

HARBOR GRACE HOSPICE

"A safe harbor in your time of need"



Harbor Grace Offers:

- A 22-bed Inpatient Facility to provide 24-hour care
- Home Care with a full staff of professionals including Nurses, Social Workers, and Chaplains

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JAMES K. FLANAGAN: A GRANDFATHER'S LAST LETTER TO HIS GRANDKIDS

On Sept. 3, 2012, James K. Flanagan of West Long Branch, N.J., died unexpectedly of a heart attack. He wrote this letter to his five grandchildren just months earlier and it is reprinted here with the permission of his daughter Rachel Creighton.



Dear Ryan,
Conor, Brendan,
Charlie, and
Mary Catherine,

My wise and thoughtful daughter Rachel urged me to write down some advice for you, the important things that I have learned about life. I am beginning this on 8 April 2012, the eve of my 72nd birthday.

1. Each one of you is a wonderful gift of God both to your family and to all the world. Remember it always, especially when the cold winds of doubt and discouragement fall upon your life.

2. Be not afraid . . . of anyone or of anything when it comes to living your life most fully. Pursue your hopes and your

dreams no matter how difficult or "different" they may seem to others. Far too many people don't do what they want or should do because of what they imagine others may think or say. Remember, if they

don't bring you chicken soup when you're sick or stand by you when you're in trouble, they don't matter. Avoid those sour-souled pessimists who lis-

ten to your dreams then say, "Yeah, but what if ..." The heck with "what if..." Do it! The worst thing in life is to look back and say: "I would have; I could have; I should have." Take risks, make mistakes.

3. Everyone in the world is just an ordinary person. Some people may wear fancy hats or have big titles or (temporarily) have power and want you to think they are above the rest. Don't believe them. They have the same doubts, fears, and hopes; they eat, drink, sleep, and fart like everyone else. Question authority always but be wise and careful about the way you do it.

4. Make a Life List of all those things you want to do: travel to places; learn a skill; master a language; meet someone special. Make it long and do some things from it every year. Don't say "I'll do it tomorrow" (or next month or next year). That is the surest way to fail to do something. There is no tomorrow, and there is no "right" time to begin something except now.

5. Practice the Irish proverb: *Moi an olge agus tiocfaidh sí* "Praise the child and she will flourish."

6. Be kind and go out of your way to help people -- especially the weak, the fearful, and children. Everyone is carrying a special sorrow, and they need our compassion.

7. Read books, as many as you can. They are a wonderful source of delight, wisdom, and inspiration. They need no batteries or connections, and they can go anywhere.

8. Be truthful.

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can be bent.*

FLEXIBILITY AND FORESIGHT IS KEY

The key to surviving Christmas as a bereaved individual is flexibility and foresight. It's important to plan ahead, and it's important to anticipate the changes you will need to make. Habit is easy, and it does take a little more effort to implement creative change in holiday planning. But change and adjustment are essential for the newly bereaved.



Families can spend so many years following the same patterns and rou-

tines that they forget these choices were made because they were right for *their* moment. But choices made under different circumstances may not be the right choices for the newly bereaved. The early moments of grief demand new rules. Even customs "set in stone" can be bent. Festivities that expend more energy than we have to give can be skipped. Entertaining and socializing can be altered or curtailed. Decisions can be delayed and new

plans designed and implemented at the last minute. The bereaved can learn to be creative and flexible in customizing their holiday plans.

Traditions bind families and societies tightly to one another. But altering our traditions to suit our current needs makes sense. Each moment, each stage of life, demands its own customs and its own rituals. By building our bridges moment to moment, we link the past and present to the future.

Cont. from Page 1: Grandfather's letter

9. Travel: always but especially when you are young. Don't wait until you have "enough" money or until everything is "just right." That never happens. Get your passport today.

10. Pick your job or profession because you love to do it. Sure, there will be some things hard about it, but a job must be a joy. Beware of taking a job for money alone – it will cripple your soul.

11. Don't yell. It never works, and it hurts both yourself and others. Every time I have yelled, I have failed.

12. Always keep promises to children. Don't say "we'll see" when you mean "no." Children ex-

pect the truth; give it to them with love and kindness.

13. Never tell anyone you love them when you don't.

14. Live in harmony with Nature: go into the outdoors, woods, mountains, sea, desert. It's important for your soul.

15. Visit Ireland. It's where the soul of our family was born – especially the West: Roscommon, Clare, and Kerry.

16. Hug people you love. Tell them how much they mean to you now; don't wait until it's too late.

17. Be grateful. There is an Irish saying: "This is a day in our lives, and it will

not come again." Live every day with this in mind.

As was written in his obituary, James K. Flanagan "was proudly liberal and fought unyieldingly for the underdog. He was an accomplished author, poet, and seanchai – Irish storyteller; he reveled in recounting the joy of growing up Catholic in Jersey City and his adventures in the Adirondack Mountains and on the Western coast of Ireland. His greatest love was spending time with his family, most of all his five grandchildren" Ryan (11); Conor (10); Brendan (9); Charles (8); and Mary Catherine (5)."

*Hug people you love.
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GRIEVING DURING THE HOLIDAYS



The holidays are a time to be filled with comfort and joy. However, for someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one, the holidays can be a time of great pain and sadness. Feelings of regret, fear, depression and loneliness may be amplified during the holiday season. Simply acknowledging that the holidays may be difficult is the first step in preparing for them.

Holiday Expectations

The holidays are a time for giving. However, if you are experiencing grief, you may not feel like you have anything to give. **This is okay.** Do what you feel is realistic for you.

- Find ways to do something special for yourself (i.e. treat yourself to a massage or plan an outing with friends).
- Reduce or simplify your shopping for others during the holidays.
- Be aware that there

is no timeframe for grief; your grief may come and go.

Be Good to Yourself

It is important to take care of yourself during this time of grief. Even if you feel the need to be “the strong one” for your family and friends, you can still attend to your own needs.

- It is beneficial to be alone at times, but do not isolate yourself. Try to find a balance between time spent alone and time with others. Have simple social occasions in your daily routine. It is okay to smile, laugh, and enjoy yourself.
- To continue your healing, make sure that you eat healthy foods, exercise regularly even if it's a short walk or a household chore. Focus on decreasing stress and building energy by getting enough rest.
- It is alright to ask for help and to accept offers of help. Don't push people away.

Honor Your Loved One

Honoring and remembering your loved one gives healthy expression to your grief and helps your heart to heal. As you take part in holiday tradi-

tions, these suggestions may help you process your grief.

- Make a special ornament with the name of your loved one.
- Pick a candle in your loved one's favorite color and scent, and light it in memory of your loved one.
- Make a scrapbook of pictures and other items that you can share with family and friends to look back on, both now and in the years to come.
- Create a new holiday tradition for you and your family like planting a tree or flowers in your loved one's honor.
- Don't be afraid to laugh and have fun while sharing memories of your loved one with close friends and family.

Your loss has meaning and your grief has purpose: that your heart will heal and your memories will be honored. May your memories and your loved ones bring you comfort and peace this holiday season.



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Your loss has meaning and your grief has purpose: that your heart will heal and your memories will be honored.

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We're on the web!

www.harborgracehospice.com

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**HARBOR GRACE
Hospice**



CONSIDER VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers are vital to the work of hospice.

Perhaps you have a specific skill to offer, or perhaps you can be someone's friend in a difficult time.

Is there space in your heart and your life for this kind of work?

If more than a year has passed since your loss, and if hospice was helpful to your family, consider volunteering with Harbor Grace Hospice.

You may call Rachel Randall at 404-941-1742 at any time to investigate whether this is a good option for you.

I'M NOT READY YET

"I'm not ready yet" is the universal cry of all beings. I'm not ready yet for first grade, for crossing the street by myself, for sleep-away camp, for junior high, for getting married, for getting a job, for having children, for burying someone I love.

I'M NOT READY YET for grieving, for handling the holidays, for stuffing a turkey, for finding a place for everything.

I'M NOT READY YET for Thanksgiving, for Hanukkah, for Christmas, for New Year's.

I'M NOT READY for the annual flood of memories that always spill out as we

unpack the stockings from their tissue-wrapped nest.

I'M NOT READY yet for the clutch of pain that still wraps my heart in grief as we place the ornaments on the tree.

I'M NOT READY YET to be normal and take my place among the normal people of the world. I look normal, and for the most part I act normal. Except for our story and for the tears in our family fabric, we are normal.

BUT I'm also not ready to live on the surface of life. So I'll just have to figure out how to handle the holidays I'm never going to be ready for.

AND, as long as the stockings are up, then let the holidays come! We'll put up some of the old, add a few pieces of new, and practice the art of blending yesterday with today in hopes of creating another memory for tomorrow. We'll gather together and count our blessings, not only naming the ones around the table, but including those whose lives have touched ours in countless ways. One does not have to be present to be alive in the hearts of those who shared a few moments of the journey together. The heart never forgets.

Edited excerpts from an article by Darcie D. Sims