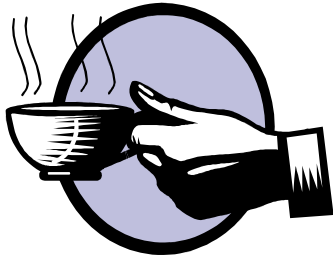


TWIN PEAKS

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Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of spring
Your winter garment of Repentance fling;
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter---and Lo! The Bird is on the wing!
The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam

WHATEVER ELSE WE LACK in wisdom and foresight, our tendency to ignore the easily forseen consequences of time's passage is perhaps the most needless of our shortcomings. We learn at an early age that life will eventually end for all of us, yet our automatic expectation is that our own death is always somewhere in the future. Is this bad? Certainly not, *if we couch that expectation with prudent preparation.*

Our schools prepare us for life and career, but very few teach us how to prepare for death. This oversight in our education is not surprising, given the separation of church and state as well as the many differences in religious beliefs—or lack of any belief concerning death. I do not favor discarding our avowed separation of church and state, but I do feel that our public schools should offer comprehensive courses in the legal aspects of death and the responsibilities incumbent upon the deceased, his estate, his executor, and his heirs. Learning the applicable facts is often very expensive for those left to settle an estate. Also, the law may be different from state to state, so it should be verified that existing documents such as Wills and Powers-of-Attorney meet the new state's requirements. Granted that with age and maturity, we *should* attend to our affairs in a timely manner, the *fact* is that most of us do not.

Aside from the considerations of what is left for others to do when we are gone, there is another important reason to think beyond today. Many of us devote excessive hours to our careers; putting money aside for the future. This is not a bad idea,

and I applaud the principle of preparing for the future. My feeling is that we concentrate too much on the money and not enough on the *other values* we're going to need.

Our health is going to determine whether our future is enjoyable or not. Unless we can function well and with only moderate loss of mental and physical attributes, the future will offer little of what we desire for ourselves. The condition of our physical bodies is to a considerable extent, up to us now. We owe it to ourselves to take care of the structure we inhabit before the time has passed when we can do so.

Most of us experience the pleasure of being with interesting and compatible people as we age. I do not consider myself a fan of social functions such as parties, but every day that passes makes me ever more thankful for the friends I have. There is no substitute for good conversation with a respected friend. Nor is there anything that compares with knowing absolutely that there are people in your circle of acquaintances who will do for you as much as you would do for yourself; all without question. The best time to cherish your old friends and to make new ones is every day.

The last point I will make here is that of being a good steward of yourself. Treat yourself to quiet time; to good music; to an interesting hobby. With a little thought, you can find room in your life for things that please and restore you. If you are not enjoying life, now is the time to change it and to include something that you enjoy in every day's activities. Share with others often.

Instead of waiting until our physician cautions us to "get your affairs in order" we would be wise indeed to keep our affairs in such order that no matter when the grim reaper appears, we will be able to depart without regrets. And be assured that the day of our departure will come; whether we realize it or not, *the Bird is on the wing!*

