



Living in the Balance

July and August 2023

Note: This is an update of a piece I wrote some years ago....

On a crisp November morning several years ago, we were with friends boating quietly up the brackish backwaters of the Cooper River near Charleston. I see the Trappist monastery of Mepkin Abbey sitting on the bluff above the Cooper; a place that has given my soul sheltered silence on retreats and holds a tender spot in my heart. The egrets. The ancient oaks. The spartina grass. The tidal marsh. I wondered aloud about having my ashes spread there. While continuing to guide the boat, Wayne broke my wistfulness by announcing, "Well, Wanda, no problem. My dad has a potato gun that he and his WWII buddies used for fun. We can just stuff your ashes right in the old potato gun and spray you anywhere you like. We'll be careful not to pack you in too tightly, we want you to sail.....not thud.....into the afterlife!" The laughter rolled.

One of the greatest gifts you can give your family and your friends is to make your wishes known about dying and death. So I'm making a pitch right here for you to talk with your amour or your best friend or someone who cares about what you care about. The Five Wishes is a good place to start if you're stumped. It's an expanded version of the Living Will....which you also need along with a health care power of attorney and a durable power of attorney. Your "people" need to know and understand what or how far to go to keep you alive and when to let you go. They do. And if you don't want to be resuscitated that is a legal document that requires a doctor's signature, and you must also meet certain requirements. A note pinned to your refrigerator with DNR in red magic marker won't do it.

And if you must blow the dust off your will or search for it, take the time to locate, revisit and update.

Leave directives. Decide what's going where. And make a list of all your accounts.....including your passwords. When my dad died I went to the bank and the associate said that I was so fortunate that my dad told me where everything was. She said, "Everyday, we get a call from frantic family members asking if their dad or mother had an account at the bank because no one left information about the location of anything."

People say that funerals are for the living, but shouldn't you be granted some pre-event input into your own whole "hereafter" shebang? I've heard about people being buried in their 1957 Chevy or with their golf clubs or bowling trophy or in their wedding dress. Now those tell a story! I encourage you to just think about the "who, what, where, when" of a service....and if you are even going to have a service. If you are....jot down your thoughts or copies of readings or hymns or prayers or rituals or songs that speak to you. Knowing my mother's thoughts and wishes saved my brother and me from conflict and heartache since he and I had very different beliefs and spiritual practices.

My husband and I have had these conversations. He knows the "plan" and he can work it on auto pilot if he has to. I've made it clear. Make me comfortable, but let me go....step on my air hose if you have to. Skip any viewing. I will not look "natural" and no one can "fix" my hair while I'm living; I am sure that will not change when I'm dead. Count me out for the photo display. In first grade I didn't like my eyebrows, so I cut most of them off; a fact forever captured in my school picture. I've opted "out" for the potato gun and opted "in" for green burial at Ramsey Creek Nature Preserve near the stream.



About Spiritual Direction —

- Offers a space and time for you to explore, reflect upon, and deepen your relationship with God.
- Provides a haven from the daily busyness of the outer world and opens a time to be still and to reflect on your inner journey.
- Is a companioning relationship grounded in dialogue and discernment.
- Explores ways you may integrate spirituality into your daily life.
- Is not limited to any one spiritual practice or tradition.
- May involve one or two meetings or multiple meetings over time.

You may wish to consider spiritual companioning if you are —

- Longing for a deeper relationship with the Divine
- Looking for a place to dialogue about spiritual questions
- Seeking ways to connect with the Spirit in a more intentional way
- Discerning ways to live in a more integrated and whole way
- Standing at a crossroads in your life
- Exploring new or fresh ways to be in relationship with God

I am no longer offering spiritual direction but will be glad to talk with you about the process.

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These photos were taken at the Biltmore House, Prince Edward Island and Cumberland Island at various times over several years.

