

# WHAT I REMEMBER ABOUT MY LIFE

## EPILOGUE: NOVEMBER 2018

The viewer is persuaded by his senses that he occupies the center of the world around him – a world he changes at will as he moves through it.

Rudolf Arnheim, *The Power of the Center* (1988)

After a life of loving the old, by natural law I turned old myself.

Donald Hall, *Essays After Eighty* (2016)

### INTRODUCTION



Now, in the fall of 2018, it has been eight years since I completed my autobiography *What I Remember About My Life*. People asked me at the time if I intended to revise it to keep it up to date, or issue supplements, but I didn't want to do that. When a book is done, it's a relief to have it *done*. If it only went up to age 66, well, that's where it stopped.

But some things have happened since then that seemed locally important to me, and the book has been finished so long that I am not as sick of it as I was when I completed it in 2010. Some things have changed noticeably, and some things have changed unnoticeably.<sup>1</sup> So, again without trying to be comprehensive, this is how things look today.

I have divided this Epilogue into two sections: my declining health, and everything else. Let's take everything else first.

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<sup>1</sup> As Ram Dass wittily said, "Everything changes. Nothing doesn't change."

## PART I: MY LIFE PROCEEDS

### SOME THINGS CHANGE, OTHER THINGS DON'T SEEM TO

I am still living in the same house I bought in 1990, approaching thirty years ago now. The



Ocean still roars just beyond my back windows. I had some street furniture built in my formerly ratty-looking front yard. The big tree that sheltered my house from the street developed some incurable



arboreal illness and I had to take it down, but the junipers behind it grew sturdily in the newly opened space.



My beloved red 1988 Subaru Justy sedan that carried me so faithfully for 18 years finally failed smog inspection, so I had to allow the local public radio station to tow it away. I hated to do it because it worked perfectly, but I could not register it. To replace it I needed to find another car short enough to park between San Francisco driveways, and there aren't many cars that size available under my

stubbornly-insisted-on limit of \$2000, so I bought a 1995 Mazda Miata convertible sports car. It took me about six months to get used to climbing in and out of it, and having only two seats can be a nuisance sometimes, but I have grown to like it. It handles like a sports car! The left rear surface panel was crumpled and rusted, which saved on the cost and acts as an anti-theft device.

I made some changes inside my house, too. I added bookshelves in almost every conceivable spot (including in front of a fireplace) to handle my increasingly huge collection of heraldic books (now at more than 2500 titles, including pamphlets, and growing fast). I had walls and corridors lined with cork so I would have surfaces to post scrolls and medal-ribbon charts and other material I haven't been able to look at because it was rolled up for storage. I replaced worn-out back windows; I took the doors off more closets; I installed gadgets of my own design. The genius artisan Alejandro Alvarez (right) helped make all this (and the street furniture) possible.



Although my collection of heraldic books has grown, my collection of specialized atlases and atlases of history has not. I sort of declared that collection complete at nearly 900 titles and have shelved them mostly downstairs, as I don't have room for them upstairs any more. I still use them when I need to, but am no longer actively collecting them.

After 23 years I *am* still collecting heraldic covers (philatelic envelopes with heraldic cachets – see example at right).<sup>2</sup> I have them sorted into nine large plastic bins, separated by index guides. There are more than 5100 of them now, and a very interesting collection it is, too. I take great pleasure in assembling and maintaining it. I have published several images from this collection in my heraldic work.



Through 2016 I continued my long-standing practice of traveling widely. Between September 2010, when the Autobiography was finished, and my last trip in 2016, I visited 27 countries, as well as making ten trips within the United States to gather counties (this includes a trip to Alaska, but not annual visits to New York City).<sup>3</sup> Except for New York, [travel letters](#) for all these trips are posted on my website, and are included in the Archive. But in 2017 I stopped traveling, for reasons of health that will be explained in Part II.

I spend a lot of time in my house alone, reading books, writing e-mails and essays and doggerel, and non-obsessively following the news (even while I also try to follow the *Dhammapada*'s exhortation *do not live in the world*).

Come, consider the world,  
A painted chariot for kings,  
A trap for fools.  
But he who sees goes free.

I take naps. I eat chicken salad. I see my friends and family, or talk with them on the phone or by Skype. I go to the theater and concerts and lectures – I don't just *kvell* that I live in a city where I can do this – I really *do* it, once or twice a week at least. I continue my long-standing practice of avoiding romantic or sexual involvement, which lends a certain aridity to my life but avoids much misery and desperate entanglement (see Chapter 33).<sup>4</sup> I maintain my successful boycott of social media. I miss my old friends who have died.<sup>5</sup> I miss my father, dead 45 years now. Very sparingly, I add new friends. But I wish I did not live so far away from my family.

<sup>2</sup> Heraldic designs for this purpose includes coats of arms, flags, orders and decorations, military insignia, regalia, royal cyphers, quasi-armorial emblems, and similar subjects.

<sup>3</sup> The countries were Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Britain (twice), China, Cyprus, Czech Republic (twice), Ethiopia, Fiji, France (three times), Georgia (Republic), Greece, Iceland, India, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Nagorno-Karabakh, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Cyprus, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Vatican City.

<sup>4</sup> "I have known many who never said a word of complaint against old age; for they were only too glad to be freed from the bondage of passion." Cicero, *On Old Age*.

<sup>5</sup> I'm thinking of you, [Jim Ito](#) and [Bernie Segal](#) and Kathy Small and [Jim Marcus](#) and [Whitney Smith](#) and [Yash Yasinitsky](#) and Richard Sussman and Peter Stander and [Rosemary Woodruff](#) and others.



LEFT TO RIGHT: CHRISTOPHER, ARIANNA, VICTORIA, ADAM, CHRISTINA. ON SCREEN: NOAH.

I endure the existence of Trump these past two years as I would a tumor: malignant, poisonous, painful, infected, dangerous, a persistent ache, a burden, a miasma, a daily manifestation of evil.

Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually.

Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness.

Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.

God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living.

The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:

Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.

Psalm 52:1-7 (selahs omitted). Every day I pray he will have a fatal stroke. Come on, big guy, have another well-done steak!<sup>6</sup>

### RADBASH

Around 2012 I decided to create a website. I called it RADBASH, רַדב"ש, a Hebrew acronym (meaning *Rabbi David, the son of Samuel*) in the style of the acronyms given to the sages of the Talmud. I had recently completed the Autobiography and wanted to post it there, and also to

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<sup>6</sup> Trump has had a stroke!  
 Filthy, hateful bloke.  
 Our thoughts and prayers  
 Are with his heirs.  
 We hope that he will croak.

have a place to put my travel letters, which I had been distributing by e-mail but which were growing too long and too full of pictures to be easily disseminated that way. Once I got started I saw the opportunity for posting other material, and found myself writing more poems and rants and essays now that I had a place to post them. My friend Katherine Forer in New Jersey (right) kindly and professionally brought this website into being for me, fine-tuned it until it looked and worked the way I wanted it to, and has skillfully maintained it for me ever since.<sup>7</sup>



I like writing for the website, but although I have painstakingly learned how to edit it on a basic level I have no aptitude for or interest in the magic that goes on behind the screen. When Kathy tries to explain some technical issue to me I reply, with apparent sorrow, that I cannot understand Hungarian, and she knows then that I am beyond my very shallow competence. People sometimes write to me because of something I have posted to the website, often in the Autobiography or heraldry sections; it is always a pleasure to get these comments by e-mail, but I don't allow comments to be posted directly to the website. I know I should add useful search terms to all that I have posted up there, and Kathy reminds me every now and then that I need to do that. Search engine optimization! But I have only just managed to learn how to add search terms, and haven't yet actually added any. Later!

I have mentioned the Phillips Family Papers Archive at Yale, for which the Autobiography was originally written. Just as the Archive prompted the autobiography, which prompted the website, which prompted more writing, the Archive has also prompted me to retrieve and organize other earlier material. I have nearly finished arranging the first supplemental tranche – about five linear feet of ringed and tabbed binders (right), the contents of which will go into Yale's acid-free archival folders. These include the full Autobiography, a nearly complete printout of the website, documents and much more. They are about ready to go up there as soon as I write Finding Aids for the Yale Archives website. I may neglect adding keywords to the website without serious consequences, but if I neglect it for the Archive none of these papers will ever be seen again. And I *want* them to be seen there in future years when the life of an individually unimportant but nevertheless representative person of my time and station may have become more interesting than it seems right now. I explain my purpose in the [Preface](#) to the Autobiography.



### HERALDIC WRITING

In the [Summing Up](#) chapter of my Autobiography I wrote that I regretted not having left any books behind.

The truth is that I did not accomplish very much.... There is no book, for example, except for this one. All my painstakingly acquired knowledge will die with me. When I leave, I will have left

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<sup>7</sup> Her firm is called [Foreverink](#).

nothing much behind. As I look back on all the ambitions I have had at various points in my life – a career in politics, a career as a trial lawyer, a career as an academic librarian, some books I wanted to write, even enlightenment – I have not come even close to accomplishing any of them. This may change now that I have retired, but I doubt it, and anyway now there is not much time left.

But against all the odds, one aspect of this *did* change. I so enjoyed writing my Autobiography that I felt like continuing to write (and I still feel that way as I am writing this Epilogue eight years later). Also in 2008 my friend Dr. Whitney Smith, the world's premier flag scholar, retired from the board of the [Flag Heritage Foundation](#) and asked me if I would take his seat there. This was a great honor, coming from Whitney, and I agreed. At that time the Foundation did not have much of an active program. I had long imagined, in what I thought was an idle fantasy, how nice it would be to have the means to endow a publication and translation program that would publish monographs in the flag and heraldic fields, and if necessary translate worthy items from difficult languages and publish them in English. The Flag Heritage Foundation needed something to do, and the board supported my idea to do this, and so under my editorship we began a publishing program.



We began small, with [The Estonian Flag: A Hundred Years of the Blue-Black-White](#), a pamphlet originally in Estonian about the history of the flag. It was first published in Canada by a professor who had personally stolen the *original* Estonian flag from the National Museum to keep it from the advancing Russians in 1940, hid it under the hearth of his mother's forest cottage, and finally dug it up and returned it to the museum after the Russians left in 1991.

Encouraged, I produced a number of other books for the series.

- Two I wrote myself ([Emblems of the Indian States](#) and [The Double Eagle](#)).
- Two more ([The History of the Haitian Flag of Independence](#), by Odette Roy Fombrun, and [Flags and Emblems of Colombia](#), by Pedro Julio Dousdebés) were translations I commissioned and edited word for word from French and Spanish (which I couldn't do with Estonian), adding historical overviews and comprehensive scholarly notes.
- The most recent title ([Japanese Heraldry and Heraldic Flags](#)) included contributions from two other scholars. I supplied an introduction, notes, illustrations, and the lead article (an explanation of Japanese heraldry for Western readers).

Most of these books are available in full text on the Foundation's website, and we distributed hundreds of copies of each title to public, national and academic libraries around the world. So they should remain available for use (and inter-library loan) as far ahead as we can see. They can all be found on Amazon.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> We also published [Flags and Uniforms of the Oxford College Rowing Societies](#) (from the 1830s), host Roger Baert's [Signa Mundi](#) on our website, and have started publishing portions of Ph.D. theses on flag-related subjects. We also contributed substantially to placing Whitney Smith's vast library of flag books and flag-related documentation in the University of Texas library, where my own collection will also go. I designed the [Foundation's logo](#), based on an image in a 14-century manuscript.

In place of my former regret, I now feel intense satisfaction when I see my books on the shelf along with the equally recondite works of other scholars. I have made a contribution too! So that feels good anyway. In 2010 I regretted that I had left no book behind, and now I have left a *bunch* behind. How often in our 70s do we get to check a major unchecked box and eliminate a major regret?

I also began writing articles on heraldic subjects for specialized journals, notably but not exclusively *The Heraldic Craftsman* (published in England). It is the journal of the Society of Heraldic Arts, where I have been appointed a craft member (a distinction usually reserved for artists, but which they gave to me as a writer).<sup>9</sup> All my published heraldic writing is either reproduced or linked to on my website, and printed copies will go to Yale. Having a forum like *The Heraldic Craftsman* available to me encourages me to keep studying and writing in my field.



Not heraldic, but I also edited Rosemary Woodruff Leary’s unfinished memoir *Holding Together* from disconnected fragments in her papers at the New York Public Library into a coherent whole, with explanatory notes. I hope it will make it into print before too long.<sup>10</sup> It was a type of writing I had never tried before, and it was a very satisfying project.

<sup>9</sup> It comes with the postnominal letters SHA, which I use when publishing with them but not elsewhere.

<sup>10</sup> Rosemary, one of my closest friends for many years, is best known for her tempestuous but consequential marriage to Timothy Leary. See also Chapter 19: [The Leariad](#).

## PART II: DECLINING HEALTH

And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death.

Genesis 27:2

I wrote in [Chapter 34](#) of the main Autobiography (the chapter on Health) of the “dispiriting picture of a sturdy constitution being slowly but irreversibly undermined.” That is still the case, but not so slowly any more. Reader take note: a lot of what follows is not cheerful. I have had some difficulty writing the story of my decline in a way that did not sound like a long-winded complaint, or what is sometimes called an *organ recital*.<sup>11</sup> But the story of this part of my life would not be even close to truthful if I did not go into it in some detail, because it has had a major impact on my life and is progressively circumscribing it. So read on if you care (maybe Yale graduate students in 200 years will care more than contemporary readers), and if not, no blame.

In January 2011, shortly after completing the Autobiography, I had a *coronary artery bypass graft* [CABG], called in the trade a *cabbage*.<sup>12</sup> This painful and exhausting experience knocked me out for several months. When I recovered, I found I was very short of breath after any exertion – a walk of a city block would leave me gasping. Even though they all *knew* that diabetes had severely weakened my kidneys, none of my many fancy doctors had any idea what to make of this – they blamed *me* for not having done cardiovascular rehabilitation after surgery. They sent me to lung specialists; everyone shrugged. It turned out, though, as a new cardiologist rapidly concluded (after I fired the old one for turning his clinic into an assembly line) that this was a routine side effect of kidney failure. It came on right after the cabbage because a person can lose 50% of kidney function without noticing it, but shocks can degrade it suddenly, and I was probably about at 50% when the brutal shock of the cabbage pushed me over into noticeable deficit.

Anyway now I knew what it was, and I also knew that it was not likely to get better. It became a matter of managing the effects – breathlessness, fatigue and edema – as long as I could before dialysis became unavoidable. Homeopathic *apis mellifica* (made from bee venom) took care of the edema (what used to be called *dropsy*) as if by magic, but the other symptoms persisted.<sup>13</sup> And then one evening early in 2018 – exacerbated by an unwise adjustment of medication and a little too much exertion – I had a severe episode of breathlessness that scared me pretty seriously.

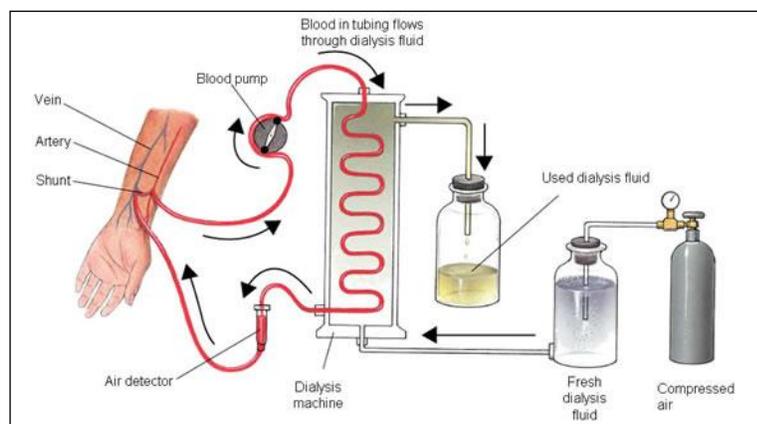
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<sup>11</sup> An organ recital is a detailed and numbingly boring account by an old person of just what is hurting at the moment, and what the remarkably young doctor said about it. Elderly men on Florida park benches make an art form of this.

<sup>12</sup> I wrote about my cabbage experience in [Travel Letter No. 10](#), available on the website and in the Archive.

<sup>13</sup> The homeopathic theory that *like cures like* accounts for the effectiveness of bee venom on edema (swelling from water retention), as actual bee venom from a sting also causes swelling.

After my scare I adjusted my medications and felt better. But I canceled my annual spring visit to New York, and also canceled a trip to England to speak at a heraldic conference that summer. I did not want to be caught away from home in a situation where dialysis was required without at least having prepared my body for it. So I stayed home and allowed my doctors to operate on my arm to install an *arteriovenous fistula*. This joins the artery to a vein, and a second operation brings the vein close to the skin so it can be used for dialysis without delay if needed. Sudden trauma (like a car accident or even a fall) can make dialysis immediately imperative, and if this fistula were not ready then other more horrible means of access would need to be used.



Dialysis – the process of removing the blood for purification the kidneys can no longer do – is a drastic remedy, because once undertaken it *must* be repeated every two days for the rest of a person’s life, and cannot be discontinued. I want to avoid that as long as possible – ideally until I die of something else.

My declining mobility has made ambitious travel more or less

permanently impractical, and I doubt I will resume it in any significant way.<sup>14</sup> My intention always was to keep traveling until either my health failed or the money ran out. I can still afford to travel, but with my mobility so impaired by breathlessness and fatigue (and chronic back pain) there is no longer much I can do once I get there. True, if I had dialysis, I could probably walk better. But I could still not travel as I used to, because I couldn’t get there without arranging on-site dialysis, which would limit me to big cities and would in any case be astronomically expensive as well as time-consuming.<sup>15</sup>

- It was a trip to Prague in 2016 that really finished me off, although I did not quite realize it at the time. There I was, but I could do almost nothing except ride in taxis. Strolling the streets of the Old Quarter, which is a lot of what I came there to do, was no longer possible. I did manage to tour a number of fixed sites, like the Castle and the Cathedral, and shop for books and covers, but it was an exhausting struggle. I have decided that even if I am not on dialysis, I am not going to try that again.<sup>16</sup>

So it appears that I have done my traveling for this lifetime, and surprisingly (due to a Buddhist understanding that everything changes) I found accepting this not at all difficult. I have a lot to do at home – projects, writing, study – that I had not been able to get to while I was traveling so

<sup>14</sup> I can still go to New York even on dialysis – a major hospital (where my father practiced medicine) is just down the street from Christopher’s apartment. I may go next spring (2019) if I feel up to it.

<sup>15</sup> In America dialysis is (for now) essentially free through Medicare. But treatment overseas is different.

<sup>16</sup> As the famous ballerina Wendy Whelan put it, speaking in the 2016 film *Restless Creature* about her aging and injury, “The body’s a big thing when you just want to keep doing what you’ve done.”

much. I did a lot of it while I had the chance, though – I have been to 83 countries and 79% of the counties in the United States, and have seen most of the landmarks I really wanted to see.<sup>17</sup> So I don't feel deprived, and even if I did I would not dwell on it.

Actually I had already been easing myself into a disabled lifestyle. Public transportation is now too tiring – just getting to the bus stop is a serious obstacle, and the stairs and expanses of underground stations are another. I now have a permanent disabled parking placard, which (combined with the tininess of my car and my willingness to pay for parking) lets me park almost anywhere I need to go. I am signing up for Paratransit.

I also have a cane that folds out into a seat. I first saw these in European museums, where they are offered to visitors as amenities. I don't need the cane part (yet, usually), but the seat part is a life-saver. Now when I walk, I can stop and rest at any time, which allows me to walk without exhausting myself, which makes me more willing to do it. I also have a scooter, as my mobility device is misleadingly called – I can go for miles on it as long as the hills are not too high. It is bouncy on the rough sidewalks – I prefer to drive it in the street but the police forbid it. Nevertheless it allows me to do local errands, and get out of the house (like taking a walk without actually walking).<sup>18</sup> I used to walk on the beach a lot (it is only a block from my house) – I can't do that any more, but I can get the scooter to the promenade *overlooking* the beach, second best but better than nothing, with sea breezes and surf sounds and gulls and pelicans, and dogs chasing frisbees.



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<sup>17</sup> The Taj Mahal, the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Grand Canyon, the Panama Canal, Chenonceau, the Kremlin, the Parthenon, the Alhambra, Gibraltar, Lisbon, Paris, Venice, Florence, Rome, Vienna, Jerusalem, Istanbul, the Pyramids, Varanasi, Stonehenge, Buckingham Palace, the Grand Palace in Bangkok, the Temple of the Tooth (in Sri Lanka), the Oval Office, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Sydney Opera House, Greenland's icy mountains (from the air), and many other sites including Auschwitz and Dachau, plus unconfined elephants, camels, monkeys, buffaloes, dolphins, whales, antelopes, wild horses, eagles, bears, yaks and kangaroos, and two popes.

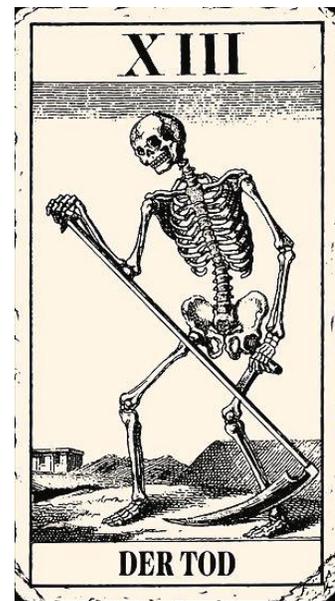
<sup>18</sup> The last time I visited New York, in May 2017, I rented one of these and it was delivered to my brother's apartment house. I was able to go easily from 74th Street and First Avenue all the way to the Public Library on 42nd and Fifth, and back again after recharging.

I am continuing to adapt. I ask for help when I need it, and accept help when offered. My friend Makiko Wisner (right) comes to shop and cook for me once a week, and does things I cannot easily do myself because of the stairs. When a light bulb burns out in a ceiling fixture, I ask for help changing it, because I no longer trust my balance on ladders (one fall and it could be the beginning of the end).<sup>19</sup> I no longer have the strength to make the visits I used to make to San Quentin State Prison, to visit certain clients I no longer quite represented, but with whom I remained my firm's liaison, and so with a mixture of regret and relief I discontinued legal visiting. That in turn meant I no longer had any use for my law license, for which the firm had been paying, or for the very bothersome mandatory continuing legal education courses I had to take to maintain it. So I will go inactive with the State Bar of California on January 5, 2019, the 47th anniversary of my admission to practice.<sup>20</sup>



Otherwise things are as I described them in Chapter 34 of the main text. Lots of problems (hypertension, hyperlipidemia, diabetes, gout) under perhaps temporary control with a massive program of medication (15 drugs at last count and also some homeopathic remedies). Weak in the lungs, weak in the knees, tremors in the hands, plumbing rusting out, cataracts forming, skin cancers that have to be carved away, insomnia, anorexia (!), balance uncertain, aching back, stiff and creaky, bone tired. While I still have all my marbles, they are no longer all perfectly round.

But when I am tempted to complain, I think *what do you expect? You're 74!* I made it this far despite a lifetime of reckless neglect, and am still able to see, read, write, hear, understand, remember, eat, drink and go to the theater. Although some lucky folks manage it, it would be unreasonable for me to expect not to have somatic problems at 74. Will I make it to 84? I'd like to (Arianna will be 16 then). Probably not, but you never know. Let's take it one year at a time. My father died at 56 of a heart condition I also have, but I had three angioplasties and a bypass not available to him and lived. So I am ahead of the game. As Cicero said (in *On Old Age*), "no one is so old as to think that he cannot live one more year."



### PREPARING FOR THE END

Still, in my mid-70s I am well along in a serious and incurable illness, so it is only reasonable that my thoughts should often turn toward **Death**, which is likely to be the next major event in my life.<sup>21</sup> But as the English wit Sydney Smith (1771-1845) is said to have said,

<sup>19</sup> Hemingway wrote in *A Farewell to Arms* that the old "do not grow wise. They grow careful."

<sup>20</sup> Going inactive is not the same as resigning from the bar. Inactive membership is free for members over 70; active status can be resumed on request if needed.

<sup>21</sup> One sage, I forget who, called it the *Great Event*.

“Death must be distinguished from dying, with which it is often confused.”<sup>22</sup> *Death* is not a problem. It is the inevitable final step and I don’t mind, and it would not matter if I did mind.<sup>23</sup> We are transient beings; it has been a great ride, and whether there is oblivion or rebirth or both (or neither) ahead, it’s not my call, and it makes no difference to what I actually do.

But *dying* can be a serious problem for those not fortunate enough to get the unexpected bullet in the back of the head promised (sort of) to Winston Smith.<sup>24</sup> There can be much painful and frightening gasping and choking and seizing, and pain and nausea, and dementia and aphasia and catheters and surgery and other unpleasantness. It is these I hope to avoid with the help of Sri Lord [GANESHA](#), to Whom I have earnestly prayed to protect me from pain and from panic.

The *medical* preparations for dying are concentrated on *not dying*. I am doing my best.



After not dying becomes impossible even in the short run, the next step is to avoid dying *in hospital* (or nursing home), but to soldier on in my own house. I have written a very specific Advance Care Directive (included in the Yale material), stating in what might be superfluous detail just what indignities I will endure and what would be too much. When that becomes impossible too, and if I am still competent when things get to be too much, I expect to use the merciful provisions of the [California End of Life Option Act](#) to order a nice bowl of hemlock. I have asked my lawyer Robert Rosoff (right) to help me place my order, as I will be feeling pretty bad by that time, and probably not up to jumping unaided through the multiple hoops imposed by the statute.<sup>26</sup> Robert is to be my Executor,



<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Hesketh Pearson, *The Smith of Smiths* (1934), 271.

<sup>23</sup> Well, actually I *do* mind, in the sense that so far anyway I’d rather not, as I have other things I’d rather do instead. But I don’t take it personally.

<sup>24</sup> In George Orwell’s *1984*. “It hath been often said,” wrote Henry Fielding who died at 47, in an age before anesthetics and modern medicine, “that it is not death, but dying, which is terrible.” From his novel *Amelia* (1751).

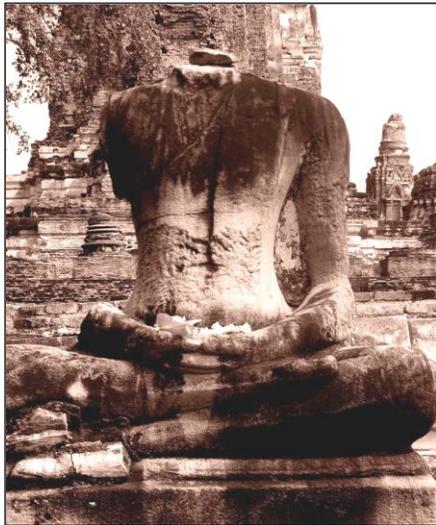
<sup>25</sup> The comic strip is Stephen Pastis’ *Pearls Before Swine*, September 21, 2018.

<sup>26</sup> I wonder if Medicare will pay for the lethal draught? But what the hell – put it on my bill!

too, so he may be in the strange position of arranging my death, then billing my estate for doing it, and then approving his own bill! Not my problem, though – I will be dead!<sup>27</sup>

The *mental* preparation for dying and the *spiritual* preparation are more or less the same. As mentioned, we are evanescent beings on a limited trip. We have to accept this or we will struggle, and there is no point in struggling. As the *Dhammapada* says:

You are as the yellow leaf.  
The messengers of death are at hand.  
You are to travel far away.  
What will you take with you?



It is to learn to accept this that Buddhists meditate in graveyards,<sup>28</sup> and *Kali bhaktas* like my Hindu teacher Michael Bowen (Baba Kali Das Acharya) teach us to love KALI (right) even though She will eat us in the end. It is a reassuring discipline once a person gets over the shock – better to have that shock early, while there is time to absorb it, than to encounter it first with terror on one’s deathbed, when there are other things to do.<sup>29</sup>



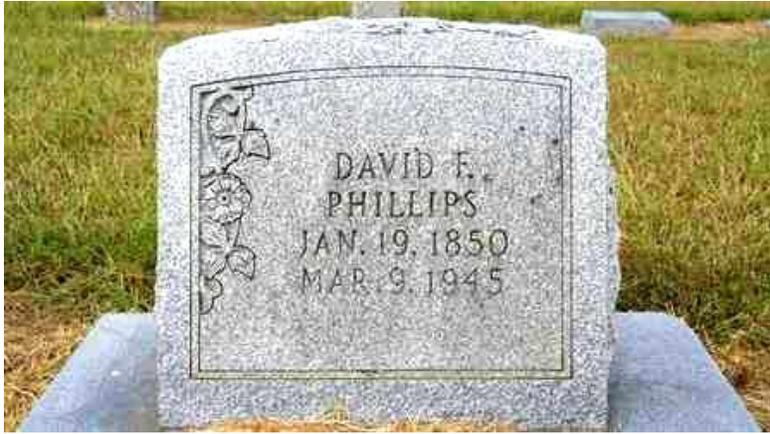
I have been on this spiritual path for 47 years, since I first took LSD in the wilds of Butte County, California, way back when, and I am as used to it now as to a smooth, well-worn moccasin. Let’s hope, as the shadow falls and dying becomes not an abstraction but an occupation, that Lord GANESHA *will* protect me from pain and panic, as I have asked Him to do, *enough at least* that I will have the presence of mind to keep perspective in the face of mortal threat, and go out in a state of calm awareness. Who, denied Smith’s bullet or a peaceful passage while asleep, can ask for anything more?

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<sup>27</sup> Careful lawyer that I am, I have explicitly waived these potential conflicts in writing. I have also written out (and sent to Yale) the Order of Service for committing my ashes illegally into San Francisco Bay, and have even chosen the music for the ceremony (Louis Armstrong’s 1928 Hot Five recording of *West End Blues*). Here it is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4WPCBieSESI>.

<sup>28</sup> Photo at left, from Thailand, by Adam Phillips.

<sup>29</sup> Benjamin Franklin’s last words were “A dying man can do nothing easy.”



**BUT WAIT!**

I am not dead yet! In fact, I am not even acutely dying yet. So let's not get all morbid! This is only an Epilogue, written eight years after the Autobiography was finished. Perhaps I will live to write another one! Meanwhile I will try hard to use *every remaining moment* wisely and joyfully. Watch this space.

November 2018



**OUR FOUNDER**