaf in one ear. And it also perhaps started other problems, such as
the Meniere’s disease he was diagnosed with, which affected his balance and gave him sickening spells of dizziness, which he would sometimes control with alcohol.

Of course it was during the war that Tom met Pat, and after a brief romance they were married when Tom was on leave one time in Streatham in 1945. Like so many people of that time they didn’t get much of a honeymoon, as Tom was back on ship just days after the wedding.

A few years later, in 1950, Jocelyn was born, and in due course Laura, Adrian and Liz came along too. It may be true that Tom was not always the warmest of fathers, but it’s also very clear that he loved his kids, and wanted nothing but the best for them. He desperately wanted them to have the opportunities he had been denied, and was very proud, for example, when Jocelyn passed her 11-plus exam and went to grammar school. He had no hesitation in cashing in an insurance policy especially so that, yes, he had the money to buy her school uniform. In fact, all his children did well academically at school, which is something he valued and took great pride in.

In 1954 Tom’s work in the civil service meant he got a promotion to work on the administration side at the prison on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent, which is where the family moved to, and where Adrian and Liz were born. It’s here that Jocelyn and Laura remember him building them a swing in the front garden at Chequers. And then some time later another promotion took the family to Southend, just literally a few days before I was born in 1967.

As you know things didn’t always work out between Tom and Pat, and in 1978 they separated. Painful as this naturally was for everyone concerned, it also gave Tom a chance, over time, to get to know his children in a different way, and likewise for them to get to know him. Tom and Adrian, for instance, for quite a while used to go and play snooker together every weekend.

Tom’s grandchildren started arriving with me in 1967, followed by Laura’s sons Robin, Matthew and Tom, and later Liz’s children Thomas and Holly.

And it was as a grandparent that, like some others of his generation, Tom perhaps found it easiest to be warm, and he certainly made the most of his time with the younger generation. Robin and Matthew remember how he would take them to Great Yarmouth for the afternoon when they lived in Suffolk, and they had a great time. As for myself, when I left home aged 17, Tom and Adrian both provided me with much support, and Tom found me lodgings in a house across the road from him. And later, I lived with him for a while, which meant getting to know him in a totally different way, and he was always generous and kind to me, and I felt lucky to have him there.

And what of Tom’s passions? He was certainly keen on his music. His mother was a good piano player, and could play by ear, though not read music, and Tom both learned to
play and taught himself to read music from an early age. Of course he was particularly
delighted on the day, around 15 years ago, that he got his first organ, and while his poor
hearing meant he didn't always hit all the right notes, it also ensured that the music was
sweet and pure to his ear, even if others had their own thoughts!

His sense of humour – loving puns and wordplays which had other people groaning –
was very characteristic and something some members of the family have inherited,
although opinion is divided on to what extent that's a good thing! He was also a great
amateur historian, determined to teach himself and acquire knowledge for himself,
despite the disadvantage he'd been put at aged 11. And he was an expert at crosswords,
doing the Telegraph cryptic every day, often before breakfast.

And another thing which energized Tom in later years was his investments, such as
buying shares and monitoring the prices daily in the Telegraph, and also splitting his
house into flats and selling off the upstairs. This seemed to give him a feeling of security,
of financial independence which he had perhaps yearned for all of his life, and he was, I
know, glad to know that he would be able to leave some sort of legacy for his four
children.

Also, speaking to Tom's sisters and his nieces and nephews, it's clear that Tom could be
the life and soul of the party at times, and was someone they were always glad to see.
And once everyone had moved away and there was no other family left in Southend,
Tom realized a long-held dream when he moved down to the south coast to be near his
sisters and their families. It is of course sad that the time they had down here together, all
in good health and enjoying retirement, was limited by Tom's declining health, and him
having to move into the residential care home.

At the end of the day, though, how much better it is that he did make it down here, he
did realize his dream and he did get to have that short time of happiness and fulfilment,
being among his family again.

The recent months and weeks have been difficult for all of us, Tom included. But now
that that time is at an end, one thing is sure; Tom, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, and
great-uncle, you will be sadly missed.

This eulogy was read on behalf of the family, and is written as if coming from a group voice, which is why the word “I” doesn’t appear, and the word “we” does. As you’ll see, it is also mid-way between a short biography and a personal view – it tells stories and anecdotes, and shares feelings, and sets these broadly within a framework of life events. All this shows that there are few rules to a eulogy – however you do it will be right.

Robert was born in April 1967, the youngest of the six children of Andrew and Celia Wheeler.

His elder brother Stephen’s prayer was answered and after four sisters along came Robert. Sally had managed to get the day off from school and was the first sibling to hold the newest of the Wheelers, a beautiful baby boy. His name was soon shortened and he was known as Bertie as a baby, and later as Rob to his many friends.

He was always cheerful, a bouncing toddler with a head of curls which Mum could hardly bring herself to cut. Michelle found him irresistible and would wake him from his naps to play. Anne remembers walking to the shops with him toddling at her side, imagining that he was her child. With five older siblings, Robert had to learn to hold his own, but he was a good-hearted and gentle child and we loved him for that.

Robert was eager to be a part of Stephen’s gang and would trail along after him in his Paddington Bear duffel coat and red boots. At the Saturday morning cinema show Sally remembers Stephen sending him up on to the stage to cause havoc by walking in front of the screen. There wasn’t much he wouldn’t do for Stephen.

At St Mary’s Primary School Robert met Jason who was to become a fixture in his life until the very end. Jason has described Robert as his dearest friend for thirty-three years.

Once the young Rob and Jason were doing the school raffle. They apparently went round the classes selling the tickets and when they found that they had some unsold tickets left over, they both innocently wrote their names down on these spares and put them into the ticket box. When the tickets were drawn and Robert’s name came up for each prize, suspicions were aroused and he became known as Robert Stealer!

Being the youngest, Robert always had someone in the family to play with but as the older ones began to fly the nest he grew closer to Pam, his youngest sister. They were always out and about getting into scrapes and having adventures. Once in a while though Pam would be the one left behind to face the music because the boys had all legged it quicker than her.

In Robert’s late teens Sylvester Stallone was his role model, and Robert got into body building and joined the local athletics club. His self-assurance grew as he spread his
horizons, made lots of new friends and proved himself through his skill at javelin throwing, becoming regional Under 19 champion. He blossomed into a very handsome and strong man, who was totally unaware of his good looks – which of course made him even more likeable!

Around this time Joanna arrived on the scene when she lodged at our house while studying. For Robert she was the one. Beautiful, bright and at ease in herself and with others, Robert made a wise choice in her. At their wedding, his friend Jason made us all laugh when he recalled that it was around the time that they met that Robert was finally able to shed the teenage carapace of his furry hooded parka.

With Joanna, Robert was at his happiest. Together they grew into adulthood and shared some fantastic times together, especially whilst living and working abroad. She was the making of him and we witnessed the way he grew so much in confidence because they traveled together and she encouraged him to try new things.

Robert and Joanna were married in July 1998 at a church in the Forest of Dean. At the hotel, the lawn where we gathered for pictures was set against a backdrop of beautiful beech trees, a setting which Robert loved. It was a superb day, full of laughter, full of love and full of great memories.

To know loving kindness was to see Robert with children. His nieces and nephews began arriving when he was in his teens and he immediately showed his facility with children. He was a wonderful uncle to them. Robert could meet them on their terms, with sensitivity and affection. They knew they could go to him for counsel, or for comfort or to just hang out with. He was always ready to play, encouraging them, listening to them and loving them.

In answer to all his hopes Joanna gave him two beautiful children of his own, a son Peter and daughter Isabelle. Robert was completely delighted and quickly proved himself to be a very hands-on Dad with masses of patience and lots of energy.

All of us agree that if any of us ever had a problem, Robert was a great listener. When diplomacy was called for, he could be relied upon. He knew what to say, to show that he cared and give support without blame. He had become a wise man.

Many of our happiest family times were down at the coast and once he had his own family Robert loved to take them to the beach.

In those harrowing last days, with Joanna’s unfailing support Robert made it to the beach at Southsea. There he was able to look out at the power of the waves and the vastness of the sea. Amidst all the pain and sadness it is a comfort to think of this journey they made together and to imagine that fleeting moment of happiness for Robert looking out towards the sea.
Our dear son and brother, this world is a lesser place without you.

Robert, we will love you always and forever.
Eulogies for a mother and a grandmother, Molly Eloise Cooke, 1912 – 2003

First, a short biography eulogy from Molly’s son, then a personal view from one of her grandsons.

From Ralph

Molly Eloise Cooke was born on 4th October 1910 in Leyton, East London. Molly was the third of five children: George, Edna, Molly, and then rather later Pat and Stella, who are both here today.

Molly was a bright pupil at school and was proud to win a scholarship to Stratford Grammar School for Girls, aged 11. Molly successfully completed her matriculation when she was 17 and soon after that she began work in the accounts department at the prestigious Oxford Street Department store Selfridges.

Molly made friends readily – she was attentive and loyal. Amongst friends from these times were Charlotte, Jean, Molly, Alexandra and Rachel, and in turn their children, some of whom are here today. Molly led an active life, enjoying dancing, playing tennis and holidaying at some of the earliest holiday camps. She became expert in needlework and made wonderful clothes for herself and others (and much later for me as a young child).

Shortly before the war she went to work for a leading wine merchants in central London and continued through the early Blitz, sometimes climbing over rubble to reach her office. In 1940 she joined the fire service, working in the control room at Acton. Here she met Alfie who had signed up as a fireman at the outbreak of war rather than be conscripted into the armed services. They married in August 1942 and lived locally in rented accommodation.

Molly had joined the Cooke family which became extremely important to her. Alfie’s parents lived in Brighton and were bringing up his daughter Sylvia from a very brief earlier marriage, Sylvia was then aged 12. Although they never lived as a family, Sylvia grew close to Molly and came to regard her as Mum – in many respects they shared a similar appearance and interests. In 1953 Sylvia was swept off to America by her husband Robert, who had been based with the USAF near Brighton. However, they were always in contact and fortunately Sylvia and Robert stayed with us for two weeks just before Molly died.

She was also very attached to Alfie’s mother who lived in Brighton into her late ’80s and provided a regular base for family holidays. Molly was also very fond of Alfie’s younger brother Jack and his wife Fran. Fran is too frail to join us today but we are fortunate that her elder daughter Veronica can be with us.
I was born in February 1948 although Molly had previously given birth to twins, John and Ella, who survived only a few days in 1945. The family moved to a new council house in 1952 at Loughton. Here Molly established close friendships with neighbors including Pauline Hayworth, Sybil Williams and Joanne Knight, and their children as well. Again, these relationships have continued right up until the present.

In 1959 I started at Stratford Grammar School for Boys, fulfilling a cherished ambition for my parents. In 1962 the family returned to live in Leyton where Alfie was closer to his workplace and Molly was near to her mother and sisters. Alfie developed an interest in bowling and both enjoyed socializing at the local club.

Sadly Alfie died in February 1965 aged 59. With me about to take my A-levels, Molly coped bravely and remained working full-time. At some point after the move to Leyton she had found work locally and held several responsible posts doing company accounts. To obtain the last of these posts she told a white lie about her age because she was over 60, but she then continued to work for the company until she was 68!

In 1968 Molly traveled to the USA for the first time with me to visit Sylvia and Robert. She subsequently made several unaccompanied visits to America and even to Turkey when Sylvia and Robert were living there.

Molly was delighted when I met Amanda in 1972 and then married in May 1974. She joined a larger family and became very fond of Amanda’s parents Enid and Frank. Molly was overjoyed to become a grandmother when Dominic was born in 1976 and Luke in 1978. It was a complete surprise when her old friend Rachel generously bequeathed her flat to Molly in 1979. With the funds, Molly was able to buy a flat in Cardiff and move to be near her grandsons, so beginning a period which Molly described as the happiest in her life. She was always busy and active. She supported Amanda and the children, giving Amanda the time to be a City Councilor for 16 years. Molly herself was active in local politics, where she met Siobhan Thomas with whom she would regularly put the world to rights.

Molly’s old friends and their children often took the opportunity to visit Cardiff and her flat with the wonderful view. She was always in close contact with her three sisters and kept the telephone companies busy! The boys would stay and be treated like princes with choices of meals and assortments of cakes. She never missed their events at school, their concerts or their stage shows.

She sailed through 80 but inevitably her age and health slowed her down and she was annoyed with herself that she could not do everything at the same pace as before. Nevertheless, others regarded her energy and zest for life as remarkable. In April 1998 Amanda and I encouraged her to move to the comfort and security of Tredegar Court where she rapidly became a lively member of the community. She enthusiastically
supported the group activities, regular tea parties, occasional outings and welcomed new residents.

Molly made light of her significant health problems. Her worst fears were of losing her independence and her ability to do what she enjoyed most – reading, cooking, shopping and socializing. The small stroke she suffered two months ago sapped her energy and she was very conscious that her days were drawing in.

When Molly left us it was much as she might have wished – quickly, without suffering and at a time when she was still cheerful and capable. She died of a heart attack late on Monday June 11th. That evening she had cooked a roast dinner for Dominic, had spoken to me in Washington where I was with Amanda visiting Luke, and had also chatted to Sylvia in Michigan. She had enjoyed another Labour victory at the election and was looking forward to Luke’s interview with the BBC in a few days.

Everyone here today was important to Molly and I thank you for coming to share in a celebration of her long and very full life.”

**From James**

Every one of us here today is a friend of Molly’s. Some of us are also relatives. Her warmth towards us was palpable, and could be felt as soon as she saw us, even at a distance.

She belonged to the generation that lived through two world wars, albeit that she was too young to remember much of the first one. Nevertheless, she grew up during the privations and crises that followed it, only to plunge straight into the Second World War, and then face the shortages and austerity of the forties and fifties. If the conversation could be steered to the early part of her life, to hear about her struggles in bringing up Ralph and holding down a full-time job was gripping, and made one appreciate our own good fortune in living through the second half of the twentieth century.

Her most striking characteristics were her energy and bubbliness, and her inexhaustible concern for and interest in others – a kindly interest, not gossip.

She was an invaluable member of any society or group in which she found herself, ever willing to take on responsibility – indeed, one or two organizations ceased to function when she left them.

Molly was a tireless cook – many of us have been the recipients of her delicious mince pies, biscuits and cakes, not only when visiting, but frequently to take away as well. Her delight and pride in and affection for her family were infectious, creating a glow in all around her.
We are here to commemorate Molly’s life and spirit. Her best and surely her most desired memorial will not be of wood or of stone, but the countless memories that will last as long as each one of us is alive.

This eulogy is an example of a personal view, and was one of two eulogies delivered at Janet’s funeral.

Auntie Jan was a wonderful lady. Today we say farewell to her physical presence amongst us.

Farewells in whatever context are sad. Because of the sadness of this occasion initially when Kevin asked me to say something about her I doubted whether I could manage. However, when I thought about it, I appreciated that our sadness can go hand in hand with some happiness, and a sense of joy that Auntie Jan at the end achieved what she wanted. And that was to leave us at this time, with her mind as always clear thinking, knowing that her body was letting her down, and that because of this her independence would go, which is what she dreaded more than anything.

So I feel she chose her time to depart, and it happened. It was right. But as she slipped away I hope she knew that in fact by memory, by association, by reminiscences, by the sheer uniqueness of her personality, though without the advantages of presence, and despite no audible interaction being available to us, she will be forever alive, scintillating in our thoughts, influencing us as we go about our daily lives.

In a few minutes what can one say about a life spanning 95 years, almost a century? Queen Victoria died in 1901. Auntie Jan was born five years later – into a world so different from today. Slow, dignified, elegant, respectful – these early environmental attributes were to effect her standards for the rest of her life. Through two wars, peace, turmoil, excitement, dramatic technical progress. Auntie Jan saw it all, she coped with adversity, she contributed, she progressed, she adapted and moved with the times – to the extent that with regard to fashion, current events, sports – especially golf and snooker – she could be way ahead of those of us more than 30 years her junior. It was one reason she loved to hear from and about the younger generation in the family – they were more knowledgeable of what was trendy.

She was deeply appreciative of the visits from Frances (a very special supporter), Justine, Amanda, and from Lorraine and Patricia, and always wanted to know what they were about, how they were faring. Because no doubt she was lonely, but would never admit to it – inevitable, at 95 so many of her wide circle of contemporaries being no longer around.

Jan loved to tell people having reached her 90s that she had been a very “delicate” child. She said that in comparison to her brother (my father) and her sister Auntie Edna (Laura’s mother) that she needed cosseting and much attending. With rueful smiles Pops and Auntie Edna would admit, “No doubt Jan was a wee bit spoilt and loved to be the centre of attention.” As she danced and sang and flirted she loved too to be complimented – compliments so well deserved, especially by gentlemen – the younger the better. Recently
on her first stay in hospital on a mixed ward she was looked after by male nurses. I thought she would be appalled, but not at all! She and a young nurse John obviously had a mutual admiration for each other and she thought he was wonderful.

Auntie Jan was determined and spoke her mind. We will – certainly Laura and I – thrive on the rows she gave us throughout our lives. Teaching us, and for this we can only be grateful, to keep up standards.

The past week dozens of stories about Auntie Jan have emerged, admiration abounding. She set herself goals and she achieved – studied bridge, played great golf – until she was a champion at both. In her working days she worked assiduously in her office days on the Admiralty staff. We loved her stories (exaggeration permitted!) of how she so influenced the ultimate head of her department that perhaps the whole progress of the war was influenced. Who knows?!

She was the real Anglo-Scot, so proud of her Scottish origins, but equally proud of her adopted English home – York. She knew every corner of every street. Bombing around, just weeks ago, in her motorized chair, George and I running after, she knew exactly the route, every street, every shop, every building, and stories about them all. Perhaps we should all write down our stories and thoughts about her – what a biography that would be.

We should be hugely proud of having had her as head of the family for such a marvellous long time. And for all her friends – how lucky they were to have known her. We will miss you Auntie Jan, but for all of us always, you will be the greatest.
Eulogy for a son, Jake Williams, 1985 – 2002

Jake was diagnosed with cancer in his teens. After a while he had a leg amputated, and he died a few months later. This eulogy is a personal view written by Jake’s parents, and was read on their behalf by the person presiding.

Jake was a quiet, helpful boy who was always willing to help anyone. He never had a bad word to say about anybody and would always think of others first. He was very particular about his appearance and his clothes and hair had to look just right. During his illness Jake never once complained. He never even got angry when he had his leg amputated – he just carried on the way he always did.

When Jake left school he chose a career in motorbike mechanics and repairs and looked forward to getting his dream bike, which was an Yamaha TTR 125. He was quite upset when he had to put his 2 year course on hold. Jake enjoyed going to school and had a 99% school attendance record, and he was quite proud of that, and was always being told that his appearance was excellent.

He was quite a mischievous baby though, and we will always remember when we went out and bought new curtains, bed, carpet, wardrobes and even a new door for our bedroom. Jake didn’t like our choice of décor and decided to do his own spot of decorating while we were asleep, and when we woke up everything was painted white. He even decided one day that he didn’t like his lovely, long, blonde curls, which he also decided to paint white, and he gave himself a haircut at the same time, so we had to go and have all his lovely hair cut into short back and sides. He even thought we were cruel to keep fish in the tank, so Jake and his brother Steve decided to give them their freedom and smashed the tank with a snooker ball. They were quite pleased with themselves when they saw the fish wriggling about on the floor.

As he grew older Jake realized fish belong in water and took up fishing as a hobby at weekends. Jake once thought about joining the army, but luckily the thought didn’t last long. Jake was not a sporty person and did not belong to any clubs, but liked the easier games like snooker and darts, which we all played at home. Some of us were not very good at darts and we now have a wall full of holes, but we enjoyed ourselves.

Jake was really just beginning his life as a young man, and it saddens us to think we shall never see him grow up and enjoy himself, like going out with his mates to nightclubs and pubs and bringing home girlfriends. People used to say how handsome Jake was and how he was going to break many girls’ hearts when he grew up, and he certainly has done that now, and not just girls’ hearts but those of all his family and friends that knew him. During his last month with us Jake once said to me the thing he missed most was being able to fight with his two brothers Steve and Robert and sister Ella, as they all used to do when Jake was well. So, instead, Jake would just run into them with his wheelchair.
We shall always love and cherish the memories we have of Jake and he certainly won’t ever be forgotten. We shall miss his lovely smile. He is our hero and braveheart and he leaves a huge empty space in our lives. We are so very proud of you Jake.
Eulogies for a father, a brother and an uncle, Geoffrey Richards, 1939 – 2002

Here are four short personal views, which together give a sense of the man.

From Christina

Not only was Dad a wonderful father, extremely devoted to and proud of his family, but as a person in his own right, he has always and will always, serve to be a great inspiration to me.

He was an incredibly strong, resilient man with an instinctive drive to succeed in the things he loved to do. This propelled him from an award winning career in advertising, to his extremely successful business as a cabinet maker, and more recently the beginning of a career as a sculptor. His creativity was at the essence of everything he did. From cabinet making, stained glass, sculpture and painting, to playing the guitar with his friends and spending hours of enjoyment listening to his classical music.

This very positive, creative, energetic man instilled in me the importance of striving hard to achieve my potential, within the things I love to do and of living life to its absolute full, no matter what obstacles are put in your way. I just feel incredibly lucky to have had this man as my father.

From Susan

Once in awhile in your lifetime, if you’re lucky, you meet a person you connect with. By that, I mean someone with whom your thoughts sort of click together, like pieces of a puzzle. You share a common thread of consciousness. It goes further than friendship or love, and I think of it as a connection of souls.

My brother and I shared that connection, and it was very special indeed. The odd thing is – it wasn’t always that way. As children, being close in age, we fought constantly. I felt he tormented me (I’m sure he felt the opposite), and a bigger tease I doubt existed. I was convinced I hated him, a fact I articulated loud and clear – and often. My poor mother, a quiet and gentle woman, would tearfully exclaim, “You’re brother and sister. You’re supposed to love each other!”

Curiously enough, as soon as we grew up and left home, we became very close. He lived with my husband and me in San Francisco while attending art school, and we had much fun tromping around the city together. He was visiting from New York when my oldest daughter was born, and her first smile was directed at him. The further away he moved, the closer I felt to him. And I learned that I loved him in a very deep and meaningful way.
When the actual ‘connection’ occurred I can’t say. It was probably always there. I know for certain it always will be.

From Anne

All my life my uncle Geoff and I lived thousands of miles apart. I didn’t appreciate our visits as much when I was younger because, well, I was young. But as I grew older I so looked forward to those visits because I knew the jokes and laughter would be endless. I suppose that’s what I shall remember, and miss, the most… his laughter and the laughter he brought to others.

My uncle was a very special man. A man who made me my first Christmas stocking. A man, who when I was born, bought my mother a small gold pin in the shape of a wishbone from Tiffany’s in New York. It was all he could afford at the time and it was that same pin I wore inside my wedding dress on my wedding day. A man whose artistic talent was endless. A man who loved the sunshine. A man I shall miss so very much.

Life can be very unfair at times. But what is our loss is another’s gain. And this is what I have to remember. I have to remember that where he is now, there is no illness and there is no pain. There is no sign of what was once polio and he now runs on two strong legs. There are bright flowers and there is constant sunshine. And there is his mother whose arms I’m sure he ran to.

I will miss you uncle Geoff every day of my life. But I know if I listen hard enough, I will hear your laughter and I will smile and laugh back.

From Carl

On a wall in my den at home, I have a picture of Geoff and me, arms on each other’s shoulders, he in a San Francisco Giants shirt and cap, me in an Oakland A’s shirt and cap. It was taken on his 50th birthday at the third game of the 1989 World Series in San Francisco. Twenty minutes after that picture was taken, there was a major earthquake. Needless to say, the game was cancelled and he and I never did get back to the third game of the World Series. But the picture says so much of our relationship. We were both smiling broadly and having a grand time as we often did. We were wearing shirts of opposing teams, just as we were opposed in opinions of certain things, but we always enjoyed talking them through. The day in San Francisco was bright and cheery as was our relationship.

I called a friend of mine who also knew Geoff very well to tell him of his passing. He made a comment that really sums up my feelings. He said that we need to be grateful for the time we had with him and how he touched all of our lives in such a wonderful way. He certainly touched mine in a way I can never forget, and I know he touched those who
were closest to him in a way that may not even be able to be put into words. He has a wonderful family that meant so very much to him.

So was the time he spent on this earth too short? Most definitely. But I will always be grateful for the time I had with him and the wonderful way he touched my life.
9. Funeral Poems

Most people don’t read poems very often, if ever. And yet, even for those who say they don’t like poetry, there can be something so simple, so profound and so beautiful about the right sentiments set to verse.

The simple, accessible poems which follow are suitable for inclusion in the funeral, whether during the eulogy or at another time. And they may also be of use and comfort to you at other times, in other ways. They are my personal recommendations, based on years of experience.

Please note that you can also find poems for those who die young in the Unusual or Difficult Situations chapter.

And remember that if you like a poem but one word or line is inappropriate to your situation, you can always change or remove that word or line – no-one will notice, and no-one will care. And if these poems inspire you to write your own poetry for the occasion, simply go ahead.

Explanatory Note

Because I do not believe in infringing authors' copyright, poems are included here in two ways:

1. For poems which are not subject to copyright, i.e. because they are anonymous or because the author died over 100 years ago, I have reproduced them for you in full.

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How to Write and Deliver a Great Eulogy in Six Simple Steps

Turn Again

If I should die and leave you here awhile...

http://www.lovethepoem.com/funeral-poems/45.htm

By Mary Lee Hall
(Read at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, by her eldest sister, Lady Sarah McCorquodale, 1997)

Old Gaelic Blessing

May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face.
May the rains fall softly upon your fields until we meet again.
May God hold you in the hollow of his hand.

Anonymous

Not Forgotten

I fall asleep in the full and certain hope
that my slumber shall not be broken;
And that though I be all-forgetting,
Yet shall I not be all-forgotten,
But continue in that life,
in the thoughts and deeds of those I loved.

Samuel Butler

Funeral Blues

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone...

http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/funeral-blues-2/

W H Auden
(Read at the funeral in the film Four Weddings and a Funeral)
Look Up

I would be true for there are those who trust me,
I would be pure for there are those who care,
I would be strong for there is much to suffer,
I would be brave for there is much to dare,
I would be friend of all, the foe the friendless,
I would be giving and forget the gift,
I would be humble for I know my weakness,
I would look up, and laugh, and love and live.

Anonymous

If I Should Go Before the Rest of You

If I should go before the rest of you...

http://www.ourdeparted.com/poetry/if-i-should-go-by-joyce-grenfell.html

Joyce Grenfell

To Those I Love

If I should ever leave you...

http://carnegie.org/sub/docpublications/reese.html

Isla Paschal Richardson
(Read at the funeral of Frank Sinatra by Gregory Peck, 1998)
Crossing the Bar

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too fall for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho’ from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face,
When I have crost the bar.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of the future that we planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

Christina Rossetti
Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep

Do not stand at my grave and weep...

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Do_not_stand_at_my_grave_and_weep

Mary Elizabeth Frye

In Memoriam

With you a part of me hath passed away...

http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poem/2959.html (verse II)

George Santayana

Not, How Did He Die, but How Did He Live?

No, how did he die, but how did he live?
Not, what did he gain, but what did he give?
These are the units to measure the worth
Of a man as a man, regardless of birth.
Not what was his church, nor what was his creed?
But had he befriended those really in need?
Was he ever ready, with word of good cheer,
To bring back a smile, to banish a tear?
Not what did the sketch in the newspaper say,
But how many were sorry when he passed away?

Anonymous

Life Unbroken

Death is nothing at all, I have only slipped away into the next room...

http://www.wowzone.com/death.htm

Henry Scott-Holland, 1847-1918, Canon of St Paul’s Cathedral, London
On Death (from *The Prophet*)

You would know the secret of death, bBut how shall you find it unless you seek in it the heart of life?...

http://www.worldprayers.org/frameit.cgi/archive/prayers/meditations/you_would_know_the_secret.html

*Kahlil Gibran*

Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night

Do not go gentle into that good night...

http://www.bigeye.com/donotgo.htm

*Dylan Thomas*

Old Irish Toast

May you have food and raiment,
A soft pillow for your head,
May you be forty years in heaven
Before the devil knows you’re dead.

*Anonymous*

Maybe

Maybe I’ll weep before I die...

http://www.angelfire.com/yt/lagedor/love.death.html

*Ronald Langereis*
I measure every grief...

I measure every grief I meet
With analytic eyes;
I wonder if it weighs like mine,
Or has an easier size.

I wonder if they bore it long,
Or did it just begin?
I could not tell the date of mine,
It feels so old a pain.

I wonder if it hurts to live,
And if they have to try,
And whether, could they choose between,
They would not rather die.

I wonder if when years have piled–
Some thousands–on the cause
Of early hurt, if such a lapse
Could give them any pause;

Or would they go on aching still
Through centuries above,
Enlightened to a larger pain
By contrast with the love.

The grieved are many, I am told;
The reason deeper lies,—
Death is but one and comes but once
And only nails the eyes.

There's grief of want, and grief of cold,—
A sort they call 'despair,'
There's banishment from native eyes,
In sight of native air.

And though I may not guess the kind
Correctly yet to me
A piercing comfort it affords
In passing Calvary,

To note the fashions of the cross
Of those that stand alone
Still fascinated to presume
That some are like my own.

*Emily Dickinson*

**But a Short Time to Live**

Our little hour, – how swift it flies...


*Leslie Coulson*

**Sea-Fever**

I must go down to the sea again, to the lonely sea and the sky...

http://www.poetseers.org/the_great_poets/misc/i_must_go_down_to_the_sea

*John Masefield*

**Song**

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadow,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on, as if in pain;
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

*Christina Rossetti*
10. Quotations

On death, dying, funerals and life. Some humorous, some profound; some you might choose to read at the funeral, some you might use, enjoy and find comfort from at other times and in other ways.

Be happy while you’re living, for you’re a long time dead.
Scottish Proverb

It’s funny how most people love the dead, once you’re dead you’re made for life.
Jimi Hendrix

I hate funerals and would not attend my own if it could be avoided, but it is well for every man to stop once in a while to think of what sort of a collection of mourners he is training for his final event.
Robert T Morris

I want to die in my sleep like my grandfather... not screaming and yelling like the passengers in his car.
Will Shriner

According to most studies, people’s number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you’re better off being in the casket than doing the eulogy!
Jerry Seinfeld

I will not insult you by trying to tell you that one day you will forget. I know as well as you that you will not. But, at least, in time you will not remember as fiercely as you do now – and I pray that that time may be soon.
Terence Rattigan

If you want to really know what your friends and family think of you die broke, and then see who shows up for the funeral.
Gregory Nunn

Let us be kinder to one another.
Aldous Huxley, on his deathbed

Death ends a life, not a relationship.
Jack Lemmon
They say such nice things about people at their funerals that it makes me sad that I’m going to miss mine by just a few days.

Garrison Kielor

To Harry Secombe: I hope you die first as I don’t want you singing at my funeral.

Spike Milligan

The reason so many people turned up at his funeral is that they wanted to make sure he was dead.

Samuel Goldwyn

I am prepared to meet my Maker. Whether my Maker is prepared for the great ordeal of meeting me is another matter.

Sir Winston Churchill

In any way that men love me, in that same way they find my love for many are the paths of men, but they all in the end come to me.

The Bhagavad Gita

If I could wish for my life to be perfect, it would be tempting but I would have to decline, for life would no longer teach me anything.

Allyson Jones

Tears are sometimes an inappropriate response to death. When a life has been lived completely, honestly, completely successful, or just completely, the correct response to death’s perfect punctuation mark is a smile.

Julie Burchill

For death is no more than a turning of us over from time to eternity.

William Penn

In the city a funeral is just an interruption of traffic; in the country it is a form of popular entertainment.

George Ade

Always go to other people’s funerals, otherwise they won’t come to yours.

Yogi Berra

Every man dies. Not every man really lives.

William Wallace

Neither fire nor wind, birth nor death can erase our good deeds.

Buddha
For what is to die, but to stand in the sun and melt into the wind? And when the Earth has claimed our limbs, then we shall truly dance.
*Kahlil Gibran*

It is wonderful how much time good people spend fighting the devil. If they would only expend the same amount of energy loving their fellow men, the devil would die in his own tracks of ennui.
*Helen Keller*

It’s not that I’m afraid to die. I just don't want to be there when it happens.
*Woody Allen*

I do not believe that any man fears to be dead, but only the stroke of death.
*Francis Bacon*

It is certain that to most men the preparation for death has been a greater torment than the suffering of it.
*Michel de Montaigne*

To die is to leave off dying and do the thing once for all.
*Samuel Butler*

I die hard. But I am not afraid to go.
*George Washington*

So that he seemed not to relinquish life, but to leave one home for another.
*Cornelius Nepos*

A man’s ethical behavior should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death.
*Albert Einstein*

Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome.
*Isaac Asimov*

Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.
*George Bernard Shaw*

Die, my dear doctor! That’s the last thing I shall do!
*Lord Palmerston*

I know not what course others my take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death.
*Patrick Henry*
Begin doing what you want to do now. We are not living in eternity. We have only this moment, sparkling like a star in our hand and melting like a snowflake.
*Marie Beyon Ray*

Taking joy in life is a woman’s best cosmetic.
*Rosalind Russell*

Good friends, good books and a sleepy conscience; this is the ideal life.
*Mark Twain*

I didn’t attend the funeral, but I sent a nice letter saying I approved of it.
*Mark Twain*

What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.
*Albert Pike*

Ask yourself whether the dream of heaven and greatness should be waiting for us in our graves – or whether it should be ours here and now and on this Earth.
*Ayn Rand*

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

He not busy being born is busy dying.
*Bob Dylan*

I don’t want to achieve immortality through my work… I want to achieve it through not dying.
*Woody Allen*

As a well spent day brings happy sleep, so life well used brings happy death.
*Leonardo Da Vinci*

Millions long for immortality who do not know what to do with themselves on a rainy Sunday afternoon.
*Susan Ertz*

He who doesn’t fear death dies only once.
*Giovanni Falcone*
Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it.

_Helen Keller_

A man's dying is more the survivors' affair than his own.

_Thomas Mann_

Life is better than death, I believe, if only because it is less boring, and because it has fresh peaches in it.

_Alice Walker_

We cannot banish dangers, but we can banish fears. We must not demean life by standing in awe of death.

_David Sarnoff_

Death is not extinguishing the light; it is putting out the lamp because dawn has come.

_Rabindranath Tagore_

Be of good cheer about death and know this as a truth – that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death.

_Socrates_

What we commonly call death does not destroy the body, it only causes a separation of spirit and body.

_Brigham Young_

Is death the last sleep? No – it is the last and final awakening.

_Sir Walter Scott_

There are stars whose radiance is visible on Earth though they have long been extinct. There are people whose brilliance continues to light the world though they are no longer among the living. These lights are particularly bright when the night is dark.

_Hannah Senesh_

Men fear death, as children fear to go in the dark; and as that natural fear in children is increased with tales, so is the other.

_Francis Bacon_

Love is life and if you miss love, you miss life.

_Leo Buscaglia_

However long the night, the dawn will break.

_African Proverb_
How to Write and Deliver a Great Eulogy in Six Simple Steps

Everything dies, baby that's a fact... but maybe everything that dies someday comes back.  
*Bruce Springsteen*

It's a blessing to die for a cause, because you can so easily die for nothing.  
*Andrew Young*

On the plus side, death is one of the few things that can be done just as easily lying down.  
*Woody Allen*

Be not as one that hath ten thousand years to live; death is nigh at hand: while thou livest, while thou hast time, be good.  
*Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*

You don’t get to choose how you’re going to die, or when. You can decide how you’re going to live. Now.  
*Joan Baez*

The walls we build around us to keep out the sadness also keep out the joy.  
*Jim Rohn*

It is as natural to die as to be born.  
*Francis Bacon*

Death comes equally to us all, and makes us all equal when it comes.  
*John Donne*

It is not death or pain that is to be dreaded, but the fear of pain or death.  
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

When humans participate in ceremony, they enter a sacred space. Everything outside of that space shrivels in importance. Time takes on a different dimension. Emotions flow more freely. The bodies of participants become filled with the energy of life, and this energy reaches out and blesses the creation around them. All is made new; everything becomes sacred.  
*Sun Bear*

Let us endeavor so to live that when we come to die even the undertaker will be sorry.  
*Mark Twain*

Frisbeetarianism is the belief that when you die, your soul goes up on the roof and gets stuck.  
*George Carlin*
We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

*Norman MacEwan*
11. On Children and Grieving

If the death of someone you care about is important in your life, it’s almost certainly important in the lives of some children too.

Here are two commonly asked questions about death, children and funerals, along with some ideas for answers.

1. Should the children come to the funeral? How old do they need to be?

There are no right or wrong answers here. But consider the stories of two parts of my own family.

One relation of mine, now in his 40s, lost his father at a very young age. He wasn’t taken to the funeral, and to this day he regrets that. Of course even if he’d gone, he might not remember it, but at least he would now know he’d been there, would now know he’d been included, not excluded.

In contrast, when my brother-in-law, Anthony, died aged 36, his son was three-and-a-half and his daughter 18 months old. They both attended their father’s funeral. Sure, they didn’t sit through it all – in fact they only stayed for a couple of minutes at the beginning, before a family friend took them off to play. And later, at the graveside, when the mourners released 36 balloons, one for every year of Anthony’s life, his son was there, to hold and release a balloon along with the rest of us. Which is something he will remember for the rest of his life.

Now, those kids did not sit through the church service, and were not present for the most emotionally intense parts of the day. But they took part. Even the daughter, who will almost certainly not remember any of it consciously later in life, was there, and took part.

So what does this mean for them? It means that they will, in coming years, hear from others about how they were at their dad’s funeral, talk to each other about how they were at their dad’s funeral, be able to tell other people how they were at their dad’s funeral and, most importantly, know inside themselves that yes, they were at their dad’s funeral.

Reflecting on these stories, if they make sense to you, you may find it easier to decide on the right approach for you.
At the same time, some older children might be actively reluctant to attend a funeral, for all sorts of reasons. Of course children of that age are often reluctant to do things in the short term which are good for them in the long term, and this may be another occasion where parental wisdom and guidance is important.

2. **How can I help the children to understand death and what it means?**

A key understanding here is that children do not necessarily think about death the way adults do. The age of a child – their stage of emotional development – will have a big impact on how they react to a death, and on how they make sense of it. And of course, on top of that, each child is different, just as each adult is different.

Your religious and other beliefs may give you some guidance on ways of thinking about death and of explaining it to your child. At the same time, you may find it worth making use of some of the great books and other resources that are available to make the process of healing after loss as natural and as healthy as possible.

One wonderful book which I have used is *Badger’s Parting Gifts* by Susan Varley. The book is suitable for up to 8 year olds, and I myself used it with my daughter when she was only just three. I recommend it wholeheartedly.

“When old Badger dies his friends think they will be sad forever. But gradually they are able to remember Badger with joy and to treasure the gifts he left behind for every one of his friends.”

[Click here for Badger’s Parting Gifts for customers in the USA](Click here for Badger’s Parting Gifts for customers in the USA)

[Click here for Badger’s Parting Gifts for customers in the UK](Click here for Badger’s Parting Gifts for customers in the UK)

And here are two websites devoted to helping children grieve, where you can find yet more resources.

12. Unusual or Difficult Situations

If you are faced with an unusual or difficult funeral situation, where the person has died early, unexpectedly or in unusual circumstances, then the task of the eulogy can at first seem harder and more challenging.

After all, funerals are ‘supposed’ to be for people who have lived full and happy lives, and this is certainly what we see as the ‘natural’ order of things. In such a case, it’s perhaps possible to see that a funeral can have an element of celebration of the person’s life. But when someone dies young, or tragically, how easy is it to preserve that kind of intention?

Well, however hard things may seem, you may in due course decide that there are always things we can be thankful for at the end of anyone’s life. Because anyone who has died, anyone who has lived, anyone who will be missed and mourned, has had things in their life that they have brought to the world and which will be grieved for – love, positive memories, times of happiness, even their unrealized potential.

So the question you may like to ask yourself in preparing a eulogy for an occasion like this is, “How can I honor the love, positive memories and happiness that this person’s life brought and contained, while at the same time acknowledging the special circumstances which make today even more tragic and sad?”

Remember, the person presiding over the funeral will almost certainly address the special circumstances and put them into a broader context – that’s part of their job and they are accustomed to doing it. So you do not need to repeat all that – you can simply acknowledge the special circumstances and the feelings that are likely to go along with it, and concentrate most of your attention on remembering the person, however short or tragic their life and death may have been.

Here are some forms of words you might like to adapt and include, plus some poetry for the death of someone young.
Some general words

These words can be adapted and applied to any unusual circumstance:

“Most funerals are for people who have lived a long life, and died a natural death. Today is different, and right now that makes it harder to bear. Death is always a sad occasion, even if sometimes it is a release from pain and suffering. But the circumstances of [Name's] life and death are of course tinged with an element of far greater sadness, far greater tragedy.”

Death of a child

“That [Name] should be taken from us so young, when [she / he] had so much still to live for, so much still to learn and discover about the world, about life, about love, makes things especially sad. Right now it may seem impossible to bear the hurt, and to remember the happy and positive things which we can perhaps be grateful for, but would it be in keeping with [Name's] character and attitude to life if we felt only sadness?

It seems to me that if we are to honor [Name's] memory, then we need to take time to focus on the love which [Name] brought into our lives, the joy [she / he] gave us, the too-short [years / months / weeks] of laughter and hugs and kisses, the fun and games, the pure, pure love. For if life is measured not in quantity of time, but in quality of love and giving, [Name's] life was indeed full, and [she / he] will forever hold a place in our hearts.”

See also poetry on following pages.

Victim of homicide

“That [Name] should be taken from us in such a way, when [she / he] had so much still to live for, makes things especially sad. Right now it may seem impossible to bear the hurt, and to remember the happy and positive things which we can perhaps be grateful for, but would we be honouring [Name's] memory and life if we felt only sadness?

Because whatever the circumstances, and whatever our anger and despair, we can also take time to focus on the love which [Name] brought into our lives, and the happy memories and other good things which we each of us have as a direct result of having known [Name].”
Victim of intentional suicide, or accidental drug overdose

“Sometimes it is hard to understand other people’s choices. That [Name] should be taken from us in such a way, when [she / he] had – to our eyes – so much still to live for, makes things especially sad. Right now it may seem impossible to bear the hurt, and to remember the happy and positive things which we can perhaps be grateful for, but would we be honouring [Name’s] memory and life if we felt only sadness?

Because whatever the circumstances, and whatever our anger and despair, we can also take time to focus on the love which [Name] brought into our lives, and the happy memories and other good things which we each of us have as a direct result of having known [Name].”

Poems for the death of a child

Remember, you can change the words to suit boy or girl as appropriate.

I have seen...

I have seen a mother at a cot – so I know what love is;
I have looked into the eyes of a child – so I know what faith is;
I have seen a rainbow – so I know what beauty is;
I have felt the pounding of the sea – so I know what power is;
I have planted a tree – so I know what hope is;
I have heard a wild bird sing – so I know what freedom is;
I have seen a chrysalis burst into life – so I know what mystery is;
I have lost a friend – so I know what sorrow is;
I have seen a star-decked sky – so I know what infinite is;
I have seen and felt all these things – so I know what life is.

Anonymous

Letter to Mom

Mom, please don’t feel guilty, it was just my time to go...

http://www.grieflossrecovery.com/grief-poems/curnutt02.html

Joy Curnutt
How to Write and Deliver a Great Eulogy in Six Simple Steps

**My Memories**

It seems as if yesterday you held out your hand...


*Jessica L. Gray*

**Early Death**

She passed away like morning dew
Before the sun was high;
So brief her time, she scarcely knew
The meaning of a sigh.

As round the rose its soft perfume,
Sweet love around her floated;
Admired she grew – while mortal doom
Crept on, unfeared, unnoted.

Love was her guardian Angel here,
But Love to Death resigned her;
Though Love was kind, why should we fear
But holy Death is kinder?

*Hartley Coleridge*

**Extract from In Memoriam**

Doomed to know not Winter, only Summer – a being
Trod the flowery June blithely for a while;
Took her fill of music, joy of thought and seeing,
Came and stayed and went; nor ever ceased to smile.

Came and stayed and went; and now all is finished,
You alone have crossed the melancholy stream.
Yours the pang; but hers, oh hers, the undiminished
Undecaying gladness, undeparted dream.

*Robert Louis Stevenson*
Today

Today I am made of tears for you,
Some noisy, some still frozen.
But these tears
Shall not dissolve me.
In each one is reflected a moment with you.
When they fall –
The moments will stay
Glistening.

Anonymous
About the Author:

Kevin Burch’s purpose is…

“…to help people have life be all that it can be.”

This book is part of fulfilling that purpose.

In addition, Kevin is a Confidence and Peak Performance Coach who uses safe and powerful visualization techniques to help people lead full and happy lives and achieve their potential. His clients range from bereaved teenagers to successful entrepreneurs to professional international athletes.

Kevin is also a qualified teacher and trainer, with an Honours degree in Biomedical Sciences and a Masters degree in Ecology.

Your feedback and comments are most welcome. We are always looking for ways to improve the next edition of this book and make it ever more useful to future readers. So please send us any suggestions you have, or any materials – including eulogies – which you would like to offer for inclusion, by emailing

kevin@eulogymadesimple.com

Thank you.
Bonus 1: Quick & Easy Public Speaking Confidence

How To Turn Nerves and Fear into Confidence and Charisma in Four Simple Steps

by Kevin Burch
“According to most studies, people’s number one fear is public speaking. Number two is death. Death is number two. Does that sound right? This means that to the average person, if you go to a funeral, you’re better off being in the casket than doing the eulogy!”

Jerry Seinfeld

A Common Fear, Easily Changed

It may not feel like it to you yet, but now, when you look at it from a different point of view, isn’t is funny how some people are scared of public speaking? After all, being scared of a sabre-toothed tiger, or a mugger with a gun, or an oncoming train when you’re car’s stuck on the crossing, that makes some kind of sense. Because you might get hurt or even die in those situations. But simply standing up and saying a few words to a group of people? When you STOP… and think about it, are you really going to come to any harm that way? Of course you already know the answer. And yet isn’t it funny how some of us think.

Recently I worked with a client who had been a soldier in his country’s Special Forces. As a result he had seen things, done things and been in situations which you and I would probably rather not know about. He had survived ‘kill or be killed’ scenarios, spent time behind enemy lines and endured working conditions which contravened most health and safety regulations!

And yet, what scared him more than any of that was standing up in front of a small group of people and saying a few words. How bizarre is that?

Now the good news for this soldier – and for you – is that it didn’t stay like that. By simply doing the few exercises you are going to discover below, he was able to completely dissolve this fear, and actually enjoy giving his presentation the next day.

And it didn’t take years of therapy, it didn’t take months of coaching and it didn’t take hours of ‘facing his fear’ by speaking in front of lots of groups of people until he was just too exhausted to be scared any more!

In fact, completely changing the way he felt took just minutes.

I wonder how easily you can imagine how good it would be for you to make your own, similar change in the same time, for all your own special reasons…
Where Does This Fear Come From?

When I was at school, I used to hate speaking in front of the class. Often the teacher would be critical, and the other kids would pull faces while I was speaking and then make fun of me at lunchtime.

Not surprising then that my brain naturally learned that standing up and speaking to groups was something to be scared of! So much so that when I was a teenager I could get really bad feelings inside my tummy just by thinking about speaking to a group. Perhaps you can relate to this.

Fast forward to now, as an adult, and me having done the exercises you are about to do. The fact is that now, after all that used to happen in the past, I absolutely love public speaking. Sure, I sometimes get a little nervous, but it’s an excited nervous, a nervous which puts me at the top of my game, and I get tremendous enjoyment from going on stage and speaking to audiences of hundreds of people. In fact, public speaking is now probably one my favorite pleasures in life!

As you can hear, the way I feel about it has changed beyond all recognition compared to the scared little boy of years ago.

What this shows is that, just as we once learned to be scared and anxious, so we can just as easily learn to be confident and relaxed.

The Two Keys to Public Speaking Confidence

The two keys are simple:

1. Know your material
2. Manage your state, how you feel

Let’s look at these in turn...

1. Know your material

This doesn’t mean knowing in advance, word for word, exactly what you are going to say. It means knowing enough about your material, whether that’s a wedding speech, a business presentation, or a seminar you’re running. And it also means knowing broadly what you’re going to say, and in what order. For example, giving your presentation a beginning, a middle and an end is pretty much essential.
And by doing your homework in this way and knowing what you’re talking about, you already have a degree of confidence and competence which will help you enormously. And your audience will pick up on this.

2. Manage your state, how you feel

If you’re like most speakers, this is what really matters most to you. And it’s also what really makes the difference.

Because if someone has written a great speech, but feels so nervous that they deliver it like a wet fish, a mouse on speed or a sloth on valium (nervousness shows up in different ways!), what kind of experience do you think their audience is going to have? Not a good one.

However, this can all be changed.

Below you’ll find four simple techniques which you can use to improve the way you feel about public speaking. You’ll find that they make the difference for you both now, as you’re rehearsing and thinking about speaking, and when you are actually speaking for real.

**Four Ways to Turn Fear into Confidence**

1. One Point

This single simple technique can transform the way you feel in seconds. Prepare to be amazed at how quickly this can happen for you!

One Point is based on a practice from the ancient Japanese martial art of aikido, and every martial art has something similar.

You see, in western cultures most people put all their attention or focus in their head most of the time, in their rational mind. But that’s not always the best place for it to be, as you’ll now discover as you do the exercise that follows.
**One Point**

Read everything through before you start.

**Part 1**

1. Stand up with your feet shoulder-width apart and your arms by your sides. Take a moment to put your attention on your One Point, which is about three finger-widths below your navel and half-way between your navel and your spine. You may like to picture your One Point being as a golden ball of energy.

2. Each time you breathe in, imagine a line of positive energy moving down the front of your chest and tummy and feeding into your One Point. As you hold your breath for a moment, see this energy swirling around inside your golden ball. Then, as you breathe out, imagine that energy shooting straight up your spine and out of the top of your head in a solid rod of bright and colorful light. (This is what is meant by ‘having backbone’!)

3. Repeat this for a number of breaths, until you feel only really good feelings now.

4. Have you ever seen a dog get out of the water and shake itself off? Take a quick moment now to shake your body out in a similar way. Shake those hands and feet!

**Part 2**

5. Now think about a public speaking situation, and notice how you feel about it. Rate your discomfort on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is wonderfully calm and relaxed, and 10 is as bad as it could be. Write your score down.

**Part 3**

6. Now bring your attention back to One Point and repeat your breathing and imagining as in Steps 1 to 3, until you have only good feelings again.

7. From this place, think again about the same public speaking situation and notice the discomfort changing as it drains away down from 10 (or wherever it was on the scale) to just one.

8. While keeping your attention at One Point, now imagine actually being in the public speaking situation, saying what you want to say, in the way you want to say it, and seeing your audience reacting positively to you in all sorts of good ways.

9. Enjoy noticing how different you feel now!
2. Spinning it Your Way

It may be that One Point is the only thing you need do to completely eliminate the negative feelings you had about public speaking. Or you may want more ways to do this and feel even more confident.

Here’s something quick, simple and fantastically powerful, which was discovered and developed by Dr Richard Bandler.

As you may have noticed, when you have a feeling inside your body it tends, as you think about it, to move around. In fact, feelings have to move in order for them to continue happening, because we all naturally know that if you sit still on your behind without moving at all, it soon becomes numb and the feeling goes.

And you yourself have certainly experienced what it’s like to have tingles run up and down your spine, haven’t you, and the feeling of butterflies moving around in your tummy when you’re excited, or perhaps nervous. And then there’s the more personal, sexual feelings you have which certainly spread around your body, sometimes in waves.

And, although you may not have noticed it consciously until now, you also know that all feelings have colors, don’t you. To just confirm this for yourself, complete these sentences inside your mind: “The color of envy is ______.” “The color of anger is ______.” That’s right, you already know the right answers for you.

*This is even mentioned in a famous song, “Loving You (is easy ‘cos you’re beautiful)” by Minnie Ripperton, which includes the lyric: “No one else can make me feel the colors that you bring...”*

Well, what’s really interesting and useful is how we can play with these colors and these movements of feelings to feel much better, right now.
Spinning it Your Way

Read everything through before you start.

1. Take a moment to think about public speaking, and notice whether you get an uncomfortable feeling inside. If you do, rate your discomfort on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is wonderfully calm and relaxed, and 10 is as bad as it could be. Write your score down.

2. Notice where in your body the feeling starts. And then notice where it spreads to.

3. Now, all feelings that continue firing off like this effectively ‘spin’ in one direction or another. So if a feeling starts in your tummy and ends up in your chest, it must loop back to your tummy so it can continue firing off. The question becomes, which way does it loop? Does it loop up your front and down your back, or up your back and down your front? Or perhaps it loops up your left and down your right, or up your right and down your left? It doesn’t matter – just take a moment to feel your own uncomfortable feeling, and notice which way it spins for you. And if you think you can’t tell, just guess!

4. What you probably haven’t noticed yet, is that that feeling also has a color. I’m wondering what that color would be. Whichever answer you give is the right answer for you, for that feeling.

5. Now, here’s the amazing part. As that colored feeling continues to spin in that direction, and while you’re still feeling it, imagine it gradually moving forward out of your body until it’s about arms-length away from you. That’s right. Now, slow down the spinning, until it’s only spinning very slowly, and then bring it to a complete STOP. At this moment, see the color change to something totally different and much more appealing – the new color of your choice. And then, in the opposite direction, start the new color spinning, back the other way. Speed it up until it feels far, far better.

6. Now take that new colored feeling, spinning in the new direction, and bring it back into your body, in the same places, but with the new color and the new direction of spin.

7. As you become aware of how much different and better that feels, rate your ‘discomfort’ now on a scale of 1 to 10, and notice how different your answer now is from the one you wrote down a few moments ago.
You could naturally use this spinning technique to transform other bad feelings too.

By the way, if a bad feeling keeps coming back, despite you running this process, it probably means it's telling you something which is worth listening to, in which case it's a good idea to ask yourself what's causing the feeling, and what you can do to resolve the cause.

3. Talking Up, Not Down

As you’re reading these words, now, written in front of you, you’re probably not speaking them out loud, are you. And yet you can choose to ‘hear’ the words, the sounds they make as they run through your mind. It’s as if you have an inner voice which is speaking to you inside your mind, but which no-one can hear on the outside.

It’s okay, this is perfectly normal – everyone does it, and not just when they’re reading!

The question is, when you’re not reading, what are you saying, and how are you saying it?

I remember asking my ex-Special Forces client what he said to himself inside when he thought about speaking in public. His answers were along the lines of, “You’re so bad at this, they’re all gonna laugh at you, what if I forget what to say, I hate speaking in public,” etc., etc. Next I asked him, “And do you say these things to yourself in a friendly, supportive voice?” Unsurprisingly he laughed, and said, “No, I say them in a harsh, mocking voice.”

I then asked him whose voice it was. And of course he knew that, whoever the voice may sound like, it was actually his voice speaking, because there couldn't physically be anyone else living in there!

And you know, this is a good thing, because if the voice in your head is your voice, it means that only one person can control it – you, of course…
**Talking Up, Not Down**

To make this exercise even more powerful, you can do it in front of a mirror.

Read everything through before you start.

**Part 1**

1. Spend a moment imagining that you are going to do some public speaking. What do you say to yourself inside your mind? Take a moment to blurt out and then write down all the negative things you might say. If you’re not sure, just make them up!

2. Look at what you’ve written, and ask yourself what tone of voice you would use if you really wanted to make yourself feel bad by saying these things inside your mind.

3. Ask yourself this question, “Am I prepared to put up with talking to myself in this negative way, or am I ready to change it forever?”

4. Once you have your right answer, I want you to think of the silliest, most ridiculous comedy voice you can imagine, or have ever heard. And I mean absolutely ridiculous. Got it? Now take that silly voice inside your mind and make it even sillier by having it go up and down randomly, from high to low and back again.

5. Now, with your new silly voice intact, take your list of negative things to say and read them, inside your mind, using only that silliest of voices. Read the whole list, then read the whole list again, only in your silly voice. (If you’ve got a mirror, do this step looking into your eyes for maximum effect, even if this makes you laugh even more.)

6. When you’ve finished scrambling your negative voice in this way, take a moment to look at the list again and notice how different it feels when you read that list now. Rather better, isn’t it.

**Part 2**

7. Now write down the positive opposite of each negative thing you wrote before, e.g. “You’re rubbish at this,” becomes, “You’re fantastic at this,” and “They’re all gonna laugh,” could become, “When I speak people love to listen,” etc.

*continued...*
8. Once you’ve converted all the negatives into positives, make up some more positives which might also be useful for you, e.g. “I really enjoy public speaking,” “People can tell that I know what I’m talking about,” “You easily remember what to say,” “You’re a great public speaker,” “I speak with passion and purpose.”

9. Think about the tone of voice you use when you say really good, positive things to yourself. If you can’t think of the voice, make it up! Imagine how you would speak to yourself if you wanted to feel really calm and powerful and confident. Play with this voice a bit – does making it louder make you feel even better? Does making it deeper help you feel even more confident? Experiment until you have a great, positive internal voice. After all, it’s your voice, so you might as well make it very good.

10. Now, with your great, positive voice, take your list of positive statements and read them, inside your mind, using only that best of voices. Read the whole list not once, not twice, but three times through. (Again, if you’ve got a mirror, do this step looking into your eyes for maximum effect.)

11. Notice how much better you feel about public speaking as you talk to yourself this way. You may wish to do this exercise whenever you are planning to speak publicly. For example, for the week before the next time you are public speaking, you could spend 10 minutes every day doing this exercise, and be delighted by what a difference it makes.

And of course you could adapt this exercise for any area of life you’d like to feel more confident about, including just how you feel about yourself in general.

4. Mental Rehearsal

One of the things we all occasionally do as adults is daydream. And daydreams are very similar to the dreams you have at night, in that they are made up of pictures and sounds and feelings, aren’t they. One interesting thing is that sometimes you are aware of the content of your daydreams as they are happening, and sometimes you only become aware of them when you now stop… and think about them, don’t you.

So here’s a question for you. It’s the kind of question that might seem a little unusual at first, but which you can naturally find yourself answering inside your mind, and it’s this...

“Who ‘decides’ what happens in your daydreams?”
Because the more you think about it, it’s obvious that your daydreams come only from inside your mind, and so the only person who ‘decides’ must be… you! You may not always decide actively and consciously, but the good news is that, with just a small amount of practice, you can make your daydreams good ones, so that you feel better and find public speaking easier and more enjoyable.

Remember my ex-Special Forces client who was scared of public speaking? As well as changing the way he talked to himself, I also asked him what kind of things he was seeing in his mind’s eye as he thought about public speaking.

At first he was a little puzzled by the question, but after thinking about it he realized he was seeing a movie in his mind’s eye in which...

a) he looked terrified
b) he stumbled over the words and got things mixed up, and
c) everyone in the audience looked bored or even angry about what he was saying

And this was a full color movie, complete with unhappy soundtrack of everyone groaning and moaning about him. No wonder it gave him a sick feeling in his stomach!

So instead I had him create and watch a far better movie for himself, using the mental rehearsal process you’re about to do on the next page. In his new movie he saw himself looking confident and assured, he was speaking fluently and easily and with passion, and everyone in the audience was looking happy and entertained. In this movie he even had people coming up to him afterwards and congratulating him on such a great speech. Needless to say, watching this movie in his mind’s eye a few times worked wonders for him, just as it can work wonders for you too.

None of this is exactly surprising, when you consider the history mental rehearsal has, and how it is used by virtually every professional athlete in the world to improve their performance.

For example, in a famous demonstration of the power of mental rehearsal, a basketball team was split into two groups to practice ‘free throws’. One group went on court and physically practiced taking the shots, while the other group sat down and mentally rehearsed doing it in their minds.

What happened next is very interesting. When the two groups came back together and competed with each other to see who did best, the mental rehearsal group actually out-scored the group who had physically practiced. How so? Because the practice group had got some practice shots in the basket and missed some others, whereas the mental rehearsal group, in their minds, had naturally scored every single basket – they had never missed a shot! They had conditioned their minds for success, and this positively affected their performance in the real competition.
This works because your unconscious mind – the part of you that lets you do things without thinking about them, like beating your heart, walking down the street, and tying your shoelaces – cannot tell the difference between a real experience and one that is vividly imagined. And anyone who has had an extremely vivid and realistic dream at night naturally knows just how true this is.

**Mental Rehearsal**

Sit with both feet flat on the floor, one hand on each thigh, and your head up and shoulders gently back. Or you can do the rehearsal standing up if you prefer, with your feet shoulder width apart and your hands by your sides. Naturally choose somewhere you won’t be disturbed, and close your eyes if that makes it easier for you.

Read everything through before you start.

**Part 1 – practice this on its own first**

1. Decide how you want to feel when public speaking. Do you want to feel confident, excited, exhilarated, calm? Remember, feeling completely relaxed, as if you’re lying on a sofa, may not be the best option if you want to do a good job. Decide what works best for you.

2. Now think of a time in the past when you have had that feeling, really strongly.

3. Take a moment to pretend you are back in that time now and see what you saw, hear what you heard and feel how good you feel.

4. Make the colors in your mind’s eye brighter and bolder, and notice how that makes the good feeling even stronger.

*continued*
Part 2
5. Now, while keeping the good feeling from Part 1 (do Part 1 again to get the feeling back if you need to), imagine you are in a movie theatre. You're the only one there, sitting in the front row, and on the screen is a short movie of you on the occasion of your public speaking. And this is a happy movie, a movie in which everything goes well, a movie in which you are the star! The movie runs from some time before your actual speech, right through to some time afterwards. It's a highlights movie, and may include scenes from before you travel to the place of your speech, you making your way there, your arrival, you being there before your slot, you walking up and delivering your speech or presentation, you walking back down, you being there afterwards, and you leaving at the right time. And because your actual public speaking is the most important part of the movie, it's also the part which is shown in most detail, the part which gets most screen time.

6. Now, because this is your movie and you are the director and the editor, you can easily change it and make it just the way you want it to be.

7. So, keeping the feeling from Part 1, go back to the beginning of the movie and watch it from there, seeing yourself going through all the parts of the day and making things even better. Perhaps you will see yourself sometimes calm and confident, and sometimes excited in the right way for you – you decide. And make sure that for the public speaking part of the movie, you can see yourself doing it with confidence and feeling, all while breathing naturally and easily. You may like to notice yourself looking up at the audience, and really connecting with them, and you can see your audience are really engaged by your words, and appreciative of you and what you have said. You may even notice people afterwards going up and thanking you for a great speech. And if for some reason you don't like a section of the movie, stop it, rewind a little, and change it until it's good for you.

Part 3
8. Now, once you’ve finished ‘editing’ and have watched the movie going well all the way through, it's time for you to float up into the movie screen and run the movie from the inside.

9. So step into the movie and run it again from the beginning, this time seeing things through your own eyes, hearing everything through your own ears, and feeling how good it feels to be doing everything right and having everything go well.

continued…
10. If you want, repeat step 9 again, as many times as is right for you.

11. And when you’ve finished, open your eyes and notice how good you feel.

You can perform this mental rehearsal as many times as you want, including on the day of your public speaking itself. Once your movie is finished, you can miss out Part 2 and just do Parts 1 and 3 for the full effect each time.

And yes, this too is an exercise you can adapt for any situation you want to perform better in, just like those top athletes do.
This book is for everyone. So whatever your political or religious beliefs, you will find some – perhaps all – of the following eulogies to famous people interesting, and perhaps moving and inspiring.

Do remember, though, that all these eulogies are for public figures, and they were also all written and delivered by highly experienced public speakers. So they are different in tone and content from 99% of the eulogies ever written, and are probably different to any eulogy which you may write.

There follow eulogies for…

- Mahatma Ghandi
- President John F Kennedy
- Rev Dr Martin Luther King
- Graham Chapman, member of Monty Python
- Diana, Princess of Wales
- Pope John Paul II
Funeral Eulogy for Mahatma Mohandas Ghandi
by Jawaharlal Nehru
February 2, 1948

A glory has departed and the sun that warmed and brightened our lives has set, and we shiver in the cold and dark. Yet he would not have us feel this way. After all, that glory that we saw for all these years, that man with divine fire, changed us also – and such as we are, we have been molded by him during these years; and out of that divine fire many of us also took a small spark which strengthened and made us work to some extent on the lines that he fashioned. And so if we praise him, our words seem rather small, and if we praise him, to some extent we also praise ourselves. Great men and eminent men have monuments in bronze and marble set up for them, but this man of divine fire managed in his lifetime to become enshrined in millions and millions of hearts so that all of us became somewhat of the stuff that he was made of, though to an infinitely lesser degree. He spread out in this way all over India, not just in palaces, or in select places or in assemblies, but in every hamlet and hut of the lowly and those who suffer. He lives in the hearts of millions and he will live for immemorial ages.

What, then, can we say about him except to feel humble on this occasion? To praise him we are not worthy – to praise him whom we could not follow adequately and sufficiently. It is almost doing him an injustice just to pass him by with words when he demanded work and labor and sacrifice from us; in a large measure he made this country, during the last thirty years or more, attain to heights of sacrifice which in that particular domain have never been equaled elsewhere. He succeeded in that. Yet ultimately things happened which no doubt made him suffer tremendously, though his tender face never lost its smile and he never spoke a harsh word to anyone. Yet, he must have suffered – suffered for the failing of this generation whom he had trained, suffered because we went away from the path that he had shown us. And ultimately the hand of a child of his – for he, after all, is as much a child of his as any other Indian – the hand of a child of his struck him down.

Long ages afterwards history will judge of this period that we have passed through. It will judge of the successes and the failures – we are too near it to be proper judges and to understand what has happened and what has not happened. All we know is that there was a glory and that it is no more; all we know is that for the moment there is darkness, not so dark certainly, because when we look into our hearts we still find the living flame which he lighted there. And if those living flames exist, there will not be darkness in this land, and we shall be able, with our effort, remembering him and following his path, to illumine this land again, small as we are, but still with the fire that he instilled into us.

He was perhaps the greatest symbol of the India of the past, and may I say, of the India of the future, that we could have had. We stand on this perilous edge of the present, between that past and the future to be, and we face all manner of perils. And the greatest peril is sometimes the lack of faith which comes to us, the sense of frustration that comes
to us, the sinking of the heart and of the spirit that comes to us when we see ideals go overboard, when we see the great things that we talked about somehow pass into empty words, and life taking a different course. Yet, I do believe that perhaps this period will pass soon enough.

He has gone, and all over India there is a feeling of having been left desolate and forlorn. All of us sense that feeling, and I do not know when we shall be able to get rid of it. And yet together with that feeling there is also a feeling of proud thankfulness that it has been given to us of this generation to be associated with this mighty person. In ages to come, centuries and maybe millennia after us, people will think of this generation when this man of God trod on earth, and will think of us who, however small, could also follow his path and tread the holy ground where his feet had been.

Let us be worthy of him.
Eulogy for President John F Kennedy
by Senator Jacob Javits at a Senate Memorial Service
December 1963

Mr. President, hundreds of thousands of words have been published, and hundreds of thousands more have been spoken into the microphones of the world since John F. Kennedy was struck down in Dallas, but none of them were really adequate. Words never are in the face of senseless tragedy.

Words cannot describe how the American people felt when they lost their president. Not until the vacuum of disbelief was filled with the horror of comprehension did any of us realize how much we identified ourselves, even apart from personal friendship, with the president – this intellectual, vigorous young man – and he would have been that if he were eighty – expressing the very essence of the youthfulness of our nation. It seems of little consequence now that there were political differences, or objections to this or that legislative product, though as far as I am concerned there was a very large measure of agreement. What matters is that feeling of loss – that personal sense of emptiness – that all Americans feel because their president was cut off in the prime of life. As a nation, we have lost a president who understood the institution of the presidency, gloried in its overwhelming responsibilities, and discharged his duties with dash and joy, which were an inspiration to the youth of our nation.

But John F. Kennedy was more than that. He was a man filled with the joy of living. He was a husband, a father – and my friend.

For myself, I remember coming to Congress the same day he did. We were sworn in together on the same January day in 1947. A photograph on my office wall shows that we two, returning veterans, looked a little uncomfortable at the moment in our civilian clothes. It shows us looking at the Taft-Ellender-Wagner housing bill, and it recalls the first job we did together when we called on the National Veterans Housing Conference of 1947, which we had organized, to back this bill. It was the beginning of an association which extended throughout our careers in the House and Senate. We collaborated in many bipartisan matters, as is not unusual in the Congress. Indeed, in our service together in the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, we worked closely – as did Senator Morse and others – on the minimum wage bill, the Labor-Management Disclosure Act, and other similar measures which were major aspects of Senator Kennedy’s legislative career.

I am a personal witness to the fact that he was resourceful, optimistic, and creative. He became and was my friend, and this is a deep source of gratification to me and to Mrs. Javits and our family.
Mrs. Javits, too, knew President Kennedy well and admired him greatly. She will, I know, always think of the president’s graciousness and the warmth of personal friendship which he exuded.

Only a week before his tragic passing, I saw him in the Oval Room at the White House when he accepted the report of the Advisory Committee on Medical Care for the Aged, in which Senator Anderson and I joined, and issued a statement offering encouragement and help.

He was vigorous and healthy and smiling and friendly – a complete human being, concerned about other human beings who were no longer as vigorous and not quite as healthy as they used to be.

This concern for the unfortunate by a man with all of the social graces and all the social status and as much power as America allows one man, was what made him so much the symbol of the youth of our country. His wife, Jacqueline, who has given Americans so much reason to be very proud of her and of all American womanhood as she reflected in it, in these last mournful weeks, in the way she carried herself, has said the most beautiful tribute – that John F. Kennedy had the “hero idea of history,” and that she did not want people to forget John F. Kennedy – the man – and replace him with some shadowy figure in the history books.

She need not fear that. There are already thousands upon thousands of people in the world working to keep his memory alive. I have been privileged to join with many others in this body in co-sponsoring a bill to rename the National Cultural Center and make it a living, vibrant memorial to this vibrant man who loved the arts. And with Senator Humphrey, I have joined in a bill establishing a commission to ensure that only the most appropriate memorials be created in his honor.

These are well-meaning, deeply sincere tokens – necessary, but still tokens. In reality it will be John F. Kennedy’s youthful freshness in his aspirations for our country that will keep his memory fresh.

In a real sense we, his former colleagues in the Congress, are the only ones with the power to write words which can transform these aspirations into memorials with meaning. We can write legislative acts, like a meaningful civil rights law, which would consecrate and perpetuate John F. Kennedy’s love for personal and national dignity. We can exorcise from our country – and the American people are doing that even now – those extremes of hatred and disbelief in public affairs which create a climate in which terrible acts become much more likely.

Acts such as these will be his final memorials. It is within our power to establish them. Perhaps his noblest memorial is that he would have wanted such memorials almost as no others.
So, in common with my colleagues in this solemn service – and that is what this is today – I bespeak for Mrs. Javits and my children – and I would place their names in the Record, so that as they read this Record when they grow up, I hope they will read their names in it and see that their father spoke with deep sympathy – Joy, Joshua, and Carla, to Mrs. Kennedy and the children, and to the president's father and mother and his brothers and sisters and their families our deepest sympathy on this terrible bereavement, for our nation and for all mankind, and in the deep expectation that flowers will grow from his grave for the benefit of man.
Eulogy for Rev Dr Martin Luther King
by Robert F Kennedy, delivered to a crowd in Indianapolis, on the
day of Dr King’s assassination
April 4, 1968

I have bad news for you, for all our fellow citizens, and people who love peace all over
the world, and that is that Martin Luther King was shot and killed tonight.

Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice for his fellow human beings,
and he died because of that effort.

In this difficult day, in this difficult time for the United States, it is perhaps well to ask
what kind of a nation we are and what direction we want to move in. For those of you
who are black – considering the evidence there evidently is that there were white people
who were responsible – you can be filled with bitterness, with hatred, and desire for
revenge. We can move in that direction as a country, in great polarization – black people
amongst black, white people amongst white, filled with hatred toward one another.

Or we can make an effort, as Martin Luther King did, to understand and to comprehend,
and to replace that violence, that stain of bloodshed that has spread across our land, with
an effort to understand, compassion and love.

For those of you who are black and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust at
the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I can only say that I feel in my own
heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed, but he was killed by a
white man. But we have to make an effort in the United States, we have to make an effort
to understand, to go beyond these rather difficult times.

My favorite poet was Aeschylus. He wrote: “In our sleep pain which cannot forget falls
drop by drop upon the heart until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom
through the awful grace of God.”

What we need in the United States is not division; what we need in the United States is
not hatred; what we need in the United States is not violence or lawlessness, but love and
wisdom and compassion toward one another, and a feeling of injustice towards those
who still suffer within our country, whether they be white or they be black.

We’ve had difficult times in the past. We will have difficult times in the future. It is not
the end of violence; it is not the end of lawlessness; it is not the end of disorder.

But the vast majority of white people and the vast majority of black people in this country
want to live together, want to improve the quality of our life, and want justice for all
human beings who abide in our land. Let us dedicate ourselves to what the Greeks wrote
so many years ago: to tame the savageness of man and to make gentle the life of this world.

Let us dedicate ourselves to that, and say a prayer for our country and for our people.
Memorial Service Eulogy for Graham Chapman, member of Monty Python
by John Cleese
January 1990

The members of British comedy group Monty Python are famous the world over for their ability to shock and to go against social conventions. If you were the kind of person at all likely to be offended by such an approach to a eulogy, you would be best advised to skip this one. Whereas if you can see this as it was intended – as a sincere if shocking tribute which was in fact absolutely fitting to the man who had died – then by all means read on.

Graham Chapman, co-author of the ‘Parrot Sketch’, is no more. He has ceased to be, bereft of life, he rests in peace, he has kicked the bucket, hopped the twig, bit the dust, snuffed it, breathed his last, and gone to meet the Great Head of Light Entertainment in the sky, and I guess that we’re all thinking how sad it is that a man of such talent, such capability and kindness, of such intelligence, should now be so suddenly spirited away at the age of only forty-eight, before he’d achieved many of the things of which he was capable, and before he’d had enough fun.

Well, I feel that I should say, “Nonsense. Good riddance to him, the freeloading bastard! I hope he fries.”

And the reason I think I should say this is, he would never forgive me if I didn’t, if I threw away this opportunity to shock you all on his behalf. Anything for him but mindless good taste. I could hear him whispering in my ear last night as I was writing this:

“Allright, Cleese, you’re very proud of being the first person to ever say ‘shit’ on television. If this service is really for me, just for starters, I want you to be the first person ever at a British memorial service to say ‘f*ck’!”

You see, the trouble is, I can’t. If he were here with me now I would probably have the courage, because he always emboldened me. But the truth is, I lack his balls, his splendid defiance. And so I’ll have to content myself instead with saying ‘Betty Marsden...’

But bolder and less inhibited spirits than me follow today: Jones and Idle, Gilliam and Palin. Heaven knows what the next hour will bring in Graham’s name. Trousers dropping, blasphemers on pogo sticks, spectacular displays of high-speed farting, synchronized incest. One of the four is planning to stuff a dead ocelot and a 1922 Remington typewriter up his own arse to the sound of the second movement of Elgar’s cello concerto. And that’s in the first half.
Because you see, Gray would have wanted it this way. Really. Anything for him but mindless good taste. And that’s what I’ll always remember about him – apart, of course, from his Olympian extravagance. He was the prince of bad taste. He loved to shock. In fact, Gray, more than anyone I knew, embodied and symbolized all that was most offensive and juvenile in Monty Python. And his delight in shocking people led him on to greater and greater feats. I like to think of him as the pioneering beacon that beat the path along which fainter spirits could follow.

Some memories. I remember writing the undertaker speech with him, and him suggesting the punch line, ‘All right, we’ll eat her, but if you feel bad about it afterwards, we’ll dig a grave and you can throw up into it.’ I remember discovering in 1969, when we wrote every day at the flat where Connie Booth and I lived, that he’d recently discovered the game of printing four-letter words on neat little squares of paper, and then quietly placing them at strategic points around our flat, forcing Connie and me into frantic last minute paper chases whenever we were expecting important guests.

I remember him at BBC parties crawling around on all fours, rubbing himself affectionately against the legs of grey-suited executives, and delicately nibbling the more appetizing female calves. Mrs. Eric Morecambe remembers that too.

I remember his being invited to speak at the Oxford union, and entering the chamber dressed as a carrot – a full length orange tapering costume with a large, bright green sprig as a hat – and then, when his turn came to speak, refusing to do so. He just stood there, literally speechless, for twenty minutes, smiling beatifically. The only time in world history that a totally silent man has succeeded in inciting a riot.

I remember Graham receiving a Sun newspaper TV award from Reggie Maudling – who else! – and taking the trophy, falling to the ground and crawling all the way back to his table, screaming loudly, as loudly as he could. And if you remember Gray, that was very loud indeed.

It is magnificent, isn’t it? You see, the thing about shock is not that it upsets some people, I think; I think that it gives others a momentary joy of liberation, as we realize in that instant that the social rules that constrict our lives so terribly are not actually very important.

Well, Gray can’t do that for us anymore. He’s gone. He is an ex-Chapman. All we have of him now is our memories. But it will be some time before they fade.
Funeral Eulogy for Diana, Princess of Wales  
by Earl Charles Spencer  
September 6, 1997

I stand before you today the representative of a family in grief, in a country in mourning before a world in shock. We are all united not only in our desire to pay our respects to Diana but rather in our need to do so. For such was her extraordinary appeal that the tens of millions of people taking part in this service all over the world via television and radio who never actually met her, feel that they too lost someone close to them in the early hours of Sunday morning. It is a more remarkable tribute to Diana than I can ever hope to offer her today.

Diana was the very essence of compassion, of duty, of style, of beauty. All over the world she was a symbol of selfless humanity. All over the world, a standard bearer for the rights of the truly downtrodden, a very British girl who transcended nationality. Someone with a natural nobility who was classless and who proved in the last year that she needed no royal title to continue to generate her particular brand of magic.

Today is our chance to say thank you for the way you brightened our lives, even though God granted you but half a life. We will all feel cheated always that you were taken from us so young and yet we must learn to be grateful that you came along at all. Only now that you are gone do we truly appreciate what we are now without and we want you to know that life without you is very, very difficult.

We have all despaired at our loss over the past week and only the strength of the message you gave us through your years of giving has afforded us the strength to move forward.

There is a temptation to rush to canonize your memory, there is no need to do so. You stand tall enough as a human being of unique qualities not to need to be seen as a saint. Indeed to sanctify your memory would be to miss out on the very core of your being, your wonderfully mischievous sense of humor with a laugh that bent you double.

Your joy for life transmitted wherever you took your smile and the sparkle in those unforgettable eyes. Your boundless energy which you could barely contain.

But your greatest gift was your intuition and it was a gift you used wisely. This is what underpinned all your other wonderful attributes and if we look to analyze what it was about you that had such a wide appeal we find it in your instinctive feel for what was really important in all our lives.

Without your God-given sensitivity we would be immersed in greater ignorance at the anguish of Aids and HIV sufferers, the plight of the homeless, the isolation of lepers, the random destruction of landmines.
Diana explained to me once that it was her innermost feelings of suffering that made it possible for her to connect with her constituency of the rejected.

And here we come to another truth about her. For all the status, the glamour, the applause, Diana remained throughout a very insecure person at heart, almost childlike in her desire to do good for others so she could release herself from deep feelings of unworthiness, of which her eating disorders were merely a symptom.

The world sensed this part of her character and cherished her for her vulnerability whilst admiring her for her honesty.

The last time I saw Diana was on July 1, her birthday in London, when typically she was not taking time to celebrate her special day with friends but was guest of honor at a special charity fundraising evening. She sparkled of course, but I would rather cherish the days I spent with her in March when she came to visit me and my children in our home in South Africa. I am proud of the fact apart from when she was on display meeting President Mandela we managed to contrive to stop the ever-present paparazzi from getting a single picture of her – that meant a lot to her.

These were days I will always treasure. It was as if we had been transported back to our childhood when we spent such an enormous amount of time together – the two youngest in the family.

Fundamentally she had not changed at all from the big sister who mothered me as a baby, fought with me at school and endured those long train journeys between our parents’ homes with me at weekends.

It is a tribute to her level-headedness and strength that despite the most bizarre-like life imaginable after her childhood, she remained intact, true to herself.

There is no doubt that she was looking for a new direction in her life at this time. She talked endlessly of getting away from England, mainly because of the treatment that she received at the hands of the newspapers. I don't think she ever understood why her genuinely good intentions were sneered at by the media, why there appeared to be a permanent quest on their behalf to bring her down. It is baffling.

My own and only explanation is that genuine goodness is threatening to those at the opposite end of the moral spectrum. It is a point to remember that of all the ironies about Diana, perhaps the greatest was this – a girl given the name of the ancient goddess of hunting was, in the end, the most hunted person of the modern age.

She would want us today to pledge ourselves to protecting her beloved boys William and Harry from a similar fate and I do this here Diana on your behalf. We will not allow them to suffer the anguish that used regularly to drive you to tearful despair.
And beyond that, on behalf of your mother and sisters, I pledge that we, your blood family, will do all we can to continue the imaginative way in which you were steering these two exceptional young men so that their souls are not simply immersed by duty and tradition but can sing openly as you planned.

We fully respect the heritage into which they have both been born and will always respect and encourage them in their royal role but we, like you, recognize the need for them to experience as many different aspects of life as possible to arm them spiritually and emotionally for the years ahead. I know you would have expected nothing less from us.

William and Harry, we all care desperately for you today. We are all chewed up with the sadness at the loss of a woman who was not even our mother. How great your suffering is, we cannot even imagine.

I would like to end by thanking God for the small mercies he has shown us at this dreadful time. For taking Diana at her most beautiful and radiant and when she had joy in her private life. Above all we give thanks for the life of a woman I am so proud to be able to call my sister, the unique, the complex, the extraordinary and irreplaceable Diana whose beauty, both internal and external, will never be extinguished from our minds.
“Follow me.” The Risen Lord says these words to Peter. They are his last words to this disciple, chosen to shepherd his flock. “Follow me” – this lapidary saying of Christ can be taken as the key to understanding the message which comes to us from the life of our late beloved Pope John Paul II. Today we bury his remains in the earth as a seed of immortality – our hearts are full of sadness, yet at the same time of joyful hope and profound gratitude.

These are the sentiments that inspire us, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, present here in Saint Peter's Square, in neighboring streets and in various other locations within the city of Rome, where an immense crowd, silently praying, has gathered over the last few days. I greet all of you from my heart. In the name of the College of Cardinals, I also wish to express my respects to Heads of State, Heads of Government and the delegations from various countries. I greet the Authorities and official representatives of other Churches and Christian Communities, and likewise those of different religions. Next I greet the Archbishops, Bishops, priests, religious men and women and the faithful who have come here from every Continent; especially the young, whom John Paul II liked to call the future and the hope of the Church. My greeting is extended, moreover, to all those throughout the world who are united with us through radio and television in this solemn celebration of our beloved Holy Father’s funeral.

Follow me! As a young student Karol Wojtyla was thrilled by literature, the theatre, and poetry. Working in a chemical plant, surrounded and threatened by the Nazi terror, he heard the voice of the Lord: Follow me! In this extraordinary setting he began to read books of philosophy and theology, and then entered the clandestine seminary established by Cardinal Sapieha. After the war he was able to complete his studies in the faculty of theology of the Jagiellonian University of Krakow. How often, in his letters to priests and in his autobiographical books has he spoken to us about his priesthood, to which he was ordained on 1 November 1946. In these texts he interprets his priesthood with particular reference to three sayings of the Lord. First: “You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.” The second saying is: “The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” And then: “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.” In these three sayings we see the heart and soul of our Holy Father. He really went everywhere, untiringly, in order to bear fruit, fruit that lasts. “Rise, Let us be on our Way!” is the title of his next-to-last book. “Rise, let us be on our way!” – with these words he roused us from a lethargic faith, from the sleep of the disciples of both yesterday and today. “Rise, let us be on our way!” he continues to say to us even today. The Holy Father was a priest to the last, for he offered his life to God for his flock and for the entire human family, in a daily self-oblation for the service of the Church, especially amid the sufferings of his final months. And in this way he became one with Christ, the Good Shepherd who loves his sheep. Finally, “abide in my love;” the Pope who tried to meet everyone, who had an ability to forgive and to open his heart to all, tells us once again today, with these words of the Lord, that by abiding in the love of Christ we learn, at the school of Christ, the art of true love.
Follow me! In July 1958 the young priest Karol Wojtyla began a new stage in his journey with the Lord and in the footsteps of the Lord. Karol had gone to the Masuri lakes for his usual vacation, along with a group of young people who loved canoeing. But he brought with him a letter inviting him to call on the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Wyszynski. He could guess the purpose of the meeting: he was to be appointed as the auxiliary Bishop of Krakow. Leaving the academic world, leaving this challenging engagement with young people, leaving the great intellectual endeavor of striving to understand and interpret the mystery of that creature which is man and of communicating to today's world the Christian interpretation of our being – all this must have seemed to him like losing his very self, losing what had become the very human identity of this young priest. Follow me – Karol Wojtyla accepted the appointment, for he heard in the Church's call the voice of Christ. And then he realized how true are the Lord's words: “Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it.” Our Pope – and we all know this – never wanted to make his own life secure, to keep it for himself; he wanted to give of himself unreservedly, to the very last moment, for Christ and thus also for us. And thus he came to experience how everything which he had given over into the Lord’s hands came back to him in a new way. His love of words, of poetry, of literature, became an essential part of his pastoral mission and gave new vitality, new urgency, new attractiveness to the preaching of the Gospel, even when it is a sign of contradiction.

Follow me! In October 1978 Cardinal Wojtyla once again heard the voice of the Lord. Once more there took place that dialogue with Peter reported in the Gospel of this Mass: “Simon, son of John, do you love me? Feed my sheep!” To the Lord’s question, “Karol, do you love me?,” the Archbishop of Krakow answered from the depths of his heart: “Lord you know everything; you know that I love you.” The love of Christ was the dominant force in the life of our beloved Holy Father. Anyone who ever saw him pray, who ever heard him preach, knows that. Thanks to his being profoundly rooted in Christ, he was able to bear a burden which transcends merely human abilities: that of being the shepherd of Christ's flock, his universal Church. This is not the time to speak of the specific content of this rich pontificate. I would like only to read two passages of today's liturgy which reflect central elements of his message. In the first reading, Saint Peter says – and with Saint Peter, the Pope himself – “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ – he is Lord of all.” And in the second reading, Saint Paul – and with Saint Paul, our late Pope – exhorts us, crying out: “My brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.”

Follow me! Together with the command to feed his flock, Christ proclaimed to Peter that he would die a martyr’s death. With those words, which conclude and sum up the dialogue on love and on the mandate of the universal shepherd, the Lord recalls another dialogue, which took place during the Last Supper. There Jesus had said: “Where I am going, you cannot come.” Peter said to him, “Lord, where are you going?” Jesus replied: “Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow me afterward.” Jesus from the Supper went towards the Cross, went towards his resurrection – he entered into the paschal mystery; and Peter could not yet follow him. Now – after the resurrection – comes the time, comes this “afterward.” By shepherding the flock of Christ, Peter enters into the paschal mystery, he goes
towards the cross and the resurrection. The Lord says this in these words: “...when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go.” In the first years of his pontificate, still young and full of energy, the Holy Father went to the very ends of the earth, guided by Christ. But afterwards, he increasingly entered into the communion of Christ’s sufferings; increasingly he understood the truth of the words: “Someone else will fasten a belt around you.” And in this very communion with the suffering Lord, tirelessly and with renewed intensity, he proclaimed the Gospel, the mystery of that love which goes to the end.

He interpreted for us the paschal mystery as a mystery of divine mercy. In his last book, he wrote: The limit imposed upon evil “is ultimately Divine Mercy”. And reflecting on the assassination attempt, he said: “In sacrificing himself for us all, Christ gave a new meaning to suffering, opening up a new dimension, a new order: the order of love... It is this suffering which burns and consumes evil with the flame of love and draws forth even from sin a great flowering of good.” Impelled by this vision, the Pope suffered and loved in communion with Christ, and that is why the message of his suffering and his silence proved so eloquent and so fruitful.

Divine Mercy: the Holy Father found the purest reflection of God’s mercy in the Mother of God. He, who at an early age had lost his own mother, loved his divine mother all the more. He heard the words of the crucified Lord as addressed personally to him: “Behold your Mother.” And so he did as the beloved disciple did: he took her into his own home – Totus tuus. And from the mother he learned to conform himself to Christ.

None of us can ever forget how in that last Easter Sunday of his life, the Holy Father, marked by suffering, came once more to the window of the Apostolic Palace and one last time gave his blessing urbi et orbi. We can be sure that our beloved Pope is standing today at the window of the Father’s house, that he sees us and blesses us. Yes, bless us, Holy Father. We entrust your dear soul to the Mother of God, your Mother, who guided you each day and who will guide you now to the eternal glory of her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.