



The Challenger

The Official Newsletter of the Harper College Honors Society

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TRIBUTE To YOURSELF

By Shelomi Gomes

One day, we will all have a unique speech written about ourselves. Unique, as it will be delivered through the words and emotions of our loved ones. Unique, as we will listen to it not in our physical form, but from a far, unreachable place which harbors our spirit. The speech will be unique, as it will be our eulogy, a tribute to ourselves.

So what makes a good eulogy and why is it important at a funeral? I put these questions to Professor Marcia Litrenta, Chair of the Speech and Theatre department at Harper, who teaches Honors Speech in the Fall, and to Ray Hernandez, an alumni of the Harper Speech team, who recently graduated, at age 20, from Worsham College of Mortuary Science. In addition, I asked three Harper Honor students, Kathy Miller, Nathan Battaglia and Tiffany Mueller what they would like their eulogies to say.

GOMES: What makes delivering a eulogy different from all other speeches?

PROFESSOR LITRENTA: When teaching my students I normally stress on how we need to focus and internalize whatever lines we are saying in our speech. When delivering a speech, we have to really care about the topic so these feelings show through. Yet when giving a eulogy, if we do this, we probably will not be able to get the words out, as we are focusing on the sadness of the moment. So in order to get through a eulogy, we have to distance ourselves from the words. I came to this realization when delivering the eulogy at my mother-in-law's funeral. It was really strange for me to do that. I knew I was not going to get through it otherwise.

HERNANDEZ: When delivering a eulogy, the audience's frame of mind, when they are listening, is at a different level. They are not at a level of high attention; they are at an emotional point. So as the speaker, you have to make the emotional connection to the person you are talking about and relate it in the eulogy and to the audience.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

At the first Challenger staff's first meeting in January, it was agreed we would write about the topic of death and dying when the time came to publish issue two.

True, death is not the lightest subject, but it is something we all must face because endings are inevitable. We also agreed that the subject of death would be interesting to research because it is so taboo in our culture. No one likes to talk about death - or be around it, for that matter. Resolutely, the Challenger staff moved ahead, thinking it would be a good "challenge" to tackle such a weighty subject.

Yet when the time came to actually begin writing, a couple of us realized we were too uncomfortable to tackle the subject. As Senior Editor, I wondered if the writing process wouldn't be a good opportunity to help overcome their uneasiness or purge some fears, but in the end, we did what mature, intelligent women do: we reached a compromise. Therefore, we dedicate this issue to an exploration of death - and life - and admit that we did a little "soul exposing" in the process.

Shelomi and I took up the topic of death while Kathy and Aurelia wrote about life. The line between the two is often very thin, as you will discover when you read our stories. I think you will be surprised to find how close to home these articles come. There's a personal story about the death of a teenager, an interview asking "What would be in your eulogy?", an essay on living life to the fullest and a piece exploring how one person can make the difference between life and death.

We would be interested to know how you - Honors students, faculty and staff - felt about the "heavy" subject we chose to address. Please feel free to email me: mfincher@harper.cc.il.us with your comments. If space permits, we will try to print some of your thoughts in the next edition of the Challenger.

Senior Editor

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"I envy you," my son said to me one day.
"Oh? Why's that?"
"You have so far to go to work.
My school is just a block away.
I just get started, then I'm there.
But Harper's such a distance.
You get to venture forth."
It's true, I guess. My work's a long way out.
It takes me 50 minutes, a bit less, maybe, when the traffic moves.
Some shady trees, Crow Island School
(The skinny sculpted bird there marks my setting off),
A string of Hyatts, Sheratons, and Regencies
(oh, Anglophonic inns!)
The new mall-centered blight where once the air base stood,
A blotch of county-demarkated wood,
The numberless imperatives of stoplights,
A rise, a dip (or two),
More malls and steady, stolid homes that harbor real selves,
Suburbia Regina! Our most imposing queen!
And then to work--the day's adventures over,
according to my son.
It is true, though. My boy's quite right.
Long-traveling privileges the soul.
We have our points of origin, and then we move away,
And leave those holy places far behind.
Familiar faces disappear behind the drapes,
Doors close,
We encounter strangers beyond number
(flashing their own imperatives)
On our way to somewhere else.
And when we come back (a day, a year, or more),
We find that all is altered, strangely changed.
The journey marks those changes, makes the changes clear.
It's well to live our lives a long way out.
Forth-venturing, we create ourselves anew,
In places far from all the hearthstone gods.
And this it is (before we move into the longest dark)
That brightens all returning.

- Tryg Thoreson

The editors would like to dedicate this issue to students and faculty across the country who have lost their lives as a result of school violence. This Challenger was written in their memory.

Just recently, the media made us aware of another plan to use weapons in a school – this time by a college student rather than a high school student.

How was disaster avoided? In this situation, one person made all the difference. Tragedy and death were avoided because someone took the time to follow up on something that was out of the ordinary.

While working in a drug store as a photo lab assistant, Kelly Bennett took a few minutes to check the colors of the negatives she was processing when she noticed the unusual subject matter of the photos. The young man who had brought in the film for processing posed with sawed-off shotguns, bombs and other sinister paraphernalia in each of the photos. The pictures gave Kelly a reason to call for help.

The police arrested the owner of the film, an angry community college student who was within days of planning a massacre at his school. Thanks to Bennett, a Columbine-like bloodbath at the De Anza College in San Jose by one of its own students was avoided.

A bit closer to home, I was personally confronted with the choice to do something or just ignore a 'situation' as I worked

on the story you are reading. As I was writing in the Harper Lab, the computer next to me was being used by a young man who was surfing the Internet, accessing sites that were definitely X-rated and had little to do with homework. What should I do?

I looked around and noticed one of the lab aides was standing

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dents were waiting for computers to be freed up so real research and homework could get done.

We'll see if my intervention helps solve this dilemma.

In the interim, let's get back to the problem of violence in schools and other public places.

Why would a person want to spend an enormous amount of time planning to vent their anger instead of planning to create a great personal life?

The answer would seem to be that they have not succeeded in selecting wholesome priorities or integrating themselves into uplifting social groups. Perhaps school or the workplace is the only place where they feel a real statement can be made about their feelings of anger, hurt and frustration.

Do you know anyone who could be considered on the outside of social activities? Why are they there? Can you do anything to change that?

High schools have, in the past year or two,

by the student surfing the net, yet he did nothing to stop him. In the end I decided it would be in the best interests of my conscience and the other students if I notified the supervisors of the computer lab.

I was particularly angry about this situation because other stu-

begun posting signs asking students to be more aware of fellow students who are troubled or unable to interact with their peers. They list phone numbers to call to make counselors aware of anyone needing help, so Columbine-like incidents can be avoided.

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*Death of Youth:
Taken by the
angels*

by Megan Fincher

Winter has finally passed and
we opened the windows today.
Once again I hear the windchimes
(their melody was silenced for so many months).
I listen to the soft music of metal against metal,
but all I can think of is death.
Death of youth, my beautiful friend,
Her small spirit has been carried away,
carried away like the echoes of windchimes.
I ask the angels why it haunts me so:
Why death in all its beauty,
death in all its wonder,
death in all its freedom,
haunts me like a nightmare.
And the angels answer
Glory! To Death!
Glory! To New Life!
And the windchimes whisper
onlythewindcangiveusvoice

The phone rang. My friend Keith, who I had known for five years, was sobbing on the other end. I had never before heard Keith cry.

"Karolina's going to die. I'm at the hospital right now and she's going to die very soon."

I remember not believing him and asking, "What? What are you talking about? Are you sure?" over and over. He had to explain the situation to me more than once, and I still didn't believe him when I hung up the phone.

I think it was the first time in my life that I ever went into a state of shock. I sat very still for a very long time. Nothing went through my head. I was numb. Eventually, I walked out to the living room.

My mother asked me who called, and I could only stare at her. How could I possibly put into words the unthinkable, the unspeakable?

I opened my mouth to tell her, but all that came out was, "Keith called. . ." and then I broke down in tears.

I haven't had many people die in my life. Those that have were old, or sick for a long time. It was expected they would pass away.

But Karolina, Keith's steady girlfriend, was eighteen. She contracted meningitis. A day later, she was dead. She had never graduated high school.

I didn't think people my age could die. If they did, it was something random and tragic, like a car accident or because of something immature and irresponsible, like alcohol poisoning.

But Karolina contracted a disease that couldn't be cured, even in this day of modern medicine and medical miracles. It didn't make sense to me; rather, it made me angry and scared. How could a beautiful, young, talented girl like Karolina die? And how could Death have taken her so suddenly, and without warning?

I was devastated, and could only imagine how her parents and close friends must feel.

I had met Karolina over the summer in the community theatre group, Second Suburb Players, which I was choreographing for. She was one of my feature dancers, and I instantly liked her. Karolina was not only beautiful, but was extremely talented. She was an Honor Roll student, and was heavily involved in theatre and show choir. When I heard the news of her eminent death, I thought of what a terrible loss the world would have without her.

People lined up for her funeral. They flooded out the funeral home doors. There were ropes set up in the funeral parlor because so many people were in line to pay their respects.

There were family, friends, friends of friends, and people from the community who only saw Karolina's beautiful face on the news and felt an urge to console her parents. I went to the funeral home a couple of hours before it closed and I still had to wait hours to talk to her parents. I was amazed at the turnout—how shocking this death was to the community as a whole.

It made me realize how no one expects a young person to die, and probably, everyone who heard about her death, even the people who didn't know her, were shocked.

Because who expects it? Who ever thinks that a teenager, a person who has never even been to college, or married, or had children, their own home, the job they had dreamed about, could be gone? I think that is the problem that I had: comprehending the fact that Karolina would never, ever be seen again.

My boyfriend, Joel, and I talked about her death for a long time after the funeral. It made us realize that we are not immortal, unlike the attitude most young people have. We both understood that every day must be cherished, because nobody is immune to death—it is the inevitable destiny we each have. When Death will reach us, we can only guess.

We learned how to cry together, and how to laugh at the beauty of our lives. As the author Tillie Olsen wrote, "Death deepens the wonder." And the death of this young woman truly put my life into perspective.

Once in awhile I will think of her, and I will thank my God that I have life and promises and dreams and heartbreaks and disappointments to experience.

I am young, but I, too, could be gone tomorrow. I have to always remember that. I have to always remember Karolina.

It is through her death that I have learned to truly cherish life. #



But if you are looking to live a quality life, do you plan to live it by yourself? Why not extend a hand when you see someone alone and unable to interact? Why not become as aware of your fellow students and neighbors as you are of new clothing trends? Wouldn't it be great if there was a place in each neighborhood where we could go to converse and interact with others? There are several here at Harper.

Sitting in front of a TV, video game or a movie at a theater is not a way to connect. It isn't even a way to interact with yourself.

So, what will you do the next time you see someone who looks troubled or needs help? Remembering that we are not alone and that happiness is always dependent on positive action rather than passiveness, why not take a chance and make a difference?

Dr. James Cavanaugh, a professor of psychiatry at Chicago's Rush Medical College and a consultant on workplace violence made some interesting points in his recent interview with *People* magazine. First, the American social and family structures have weakened with the advance of longer work hours, and less time for family. The school or workplace has become the home and community. When an angry person can not resolve issues in a fami-

ly environment, the anger is directed where the frustration occurs.

That could mean Harper.

So why not look around you and see if there is someone who could benefit from your intelligence, kindness and faith in God.

We can, as individuals, make a tremendous difference. If everyone stopped saying "I'm only one person," and instead said, "Hi, I noticed you were sad/angry/had a problem with the homework..."

Maybe each of us could leave a personal legacy that included "saved lives, property and the sanity of others," as Kelly Bennett did with her small but exceptional act of awareness the day she took a moment to investigate the innocent photos she was processing. #

The Challenger Eulogy Contest!

We invite our readers to do something unusual this month: author your own eulogy, just as two of our editors have done this month (below). A prize for the most creative eulogy submitted will be awarded, so put on your thinking caps and enter. The contest is open to everyone: students, staff, faculty (and Dr. Breuder). Please submit your eulogy (no more than 100 words) to Megan Fincher c/o Challenger, Honors Office, L334, no later than April 20, 2001.

Aurelia Flowers

A daughter of two loving parents, mother of a wonderful son and daughter, has recently taken a leave of absence from her current duties. She thoroughly enjoyed her experiences as a child, waiting for the time her parent's words of, "Just wait until you have your own children, then you'll know!" came true. Not quite sure of whether she really does "know" now, Aurelia has taken life, faith, her children and family quite seriously most of the time, except for the odd occasion when she felt that it would be intriguing to give in to the longing to be a beach bum on a fabulous island in the Pacific. Never one to give up, she continued to work with herself, family and friends to create opportunities to grow and enjoy one another - regardless of the circumstances. As a parting gift she invites all of you to come to Tahiti to enjoy the final memorial celebration of her life.

Kathy Kobylewski

"Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Kathy lived her life with the hope that she would hear those words spoken to her by God. She strived to live a Christ-centered life; a life that would be honored by the relationships she built. She was compassionate, empathetic, a leader and a helper. She was a woman with a huge heart, putting others ahead of herself, longing to be the person that God intended her to be. Although she faced many struggles in her life, she learned to rely on the comfort and strength of her Savior. "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." She took the time to learn about and have a relationship with her Heavenly Father and His people, both those who knew Him and those who did not, yet. Kathy will be remembered as a devoted wife, sister, aunt, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, friend and servant.

"Well done, good and faithful servant!"

[Matthew 25:23]

Gomes: Tribute to Yourself (from cover)

GOMES: Why is it important to have a eulogy?

PROFESSOR LITRENTA:
A eulogy, which is built into the ceremony, gives us that moment of remembering and brings together the communal of people. This is why it is important to have a eulogy. A meaningful eulogy is one that not just focuses on the events that connected you to that person, but events that other people can remember, such as rekindling a past memory that everyone can relate to.

HERNANDEZ: A eulogy is important for the mourners, to give them a sense of closure. It's also a reminder of the wonderful things we have come to know about this person. You don't want the last memories to be of their death, so it's good to reflect about your time with them as a remembrance of their life.

Considering that Ray Hernandez entered the field of Mortuary Science, I asked him further questions.

GOMES: Ray, what made you choose to go into the field of Mortuary Science?

HERNANDEZ: Ever since I was a child I have had an interest in being a Funeral Director. It probably started when my aunt passed away, when I was 11 years old. That was the first funeral I had been to, and prior to that, I never had been exposed to death. I thought the funeral directors at my aunt's funeral were fairly rude and pushy. So I decided to go into this field to make a difference and also as a tribute to my aunt.

GOMES: Have you had any personal experience giving a eulogy? What did you learn from it?

HERNANDEZ: Yes, my grandfather passed away two years ago and I gave the eulogy at his funeral. I learned a lot about my grandfather and I learned how people viewed him by watching their reactions while I was speaking.

GOMES: In your schooling, did you learn about preparing eulogies?

HERNANDEZ: Yes, it was a part of my course work and I will be expected to give eulogies as a part of my profession.

GOMES: What would you like said in your eulogy?

PROFESSOR LITRENTA: Being a professor and working with students, I would like to be remembered as a person that thought about other people.

HERNANDEZ: Mainly that I always looked for the kindness in people, and that I was a people-person.

KATHY MILLER: Three things. One, that I was a really good mom. Second, that I thought it was important to work on social justice issues for women and family. Finally, that I loved to laugh!

NATHAN BATTAGLIA: If there was one thing, it would be that I tried to live my life as a living example of love.

TIFFANY MUELLER: I hope my eulogy would say that I was fair, honest and true person. Also, that

I loved my family and fought for what I strongly believed in, issues related to children.

Now that you have read what our interviewees had to say about eulogies, have you thought about what your eulogy would be like?

Here's a simple exercise: Take a moment and compose your eulogy. You may think it morbid, but instead, consider it a tribute to yourself. By doing this exercise, it will help affirm the type of life you would like to lead.

Keep this eulogy somewhere special and read it now and then. You may be surprised to find yourself writing that you want to be remembered for your humbleness, integrity and sense of humor.

I want to be remembered as being a reliable friend, a loving, fun partner and the best parent a child could have.

These are my hopes.

So, how would you like to be remembered? #



LIVE A JOYFUL LIFE BY KATHY KOBYLEWSKI

Have you ever thought about how to live? Chances are you, like the majority, have not. Most people think that "living" comes naturally. You are born therefore you live. I disagree. Have you ever considered taking a more active role in living a quality life? What are the things that come to your mind when I say that?

You might already be thinking, "Is this girl nuts? Why else would I be in college if I haven't thought about improving my quality of life? I want to be successful and make lots of money!" I do not argue that success and money do affect a person's quality of life, but considering the fact that that is not news, I would like to focus on something that maybe you haven't thought about.

The first thing is to realize that everything you do and everything you don't do, has a direct effect on the people in your life that you care the most about. This is why it's important to know yourself. Know your strengths and weaknesses and learn to control both. Being married, any time my husband or I are faced with a major decision, the first question we ask is, "Is this good for the marriage?"

We realize that our individual decisions greatly affect the happiness of each other and therefore ourselves. Forgiveness is a major part of being able to live a quality life.

We have got to learn to forgive!

I don't mean that you have to agree with or excuse everything that is done, but forgiveness is about giving up the right to retaliate.

Who is really hurting the most when you choose not to forgive someone? The person who hurt you may or may not feel bad about what they did, but they will get over it a lot quicker than you will. When you hold on to the hurt and the anger you are preventing yourself from truly living.

I've heard it said, "Let them off the hook" as a way of saying you should forgive. In response, I've heard it said that when you don't forgive, it's you that's really on the hook, so "Let yourself off the hook!"

Another way to improve your own quality of life is to improve the quality of life of someone else. There is nothing like the feeling of satisfaction after a hard day at work, that you didn't get paid for, rebuilding a broken down building that will provide homes for people who otherwise wouldn't have one. Or spend your weekends mentoring younger adults. Volunteering is a wonderful way to bring joy into your life, while helping to bring joy into someone else's life.

The final thing that I want to write about ties everything else together. Know and love God. It is an incredible thing that there is actually a book written by the author of life Himself on how to live a meaningful life. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul." "Love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22 (37 and 39). If we as a people could do just those two things, imagine how easy it would be to live a joyful life! #