

# Pathways

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## fresh starts by Andrea Ruggieri



When the clock strikes midnight, confetti flies, champagne flutes klink, and the new year rolls in, it often sprouts hopeful aspirations of starting anew and setting fresh goals for the coming year. There's something about new beginnings that feels calming, yet energizing.

For most, the idea of "new" just feels right, whether it's a new car, unscathed of door dings and wafting of that intoxicating new car smell, or stepping out in a brand new outfit (yes!... retail therapy!). It just feels good. But why? How can a concept so essentially simple effect our state of mind? Novelty is attractive! Novelty gives us a break from our old routines and reinvigorates our brain receptors. There are documented, scientifically-based experiments that have shown that novelty is directly associated with learning and improving memory. We learn more when we are motivated and interested in something new; it gets those brain synapses snapping!

We could all go out and get new things, but truthfully new beginnings aren't typically about "things." They're more about finally finding a reason (...the new year) to start something we've been putting off. Maybe it's starting a journey to be more healthy, or to finally look for a new job that will fulfill your monetary, intellectual or creative needs, or maybe it's just letting go of negative feelings. We hope for something better.

Allowing yourself to begin a journey of hope is a courageous step. We don't always know where the journey will lead us, there are no guarantees. However, the alternative is daunting as well. Stagnation. Most people know what happens to water when it stagnates; it has no circulation or change. It begins to putrify, pollute itself, and not sustain favorable life. This analogizes our own lives without new beginnings. It is consummately necessary for us to forge ahead though the path may be littered with obstacles and hardship. It helps us to free ourselves of the negativity of the past and to improve ourselves mentally and physically. New beginnings, try it; it may be just the antidote.

At Walker Brothers Funeral Home, we too look ahead to the new year with ambition to continue to serve our families and community to the best of our abilities. It's always our goal to keep striving to improve and offer all we can to help you through life's toughest challenges. Keep your eye on our Facebook page, website and other communications for educational seminars and grief therapy offerings. We plan to continue these offerings as long as there is a need for it.

*And as always, thank you to the families who have patronized us and to those considering Walker Brothers Funeral Home.*

*Happy 2020!*



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# death of a statesman

honoring our esteemed leaders in death



by M.J. Moyes

The “state funeral” is held in just about every country of the world to publicly honor deceased leaders or others of national significance, and has been an important historical convention ever since mankind first established governance. As far as historians can discern, every major civilization, as well as most of the smaller ones, established various rites and protocols to publicly honor revered leaders and other citizens of distinction upon their deaths. Similar to modern times, the state funerals of antiquity were designed to let the general populace participate in the mourning of beloved (and sometimes not so beloved) leaders and could serve as a catharsis for the people’s collective grief.

No matter the country, state funerals generally include elaborate rites, significant pomp and ceremony, and varying levels of military involvement depending upon a country’s militancy and sense of historic military tradition. Religion also usually plays a big role, though this is dependent upon the overriding faith of the country and/or faith of the leader. State funerals for leaders in most democratic countries tend to include significant religious overtones, whereas religion is completely absent from state funerals in communist countries, such as Cuba and North Korea. Certain state funeral rites and protocols—lying in state, processions, honor guards, gun salutes, appropriate music— are common to most countries. While state funerals have long drawn crowds of mourners that can reach into the hundreds of thousands, the modern era’s mass media has turned state funerals into global events that can be watched by hundreds of millions.

There have been 18 state funerals held in the U.S. since its founding, with state funerals honoring 13 presidents and five other people who received the honor by presidential designation. Sitting and former presidents, along with president-elects, are entitled to the honor by law. A sitting

president can also bestow the honor to people outside of the presidency, though such designations have been rare. While state funerals have significant protocols, overall planning—along with the decision on whether to have a state funeral to begin with—is primarily determined by the president and his family before his death. Of the five living U.S. presidents, only former president Jimmy Carter has revealed plans for a state funeral. Plans for Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and sitting president Donald Trump remain unknown.

The overall planning and management of state funerals falls under the purview of the Military District of Washington (MDW), which is also in charge of combat defense of the nation’s capital region and all ceremonial operations within Arlington National Cemetery. Since the attacks of 9/11 the Department of Homeland Security has taken over responsibility for security arrangements, though MDW provides armed services to help with the security. Planning for the state funeral is dictated by a 138-page planning document, which establishes parameters for the individual presidential funeral planning. In the case of former president Carter, this has led to the filing of a 411-page document for his state funeral.

In general, modern state funerals in the U.S. have tended to follow similar protocols and consist of similar major components, though all are subject to adjustment.

For example, sitting presidents who die while in office lie in repose in the East Room of the White House, while former president’s lie in repose in their home or adopted state prior to traveling to Washington, DC. However, former president Dwight D. Eisenhower bucked this tradition by lying in repose at the Washington National Cathedral.

Following repose, most state funerals include a ceremonial funeral procession that transports the casket from or near the White House to the U.S. Capitol on a military caisson flanked by an eight-man honor guard and drawn by six horses of the same color with three riders which are led by a section chief mounted on a separate horse. Former presidents and other honorees are transferred to

the caisson at 16th and Constitution Avenues, with the procession traveling down Constitution Avenue; while the caskets of sitting presidents are traditionally placed on the caisson at the White House and make the processional journey via Pennsylvania Avenue. The funeral procession is led by a civilian police escort which is then followed by units representing all branches of the military, with each unit including a service band. The honor guard-flanked caisson follows the military units and is in turn followed by a riderless horse with boots reversed in the stirrup, the symbol of a fallen warrior. Former president Gerald Ford eschewed the caisson and according to his wishes, his casket was transported by hearse which stopped at the National World War II Memorial to pay tribute to the president's naval service during that war.

Whether caisson or hearse, the procession is followed by a presidential motorcade that transports the family, who are usually escorted by various government dignitaries. The procession is supposed to travel at a steady three miles per hour and when halfway to the capital is honored by a 21-fighter aircraft formation that executes the "missing man" maneuver at a low enough elevation to be seen by those in or viewing the procession.

Upon arrival at the Capital the casket is carried into the Rotunda where a short service is held with the family, members of congress and sometimes other government officials. The late president's body then lies in state with an honor guard maintaining vigil, with the public allowed through the Rotunda for viewing for at least 24 hours.

While another procession with the caisson—followed on foot by the family, government officials, hundreds of dignitaries from around the world, and the newly sworn in President Lyndon B. Jonson—was used to escort President John F. Kennedy to his national memorial service at St. Matthew's Cathedral. Most state funerals have relied on less ceremonial motorcades to transport the casket to the official service. Most services have also been held at the Washington National Cathedral, rather than other places of worship, such as St. Matthew's.

Prior to the mid-20th century, transport of the deceased to his final resting place was generally conducted by a funeral train procession, with thousands of citizens lining the tracks throughout the states traveled through to pay their last respects. Other than President Kennedy, who was

interred at Arlington National Cemetery, state funeral honorees have been transported to their final resting places via jets of the Air Force One fleet, with flight arrivals and departures accompanied by a 21-gun salute.

While this summary of the history and logistics of state funerals is certainly interesting, the emotional component and size of these services is equally, if not more, fascinating. Thus, we will have to take a closer look at emotion and attendance of state funerals in a future article.



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# grief... at a distance

by Andrea Ruggieri

The grief journey in and of itself as we know, can be grueling. Now add to it, your loved one lives hundreds, if not thousands of miles away. I read many stories of loss at a distance in preparation for this article and the common thread over and over again was the guilt in moving away from the family circle. Some of them, were immigrants from overseas who struggled with the conflict of wanting to “be there” during a long illness, or even for the imminent funeral, but unable to do so. Some are across a continent or overseas for education or work and it becomes an unimaginable choice for many reasons. Financial constraints usually top the list, but there are a number of other reasons, like immediate familial responsibilities making it exasperatingly difficult. Maybe you have small children and no support system, or a spouse who is ill, or you are ill, or other critical responsibilities are present that create a real challenge. Let’s face it, any reason begins to sound like an excuse and you fear you will be judged, but the reality is, sometimes you just aren’t able to do the things you want to do most in life.

I remember the struggle was palatable when my mother was gravely ill in Syracuse, NY. My one brother lived in Chicago and the other with his young family with three children under the age of five in Florida. At the time, I was in my third trimester of pregnancy, continually running back and forth from Rochester to Syracuse with concern and warning from my obstetrician. It’s unfortunate, life doesn’t just stop, even when someone you love is dying. We all did our very best to be there to help dad and comfort and spend time with mom in her last days. When it came to the point where it was evident that she would soon pass, though still not knowing how things would progress, it became an even more upsetting situation. Hearing the stress in my brothers’ voices trying to decide “when” was a good time to fly home was heartbreaking. They had both traveled home multiple times over the last five months of her illness and were financially strained. It seemed like an impossible impasse. I’m thankful all of my family was able to be there to celebrate mom’s life. Not everyone is as fortunate.

So what do we do? With the guilt, the disappointment, or the loneliness of familial isolation when your family core is many miles away and being there during sickness or a loss is not an option? First, just because there is distance does not mean that you can’t show your love. Do something that is within your means, but MEANING-FULL. Create a Facebook group page for all invited to share and memorialize. If you are able, arrange and finance a special luncheon for family that is attending, send a letter to be read at the funeral, put together a video tribute that can be shown, and all can be coupled with a personal message from you. Given some thought, there are a multitude of ways to step forward and show that you care.

There is also the emptiness you might intimately feel by not being there for the formal goodbye. For some it makes sense to hold a memorial service in your own locality to fill that need. For others, they simply don’t feel comfortable having a service for someone they love, but who may be unknown to your current circle of family/friends. In this case, you may need to explore different routes. Sometimes it may be as simple as holding your own personal ritual. Buy a beautiful candle that is special for only your lost loved one. The simple lighting of a candle and remembering can bring comforting moments of solace. Plant a tree or garden in memory with personal stepping stones or markers, or a bench to sit and connect spiritually with those who’ve passed. Tend to this special area with the same depth of care you feel for your loved one. Create a memory book or recipe book dedicated to your loved one. Release paper lanterns every year into the night sky. Above all else, don’t feel that you are not allowed to grieve because you couldn’t be there. Be vigilant in taking care of yourself; find those who will support, understand and listen to you in your times of need.



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