

## **A Few Ideas for a Green Burial Followed by Memorial Service For Chris Palmer**

By Chris Palmer  
November 2, 2023

I'm drafting these notes (my "death will") to help Gail, Kim, Sujay, Tina, CJ, Jenny, and Chase, and to ease the burden on them when I die.

I want a simple green burial at Reflection Park (attended by family and close friends), buried next to Gail. Pumphrey Funeral Home (301-652-2200) can transfer my body to Reflection Park and help with the Death Certificate. (Will Pumphrey, the CEO, is a friend.) Pumphreys can refrigerate my body for a few days or even longer while you make the arrangements. No embalming!

The contact at Reflection Park is Dr. Basil Eldadah: [eldadahb@gmail.com](mailto:eldadahb@gmail.com). Basil and I are friends. The address is 16621 New Hampshire Avenue, Silver Spring, MD. Phone 443-840-6775. Website [reflectionpark.org](http://reflectionpark.org).

At Reflection Park, I recommend a simple commitment service in line with a "home funeral" or "community-led deathcare." Basil or Will Pumphrey can recommend a "home funeral guide" to help you with the arrangements if you need help. Basil and Will will happily help you in any way they can.

I want family members to be the pallbearers. Everyone would say something. Bring flowers to say goodbye. Take your time. Feel free to draw on my biodegradable casket and write messages on it.

I can imagine our daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren visiting and talking to us in Reflection Park. It is a beautiful natural area of 40 acres bursting with trees, wildflowers, and nature. A green burial at RP seems particularly fitting since I devoted my professional life to conservation.

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My thoughts below are for a memorial service (perhaps about an hour long), but they could easily be used (with appropriate adjustments) for a "living wake" or "living funeral" (a celebration of the life of a dying person held *before* they die when they can appreciate what is said).

I strongly favor living wakes. If you do a living wake with a large group of family and friends, there may be no need for a memorial service, but a living wake would likely only involve a small group (the family and a few friends).

The green burial at Reflection Park would be followed one or two months later by a memorial service/life celebration, loosely in line with the notes below.

Of course, you may prefer that the memorial service follow the green burial within a day or so. That would help Jenny and Tina because they would only have to make one trip to Bethesda, but it also means there is much work to do quickly. (The estate would pay for travel expenses.)

*Venue:* I recommend the Edgemoor Club (or Woodend). After the memorial service, there can be a catered party/reception for everyone at the same venue (paid for by the estate).

*Who to invite:* Everyone who knows me well. See the list of my friends on pages 8 and 9 of my Personal Mission Statement. Friends in the Bethesda Metro Area Village, Montgomery Hospice, MacGillivray Freeman, the Office of Cemetery Oversight, the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Maryland & Environs, and the Edgemoor Club. And, of course, all our friends, neighbors, and tennis partners.

*Officiant or Funeral Celebrant:* The officiant or celebrant could be Gail, Kim, Tina, Jenny, Sujay, CJ, Chase, or whomever Gail designates. A fallback (if no one wants to do it!) is to hire a secular humanist celebrant from the Washington Ethical Society. I prefer having Gail, Kim, Tina, or Jenny be the celebrant. Their job is to keep the event on track and well-orchestrated.

*Starting the event:* The celebrant might begin by reading aloud the following message from me to set the intention:

“Hi everyone, thank you for coming today! My life was full and happy, and I have much to be grateful for. My death, though sad, is not a tragedy. I don’t want this celebration of my life to be too solemn. Please remember the wonderful times we had together. Please share your stories and memories with my grandchildren to help them remember me. I hope to live on in the hearts I leave behind.”

*Eulogists:* Kim, Tina, Jenny, grandchildren, friends, and anybody else who would like to speak. I would be honored if my family, including grandchildren, spoke. Gail may prefer not to speak.

*Postcards for written stories:* Ask everyone to write their memories and stories about me on postcards and send them to Gail so she can share them with our grandkids. If this is done before the memorial service, some of them could be read aloud at the memorial service for everyone to enjoy. Everyone would be given, either before the memorial service or as they arrive, a postcard with the prompt: “A favorite memory of Chris was...”

*Program:* This printed document can include a photo(s) of me, a short bio, the program elements, a list of eulogists, etc. Perhaps add a “thank you” from the family to everyone for coming. The memorial service might look like this:

- Music as people enter (see below for music selections #1 through #5)
- Welcome from celebrant
- Message from me (see above)

- Eulogies from Kim, Tina, and Jenny (or perhaps one of them speaking on behalf of all of them)
- Reading #1 (see below)
- Eulogies from grandchildren (or maybe a few of them speaking on behalf of all of them)
- Music: *You Raise Me Up* by Josh Groban
- Eulogies from friends (if offered)
- Reading #2 (see below)
- Opportunity for others to speak
- Reading #3 (see below)
- Thank you for coming. Reception to follow.
- Music as people exit (see below for music selections #6 through #8)

*Readings:* I've selected three readings to be read by family members (or friends), and I have included them at the end of this memo for ease of reference:

1. *We Remember Them* by Sylvan Kamens and Rabbi Jack Riemer
2. *Our Lives Matter* by M. Maureen Killoran
3. *The Wolf Credo*

*Music:* I've listed below music that I like. The first few choices can be played as the memorial service starts (as people come in) and when it ends (as people exit). *Note:* This list of 38 can also be my playlist as I near death.

1. *I Did It My Way* by Frank Sinatra
2. *What a Wonderful World* by Louis Armstrong
3. *Go Down Moses* by Louis Armstrong
4. *Imagine* by John Lennon
5. *No Hard Feelings* by the Avett Brothers (CJ)
6. *Eleanor Rigby* by the Beatles
7. *Auld Lang Syne*, sung by the Choral Scholars of University College Dublin
8. *Yesterday* by the Beatles
9. *Pie Jesu* by Charlotte Church (*Voice of an Angel*)
10. *Gymnopedie No. 1* by Erik Satie
11. *Gnossienne I* by Erik Satie (played by Alessio Nanni)
12. *That's Alright* by Elvis Presley
13. *I Will Always Love You* (from the *BodyGuard*) by Whitney Houston
14. *Summertime* by Charlotte Church
15. *How Do* by Mary Chapin Carpenter
16. The music to *Downton Abbey*
17. *You Raise Me Up* by Josh Groban
18. *Like a Rolling Stone* by Bob Dylan
19. *You've Got a Friend* by James Taylor
20. *Bridge Over Troubled Water* by Simon and Garfunkel
21. *Beat It*, and *Thriller* by Michael Jackson
22. *Johnny B. Goode* by Chuck Berry
23. *For a Dancer* by Jackson Browne

24. *If I Can Help Somebody* by Mahalia Jackson
25. *Dance Me to the End of Love* by Leonard Cohen
26. *Breathe* by the Kennedys
27. *Wind Beneath My Wings* by Bette Midler or Celine Dion
28. *Somewhere My Love (Lara's Theme)* from *Dr. Zhivago*
29. *Hallelujah* by Lucy Brown (Leonard Cohen)
30. *My Heart Will Go On* (from the Titanic)
31. *I Will Remember You* by Sarah McLachlan
32. *The Way We Were* by Barbara Streisand
33. *Happy* by Pheral Williams
34. *Down at the Twist N Shout* by Mary Chapin Carpenter
35. *Can't Stop the Feeling (Sunshine in My Pocket)* by Justin Timberlake
36. *Your Smiling Face* by James Taylor
37. *King Tut* (Saturday Night Live) by Steve Martin
38. *Sunshine on My Shoulders* by John Denver

*Photos:* In the venue can be photos from my life for family and friends to enjoy. I especially like the ones from our vacations with all 17 of us. You may want to show the 200-page album of “Grandpa’s photos” I gave you at Christmas 2023.

*Memory Table with significant “physical things” from my life:* If you want, you could have a “memory table” and display some of the books I authored, a few of the films I made, my Personal Mission Statement, one of my talks or workshops, one or two of my family journals, a few of my letters, the family history I wrote, my juggling balls, a few of my cartoons, my favorite piano music, my Naval cap, my Emmy, my tennis racket, and boxing gloves.

PS: Remember to contact our attorney about our wills: Leah Morabito:  
[Lmorabito@mcmillanmetro.com](mailto:Lmorabito@mcmillanmetro.com).

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### ***We Remember Them* by Sylvan Kamens & Rabbi Jack Riemer (Reading #1)**

At the rising sun and at its going down; We remember them.  
 At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter; We remember them.  
 At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring; We remember them.  
 At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer; We remember them.  
 At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of the autumn; We remember them.  
 At the beginning of the year and when it ends; We remember them.

As long as we live, they too will live, for they are now a part of us as We remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength; We remember them.  
 When we are lost and sick at heart; We remember them.  
 When we have decisions that are difficult to make; We remember them.

When we have joy we crave to share; We remember them.  
 When we have achievements that are based on theirs; We remember them.  
 For as long as we live, they too will live, for they are now a part of us as, We remember them.

***Our Lives Matter* by M. Maureen Killoran (Reading #2)**

We come together from the diversity of our grieving,  
 to gather in the warmth of this community  
 giving stubborn witness to our belief that  
 in times of sadness, there is room for laughter.  
 In times of darkness, there always will be light.  
 May we hold fast to the conviction  
 that what we do with our lives matters  
 and that a caring world is possible after all.

**The Wolf Credo by Del Goetz (Reading #3)** (Gail and I suggest each grandchild read one line aloud.)

Respect the elders  
 Teach the young  
 Cooperate with the pack

Play when you can  
 Hunt when you must  
 Rest in-between

Share your affections  
 Voice your feelings  
 Leave your mark