

Is that the one? - Is that your obit picture?

Gary Heartsill

Your journey has molded you for the greater good.
And it is exactly what is needed to be.
Don't think you have lost time.
It took each and every situation you have encountered
to bring you to the now.
And NOW is right on time.
K. Jones

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It takes Gramma to explain to the kid where his photo may be printed. Ole Earl is my model for the theme of this paper as he is thinking now about where his picture will be in the future.

So, the questions for this paper have to do with reconciling the finish by using the past in present time. Somewhere between the no longer and the not yet is the NOW of life. We can say yesterday, today, and tomorrow. They are inextricably joined. Only the foolish disregard the connections using the lessons of the past to forge the future by acting today - as we have heard all our lives "An apple a day keeps the doctor away!" or "Keep your powder dry!" perhaps "Don't leave home without it!"

Birth, struggle, and death (*Geburt, Kampf und Tod*). We are born, we live, and we die. So, how can we appropriate our history to mold our destiny, while acting in the present? Perhaps if we take care of the NOW in our lives we might write our history and our future may be preserved. To state this another way by looking at the end we are put back into the present to mold the future.

Obits, tombstones, calendars, and a bucket list

Some of the old codgers around when asked how they are doing will respond with the trite, worn out, and worthless statement "When I read the obit this morning my name wasn't in it so I guess I am doing ok." I wonder if they have thought of their obituary picture. Do they care? Does anyone care? The question here is if they saw their picture in the obituary would it be one they would have chosen or picked out? A survey of any obit page will show most obit pictures are probably determined after the person dies without any kind of a plan to pick an appropriate last picture, or, asking before hand if "Is that the one?" Most pictures are from graduation, military, baby, beauty shot, or one just found at home in an old scrap book. Perhaps, by taking care of the day (today) and picking out a picture will take care of tomorrow?

Obituaries also take some forethought, time, and reflection (I wonder what the ole codger would say about his obituary?). The obits go the range from a full name and two dates to a full blown history. You can observe the space given in the newspaper from about two or three lines to a full column (or two) - with picture included. You can see the difference in text most of the

time by the money spent on the post - and whether the funeral home writes it or an English major. The question is what would you like to see in your obituary? What would honor your life? What does your dash say?

*For that dash represents all the time
that they spent alive on earth.
And now only those who loved them
know what that little line is worth.¹*

Linda Ellis

For sure the dash will show up on your tombstone between the two dates. Some of the information in the obituary will be on your headstone, marker, or tombstone. What will it say? What would you like for it to say? Will it show just a name, date, dash, and date? Maybe there is something in your past, something that is just especially you, that you would like to have carved into the granite? A focus on tomorrow (or the end) or picking your obit picture and your tombstone puts you right back in the present, right back in the NOW, right back in the "Dang, I need to finish, start and finish, accomplish, complete what needs to be done, before I die - or before it is too late." I'm thinking of the ole codger again...wonder what he would like to see on his tombstone?

I have a stack of yearly calendars, by the month, next to my desk here in my Combat Control Center (CCC). The stack is about two inches high (uncompressed) and it reflects my life - and to some degree my history - since January 1990. This reflection is over 295 months or over 24.5 years and is about one-third of my life. I can pretty quickly look back and check dates, times, and events - the looking is quick but the finding specifics sometimes is longer. Some of the highlights are:

- * my first computer in June of '90.
- * our first grand child in May of '91.
- * my last degree in August of '92.
- * my last three airlines
- * twenty years instructing at SimuFlite
- * almost twenty years teaching for Embry-Riddle
- * fifty-third wedding anniversary '13
- * lost my mother in '03
- * lost my dad in '09
- * lost my precious wife in '14

Looking back (now) at the joys, smiles, trials, tears, and grief, do the events give me a picture of how good it has been, how directed it was, maybe how authentic it was?

Can I say thanks for all that has been, all that is, and all that will be?

Do the highlights tell me what I have missed?

Can I see what I need to shore up?

Is there time to make amends for things I should have done?

Is it too late to "get 'er done" before I cross the Red River?

¹ See The Dash at: <http://www.linda-ellis.com/the-dash-the-dash-poem-by-linda-ellis-.html>

Glancing back I wonder if there are any existential markings or notes to give me any guidance for the future? Can any helpful decisions be made from looking back? Can we profit from our experiences? Dr. Keating "a passionate iconoclast" in *Dead Poets Society* asked his class if the previous students had any idea they could live one iota of their capabilities. He read from Whitman:

*O me! O life! of the questions of these recurring,
Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd with the foolish,
Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish
than I, and who more faithless?)
Of eyes that vainly crave the light, of the objects mean,
of the struggle every renew'd,
Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and the sordid
crowds I see around me,
Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with the rest me intertwined.*

The question, O me! so sad, recurring - What good amid these, O me, O life?

Answer:

*That you are here - that life exists and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.
(That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.)*

What will your verse Be?

Bucket list (best for last)

Is that the one? Picture, obituary, calendar, tombstone...how about your Bucket list? Most everyone has one and most of us have even seen the movie. I will add my Bucket list was essentially complete when I spent a weekend on the aircraft carrier LINCOLN (The Penny) back in ought '08 but it brings up the eschatological question "to what end will the completion of a bucket list add to the powerful play and your verse?"

Perhaps completed items like:

- * Yes, I lived my life - fully.
- * Yes, I made my amends - all of them.
- * Yes, I have said my good byes - well, most of them.
- * Yes, I have written my obit.
- * Yes, I have I have my obit picture.
- * Yes, I have my tombstone all figured out.
- * Yes, I am NOW standing proudly between the NO LONGER and the NOT YET.

I checked with that ole codger and noted he had only one more thing left to do on his Bucket list - just one simple word: *kick*.