NONRELIGIOUS CEREMONIES

VOLUME 1.

A MANUAL FOR BEGINNERS

EDITED AND COMPILED BY HUGH HILL

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

As many Secularists do when on vacation, I contacted a representative of the local Secular Humanist society during a vacation in Florida. It began as a courtesy and 'getting to know you' call but ended up becoming a valued friendship. The young lady I was privileged to meet was Jennifer Hancock, the executive director of the Humanists of Florida Association. Jennifer had, and still has, an enthusiasm, an energy and fund of ideas that left me feeling washed out and well past my prime. After a lengthy discussion over lunch in which we discussed membership, recruitment, affiliations, religious lunacy (like creationism), atheism, agnosticism, publicity, international liaison and, very importantly, ceremonies, we agreed to keep in touch via the internet. I think we also briefly discussed exchange visits to our respective societies at that meeting but, I have to confess, my memory isn't what it used to be. However, it wasn't long after that Florida vacation that Jennifer and I agreed that she and her husband, Mike, should visit Scotland and give a talk describing the U.S.A. Secularists and, in particular, her own Florida branch of the Humanists. We wanted to know how she had managed a tenfold increase in membership in almost as many months, how she managed to raise substantial sums of money for the cause of Secular Humanism and how she had greatly increased her society's sphere of influence. Her message was simple - hard work and dedication gets results. "Don't look inward, look outward", was Jennifer's message. "The Secular Humanists are out there, most of the population is Humanists, it just takes someone to go out there and tell them." She's right, of course. Up to the present the major religions have taken the Secular ethic and claimed it for their own. They have exploited it, publicised it and cashed in on it in the name of one entity or another. What they have never done is given their fellow human beings credit for being just good, decent and honest folk who see the value of mutual social cooperation for present and future generations without the need for religious superstitions or the anti social behaviour religion is

inclined to spawn. In fact, they preach quite the opposite – and get away with it. "Don't let them", said Jennifer. "Whenever decent folk meet to protest against the closure of hospitals, the decline in education, the rights of minorities or any of the things that we as Secularists support, then be in amongst them with your banner, and when one of them asks 'What is a Secular Humanist?' the simple answer is, 'You are". Of all the talks I have heard at the many Secularist meeting I have attended, this ranks as one of the very best.

As you would expect, that meeting was only the beginning of a mutual cooperation that will last a lifetime and beyond. Very soon after Jennifer's visit, I was invited to attend a seminar in Florida to discuss and promote Secular Humanist ceremonies. After a few e-mails it was decided that a training manual of ceremonies that could be adapted to any international culture would be the ideal. This manual is the result. It has been greeted with enthusiasm by many, scepticism by a few and anticipation by almost all. I can only hope that such anticipation will not be disappointed.

There are many people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude. Firstly, to Robin Wood whose dedication to rationalism and freethought has been an inspiration to many, including myself, over the years. To Jennifer Hancock and Maddy Urken who were good enough to advise and suggest variations that would enhance the transatlantic nuance. To Gordon Ross, Alastair Douglas, Caroline Macafee, Anne Lyster, Mandy Evans Ewing, Joe Hughes, Gerri Douglas-Scott, Patrick and Carmen Druce, Ian Downie and the many people who have given freely and generously of their time and effort to help produce this training manual. To all of you, my utmost thanks. May time and appreciation etch your names into the archives of Secularist history.

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1.

INTRODUCTION.

This manual is an introduction to the art of presenting nonreligious ceremonies. It is meant specifically for the beginner. Examples are given which help to clarify the text. These examples can readily be followed and used by celebrant tyros. The only special skill needed is your own common humanity.

Why would someone want a nonreligious ceremony? A great many of those requesting nonreligious ceremonies have been victims of religion and as a result have decided to have nothing more to do with whichever of those power systems has been instrumental in turning them into atheists or agnostics. Others will have nothing to do with religion because they simply see religion as a pointless exercise that has little to do with the realities of life. Yet others, sick of the constant demands of the religious from opposing factions simply say 'a plague on all your houses', and opt for a nonreligious ceremony to which all religions are invited. The other side of that same coin sees those who feel that by having a nonreligious ceremony, then all of their various denominational and nondenominational friends can feel welcome without being offended by the lack of religion - an optimistic outlook on life that has to be admired. Whatever the reason two things must always be borne in mind; firstly, the motivations for asking for a nonreligious ceremony are invariable none of the celebrant's business; and secondly, Secular ceremonies are not anti-religious and shouldn't be pitched in a manner which suggests so. The words 'non-judgemental' and 'respect for others' are emblazoned in the hearts of most Secularists who try,

however difficult, to live by such tenets. Nonetheless, that doesn't mean to say that Secularists should ignore the impositional and downright evil aspects of many religious practices, it just means that we keep our religio/political opinions out of our ceremonies so far as possible. Throughout this manual, you will observe that there is a high degree of tolerance for the point of view of other philosophies, too high some would say. And some would include much more tolerance to the extent of including hymns in a ceremony, the attitude being 'why should the religious have all the best tunes?'. These contentious issues will be covered in chapter 3, General Principles, after coverage of the need for nonreligious ceremonies in chapter 2.

What will emerge as you follow the sample ceremonies is a general 'feel' for the ideals to which most celebrants, or officiants, subscribe. The standards of integrity are high and fraught with difficulties. What might be appropriate in once circumstance might be highly inappropriate in another. A set of rules just doesn't work, what we have to work within is a set of principles. These will become clearer as the course progresses.

Chapter 4 covers Naming Ceremonies. They can be as elaborate, or as simple, as anyone wants them to be. Like all nonreligious ceremonies there are no rules except – <u>NO RELIGION</u>. Two examples are given and, like all the examples throughout the manual, are a fiction based on ceremonies that have been done by celebrants within the past few years.

Wedding Ceremonies are dealt with in chapter 5 separate from partnership ceremonies. Culturally, there can be a problem with wedding ceremonies since a wedding ceremony is not a marriage ceremony. The U.S.A., Scotland and Australia, for example, have celebrants who are licensed to carry out civil wedding ceremonies where a particular wording has to be used if the marriage is to be legal. But in some parts of the United Kingdom marriage ceremonies cannot yet take place

through the services of a Secular celebrant although the various Humanist organisations are actively working on this issue. In Scotland Secular marriages are perfectly legal. The judicial requirements vary from country to country and this will have to be a matter between the celebrants and their local Secularist ceremonies advisor. If you can't conduct a marriage ceremony, don't sweat it. You can have a wedding ceremony after the legal requirements have been carried out by a registered person of that country. The wedding is what is remembered. How many people have you heard say, "I remember our wedding day", as opposed to "I remember our marriage day"?

Again, there are cultural and legal elements to partnership ceremonies. In some countries, or in some USA states, same sex partnership agreements carry legal status. In other countries such forward thinking legislation is not even on the horizon so, once again, although ceremonies of same sex partnerships are legal in some places but not others, refer once again to your local Secularist ceremonies advisor. Heterosexual partnership ceremonies are less problematic. Many couples have chosen not to enter into a legal agreement, like marriage, but none the less want to publicly declare their love for each other in a ceremony to which all their friends and relatives are invited. Very often these ceremonies are linked to naming ceremonies for any children the couple might have. Same sex partnership ceremonies without recourse to legal niceties are also fairly straightforward.

Becoming ever more popular is the Restatement Of Vows ceremony covered in chapter 7. Once again, this concerns a couple who wish to publicly restate their love for each other usually on an anniversary. There are few complications outside the actual physical arrangements of the ceremony. Where children and grandchildren are involved, the couple might want to include all of the family in the ceremony. It just takes more time and patience especially with young grandchildren who are sometimes used to 'spring' a surprise recitation for gran and granddad. Speeches by family members are usually included in the text

for reasons that will become obvious later.

The most harrowing, and the most common ceremony is that of a funeral. By far the largest section of this manual is devoted to funerals and funeral ceremonies. We can chose to name our children, get married, become partnered or restate our love for each other but we can't choose to avoid dying. It will come to us all. Over 90% of Secular ceremonies are funerals. It is the most traumatic experience any family can be called upon to endure. The funeral ceremony is also an important part of the process of closure for friends and relatives. The Secular celebrant needs a sensitivity and depth of understanding and compassion that requires cultivation if the celebrant is to provide the support and help a family needs at this difficult time. Each funeral, like each person, is unique. It has to balance the needs of the bereaved with the wishes of the deceased. This is a feat of balancing that has to be judged, so far as possible, by the celebrant so that every aspect of the ceremony reflects the respect, wishes and feelings due to the deceased and his/her family. The celebrant is often called upon to be mediator, advisor and general factotum in these circumstances. There is, invariably, so much to do and so little time in which to do it. The family will usually look to the celebrant for complete guidance in the matter of the ceremony. Never underestimate the importance of your funeral ceremonies as a touchstone to your reputation as a Secular celebrant. You can get away with mistakes, fluffs and outright cock ups at a happy celebration such as a wedding or a naming ceremony, but you can't get away with screwing up a funeral ceremony. If you learn nothing else, learn how to conduct yourself and your funeral ceremonies. This is the ceremony for which there is the greatest need and this is the ceremony on which a celebrant can stand or fall. Your reputation is the reputation of Secularism to those who attend your ceremonies. Chapter 8 will have a lot to say on this most important ceremony.

There are other ceremonies such as the opening of a new funeral

parlour and the dedication ceremony that invariably takes place. There are 'change of life' ceremonies; divorce ceremonies; child leaving home ceremonies; memorial ceremonies; adoption ceremonies, dedication of a new home ceremonies; in fact there are as many ceremonies as people want to imagine. But we will simply give these a sideways glance and not dedicate too much time to them since the chances of having to cope with such are minimal and, in any case, so unique as to be likely a 'one of'. There is also a great deal we couldn't, and possibly shouldn't, cover in a manual of this nature. We help to define ourselves and our Secularism by what we choose to leave out as well as by what we choose to include in our ceremonies.

Finally, we look to the future. More and more people throughout the world are taking up the option of nonreligious ceremonies when they become available. We need a continuous supply of trained celebrants, or officiants, or ceremony officers, or whatever nomenclature you wish to adopt, to meet the relentless growth in demand for our ceremonies. I have founded the Secular Fellowship for the purpose of training celebrants all over the world. We are, after all, an international organisation, albeit of disparate groups, and as such we must think in international terms. The International Humanist and Ethical Union sets an example to which we can all aspire. Where there are humans there is Secular Humanism. Where there are Secular celebrants there are front line troops for the cause to which we also aspire.

Good luck in your study and practice of nonreligious ceremonies.

2.

THE NEED FOR NONRELIGIOUS

CEREMONIES.

Ceremony is a fact of life. We have invented rites for all sorts of things from wearing a necktie to swearing in a president or crowning a monarch. Emile Durkheim, the renowned sociologist, has described communal ritual as a social act which allows individuals to communicate their common sentiment under a given set of circumstances. Since, as individuals, we frequently find it difficult to express what we feel because the individual consciousness is a closed book to all but the owner, then means of expression will be found through the use of common symbolism, ritual and ceremonial. The success of a ceremonial or ritual can be found in its efficacy to initiate the sentiment it was first used to address. A very clear example is the flag of the U.S.A. As a national symbol it has become so revered that the very mention or sight of it provokes strong reaction and it is regarded as an appropriate centrepiece for all sorts of ceremonies. People 'unite' behind the flag and, by extension, 'unite' behind causes that are frequently espoused by politicians who suborn the flag as a substitute for argument. religions are past masters at using symbolism and ceremony to invoke support for untenable belief systems that aren't able to stand up to the elementary scrutiny. The Roman Catholic transubstantiation is a prime case. It consists of a ceremony in which a priest says magic words and makes magic hand symbols over unleavened bread and wine which results, the church claims, in these

foodstuffs being turned into the body and blood of a man who, ostensibly, died two thousand years ago. The claim does not lend itself to rational investigation. However, the church, having spent millennia honing that ceremony we call the 'mass', has seen it take on a life of its own. We may not agree with the ceremony, but we have to admit, it has worked and still works for many millions of people.

One of our tasks, as Secularists, is to recognise that there is an apparent need within the social structures we create for an element of ritual and ceremony. The group dynamic seems to require a set of rituals which help create an identity to which the individual can relate. Gang culture sometimes appears to take this natural tendency to extremes. The fact remains, there is a part of us that wants to show that we identify with one or other set of ideals. Symbolism, ritual and ceremony are the tools we use. However, religious superstition has laid claim to much that is natural and overlaid it with mumbo jumbo. As Secularists, it is, I would suggest, incumbent upon us to replace these outdated, fanciful and sometimes foolish ceremonies and rituals with sensible and realistic alternatives. We should be establishing practices that have reality as their basic premise.

There is another and most heartening reason for providing nonreligious ceremonies — the world is becoming more secular. Sometimes it doesn't seem so because the people who promote religious superstition have an energy and single mindedness that can be frightening. Try as we may, it is almost impossible to drag such people, invariably kicking and screaming, out of the dark ages. Their screams can be heard all over the world. Their voice is loud but diminishing. Since the 1960's, religion has been declining. In the U.S.A. alternative sources, or 'new age' religions, have come very much to the fore as a means of ameliorating the failure of traditional religions to move into the 21st century. Such moves have had little or no real impact on the march of secularisation. The religions have had to attempt to change their approach to a better educated, more sophisticated population. A great

example that warms the cockles of my heart is that being pursued by the creationist cranks. Since the publication of Charles Darwin's 'Origin of Species' in 1859 creationists have been losing ground but they haven't yet gone away. Now, being aware that they are perceived by nearly all of society as nut cases, many creationists have shifted their ground and have joined the ranks of the 'intelligent design' brigade. (A creationist by any other name is still a crank). Only in the U.S.A. are they still causing problems way beyond their actual numbers. Although in the U.S.A., at the beginning of a new century, a poll by Gallup showed that 48% of Americans believe in creationism, 28% in evolution, with 10% having no opinion either way. 9% "leaned towards creationism", while 5% "leaned towards" evolution. In the United Kingdom, during the same period, a YouGov poll indicated that only 44% of people believed in a god and only 30% believe in a place called heaven. This compares with a Gallup poll in 1968 which indicated that 77% of the population believed in a god. The people of the U.K. aren't smarter than those in the rest of the world so the reason why they appear to be less gullible is up for investigation.

The United Nations resolve to give every child in the world a basic education might be proving helpful. Viva la U.N. Less people seem inclined to swallow the fantasies plied by the religions. Fantasies are built on top of fantasies, on top of fantasies, on top of fantasies... ad nauseam. The religious systems have failed; they are being found out and exposed for what they invariably are – power systems. Their bogus claims to be the fount of goodness are a sham. People are either good or bad. Most of us live somewhere in between being perfectly good or seriously bad, religion has nothing to do with it. Secularism reflects this ideology. Our ceremonies seek to provide the sensible alternative. And people are looking to us to provide it.

There is a famous poster used for recruiting during the great war of 1914-1918 showing Lord Kitchener pointing a finger at the viewer and declaring, 'Your country needs you'. We could easily substitute a similar

poster showing Charles Darwin giving the message, 'Humanity needs you', and make sure it is widely distributed to the world on Darwin Day, 12th February, when we give gifts of Darwin's books and Secular books to our friends.

The need is there. Attend to it.

3.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

There is only one rule – NO RELIGION.

O.K., you don't have to have this mantra etched into the business end of a six inch nail and hammered into your head. You get the point, without the nail. So do we have a set of guidelines? Yes, but it isn't laid out in a fashion that doesn't require thinking about, such as 'Thou shalt not...'. Our set of guidelines follows a set of principles within which we work.

As with each religious person's mental schema of their particular god, each of us will have a schema for our Secularism. It isn't possible to access a religioso's idea of a God since it is something unique to that person's consciousness and, therefore, can't be challenged by someone outside of that particular person so there is no point in wasting time arguing about it. So it is with Secularism. Each person has their own idea of what constitutes Secularism in any given circumstance. The best we can hope to achieve is a loose federation of ideas to which we can, as individuals, subscribe. The first idea to which I would ask you to subscribe is that Secularism is a set of principles within which we live which excludes religious, superstitious and anti social practices.

The second idea is that Secularism is about people. Our ceremonies are about the person, not some fantasy figure or place demanding obsequiousness. Each person is unique, and we celebrate such

uniqueness. These are the only two principles we need to be aware of to practice our role as a Secular celebrant. The high ideals and fine detail is always open to debate but this is neither the time nor the place.

Ours is an exercise in practicality. We need to consider mundane things like arranging ceremonies, what to include and exclude, fees, travel arrangements, and many other things besides. Each ceremony, just like each person, is different. Every ceremony requires that you work with a new set of people setting up a completely new ceremony tailored to fit the individual(s) who will be the subject. Although you are given check lists as a general guide, bear in mind that the checklist is only a guide and not a rigid formula.

CEREMONIES.

Here comes that six inch nail again — Nx Rxxxxxxx. However adamant you might be about excluding religion there will always be people who just don't get the fact that religion is not a requirement of rites of passage, or any other, ceremony. Be up front with people without labouring it. Ask to be given copies of everything guest speakers will be saying. If there is a religious element being presented then ask for it to be removed or substituted, or reworded. In the past I've had to decline to do ceremonies because a family has insisted upon including hymns or prayers in a ceremony they have invited me to do. Usually this type of intrusion into a nonreligious ceremony is meant to placate a particularly religious relative or friend. No matter. It is a nonsense to include religious practices in a nonreligious ceremony.

FEES.

You don't have to charge a fee, you can rely upon the gratuities paid by clients. However, since we (so far as I am aware) don't have a system of stipends we may have to finance our activities by direct fees. Local conditions will dictate the fees to be charged or not, as the case may be.

Usually a scale of recommended fees is agreed by the local Secular group executive in consultation with the celebrants who carry out the ceremonies. In districts where a lot of travel is involved a separate travel fee might be appropriate. E.g. \$175 for a funeral ceremony plus 50¢ per mile for any travel done. It isn't necessary to invoice clients to collect your fee. Generally, the fee is one of the first things you will be asked about except in the case of funerals where the funeral director is usually the person who arranges the fee in accordance with your current charges. This charge will be passed on to the client by the FD. The FD will also discretely slip you an envelope containing your fee just prior to, or straight after, the ceremony. Outside of funerals you might like to be paid up front before you begin working on the ceremony. How you arrange payment of your fee, if you decide to charge them, is entirely up to you in each case.

Your local Secular organisation will, or should, keep funeral directors up to date in the recommended scale of fees being charged. Bear in mind that these fees are only recommendations. You may decline to charge a fee for fellow members, low income families, destitute or very poor families. You should never charge a fee for the funeral of a child below the age of sixteen. It just isn't done.

The recommended scale of fees should be posted on your organisation's web site, if you have one.

Keep a record of your transactions. Usually, a percentage of your fees collected goes to supporting your local organisation. Make sure this sum is paid into your local treasurer, or whoever, on a regular basis. Quarterly is good, half yearly is the limit I would suggest.

FEEDBACK.

Keep records of each kind of ceremony and let your local organisation know at the end of each year. If we are to track how well you are doing and how fast you are growing, and you will, then we need to keep records. It allows us to create a degree of forward planning which is essential to any international organisation. It also lets those who love statistics have a ball.

DECORUM.

Great word that, decorum. It means you are not just a celebrant, not just one of the front line troops, not just an ambassador for Secularism, but also the face of Secularism the public will become most aware of. More than one good celebrant has come unstuck by joining in the celebrations too freely before, during or after a ceremony and made idiots of themselves. It also means not wasting your time at functions or ceremonies arguing with religiosos who are hell bent on getting it across to you that you are bound for eternal damnation if you don't believe their religious claptrap. People won't remember your arguments, they will just remember that you seemed to argue a lot. Like any sensible person, you have more to do with your time.

Our Secular ceremonies are loving, caring, respectful and simply the best.



NAMING CEREMONIES.

One of the main rites of passage ceremonies is the naming ceremony. Few of us hasn't been the subject of one, usually when we were very young. Naming ceremonies invariably apply to children although adults have been the subject of naming ceremonies when they become citizens of a new country for example, and wish to adopt a name more in keeping with the new culture in which they find themselves. Gone are those days when an immigration official gave entrants to a new country a name, not always suitable or even one the incumbent could pronounce, and declared them certified, stamped and sorted for life. We are a bit more sophisticated these days but the yearning to have a name which helps identify with one's new country is strong in many people and so don't be surprised if a request for a naming ceremony comes your way under these circumstances.

Generally though, naming ceremonies are confined to children. As with all ceremonies, it is agreed with the involvement and consent of the adults requesting the procedure. Sometimes you will have little to do but present a script already prepared by a parent. Other times it might be you they look to for compiling a suitable ceremony from scratch. Either way, it is invariably a highly enjoyable and rewarding experience for any celebrant, especially those with their own children or grandchildren who can identify with the importance and the excitement of the occasion.

The requests for naming ceremonies reflects the changes we see in our various societies. The nuclear family of mum, dad and 2.4 kids is no longer the norm and hasn't been for some time. You can expect requests from unmarried parents, single parents, lesbian couples, gay couples, adoptive parents, culturally or religiously different parents as well as married couples. You could even have requests for a naming ceremony to add names to an existing name. Like all of our ceremonies, there are no rules except – N. R.....

Essentially, all of these ceremonies use the same approach. Find out who is the subject of the naming ceremony (and there can be more than one naming at the same ceremony) and if it isn't obvious, find out why the naming ceremony is taking place. If a new citizen is taking a new name, they may want to include, as a culmination of the ceremony, a restatement of their citizenship vows under their new name. Find out where the ceremony is to take place. If it is an outdoor event, have a plan 'B' in case of inclement weather.

If the subject of the ceremony has brothers and sisters suggest that they take part in the ceremony. If there are grandparents or great grandparents, try and include them. Get the names and relationships of 'special friends' if there is to be any. Get details of all the participants and, if possible, ensure a copy of what they intend to say is made available to you for inclusion in the script. Take nothing for granted.

And what of symbolism? A common symbol is the planting of a tree. Incorporate this into the ceremony by having the participants place a shovel full of earth into the roots. Candles are a favourite. A candle can be lit to symbolise the new life and the hopes and aspirations the parents have for their child. It can be taken further, the parents then each light a candle from the one used to represent the new life. Even further, the special friends can light a candle from candles held by the parents as a symbol of the special friend's place as mentors who will be there for the newly named child as well as the parents. Mind you,

personally, I'd suggest drawing the line at that because things might become too hot to handle if many more people were to start lighting candles.

There are many inventive and innovative symbols used at Secular ceremonies. At one child naming ceremony each guest was requested to bring along a piece of ribbon which was used to help decorate a tree. It looked terrific. The range of symbolism ends only where the human imagination ends.

Music, especially at the beginning and end, should be given careful consideration. Sometimes music played all through the ceremony quietly in the background seems like a good idea to some people, however it can present problems if the celebrant has to speak above music without using a microphone. It sounds like a nice idea but it has to be considered very carefully. If there are quite a few pieces of music to be used then it would be appropriate to give the person handling the music a copy of the script with instructions about when to fade in and fade out music and what, if any, other special instructions are to be included. Have a word with the music person before the ceremony to make sure he or she knows that you will give them a cue, usually just a slight nod of the head, when you feel music should be faded out. That means they must pay attention to the script and take their cue from you when required. On more than one occasion I've been left hanging along with the guests because a music person hasn't been paying attention and let a piece of music go on and on way past its listening time. Mark all CDs and tapes clearly in their order. If using tapes ensure that only one piece of music is used at the beginning of side A of a tape. It isn't permissible to allow the ceremony to be interrupted whilst someone finds a piece of music somewhere in a tape.

There are also multiple naming ceremonies, not just twins or triplets, but adults and children and other family members and combinations thereof.

These take a bit more co-ordinating but essentially they are no more

complicated than naming a single small baby.

The venue can be anywhere. Usually naming ceremonies take place in the home or at a local hotel or in any scenic location deemed fit for the occasion. A beautiful beach, the local municipal gardens, uncle Fred's orange grove, you name it, we can use it. The only caution would be that where permission is required, such as the use of a municipal garden, it's just as well to check such permission has been obtained. It wouldn't do to be half way through a naming ceremony only to have some officious person with a skip cap demanding you move on. Then your ceremony would really become a naming ceremony with lots of names you didn't really want people called.

The basic naming ceremony for a child is about commitment from the parents and from the special friends and any other person the parents want to include.

So, what do we need to check?

- a. Who is the subject(s)? What will be the full name he/she is to be called, and the subject(s) date of birth for the certificate.
- b. When is the ceremony to take place?
- c. What is the venue and is it outdoor or indoor? If outdoor suggest arranging a plan B in case of inclement weather.
- d. Have you cleared your fee, if any, and any incidental expenses?
 - e. How many guests are expected?
 - f. Who will be taking part in the ceremony?
- g. What will guest speakers be saying? Get a copy for the script.
- h. What is the reason for the naming ceremony? If it isn't obvious.
- i. What commitments do the organisers want to see and hear made?
- j. What music will be used? Is it tapes or CDs?
- k. Who will be handling the music?

- I. Will there be a book of remembrance each of the guests can sign?
- m. Will there be a toast?
- n. Any special symbolism like tree planting or candle lighting?
- Is there a party planner or similar involved with whom you should co-ordinate?
- p. Most importantly contact name and number of the organiser.

I'm also attaching comes of hisping combinate by les from which per line.

ceremony which isn'y under pressure of a very tight deadline, such

SAMPLE SCRIPT 1.

The following e-mail correspondence tells the story of this delightful ceremony. For obvious reasons it has been edited to remove some of the repeat text and chatter. There were also a few phone calls so any gaps you might perceive were covered by phone conversations which I didn't record. I never actually met the parents till 25 minutes before the ceremony – just enough time to have a quick rehearsal of their parts. A copy of the completed ceremony had already been e-mailed to them for their final approval some days before. This is a typical case of the process that takes place when organising a naming ceremony or any other ceremony which isn't under pressure of a very tight deadline, such as funerals.

Also included in the price was a mini naming certificate printed on vellum and wrapped in satin ribbon for each of the guests and a video of the proceedings. These small extras were very much appreciated.

My grateful thanks to Patrick, Carmen and, of course Holly Druce for their very kind permission to use this text – and a video of the ceremony – for the benefit of nonreligious ceremony trainees.

Hello,

I am contacting several people to ask if they perform "Naming Ceremonies" for children. I found your name on the Secular website. Are Naming Ceremonies something you do? If so I would like some more information of procedures and costs.

We are hoping to organise a naming ceremony for our little girl on Sunday 8th August. We are looking for something light and informal which all members of the family can relate too.

We live in South West Scotland. Many Thanks Carmen Druce (Mrs). Dear Carmen.

Delighted to hear from you. Yes, we do naming ceremonies. Basically it consists of getting together with yourself and family, deciding on the kind of ceremony you want, organising the various participants and setting things up as required. There are no rules except that the ceremony will be strictly nonreligious and the ceremony is about the 'person' (however small), as are all our ceremonies.

We can provide a variety of poems, prose and appropriate symbolism. We will also provide a copy of the script to retain for posterity and, if required, to copy to friends or relatives who can't manage to the celebration.

Normally more than one meeting and usually a large number of phone calls and e-mails are involved. Our guideline price for this service is £100. This will include mementoes, certificate and, if required, a film of the occasion.

Attached is a copy of our leaflet, 'A New Life' which should prove informative. I'm also attaching copies of naming certificate styles from which you can choose one for Holly.

Please let me know as soon as possible and we can make whatever arrangements are needed. Thanks for contacting me.

Regards, Hugh

Dear Hugh

Thanks very much for all the information. I am going to spend the next few days concentrating on getting my invitations sent out as we have left it quite late!

I will email you again towards the end of the week and we can organise a suitable time to meet.

Meanwhile Patrick and I will have a little think on what we would like the ceremony to be like.

Best Wishes Carmen

Dear Carmen

We could arrange most of the ceremony over the net. I'll mail you some ideas, in the meantime it would be of help if you could send me the poetry and the

music you want to use plus the names and contributions of any guest speakers/singers. This will allow me to organise a ceremony of which you can approve.

Regards, Hugh

Dear Hugh

We are going to choose 2 poems which will be read by Patrick and one other, I will forward you the final selection ASAP. Holly will sit on her Shetland Pony (Magic) for the ceremony (this is the only way we will keep her in one place!!). There will be a cake which can be cut and incorporated into the ceremony. I think some people are bringing gifts for Holly but I'm not sure if this is something which is normally included in the ceremony or not. We hadn't really thought much about music but it would be nice to have something soothing playing quietly in the background if this is acceptable to you. I assume that you have a standard reading which you read as part of the ceremony?

I will forward you the poems shortly and which naming certificate we would like.

Best Wishes Carmen

Dear Carmen,

I need the following information;

When was Holly born?

What will be her full naming ceremony name?

Where will the ceremony take place?

Will you be providing a book into which your guests can enter comments and best wishes for Holly?

How many guests do you expect to have?

Will you be providing wine and soft drinks with which to toast Holly at the end of her naming ceremony before she cuts the cake?

Regards Hugh

Dear Hugh

I wondered if we could have the following poems incorporated into our naming ceremony? We are making arrangements to be able to come and meet with you and I will contact you soon to arrange an appropriate day and time. Let me know what you think.

Many Thanks Patrick, Carmen and Holly.

1/ Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you they belong not to you.

You may give them your love, but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their spirits, for their spirits dwell in the house of tomorrow which you cannot visit, even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

2/

If Holly could make a speech, she would say;

"Accept me, accept my tears, my delight, my exhilaration.

Love me as I am. Let me be. I'm OK. I'm Complete. I have everything I need. Don't force me to be like you. Don't force me to be different from you. Don't force me at all......

Admire me, like me, enjoy me. You are my everything. You are the sunshine of my life.

Slow down. Be with me. Let me see you. Let me be with you.

Trust me, trust yourself. Love me, Love yourself......

I want to do things my own way,

I want to do what I like,

I want to like what I do."

Dear Carmen,

The poems you suggest are entirely suitable. I'll include them in the script I send you for your approval.

Regards,

Dear Hugh

We would like naming Ceremony Certificate number 2 attachment (balloons) if possible. What is meant by special friends as we have opted not to have anything like that?

Best Wishes Carmen

Dear Carmen,

'Special Friends' aren't essential to the ceremony, but they, if we can use a baptism ceremony for comparison, fulfil the role played by life mentors much in the same way a godparent would play in ensuring the child's religious upbringing. If you did elect to honour any one, or two, or three, or more, persons with the task of special friend(s) then their function would be to help fulfil the ambitions you have for Holly. Sometimes people will ask close friends or even grandparents to act in this capacity. The main criteria is that the 'Special Friends' share your secular beliefs and aspirations for Holly. It is generally considered something of an honour and usually helps to create a special bond between the child and her special friends. But, I emphasise, it isn't an essential part of our ceremony.

Music will be delightful. Usually, we will have opening music as Holly enters for the ceremony. This is followed by an introduction by me which welcomes those attending followed by a paragraph or so laying down the tone of the ceremony. Generally, I will tell people what to expect, who will be participating, the order in which things will take place, and any special part of the ceremony - like someone singing or playing the pipes. If there is any particular reason why you choose a secular ceremony I can make that known to people on your behalf. I will also advise people that a copy of the text we will be using will be sent to any who aren't able to attend, or copies to those present if they want a copy, and a copy will be kept for posterity by Holly.

The first to speak will be yourselves, Holly's parents, and here it would be nice if you told your guests what your aspirations for Holly are. What your feeling were when she first came into the world. Your love for Holly and your reason for choosing Holly's 'special friends' (if you choose to have any) and anything else you want to include.

Lead up to a poem dedicated to Holly from both of you. Or a poem dedicated from mum and a piece of music dedicated by dad. Or any combination. If you have a special gift for this ceremony, now is the time to announce it, but just announce it since presenting it could stop the ceremony and lose Holly's attention. Then I will ask the 'special friends' if they promise to honour their commitment to Holly. They will then have their own dedication of a poem or a piece of music.

After these formalities I will then come to the most important part of the ceremony - the actual naming. Quiet, non-intrusive music in the background is fine. I will ask people to stand for this part. At the end of the actual naming part of the ceremony, we should ask people to applaud, generally accompanied by up-beat closing music as, in this case, Holly is led to the (on her pony?) table where she can cut her cake - assuming you have one. This will end the ceremony and the gifts can then be presented.

In a naming ceremony where the child is old enough to participate but too young to give full attention, it is usually best to keep the speeches, etc. to no more than fifteen minutes and let the music and any other non speech parts of the ceremony carry the rest.

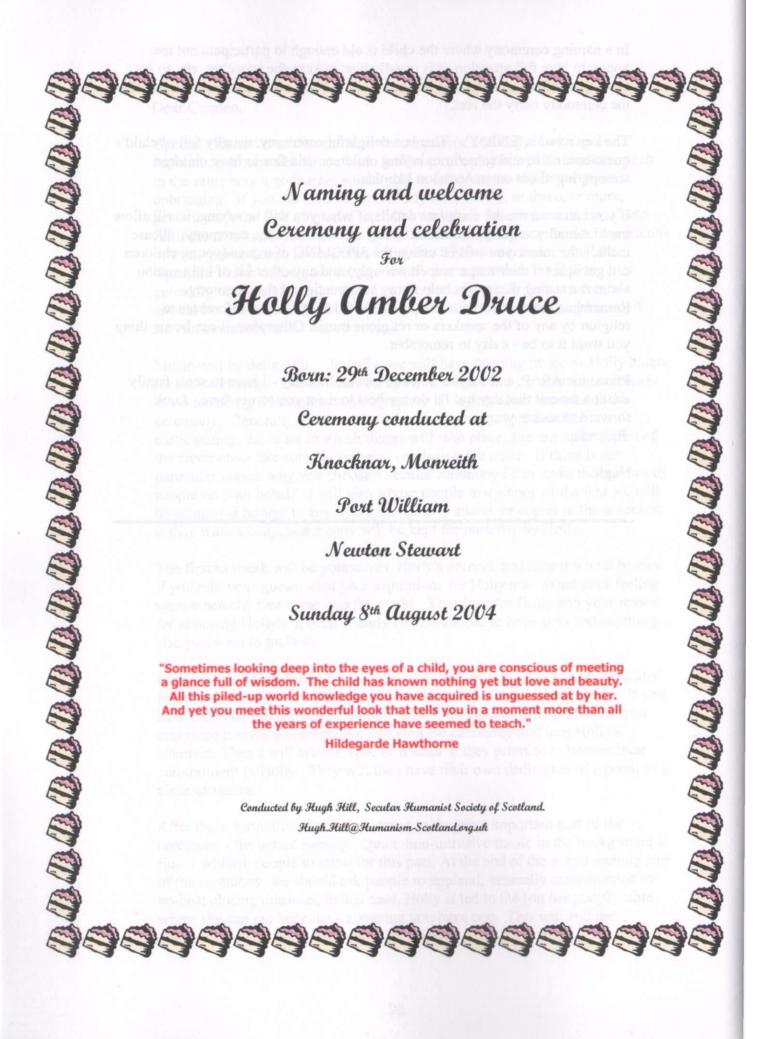
The key word is 'ENJOY'. This is a delightful ceremony, usually full of child's questions, noise and sometimes crying children. It's fine to have children scampering about on an occasion like this.

If you can send me the complete details of what you will be saying, it will allow me to e-mail you a copy of the text a day or two before the ceremony. Please include the music you will be using, the SPELLING of names (young children can get upset if their name is spelt wrongly) and any other bit of information about the setting that might help in my construction of the ceremony. Remember, there are no rules except 'NO RELIGION'. No references to religion by any of the speakers or religious music. Otherwise, it can be anything you want it to be - a day to remember.

Phone me ASAP, and maybe we can meet on Monday - I have to see a family about a funeral that day but I'll do my best to meet you somewhere. Look forward to seeing you.

Regards,

Hugh.



[Opening music: Hello, My Baby – Ladysmith Black Mambo]

(Hugh.)

Good afternoon and a very warm welcome to everyone. My name is Hugh Hill and I have been invited here today as a Celebrant from the Secular Humanist Society of Scotland. On behalf of Patrick and Carmen I would like to thank you all for coming today; your being with them on this special occasion means a lot.

Some of you may be wondering why Carmen and Patrick have chosen a Secular ceremony; for them Secularism reflects most closely the beliefs and values which they themselves hold. Secular Humanism is an approach to life based on the belief that this world and this life is all that we have and that our destiny lies solely within our own hands. It encourages the pursuit of truth, knowledge, self-responsibility, tolerance and compassion towards others. All being well, Carmen and Patrick feel that this approach will allow their child to grow into a freethinking, independent and happy woman. Holly, as the first of the next generation in your families, has been a very special arrival. Her deceptively small appearance, as she was curled tightly and warmly in the womb, belied the substantial beautiful baby girl who emerged into the world on the 29th of December 2002. Holly has already begun her own unique journey through life and, as she spreads her wings and broadens her horizons with each passing moment, she is clearly surrounded by huge amounts of love. As she grows, all of you here are the ones Holly will look to for companionship, leadership and support. By watching and listening to you she will learn about how people treat each other and create relationships. Lead well by example, for you are the community of this child.

Carmen and Patrick wanted to celebrate the naming of Holly with something more formal than a simple party. Throughout the world and throughout the history of humankind, formal ceremony is used to mark and

make explicit the rites of passage which all human beings experience in common. For Carmen and Patrick this is a meaningful way to celebrate Holly's life and to express their love and aspirations for her, for her place in the world and for her future. Patrick and Carmen hope whatever your beliefs you will very much feel a part of, and enjoy, this celebration.

To this end I would now like to invite them to come before all of you here today, the most important and central people in their lives, and ask you to witness the commitments that they wish to make to Holly.

(CARMEN AND PATRICK STEP FORWARD.)

(Hugh.)

Carmen and Patrick, your pledge to Holly on this occasion, is to offer her your unconditional love through good times and bad.

Do you promise to support Holly along the path of her life, and to present her with opportunities to help her find a path she wants to walk?

Do you promise to guide her as best you can, while allowing her the freedom to make her own choices and mistakes?

Do you promise to respect her right to be an individual, with her own thoughts and feelings, whilst showing her how to respect the differences of others?

(Carmen and Patrick together.)

Holly, we feel truly privileged to be your mum and dad. We will strive to provide you with

- •a life full of love, happiness and security
- •a life where you will be free to develop your own opinions, beliefs and

values

•a life with a strong sense of self worth and respect for others

We hope that as you grow you will love us as much as we love you

(Hugh.)

Now here is Tony and Patrick to read two very appropriate poems for this occasion.

(Tony.)

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you they belong not to you.

You may give them your love, but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their spirits, for their spirits dwell in the house of tomorrow which you cannot visit, even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

(Patrick)

If Holly could make a speech, she would say;

"Accept me, accept my tears, my delight, my exhilaration.

Love me as I am. Let me be. I'm OK. I'm Complete. I have everything I need.

Don't force me to be like you, Don't force me to be different from you. Don't force me at all.....

Admire me, like me, enjoy me. You are my everything. You are the sunshine of my life.

Slow down. Be with me. Let me see you. Let me be with you.

Trust me, trust yourself. Love me, Love yourself......

I want to do things my own way,

I want to do what I like,

I want to like what I do.'

(HUGH.)

I would now like to share with you a few words that Patrick and Carmen have chosen, adapted from Dorothy Law Nolte, which are very much a favourite of mine, they say very succinctly what we all know so well to be true:

If a child lives with tolerance,

She learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement,

She learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise,

She learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness,

She learns judgement.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,

She learns to give love to the world.

And now we come to the most important part of today's ceremony... **The Naming.** Ladies and gentlemen. Will you please now stand for this very important part of our ceremony.

A name is a very special thing for once given it is with us for life. It defines who we are as much as our face, our laugh or the way we walk. It will be spoken, whispered, shouted, cried, sung and written countless times by many of you here today. It now gives me great pleasure to formally name this child;

Holly Amber Druce.

Holly, we wish you health, happiness, well-being and fulfilment in your life with this celtic blessing;

The peace of the running water to you,

The peace of the flowing air to you,

The peace of the quiet earth to you,

The peace of the shining stars to you,

And the love and the care of us all to you.

Would you all please raise you glasses and formally welcome to the world:

Miss Holly Amber Druce.

(Response and toast - 'Holly')

Finally, there is a special commemorative book that Carmen and Patrick have provided for you to sign and express your good wishes and thoughts for Holly. It can be found on the table near Holly's cake.

Thank you all, once again, for being here and for your witness, and for sharing in this special time together.

Now we conclude our simple and loving ceremony by asking Holly to cut her naming ceremony cake.

Thank you.

This is to certify that

Holly Amber Druce

Was formally named in a Secular naming ceremony
On August 8th, 2004,
at Knocknar, Monreith
Port William,

Newton Stewart.

In the presence of her parents

Patrick Druce

and

Carmen Druce

Signed,

Date,

Hugh Hill, Secular Humanist Society of Scotland Celebrant.

SAMPLE SCRIPT 2.

This is based on a script by Mandy Evans Ewing. It is, as you will note, an absolutely straightforward ceremony that conveys everything needed for a naming. Mandy has used candles for her symbolism which is generally the easiest and most readily appreciated by most people.

Mandy has gone straight to the heart of her ceremony in the first part of the introduction. She compares her ceremony with a religious ceremony then goes on to emphasise that it mustn't be confused with a religious ceremony whose basic concept is to commit a child to a set of supernatural beliefs but, instead, this is a Secular ceremony. This ceremony will commit the child, Marianne, in accordance with the wishes and with the assistance of her parents, to find her own set of beliefs and principles when she becomes mature enough.

This ceremony is a masterpiece of simplicity for the participants and the celebrant. I strongly recommend it to you as a first class example for you to follow.

NAMING CEREMONY OF MARIANNE ROBERTA FRASER. 27th July, 2004, at Pearl House, Nantucket.

Opening Music (Ronnettes -"Baby I Love You")

Family and friends, we have been invited by Arlene and Christopher to share in a ceremony celebrating the birth of their first child.

This is a Secular naming ceremony. It has much in common with a religious christening. Religious people see the significance of what they are doing in terms of religious faith but as parents Christopher and Arlene are not committing their child to any set of beliefs. They are committing themselves to helping their child to find truth for herself so that she may achieve a better understanding than her forbears.

First and foremost this ceremony is an expression of joy. Arlene and Christopher are sharing their joy in their daughter with people who matter to them; with family and friends. And we are all here to express the joy we feel for them and our love for them and their daughter.

A second important element in this ceremony is the consideration of our responsibilities towards the children among us. Marianne is the central figure today, but she reminds us of our own children; our nephews and nieces - our grandchildren and the wider circle of children of our friends and all other children in the world.

I would like to ask Sally to say a few words as a reminder of the duty we have in the upbringing of our children.

If a child lives with tolerance, she learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement, she learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise, she learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness, she learns judgement.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,

She learns to give love to the world.

Arlene and Christopher, you have brought your daughter here to be welcomed by your family and friends and to appoint two special friends to help you guide her through life. Who are these special friends?

"Sally Kennedy and Sophie McMillan"

As parents will you do all you can to help Marianne become a responsible, selfreliant, caring person, and will you love and cherish her uniqueness. Will you help her develop in her own way?

"We will"

Sally and Sophie do you formally accept a commitment to Marianne, to offer friendship and love so that she can turn to you in times of doubt or difficulty with confidence and trust and will you give what support you can to Arlene and Christopher as Marianne's parents?

"We will"

(Sally holds Marianne whilst Sophie reads "I Have Seen".)

I have seen a mother at a cot,
So I know what love is.
I have looked into the eyes of a child,
So I know what faith is.
I have seen a rainbow,

So I know what beauty is.

I have felt the pounding of the sea,

So I know what power is.

I have planted a flower,

So I know what hope is.

I have heard a wild bird sing,

So I know what freedom is.

I have lost a friend,

So I know what sorrow is.

I have seen a star decked sky,

So I know what infinite is.

I have seen and felt all these things,

So I know what life is.

Arlene and Christopher, bringing a new life into this world is one of the most important things that any two people can do, and it puts a big responsibility on your shoulders. For many years this child will be dependent upon you. The way this child is looked after, cared for and loved will all play their part in determining the sort of adult she will become in future years.

(Marianne is handed to her parents who stand behind the table with candle)

And so let us come to the significance of the actual naming. Marianne's name is part of her perception of herself. It represents her individuality and her uniqueness. It marks her off from all other human beings and says, "this is who I am, I have at least this much significance even though I am small and helpless"

So let us share the joy of this occasion and name this child Marianne Roberta Fraser.

As a symbol of her life and the hope for a bright and happy future I invite you to

light this candle. A light representing your wish for a life full of everlasting love.

(Light Marianne's candle).

Music. ("Perfect Day")

May the life of this child be rich in vision, full in accomplishment and afire with the highest ideals.

Arlene and Christopher have asked me to read a passage adapted from an American anthology.

Let our children learn to be honest, both with themselves and with all others. This is the basic human value.

Let our children cultivate the breadth of humanity: a cordial welcome.... for whatever is beneficial is beneficial to the human race.

Let our children learn to love truth...even when it goes against them. If they do this, they will not be much hampered by prejudice, for whatever truth can enter, prejudice cannot long remain.

Let our children find courage and discover that they are stronger than the things of which they are afraid. Courage in their dealings with their own lives, courage in speaking out for right, in condemning injustice, in standing for good against evil, courage to remain loyal to a deep conviction and courage to admit when they have made mistakes.

Let our children cultivate kindness. Let them learn that there is good and bad in all of us and that each of us must make a hard struggle to bring the good out on top. Then, learning from their own lost battles, they will acquire a gentle wisdom and walk softly where other people might get hurt.

To conclude I would like to call on Sophie to read another poem -

The music will ring out sweetly,

May the skies be clear and blue

As friends and family gather

To be here today with you.

To celebrate the naming

Of a little girl so sweet

And share in all the blessings

Which will make her life complete.

There may be tears of happiness

Of love which shall not cease

And dreams to make her future

One of everlasting peace.

(Cut the cake!)

Arlene and Christopher would like you to write in the book as a record of the celebration of welcoming Marianne into the world.

(Sign the Certificate.)

Music (Jive Bunny medley).

This is to certify that

Marianne Roberta Fraser

Was formally named in a Humanist naming ceremony

On July 27th, 2004

At Pearl House, Nantucket.

In the presence of her parents

Christopher T. Fraser and Arlene Fraser

and her special friends

Sally Kennedy and Sophie McMillan.

Signed,

Date,

Melanie Shepherd, Secular Society of Nantucket Celebrant.

Poetry and prose suitable for a naming

ceremony.

There are literally thousands of books of poetry dedicated to children and parents. The following is only a small selection used frequently at Secular naming ceremonies. No doubt you will build up your own collection over time.

Better to be driven out from among men than to be disliked of children.

Richard H Dana

THE GIFT.

I want to give you something, my child, for we are drifting in the stream of the world.

Our lives will be carried apart.

But I am not so foolish as to hope that I could buy your heart with my gifts.

Young is your life, your path long, and you drink the love we bring you at one draft and turn and run away from us.

You have your play and your playmates. What harm is there if you have no time or thought for us?

We, indeed, have leisure enough in old age to count the days that are past, to cherish in our hearts what our hands have lost forever.

The river runs swift with a song, breaking though all barriers.

But the mountain stays and remembers, and follows her

with his love.

Rabindranath Tagore.

IF

Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,

If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,

But make allowance for their doubting too;

If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,

Or being lied about, don't deal in lies

Or being hated, don't give way to hating,

And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;

If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;

If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster

And treat those two impostors just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken

Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools.

Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,

And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will that says to them; "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,

Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,

If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;

If all men count with you, but none too much;

If you can fill the unforgiving minute

With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,

Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,

And – which is more – you'll be a man, my son!

Rudyard Kipling

I have seen a mother at a cot – so I know what love is;
I have looked into the eyes of a child – so I know what faith is;
I have seen a rainbow – so I know what beauty is;
I felt the pounding of the seas – so I know what power is;
I have planted a tree – so I know what hope is;
I have heard a wild bird sing – so I know what freedom is;
I have seen a chrysalis burst into life – so I know what mystery is;
I have lost a friend – so I know what sorrow is;
I have seen a star-decked sky – so I know what infinity is;
I have seen and felt all these things – so I know what life is.

Anonymous

INFANT JOY.

I have no name:

I am but two days old.

What shall I call thee?

I happy am,

Joy is my name.

Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!

Sweet joy but two days old,
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee!

Anon

ON CHILDREN

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may house their bodies but not their spirits,

For their spirits dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backwards nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

Kahlil Gibran

THESE I CAN PROMISE

I cannot promise you a life of sunshine;
I cannot promise riches, wealth, or gold;
I cannot promise you an easy pathway
That leads away from change or growing old.

But I can promise all my heart's devotion;

A smile to chase away your tears of sorrow;
A love that's ever true and ever growing;
A hand to hold in yours through each tomorrow.

Unknown author

A CELTIC WELL-WISHING

The peace of the running water to you,

The peace of the flowing air to you,

The peace of the quiet earth to you,

The peace of the shining stars to you,

And the love and the care of us all to you.

Anonymous

REVOLVING DOOR

A baby is a jolly thing
All curly from the womb,
So let us many get and bring
In case we early to the tomb
Should be abruptly called.

A baby is a curly thing,
It makes its mother happy;
It pops, and nips its teething ring
When daddy changes nappy.

Ha-Ha! Across its mobile face
A skelter of emotions race,
Terror: then giddy joy; then pain;
Astonishment: then fear again.
Ecstatic grin, tongue out tongue in.

Round and round and round they go
Until a solemn gaze on Toe
Is concentrate.

Toe: that Great Mystery,
The Other End of Me!
Wait ... Another toe!
Pure ecstasy!

Give it a name – a name! This child a name!

The end and the beginning

See society spinning

Spinning society. Appetite satiety.

The end and the beginning

Are very much the same

North and south and east and west
The baby only knows that best
Of all things in the world is Breast;
Item: one object, warm and smooth as silk,
Round and resilient and full of milk
Questions not "Whence?"
Nor yet wanting "Hence!"
O! Would some power the giftie gie us
The little niftie thriftie giftie,
The gift of continence.

There comes a time in every life of every one of us

When we, because our moment is not ripe,

Pause and regress, and recollect and stumble,

And then remuster, each in his own type.

And if at such an instant, one should question

Whether a certain quality should be

Again included in the ego's makeup,

Again that acorn should bring forth that tree:

Then you may know that time o'er past is wasted;

That sorrow and strain must again be once more;

That virtue and pride were not completely tasted;

That Sally had borne you past the precious door.

Close not your eyes, my friend, and not again be cheated

Lest inattention in the end has you defeated.*

A baby is a jolly thing
Still dusty from the tomb,
So let us many get and bring
In case we early to the womb
Should be abruptly called.

*These 14 lines could stand alone as an independent poem

IF A CHILD LIVES WITH TOLERANCE

If a child lives with tolerance,
she learns to be patient;
If a child lives with encouragement,
she learns confidence;
If a child lives with praise,
she learns to appreciate;
If a child lives with fairness,
she learns judgement;
If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,
she learns to give love to the world.

Dorothy Law Nolte

Our child,
Into the daylight
You will go outstanding.
Preparing for your day.

Our child, it is your day
This day.

May your road be fulfilled.
In your thoughts may we live,
May we be the ones whom your thoughts will embrace,
May you help us all to finish our roads.

From writing of the Zuni Indians

And now may our hearts be open to all the children of the generations of man, that a circle of love and peace may grow forevermore.

Anonymous.

THE CHILD AT PLAY.

Dark brown is the river,

Golden is the sand.

It flows along forever,

With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,
Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating –
When will all come home?

On goes the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley,
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore.

R.L.Stevenson.

ON THE SEASHORE.

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet.

The infinite sky is motionless overhead and the restless water is boisterous. On the seashore of the endless worlds the children meet with shouts and dances.

They build their houses with sand, and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds.

They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets.

Pearl fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets.

The sea surges up with laughter, and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach... On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.

Rabindranath Tagore

BORN YESTERDAY.

Tightly folded bud,
I have wished you something.
None of the others would:
Not the usual stuff
About being beautiful,
Or running off a spring
Of innocence and love —
They will all wish you that,
And should it prove possible,
Well, you're a lucky girl.

But if it shouldn't, then
May you be ordinary;
Have, like other women,
An average of talents:
Not ugly, not good-looking,
Nothing uncustomary
To pull you off your balance,
That, unworkable itself,
Stops all the rest from working.
In fact, may you be dull —
If that is what a skilled,
Vigilant, flexible,
Unemphasised, enthralled
Catching of happiness is called.
Phillip Larkin.

SOME EXAMPLES

OF NAMING

CERTIFICATES

A simple certificate with a border printed onto textured paper and sometimes accompanied by a photograph is always appreciated and is offered as part of the service

This is to certify that

Alexander John Berkely

Was formally named in a Secular naming ceremony

On January 6th 2006

At R.S.S. Discovery, Dunedin.

In the presence of his parents

Rhona Berkely Samuel Berkely

And his special friends

Tessa George Jack George

Signed,

Date,

Gareth Wood, Secular Fellowship of New Zealand Celebrant.



This is to certify that

David Richmond

Was formally named in a Secularist naming ceremony

On May 2nd, 2004

At 21, Woodend Rd., Brisbane,

In the presence of his parents

David Richmond and Debbie Partridge

And his special friends

Margaret Malone and Terence Malone

Signed,

Date,

Eric Harmon, Queensland Secular Society Celebrant



THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

NICOLE RICHMOND

Was formally named in a Secular naming ceremony On May 2ND, 2004. At 51, Dalblair Rd., Ayr

IN THE PRESENCE OF HER PARENTS

DAVID RICHMOND

AND

DEBBIE PARTRIDGE

AND HER SPECIAL FRIENDS

MAY HILL AND HUGH HILL

SIGNED,

HUGH HILL, SECULAR SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND CELEBRANT.



This is to certify that

Nicole Richmond

Was formally named in a Secular naming ceremony

On May 2nd, 2004,

At 51, Dalblair Rd., Ayr

In the presence of her parents

David Richmond and Debbie Partridge

And her special friends

May Hill and Hugh Hill

Signed,

Date,

Hugh Hill, Secular Society of Scotland Celebrant.

5.

WEDDING AND MARRIAGE CEREMONIES.

You can have a wedding almost anywhere. On top of Mount Everest, in a submarine, jumping out of an aeroplane, on a number thirty one bus or in a phone box. It doesn't matter to you as a Secular celebrant because all wedding ceremonies follow the same pattern. It is a commitment between two people to love, honour, cherish and respect each other. Most weddings are heterosexual, some are homosexual, it doesn't matter, the commitment is still the same. The theme is always, as you would expect, love, love and more love. Tell the love story that has been in preparation for telling the love story that is to come. You know what I mean... "Billy and Cathie met on this number thirty one bus six months ago and fell madly in love. That is why they are being married here today on this self same bus on this self same route. On this occasion the bus company, being the romantics that they are, have waived the bus fare for these two today, a good sign for the future we hope..." Well, maybe it isn't quite like that but most marriage ceremonies will have an element of the romance arising from the couple's meeting, falling in love and deciding to commit to each other.

The marriage is a commitment often combined with the wedding which is the public display and celebration of that commitment. In many countries, the marriage and wedding will be conducted by the Secular celebrant, in other countries a separate civil marriage ceremony will take place followed

by the Secular wedding. Most countries have a marriage law that requires a specific wording to validate a marriage. You know your own civil law; if your not sure check with your ceremony co-ordinator. At present, at the beginning of 2006, the only countries permitting same sex marriages are Belgium and the Netherlands, although there are some states within North America who also recognise the validity of same sex marriages. In the United Kingdom, Scottish law differs from English and Welsh law in terms of where a marriage can take place and the legal pre marriage requirements. But, generally in Britain, except for Scotland, Secular marriages carry no legal status so, most couples having a Secular wedding firstly go through a brief civil registration ceremony followed by a full blown wedding ceremony conducted by a Secular celebrant. In Scotland the situation is completely different, since 2005 Scottish Secular weddings carry full legal status so we now see a trail of Secularists bent on having their non religious marriages making their way to Scotland for their fully recognised, non religious marriage ceremony followed by a wedding ceremony. However, it still isn't uncommon for some British couples to travel to Australia, or Florida to be married by a Secular celebrant where such marriages do carry legal status. The international element of Secularism has far more potential in this area than people might think.

The couple whose wedding you are conducting will know exactly what they want. It is quite probable they have been planning their wedding for months. Every step along the way is a consultation. Specific instructions have probably been given and these will have to be built into the script. The same principle applies to the contributions of guest speakers that is applied to every other ceremony – get a copy of what everyone will be saying. If it is obvious that a guest speaker is making a speech then suggest that the speech be confined to the wedding breakfast, or dinner, or supper, or Chinese take away, or whatever. The marriage ceremony is not a place for making speeches. That doesn't rule out the inclusion of

speeches in your script – after the end of the marriage ceremony - if that is what the couple want. Many couples will see the inclusion of speeches as part of the record of this occasion so, why not?

Your script should contain an opening which welcomes the guests, followed by an explanation of the gravity of the commitment being entered into by the couple. Then proceed with the marriage vows and symbolism which you will already have agreed for each particular ceremony. (See partnership Ceremonies for the meaning of flowers.) It is fairly straightforward. The beauty is in the manner in which the ceremony is conducted. You will probably have rehearsed the ceremony with the major participants beforehand so there shouldn't be any problems when the great day comes along. It is a loving and happy ceremony which is also very serious. It must be handled, like all ceremonies, with sincerity and respect. After all, we Secularists, and our ceremonies are known for our love, honour and respect, are we not?

Here's your checklist;

- a. The names of the couple.
- b. The venue.
- c. Time and date.
- d. If it is an outdoor ceremony, suggest a plan B in case of inclement weather.
- e. (In some cases) Will there be a separate marriage ceremony prior to the wedding?
 - f. Will it be a very private affair or will there be a lot of guests?
 - g. Any special symbolism, flowers, exchange of rings, candles, etc.?
 - h. Best man and best maid? Page boys and flower girls?
- i. Is the bride being given away?
 - j. Has the couple decided on the wording of their commitment to each other?

- k. What will the other participants be saying?
- 1. Will rehearsals be needed?
- m. Sort out the fee, if any.
- n. Is there a wedding organiser with which to liaise?
- Have all permissions, (remember that number thirty one bus?) been obtained?
- p. Who is the major contact for this ceremony?

By the way, if you do ever conduct a marriage ceremony at the top of Mount Everest or jumping from a plane, can I have a copy of the script and a copy of the video, please?

SAMPLE SCRIPT 1.

This is a typical marriage ceremony script. Some of it is based on a ceremony used by the South Place Ethical Society in London and quoted in 'Sharing The Future' by Jane Wynne Willson of the British Humanist Society— see references. It is fairly straightforward insofar as the only symbolism is the giving of a red rose to the bride by the groom prior to the exchange of rings, which is in itself the generally recognised symbol of a union between two people. The customary explanation of the ring as a symbol, "the perfect circle for the perfect love, a continuous ... etc.", hasn't been included since it has almost become a cliché. However, the central importance of the ring as the centrepiece of the marriage ceremony still retains it potency. The red rose also carries a very strong message. As does the invitation for the new husband and wife to kiss. In this day and age, this gesture is still considered as essential as the exchange of rings, so where there are rings there is a kiss.

The bride's maid and best man simply play a traditional role, however there is no reason why it should be the best man who takes charge of the rings until required, it could be the bride's maid or the celebrant. The ceremony generally follows what has become a traditional Scottish wedding with the best man making his speech after the marriage ceremony at the wedding reception. However, if the couple had wished, there was no reason why the other participants couldn't have been more involved by being given a paragraph of goodwill readings. Straight after the pronunciation of the couple as husband and wife would have been an appropriate point for such an interjection. It would have replaced the final well wishing made by the celebrant.

One small point; simply saying, "I now pronounce you husband and wife – sign here." Seems, to my mind, a bit of an abrupt ending. The ending I have provided seems a bit more gentle and in keeping with the ceremony as a whole.



Cext of the marriage ceremony of Paroline **Davidson** And Roger Zelham.

24" January, 2006.

The Green Man Hotel

Apr, Scotland.

Oelebrant: Hugh Hill, Secular fellowship of Scotland.



(MUSIC: WEDDING MARCH - MENDELSSOHN)

(HUGH AND ROGER AND HIS BEST MAN ARE STANDING BEFORE THE GUESTS AND CAROLINE IS ESCORTED INTO THE ROOM BY HER FATHER TO JOIN ROGER. THEY ARE ACCOMPANIED BY TWO BRIDESMAIDS. THE GUESTS AT THIS POINT ARE STANDING. CAROLINE'S FATHER SIMPLY LEAVES CAROLINE IN POSITION NEXT TO ROGER AND TAKES HIS PLACE BESIDE HIS WIFE IN THE FRONT ROW OF GUESTS)

(HUGH)

Ladies and gentlemen, please be seated.

We are gathered here to witness and to celebrate the marriage of Caroline Davidson and Roger Pelham. Many of you have travelled a great distance to be here on this very important day for Roger and Caroline. I must thank you for being here and taking part in this special occasion. It will be a day to be remembered by all of us.

My name is Hugh Hill and I'm a member of the Secular Fellowship of Scotland and it is my privilege to have been asked by Caroline and David to conduct this loving ceremony.

Marriage is a joining of two people in a life bond formed from the love they have found for each other. It is a partnership that involves mutual love and respect and carries with it a commitment to share all their hopes, responsibilities, and cares for each other's happiness, aspirations and comfort. It is a commitment to become a single entity whilst, at the same time, allowing and encouraging each other to be a happy and independent person within their marriage. It is a measure of the trust they have in the love they have for each other, and the ability of that love to take them into a new and higher plane of existence in life. It is the beginning of a new

family, a new life and a new mutual purpose.

This has not been a step taken lightly by these young people. When they met eighteen months ago, at a party hosted by Martin, a mutual friend, they seemed to become attracted to each other almost immediately. It became obvious to all who know them, that the relationship was serious. They were very rarely outside of each other's company when they weren't at work. From day one, it was a magic love affair. And now, they have chosen to come together here today to exchange their vows of matrimony witnessed by their families and friends.

Let us now begin the joining of these two lives by citing a sonnet written by William Shakespeare.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments. Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove;

O, no! — it is an ever fixed mark,

That looks on tempests and is never shaken.

It is the star to every wandering barque,

Whose worth's unknown, although its height be taken.

Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks

Within his bending sickle's compass come;

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error, and upon me proved,

I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Roger, you have poem by Leo Marks you would like to dedicate to Caroline.

(ROGER)

The life that I have is all that I have
And the life that I have is yours
The love that I have of the life that I have
Is yours and yours and yours.

A sleep I shall have

A rest I shall have

Yet death will be but a pause,

For the peace of my years in the long green grass

Will be yours and yours and yours.

(ROGER HANDS A SINGLE STEM RED ROSE TO CAROLINE)

(HUGH)

Thank you Roger. And now you Caroline, you have a dedication to Roger.

(CAROLINE)

Roger, I pledge my love to you, and will be open to your love in return.

I would like to share in your dreams and for you to share in mine;

To give help when you need it, and to ask for help when in need;

To support you in all your endeavours;

To share in your joys and sorrows.

In the presence of our families and friends, I ask you, Roger,

To be a friend, companion and lover throughout my life.

(HUGH)

Thank you, Caroline.

Caroline and Roger have come here in affection and honour to say before us that they will henceforth share their home, combine in mutual living and responsibility and give their joint support to the life of the community. Love is the wish of the whole self to unite with another to the end of personal completeness. Touched by

this love, nature yields tenderness, togetherness, simplicity, honesty and delight. When a man and woman openly and sincerely declare their affection for each other they are affirming the precious truth that love is the foundation of all life – between parents and children, between friends and, as goodwill, between all mankind. Hence we are here to witness not only this act of love and commitment between these two people but also a deeper truth.

Ladies and gentlemen will you now please stand.

(ORGAN MUSIC PLAYED VERY QUIETLY IN THE BACKGROUND)

Roger, will you now repeat after me;

"I, Roger Pelham, - solemnly declare - that I know of no lawful reason - why I may not be joined in marriage - to Caroline Davidson"

(ROGER REPEATS AS REQUIRED)

Caroline, will you repeat after me;

"I, Caroline Davidson, - solemnly declare – that I know of no lawful reason – why I may not be joined in marriage – to Roger Pelham".

(CAROLINE REPEATS AS REQUIRED)

May I now have the rings. (FROM THE BEST MAN).

Roger, will you now take this ring and placing it on Caroline's finger, repeat after me;

"I, Roger Pelham, - call upon all these people present – to witness that I take you, Caroline Davidson – to be my lawfully wedded wife – from this moment on."

Caroline, will you now take this ring and placing it on Roger's finger, repeat after me;

"I, Caroline Davidson, - call upon all these people present - to witness that I take you, Roger Pelham, - to be my lawfully wedded husband - from this moment on."

Roger and Caroline will now repeat after me, together, these words;
"We have wed each other – and do pledge ourselves in honour – to prefer each other's good – and to work together for our common good. - We aspire to have and to hold together – from this day forward – for better or for worse – for richer or for poorer – in sickness and in health – and to love and to cherish each other – so long as we both shall live.

(ROGER AND CAROLINE REPEAT AS REQUIRED)

I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss each the other.

(MUSIC: CRESCENDO CHORD TO END)

(LEAD APPLAUSE)

Ladies and gentlemen, please be seated.

In conclusion of our ceremony we all offer to you, Roger and Caroline, our heartfelt good wishes. May you live for each other and within each other with happiness and joy. May you never close your heart or your mind to each other in anger or in resentment but always be open, honest and understanding. May you make every effort to create a better life not only for yourselves and your families and friends, but for all of humanity by your good deeds and good works. We wish you all the joy and happiness mutual love can bring and we thank you for allowing us to enjoy the happiness of this very special day.

I now invite you to sign the register to conclude this happy ceremony.

This is to certify

that

Roger Telham

and

Caroline Davidson

Stated their marriage vows to each other at the Green Man Hotel Ayr, Scotland at a Secular ceremony.

Witnessed by

Debbie Rosemount

Cyril Richards

Secular celebrant; Hugh Hill, Secular Fellowship of Scotland.

Signed

Date

SAMPLE SCRIPT 2

This is a wedding ceremony based on one carried out by Joe Hughes. As in all these ceremonies it is a joyful occasion and, given Joe's witty personality, it is the kind of ceremony in which he thrives. Joe can manage to grasp an element of humour out of almost any situation. Note how he builds jokes into his ceremony and cleverly uses them as a bridge to make a point – not everyone can do this with success. Joe has been a celebrant for more years than he probably cares to remember. It is quite likely that he has conducted more secular ceremonies than anyone else living (or dead, come to that). I can imagine his gesture at the end of the ceremony when he invites everyone to begin the festivities. Joe's greatest strength in his ceremonies is his personality. He can snatch an embarrassing moment from the jaws of disaster and turn it into a triumph of wit. He is a master of the ad lib and his skill serves him well in those moments when everything seems to go wrong and 'sod's law' kicks in with a vengeance. By sheer force of his personality he manages to retain control of situations where most of us would simply wish the ground would open up and swallow us.

Don't try for jokes in your script unless you are very sure they will succeed. Many a celebrant has come unstuck by trying to be smart. If you aren't sure about introducing jokes then don't do it until you've feel confident. However, if you do feel confident ...

Note; The expression 'help mah boab' is Scottish slang meaning ', 'Well, I'll be...'

Marriage Ceremony for Rita Cochrane and Hendrick Larsen. Held in Hooper's Hotel, Dumbarton. 29th March, 2005 Celebrant – Joe Hughes

JOE

This is a very important day for Rita and Hendrick in both a personal and a public sense. So on their behalf I'd like to welcome you all here today and also to thank you all for taking part in this very special occasion. Today is a joyful occasion for their commitment to each other springs from a delight in each others company for theirs is a love that they are sure of and they wish to express it openly and joyfully and who better to share this happy occasion with than you here today, their families and friends. And talking about the role both families have to play, it is to the eternal credit of their parents that they gave their children happy and secure childhoods and were always there to offer support and advice as Hendrick and Rita grew through their formative years into adulthood. And among all the other people who are here today special mention must be made of the best man, Graham, the bridesmaid, Valerie, and the page boys and flower girls Tommy, Clarence, Marigold and Emma. I was actually talking to one of the wedding guests earlier and he was telling me that he and his wife led very happy lives for 25 years - and then they met. I know that Hendrick and Rita won't have any such problems.

Rita and Hendrick first met in the summer of 2002 in Canada, Hendrick was living there and he was working as what is known as 'an environmental super hero'. Help mah boab, in Scotland we call that a road sweeper.

Rita had been working there and had decided to remain for the summer having worked during the ski season running a chalet. Hendrick saw her play at an

open mike competition in which he was also performing and he got his beady eye on her, and Hendrick, being the big smoothie he is, boldly asked her to get together to 'jam', as they say, as she had some excellent rhythm - some chat up line that one. But it worked and they became bosom buddies and they performed together at local bars and restaurants and actually started writing their first album. At the end of the season Rita returned to the UK and some 6 months later Hendrick joined her. By this time Rita had got herself what she described as a proper job and they lived together in Manchester for the next 2 years until Rita completed her traineeship. On 29 February last year, a leap year, Rita proposed to Hendrick, but knowing Rita, she probably ordered him to marry her, - as you do. 'She who must be obeyed', as Hendrick already knows

To think that Rita travelled all the way over to Canada to find a man from sunny Dumbarton. But there you have it folks, and like Dumbarton this is a rock solid partnership - sorry about that one.

During this ceremony there will be some readings, some music, a symbolic lighting of candles and an exchange of vows and rings. Rita and Hendrick will now each light a candle to symbolise their respective individual lives before they are joined in formal union and a third candle will be lit later during our ceremony.

Some of you may be wondering what Secularism is and why Rita and Hendrick have chosen a Secular ceremony on this happy occasion. They have actually chosen a Secular ceremony because they believe that it best represents how they think and how they feel. Secularism is a philosophy of life based on a philosophy and an ethic rooted in the natural world. Secularists believe in the good within human beings and in the individual right to freedom of choice in all decisions between birth and death. Secularism is about unselfishness, kindness and consideration towards others. It's about accepting responsibility for our own lives while accepting a responsibility to the whole world. It is a Secularist belief that all human beings are of equal worth and that we should show respect and

understanding to others irrespective of class, creed or race and that there should be no discrimination on any grounds whatsoever. The Secular societies exists to represents those people who do not hold any religious beliefs. Secularists care deeply about moral issues from a nonreligious standpoint. We believe in the good that is inherent in human beings and in the right to have free choice in the major decisions we all must make during our lifetime.

Secularists believe that this is the only life we have and that humanity must find solutions to problems from within ourselves and not rely on supernatural beliefs to provide and supply easy answers.

We now come to our first reading by Rita's sister the delectable Valerie to read 'Acknowledgement' by A.S.J. Tessement.

VALERIE. (Reading) 'Acknowledgement' by A.S.J. Tessement.

JOE.

Thank you, Valerie.

Marriage is a desire by two people to share themselves and experience with each other and a willingness to accept each other for what they are. Marriage means making a commitment to developing cooperation, friendship and mutual respect. It calls for honesty patience and, of course, humour. Marriage is where partners each care for the other and support them in all they do. Marriage demands courage. Courage to be open, the courage to grow, the courage to change, the courage to sort out together the tasks of daily living. Marriage requires closeness and distance. Closeness to be with each other and distance to allow each one to be an individual. A good partner in such a marriage will be a loving and caring partner and, above all, a best friend.

Marriage joins two people who trust the love they have found. It is a statement to

all those around them about what both of them already know, namely that they have found such love that they wish to share for the rest of their lives. Our marriage ceremony provides an opportunity to bring both families together in one place to impart this message of love and commitment and for everyone to celebrate the happiness of the married couple. Hendrick and Rita both feel that the closeness of all of us here today, their family and friends, is essential to happy life. In the years ahead as they adapt to changing circumstances it is you, the special people here today, that they will come to for support for council and for company. The following short sentence sums up what a loving partnership is all about, - 'to love a person is to learn the song that is in their hearts and to sing that song when they have forgotten'.

We come to our second reading. Hendrick's uncle Charlie will now read from Captain Corelli's Mandolin by Louis de Bernier.

CHARLIE. (Reading) from Captain Corelli's Mandolin by Louis de Bernier

JOE

Thank you, Uncle Charlie.

This is the point which is the central part of our ceremony where Hendrick and Rita will formally state their commitment to their future together.

Hendrick, please repeat after me;

(HENDRICK REPEATS AS REQUIRED)

'Rita, I invite you to share my life, - as I hope to share yours. - To share in your joys and sorrows. - To give help when you need it and to ask for help when in need. - I will try to bring you happiness and laughter throughout your life. - Whatever our futures may hold. '

JOE.

Rita, will you repeat after me?

(RITA REPEATS AS REQUIRED)

'Hendrick, I invite you to share my life, - as I hope to share yours. - To sharing your joys and sorrows. - To give help when you need it and to ask for help when in need. - I will try to bring you happiness and laughter throughout your life. - Whatever our futures may hold.

We now come to the exchange of ring which is the traditional way of sealing the vows you have just made. The wedding ring is an unbroken circle symbolising an unbroken and unending love and it is the outward sign of an unending promise made to each other. Graham, will you please hand Rita's ring to Hendrick?

Hendrick, please repeat after me.

(HENDRICK REPEATS AS REQUIRED)

'Rita, I give you this ring as a symbol of my love. - Wear it with happiness and pride - now and forever.'

Graham, will you please now hand Hendrick's ring to Rita.

'Rita, will you please repeat after me?

(RITA REPEATS AS REQUIRED)

'Hendrick, I give you this symbol of my love. - Wear it with happiness and pridenow and forever.'

(At this point in a legal ceremony Joe will include the following wording which is a legal requirement at these ceremonies;

JOE.

"I will now ask you to accept one and other as husband and wife by repeating the required declaration after me.

Henrick, will you please make this declaration to your bride. 'I solemnly and sincerely declare that I, Henrick Larsen, accept you, Rita Cochrane, as my lawful wedded wife to the exclusion of all others.' (Henrick repeats as required.)

IOF

Rita, will you please make this declaration to your groom. 'I solemnly and sincerely declare that I, Rita Cochrane, accept you Henrick Larsen as my lawful wedded husband to the exclusion of all others.' (Rita repeats as required).

JOE

Following the declarations made before me in the presence of these witnesses, it is my pleasant duty Henrick and Rita to declare you husband and wife.

Henrick and Rita are now going to sign the marriage schedule which will be witnessed by - Best man, Graham and bridesmaid, Valerie. (Signing of marriage schedule accompanired by background music. The ceremony continues as follows.)

(JOE) Rita and Hendrick have affirmed their desire to live together in lifelong partnership and this has been symbolised by their exchange of rings and has been witnessed by all of us here today. I now declare you husband and wife. Congratulations to both of you.

You may now wish to embrace and kiss. (THE KISS)

From the two lit candles, Rita and Hendrick will now light a third candle to symbolise the joining of their lives.

(A THIRD CANDLE IS LIT FROM THE OTHER TWO)

The three lit candles are a symbol of their togetherness and also a symbol of their continuing individuality.

We now come to third reading. Hendrick's equally delectable sister Sophia, will read 'Celebration '

SOPHIA. (Reading) Celebration.

JOE.

Thank you Sophia.

Hendrick and Rita, we all wish you the greatest happiness in your lives together and these wishes can all be summed in the words of this traditional native Canadian wedding ceremony;

May the sun bring you new energies by day.

May the moon softly restore you by night.

May the rain wash away any worries you may have
And the breeze blow new strength into your veins
And, in the end, for all the days of your life
May you walk gently through the world
And know it beauty is yours,

And may your days be good and long upon this earth.

The strength and the confidence of Rita and Hendrick's long term commitment to each other can be gauged by the fact that they chose to get married in the afternoon thus choosing to ignore the infamous Zsa Zsa Gabor's advice, (ASIDE) as most of the older one's here today will know, Zsa Zsa had about 14 husbands over the years. The bold Zsa Zsa said, "You should always get married in the morning, that way if it doesn't work out you haven't wasted the whole day."

Friends we are nearing the end of our ceremony. Our loving couple have conveniently provided a guest book and left a number of instant photo cameras

around. They would be delighted if you could take your own picture and include it in the guest book with any comments and best wishes you might like to make in commemoration of this very special day. There is champagne and shortbread available in the next room straight after this ceremony.

Rita and Hendrick, you came here today to pledge your future to each other and to declare the love that you share in front of your family and friends. May the strength of this love help you both to realise success in your future lives together. We shall all treasure the memory and the happiness of this special day. Our wishes are for the happiness to go with you both into your future together. May life smile on you both and may you achieve fulfilment in your partnership. It only remains for me to say, - let the festivities begin.

Thank you.

PROSE AND POETRY FOR WEDDINGS AND MARRIAGES.

Think of a six figure number – that is the very minimum of love poems you will find on the shelves of your local book stores. It won't take you long to build up your own collection. Most couples who want to be married will have their own ideas about what they want to say. Material for weddings isn't a problem. The problem is in deciding what to leave out.

See also 'Partnership Ceremonies' and 'Restatement of Vows Ceremonies'.

ON YOUR WEDDING DAY

Today is a day you will always remember The greatest in anyone's life, You'll start off the day just two people in love And end it as Husband and Wife. It's a brand new beginning, the start of a journey With moments to cherish and treasure, And although there'll be times when you both disagree These will surely be outweighed by pleasure. You'll have heard many words of advice in the past When the secrets of marriage were spoken, But you know that the answers lie hidden inside Where the bond of true love lies unbroken. So live happy forever as lovers and friends It's the dawn of a new life for you, As you stand there together with love in your eyes From the moment you whisper 'I do'. And with luck, all your hopes, and your dreams can be real May success find it's way to your hearts,

Tomorrow can bring you the greatest of joys But today is the day it all starts. Author Unknown

WHAT IS LOVE

Sooner or later we begin to understand that love is more than verses on valentines and romance in the movies. We begin to know that love is here and now, real and true, the most important thing in our lives. For love is the creator of our favourite memories and the foundation of our fondest dreams. Love is a promise that is always kept, a fortune that can never be spent, a seed that can flourish in even the most unlikely of places. And this radiance that never fades, this mysterious and magical joy, is the greatest treasure of all - one known only by those who love.

Author unknown

ON LOVE

When love beckons to you, follow him,
Though his ways are hard and steep.
And when his wings enfold you, yield to him,
Though the sword hidden among his pinions may wound you.
Love has no other desire but to fulfil itself.
But if you love and must needs have desires,
Let these be your desires:
To melt and be like a running brook
That sings its melody to the night.
To know the pain of too much tenderness.
To be wounded by your own understanding of love;
And to bleed willingly and joyfully.
To wake at dawn with a winged heart

And give thanks for another day of loving; To rest at the noon hour and meditate love's ecstasy; To return home at eventide with gratitude; And then to sleep With a joy for the beloved in your heart And a song of praise upon your lips. Kahlil Gibran

ON MARRIAGE

Love one another, but make not a bond of love: Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your spirits. Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another your bread but eat not from the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone. Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping. For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts. And stand together yet not too near together: For the pillars of the temple stand apart, And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow. Kahlil Gibran

MY LOVE IS LIKE A RED, RED ROSE

My love is like a red, red rose. That's newly sprung in June: My love is like the melodie, That's sweetly played in tune. As fair art thou, my bonnie lass, So deep in love am I; And I will love thee still, my Dear,

Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my Dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
And I will love thee still, my Dear,
While the sands of life shall run.
And fare-thee-well, my only Love!
And fare-thee-well a while!
And I will come again, my Love,
Tho' 'twere ten thousand mile
Robert Burns

THE CONFIRMATION

Yes, yours, my love, is the right human face. I in my mind have waited for this long, Seeing the false and searching for the true, Then found you as a traveller finds a place Of welcome suddenly among the wrong Valleys and rocks and twisting roads. But you, What shall I call you? A fountain in a waste, A well of water in a country dry, Or anything that's honest and good, an eye That makes the whole world bright. Your open heart, Simple with giving, gives the primal deed, The first good world, the blossom, the blowing seed, The hearth, the steadfast land, the wandering sea, Not beautiful or rare in every part, But like yourself, as they were meant to be. Edwin Muir

THESE I CAN PROMISE

I cannot promise you a life of sunshine;
I cannot promise riches, wealth, or gold;
I cannot promise you an easy pathway
That leads away from change or growing old.

But I can promise all my heart's devotion;
A smile to chase away your tears of sorrow;
A love that's ever true and ever growing;
A hand to hold in yours through each tomorrow.

Unknown author

THE UNION OF YOU AND ME

It is for the union of you and me
that there is light in the sky.

It is for the union of you and me
that the earth is decked in dusky green.

It is for the union of you and me
that night sits motionless with the world in her arms;
dawn appears, opening the eastern door
with sweet murmurs in her voice.

The boat of hope sails along
on the currents of eternity towards that union,
flowers of the age are being gathered
together for its welcoming ritual.

It is for the union of you and me

that this heart of mine, in the garb of a bride,
has proceeded from birth to birth
upon the surface of this ever-turning world
to choose the beloved.

Rabindranath Tagore

TRUE LOVE

True Love is a sacred flame that burns eternally

And none can dim its special glow or change its destiny.

True Love speaks in tender tones and hears with gentle ear,

True Love gives with open heart and True Love conquers fear.

True Love makes no harsh demands,

It neither rules nor binds,

And True Love holds, with gentle hands, the hearts that it entwines.

Unknown author

Love is not all: it is not meat or drink
nor slumber nor a roof against the rain
or yet a floating spar to men that sink
and rise and sink and rise and sink again;
Love cannot fill the thickened lung with breath
nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone;
Yet many a man is making friends with death,
even as I speak, for lack of love alone.
It well may be that in a difficult hour,
pinned down by the pain and moaning for release
or nagged by want past resolution's power,
I might be driven to sell your love for peace,
or trade the memory of this day for food.
It well may be. I do not think I would.
Edna St Vincent Millay

VALENTINE

The things about you I appreciate May seem indelicate; I'd like to find you in the shower And chase the soap for half an hour. I'd like to have you in my power And see your eyes dilate. I'd like to have your back to scour And other parts to lubricate. Sometimes I feel it is my fate To chase you screaming up a tower Or make you cower By asking you to differentiate Nietzsche from Schopenhauer. I'd like successfully to guess your weight And win you in a fete. I'd like to offer you a flower. I like the hair upon your shoulders, Falling like water over boulders. I like your shoulders, too; they are essential. Your collar-bones have great potential (I'd like all your particulars in a folder Marked Confidential.)

I like your cheeks, I like your nose,
I like the way your lips disclose
The neat arrangement of your teeth
(Half above and half beneath)
In rows.

I like your eyes, I like their fringes.

The way they focus on me gives me twinges.

Your upper arms drive me berserk.

I like the way your elbows work,

On hinges.

I like your wrists, I like your glands,
I like the fingers on your hands.
I'd like to teach them how to count,
And certain things we might exchange,
Something familiar for something strange.
I'd like to give you just the right amount
And get some change.

I like it when you tilt your cheek up.

I like the way you nod and hold a teacup.

I like your legs when you unwind them.

Even in trousers I don't mind them.

I like each softly-moulded kneecap,

I like the little crease behind them.

I'd always know, without a recap,

Where to find them

I like the sculpture of your ears.

I like the way your profile disappears

Whenever you decide to turn and face me.

I'd like to cross two hemispheres

And have you chase me.

I'd like to smuggle you across frontiers

Or sail with you at night into Tangiers.

I'd like you to embrace me.

I'd like to see you ironing your skirt

And cancelling other dates.

I'd like to button up your shirt.

I love the way your chest inflates.

I'd like to soothe you when you're hurt

Or frightened senseless by invertebrates.

I'd like you even if you were malign
And had a taste for sudden homicide.
I'd let you put insecticide
Into my wine.

I'd even like you if you were the bride of Frankenstein
Or something ghoulish out of Mamoulian's Jekyll and Hyde.
I'd even like you as my Julian
Of Norwich or Cathleen in Houlihan
How melodramatic
If you were something muttering in attics
Like Mrs Rochester or a student of Boolean mathematics.

You are the end of my self-abuse.

Your are the eternal feminine.

I'd like to find a good excuse

To call you and find you in.

I'd like to put my hand beneath your chin
And see you grin.
I'd like to taste your Charlotte Russe,
I'd like to feel my lips on your skin,
I'd like to make you reproduce.

I'd like you in my confidence.
I'd like to be your second look.
I'd like to let you try the French Defence
And mate with you to be my rook.
I'd like to be your preference
And hence
I'd like to be around when you unhook.
I'd like to be your only audience,
The final name in your appointment book,
Your future tense.

John Fuller
(This very light hearted verse can be cut back and still retain its humour)

O TELL ME THE TRUTH ABOUT LOVE Some say that love's a little boy, And some say it's a bird, Some say it makes the world go round, And some say that's absurd, And when I asked the man next-door, Who looked as if he knew, His wife got very cross indeed, And said it wouldn't do. Does it look like a pair of pyjamas, Or the ham in a temperance hotel? Does its odour remind one of llamas, Or has it a comforting smell? Is it prickly to touch as a hedge is, Or soft as eiderdown fluff? Is it sharp or quite round at the edges?

O tell me the truth about love. Our history books refer to it In cryptic little notes. It's quite a common topic on The Transatlantic boats; I've found the subject mentioned in Accounts of suicides, And even seen it scribbled on The backs of railway guides. Does it howl like a hungry Alsatian, Or boom like a military band? Could one give a first-rate imitation On the saw or a Steinway Grand? Is its singing at parties a riot? Does it only like Classical stuff? Will it stop when one wants to be quiet? O tell me the truth about love. I looked inside the summer-house; It wasn't ever there: I tried the Thames at Maidenhead, And Brighton's bracing air. I don't know what the blackbird sang, Or what the tulip said; But it wasn't in the chicken-run, Or underneath the bed. Can it pull extraordinary faces? Is it usually sick on a swing? Does it spend all its time at the races, Or fiddling with pieces of string? Has it views of it's own about money? Does it think Patriotism enough?

Are its stories vulgar but funny? O tell me the truth about love. When it comes, will it come without warning Just as I'm picking my nose? Will it knock on my door in the morning, Or tread in the bus on my toes? Will it come like a change in the weather? Will its greeting be courteous or rough? Will it alter my life altogether? O tell me the truth about love. W H Auden

I WILL BE HERE If in the morning when you wake, If the sun does not appear, I will be here. If in the dark we lose sight of love, Hold my hand and have no fear. I will be here.

I will be here, When you feel like being quiet, When you need to speak your mind I will listen. Through the winning, losing, and trying we'll be together, And I will be here. If in the morning when you wake, If the future is unclear, I will be here.

As sure as seasons were made for change,

Our lifetimes were made for years,

I will be here.

I will be here,
And you can cry on my shoulder,
When the mirror tells us we're older.
I will hold you, to watch you grow in beauty,
And tell you all the things you are to me.
We'll be together and I will be here.
I will be true to the promises I've made,
To you and to the one who gave you to me.
I will be here.

Steven Curtis Chapman

THOUGHTS ON MARRIAGE BY AN AMERICAN SECULAR WRITER

A successful marriage is one where each partner discovers that it is better to give love than to receive it. To truly love another person is to wish that person to develop and flourish in his or her own terms.

In a long marriage there will be joy and laughter, but also sadness and sorrow, harmony and discord, as you strive to overcome adversity and fulfil your dreams.

The key value of wedlock is that it allows for intimacy between a woman and a man, who can enjoy each other's company, share ideals and expectations, confess failures and admit defeats to each other, and yet realise in union the qualities of the good life.

As you build your home, embark upon careers, and raise a family, your marriage can become a work of art in which both of you together give it line and form, colour and tone. You will be challenged every day and in every way to make your marriage work. If you do, it can become a thing of beauty, a joint creation of aesthetic splendour and enduring value.

Paul Kurtz

FROM THE JEWISH MARRIAGE CEREMONY

In this place, In this period of quietness, Let us all think for a moment Of [Nathan] and [Rachel]. This is a new beginning for them, With all their hopes and dreams of love. May these hopes and dreams be realised. May they believe in each other; May they be devoted to each other; May the warmth of their love for each other, In the kindness of their home, Allow them to be charitable To others as well as themselves. Through their years together, May their love grow and deepen Through giving, each to the other. May they learn the great joy That comes from sharing.

[May be followed by a period of silent reflection)

TO KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE BRIMMING

To keep your marriage brimming,
With love in the loving cup,
Whenever you're wrong, admit it;
Whenever you're right, shut up.
Ogden Nash

AT THE END OF A WEDDING CEREMONY
AN AMERICAN WELL-WISHING
("THE BLESSING OF THE APACHES")

(CELEBRANT)

May the sun bring you new happiness by day;
May the moon softly restore you by night.

May the rain wash away any worries you may have
And the breezes blow new strength into your being.

And then, all the days of you life,

May you walk gently through the world

And know its beauty.

[CELEBRANT AND ALL GUESTS]

Now you will feel no rain,

For each of you will be shelter for the other.

Now you will feel no cold,

For each of you will be warmth to the other.

Now you will feel no more loneliness,

For each of you will be companion to the other.

Now you are two persons,

But there is only one life before you.

Go now to your dwelling, To enter into the days of your life together. And may your days be good and long upon the Earth.

> Native American Traditional (From other sources as well as Apache)

[Second verse can also be used on its own]

A CELTIC WELL-WISHING

The peace of the running water to you, The peace of the flowing air to you, The peace of the quiet earth to you, The peace of the shining stars to you, And the love and the care of us all to you. Traditional

Leo Marks

A CODE POEM FOR THE FRENCH RESISTANCE

The life that I have is all that I have And the life that I have is yours The love that I have of the life that I have Is yours and yours and yours. A sleep I shall have A rest I shall have Yet death will be but a pause, For the peace of my years in the long green grass Will be yours and yours and yours.

TRIBAL WISH OF THE IROQUOIS INDIAN

May you have a safe tent
And no sorrow as you travel.

May happiness attend you in all your paths.

May you keep a heart like the morning,
And may you come slow to the four comers

Where man says goodnight.

Author Unknown

APACHE BLESSING (Solo version extended)

Now you will feel no rain, for each of you will be shelter for each other.

Now you will feel no cold, for each of you will be the warmth for the other.

Now you are two persons, but there is only one life before.

Go now to your dwelling place to enter into the days

of your life together.

And may your days be good and long upon the earth.

Treat yourselves and each other with respect, and remind yourselves often of what brought you together.

Give the highest priority to the tenderness, gentleness and kindness that your connection deserves.

When frustration, difficulty and fear assail your relationship - as they threaten all relationships at one time or another - remember to focus on what is right between you, not only the part which seems wrong. In this way, you can ride out the storms when clouds hide the face of the sun in your lives - remembering that even if you lose sight of it

for a moment, the sun is still there.

And if each of you takes responsibility for the quality of your life together, it will be marked by abundance and delight.

Author Unknown

ONLY OUR LOVE

Only our love hath no decay;
This, no tomorrow hath, nor yesterday,
Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keeps his first, last, everlasting day
John Donne (1572-163 I)

EXTRACT FROM LINES COMPOSED A

FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY

The best portion of a good man's life, is

His little, nameless, unremembered acts,

Of kindness and of love.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

LOVE IS ENOUGH

Love is enough: though the World be a-waning,

And the woods have no voice but the voice of complaining,

Though the sky be too dark for dim eyes to discover

The gold-cups and daisies fair blooming thereunder,

Though the hills be held shadows, and the sea a dark wonder

And this day draw a veil over all deeds pass'd over,

Yet their hands shall not tremble, their feet shall not falter;

The void shall not weary, the fear shall not alter

These lips and these eyes of the loved and the lover.

William Morris (1834-1896)

A WALLED GARDEN

'Your marriage', he said, 'Should have within it

A secret and protected place, open to you alone.

Imagine it to be a walled garden.

Entered by a door to which only you have the key.

Within this garden you will cease to be a mother,
father, employee,

Homemaker or any other roles which you fulfil in daily life.

Here you are yourselves, two people who love each other.

Here you can concentrate on one another's needs.

So take my hand and let us go back to our garden.

The time we spend together is not wasted but invested.

Invested in our future and the nurture of our love.'

Author Unknown

(UNTITLED)

The minute I heard my first love story I started looking for you, not knowing how blind that was.

Lovers don't finally meet somewhere. They're in each other all along.

Rumi(I207-I273)

THE DAY

May this be the start of a happy new life that's full of special moments to share

May this be the first of your dreams come true and of hope that will always be there...

May this be the start of a lifetime of trust and of caring that's just now

begun...

May today be a day that you'll always remember the day when your hearts become one...

Author Unknown

WEDDING DAY

Now comes the knitting, the tying, the entwining into one,
Mysterious involvement of two, whole separate people
Into something altogether strange and changing and lovely.
Nothing can ever be, we will never be the same again;
Not merged into each other irrevocably but rather
From now on we go the same way, in the same direction,
Agreeing not to leave each other lonely, or discouraged or behind,
I will do my best to keep my promises to you and keep you warm;
And we will make our wide bed beneath the bright and ragged quilt
Of all the yesterdays that make us who we are,
The strengths and frailties we bring to this marriage,
And we will be rich indeed.

Author Unknown

EXTRACT FROM THE VELVETEEN RABBIT

'What is REAL?' asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nona came to tidy the room. 'Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?' 'Real isn't how you are made,' said the Skin Horse. 'It's a thing that happens to you. When someone loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.'

'Does it hurt?' asked the Rabbit.

'Sometimes,' said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. 'When you are Real you don't mind being hurt.'

'Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,' he asked, 'or bit by bit?' 'It doesn't happen all at once' said the Skin Horse. 'You become.

It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in your joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand.' 'I suppose you are real?' said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse might be sensitive. But the Skin Horse only smiled.

'Someone made me Real,' he said. 'That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always.'

Margery Williams (1881-1944)

MARRIAGE ADVICE

Let your love be stronger than your hate or anger.

Learn the wisdom of compromise, for it is better to bend a little than to break.

Believe the best rather than the worst.

People have a way of living up or down to your opinion of them.

Remember that true friendship is the basis for any lasting relationship.

The person you choose to marry is deserving of the courtesies and kindnesses you bestow on your friends.

Please hand this down to your children and your children's children.

Jane Wells (1886)

OUR FAMILY

Our family is a circle of love and strength.

With every birth and every union, the circle grows.

Every joy shared adds more love.

Every obstacle faced together makes the circle stronger.

Author unknown

TRUE LOVE

Love means caring and understanding,
It means sharing wonderful, tender and precious moments,
Sharing the memories that are so much the part of a loving relationship.
Love gives life a very special happiness.
This is your day, the beginning of a new life,
A life you will share together
The beginning of new dreams,
Dreams you hope will come true,
The beginning of love that will grow deeper with the years,
This is your day - and you will remember it forever.
Author unknown

I CARRY YOUR HEART WITH ME

I carry your heart with me (I carry it in my heart)

I am never without it (anywhere I go you go, my dear; and whatever is done by only me is your doing, my darling)

I fear no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet)

I want no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)

And you are whatever a moon has always meant and whatever a sun will always sing is you.

Here is the deepest secret nobody knows

Here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud

And the sky of the sky of a tree called life

Which grows higher than the spirit can hope or mind can hide

And this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

I carry your heart (I carry it in my heart)

E.E. Cummings

CELEBRATION

I Will bring you a whole person

And you will bring me a whole person

And we will have twice as much of love and everything

I be bringing a whole heart

And while it do have nicks and dents and scars,

That only make me lay it down more careful like.

An you be bringing a whole heart

A little chipped and rusty and

Sometime skip a beat but

Still an' all you bringing polish too

And look like you intended to make it shine

And we be bringing, each of us

The music of ourselves to wrap the other in forgiving clarities

Soft as a choir's last lingering note

Our personal blend

I will be bringing you someone whole

And you will be bringing me someone whole

And we will be twice as strong

And we will be twice as true

And we will have twice as much of love

And everything.

Author unknown

ENDNOTE.

There are many similar ceremonies that can be approached in much the same manner as you would approach a marriage or wedding ceremony;

<u>Betrothal or engagement ceremony.</u> When couples become engaged to be married, it isn't unusual for them to want to mark the occasion with a celebration or a ceremony.

<u>Handfasting</u>. This is an old Celtic tradition where the symbolism used isn't rings but a fastening of the couple at the wrist by a length of cloth, generally clan plaid, or something similar. The intention is to witness the consent of a couple to cohabit for a period of time, generally a year, before they decide to marry. It is highly unlikely to arise except in Celtic cultures and even then, it is still quite rare.

6.

PARTNERSHIP CEREMONIES.

SOMETIMES CALLED, 'AFFIRMATION CEREMONES'.

Did you know that partnership vows aren't the same as marriage vows? Of course you did. Partnership vows can be every bit as strong and committed as marriage vows but devoid of the legal niceties. ceremony however, is fairly much the same without the 'I now pronounce you husband and wife...' bit. It has the same sense of personal commitment; it has the same degree of dignity; it has the same loving feel about it; and it is the same very personal ceremony tailored to a unique couple relationship. However, in some cases, especially in same sex partnership commitments, there is an element of 'statement' which a marriage ceremony doesn't have. The statement being made usually emerges as a direct challenge to accepted norms, or as a means of allowing a couple to express love and devotion to each other outside the precincts of a legal framework, which some see as not only irrelevant, but downright insulting. It isn't always like this, of course, since the cohabitation culture has now become perfectly acceptable within much of our present day society and couples will simply want to publicly state their love for, and devotion to, each other in public.

The guidelines and check list given for weddings should generally be followed. The legal position will be very different.

SAMPLE SCRIPT 1.

This script is for an affirmation, or partnership, ceremony between two men. It is based on a script by Robin Wood, who based it on a script by ... who based it on a script by... The point is that we copy basic scripts from each other – as all Secular celebrants do, and we keep adding and changing bits here and there until an almost perfect script is developed. This script has a bit of a way to go but, as it stands, it is very practical. What will eventually develop is a number of scripts based on this one. Each celebrant will find his or her own 'voice' and this will lead to the kind of script that suits the celebrant's particular presentational skills.

You will note a couple of obvious things. Firstly, the friends who act as witnesses are, in fact, each a sister of the two men who are the subjects of the ceremony. There were about twenty guests present including all the members of their respective families who were able to attend. Secondly, the use of cards for the actual words of commitment. Usually the couple are simply asked to 'repeat after me'. There is no particular reason for using cards in preference to repeating the chosen words after the celebrant.

SECULAR HUMANIST AFFIRMATION CEREMONY FOR GREGORY CONNEL AND ROBERT McDADE HELD IN THEIR HOME AT 75, HEATHFIELD TERRACE, EDINBURGH. WITNESSED BY SHIELA BROWN AND GEMMA McDADE.

(CELEBRANT.) We are here today for the dedication of Gregory and Robert to each other. This will be a non religious ceremony of affirmation conducted under the auspices of the Secular philosophy which states, as one of its prime principles, that all human beings are of equal worth without reference to race, creed, sexual orientation or any other grounds whatsoever. We are all members of the human community with the same need for love, care, respect and affection.

It is especially important that this principle is recognised in a close and loving relationship between two people. In all cases, if a relationship is to be fulfilling and enduring, it must be a co-operative venture, based on love, respect and a determination by each partner to recognise and adjust to the other's needs, temperament and moods.

For this reason, we are here today to witness this solemn declaration Robert and Gregory will make to each other to form a loving and lasting relationship. It will be carried out in the manner of the old Scottish tradition of marriage by declaration. Try to imagine me, if you can, as the old blacksmith at my anvil. Not only do I form firm bonds of metal but also the firm bonds of marriage in the old tried and tested ways. Although these promises may have no legal standing in modern law, to Robert and

Gregory, their love is far more binding than any arbitrary, man made laws.

The commitment of Robert and Gregory to one another has grown over the past five years, so firstly, this ceremony is to affirm what they have already established together and, looking ahead to their new home in Falkirk, we wish them continued happiness and fulfilment together in the future.

When two people openly and sincerely declare their affection for each other, they are reaffirming the truth that love is the foundation of human life. Love is the wish of the whole self to unite with another to achieve personal fulfilment. Enriched by this love, nature yields tenderness, togetherness, simplicity, honesty and delight.

Before I ask Robert and Gregory to make their declarations to one another, I shall read a well known poem which is especially relevant today.

SONNET 116 by Shakespeare.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments. Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove;

O, no! — it is an ever fixed mark,

That looks on tempests and is never shaken.

It is the star to every wandering barque,

Whose worth's unknown, although its height be taken.

Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks

Within his bending sickle's compass come;

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error, and upon me proved,

I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

(TO SHEILA AND GEMMA) Robert and Gregory want you to witness the promises they make to one another, and to add your signatures to this certificate as a permanent record of today's ceremony and your presence here.

(TO ROBERT AND GREGORY) Robert and Gregory will you please now hold hands.

Do you both aspire to love one another and to live together in a spirit of tolerance, mutual support and concern for each other's well-being, sharing your responsibilities, sharing your problems and your joys?

(ROBERT AND GREGORY TOGETHER) We do.

(CELEBRANT) I now ask you each in turn to speak in truth to one another and before all these people and to pronounce the words of solemn declaration that voluntarily bind you together.

(CARDS HANDED TO ROBERT AND GREGORY)

(CELEBRANT) Robert, will you now say the words printed on the card.

(ROBERT) I want it known that I, Robert McDade, take you, Gregory Connel, to be my life's partner, and I do solemnly and sincerely promise from this day forward to cherish, love and comfort you in sickness and in health, in joy and in sadness, in good times and in bad times, for the rest of my life.

(CELEBRANT) Gregory, will you now say the words printed on the card.

(GREGORY) I want it known that I, Gregory Connel, take you, Robert

McDade, to be my life's partner, and I do solemnly and sincerely promise from this day forward to cherish, love and comfort you in sickness and in health, in joy and in sadness, in good times and in bad times, for the rest of my life.

(CELEBRANT) Will the two of you now join hands and repeat after me this solemn oath;

We, Robert and Gregory - have openly declared our love for one and other - in the presence of these witnesses - and do pledge ourselves to each other - from this day forward - as long as we both shall live.

(ROBERT AND GREGORY REPEAT AS REQUIRED)

(CELEBRANT) Robert and Gregory will now exchange rings as tangible and lasting symbols of their commitment to one another. Each ring is an unbroken circle symbolising unending love. Each ring is made of gold symbolising the value of their relationship. Each ring will be worn permanently, symbolising the everyday nature of their relationship.

(CELEBRANT, HANDING RING TO ROBERT) Robert, say after me as you place the ring on Gregory's finger.

Gregory, I give you this ring as a symbol of my everlasting love. (ROBERT REPEATS)

(CELEBRANT, HANDING RING TO GREGORY) Gregory, say after me as you place the ring on Robert's finger.

Robert, I give you this ring as a symbol of my everlasting love. (GREGORY REPEATS)

(CELEBRANT) You may now kiss.

(THE KISS)

Robert and Gregory, on behalf of us all gathered here today, we offer you our sincere good wishes. May life smile upon you; may you achieve fulfilment in your life together; may you have joy and give joy; and may your home be a source of strength and happiness to yourselves and others.

We will now conclude this simple, heartfelt and very loving ceremony by signing the certificate as a permanent record of this occasion and as a reminder to Robert and Gregory of their promises to each other.

(THE CERTIFICATE IS SIGNED BYTHE CELEBRANT, ROBERT, GREGORY, SHEILA AND GEMMA)

(APPLAUSE STARTED BY CELEBRANT AT THE FINAL SIGNATURE)

SAMPLE SCRIPT 2.

This script was prepared by Gerrie Douglas-Scott and it really requires very little comment.

I must express my thanks to the participants who were kind enough to give their permission to use this virtually as it was written. The names have been changed but otherwise it remains, with a couple of very minor changes, the same, well crafted, well balanced and carefully structured ceremony we have come to expect from Gerrie.

The symbolism of candles as well as rings is explained at the beginning of the piece and an explanation of the ceremony is given before the ceremony proper begins.

The Wedding of

Paul and Colin

27th November 2004

Dundee

INTRODUCTION and NOTES FOR THE CEREMONY.

Music: Evergreen

Entry: Colin and Kerry enter followed by Paul and Susan.

Gerrie: Welcome to everyone and Introduction (to who I am and why we are here) and that Kerry and Susan are here to show their support for Colin and Paul's relationship and wedding.

Lighting of separate candles

Gerrie to explain the lighting of the separate candles, symbolising your separate lives at the moment. The large candle is lit after your exchange of rings.

Why do Paul and Colin want this Secular ceremony for their relationship?

- 1 To show how much they love each other, to share with the people closest to them and to confirm their commitment to each other.
- 2 To celebrate their strong relationship, each other is enough. What they have faced together has made them strong.
- 3 How, although they haven't been together for what some people might consider

a very long time, they both knew that they had something strong enough to overcome any obstacles. From the day they met they knew they had a lot in common and this proved to be the basis for a very strong relationship, as partners and friends.

Some words on LOVE: what it means, how it is expressed in words, gestures, day to day living, in music and poetry and in the little things that they do for each other.

CEREMONY BEGINS.

READING

Kerry (long time friend of Colin and now a close friend of Paul)

TRUE LOVE

Love means caring and understanding,
It means sharing wonderful, tender and precious moments,
Sharing the memories that are so much the part of a loving relationship.
Love gives life a very special happiness.
This is your day, the beginning of a new life,
A life you will share together
The beginning of new dreams,
Dreams you hope will come true,
The beginning of love that will grow deeper with the years,
This is your day - and you will remember it forever.

Gerrie. In her groundbreaking research into the experience of being in love, Dorothy Tennov writes: "Love enters your life pleasantly. Someone takes on a special meaning. You suddenly feel a sparkle of interest in

somebody else, an interest fed by the image of returned feeling. Maybe the eyes lock. The beginning is a transformation that is sometimes so distinct that the French use the term 'coup de foudre', or thunderbolt - a state of consciousness that, if experienced for the first time, is utterly unlike anything else that has ever happened."

READING

Susan (good friend of Paul for several years and now a close friend of Colin)

E.E. Cummings - I Carry Your Heart With Me

I carry your heart with me (I carry it in my heart)

I am never without it (anywhere I go you go, my dear; and whatever is done by only me is your doing, my darling)

I fear no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet)

I want no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)

And you are whatever a moon has always meant and whatever a sun will always sing is you

Here is the deepest secret nobody knows

Here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud

And the sky of the sky of a tree called life

Which grows higher than the spirit can hope or mind can hide

And this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

I carry your heart (I carry it in my heart)

The time has now come for Paul and Colin to make their vows to each other. They will now read out some words they have written for each other.

Colin then Paul (words written by themselves)

Colin: Paul, from the first day I met you I knew I liked you and had feelings for you and everyday they grow stronger. I love you Paul with all my heart and spirit. I give you this through all our lives together, through good and bad, no matter what. But the best thing I could ever give you is me – and the love I have for you. I show this by giving you this ring to show the commitment and love I have for you.

Paul: Never in my life have I felt so comfortable and at ease with someone after knowing them for just one day. But when I met you, I knew that I had met someone who I could share my life with. We've had our ups and downs and we've come through them and are much stronger now than I could have imagined. I'm grateful to have you in my life Colin and I hope and aspire to make you as happy as you've made me. I love you with all my heart and thank you for being part of my life.

VOWS (repeated after Gerrie)

Colin then Paul

I pledge to share our Love together as One.

I love you because you are the only one for me. I promise you love, honesty, commitment and loyalty all my life.

ENDORSING THE RINGS – These rings are an external symbol of the vows that Colin and Paul have made to each other. The circle symbolises their never ending love and commitment.

Placing rings on each other's fingers.

Colin. "Paul, I place this ring on your finger, as a symbol of my never ending love"

Paul. "Colin, I place this ring on your finger, as a symbol of my never ending love"

Gerrie: As a symbol of the oneness they feel, Colin and Paul will light this candle together. The candle's flame symbolises light and warmth (and anything else you suggest). This is what their love and commitment brings to the world.

(Each takes flame from their smaller candle, which they put together, and light one bigger candle on the table.)

Gerrie: I now pronounce that Colin and Paul are one, that they have affirmed their commitment and love to each other and to those that they love.

(The Kiss)

Gerrie:

May the sun bring you new energies by day
May the moon softly restore you by night.
May the rain wash away any worries you may have
And the breeze blow new strength into your being.
And then, all the days of your life,
May you walk gently through the world and know its beauty.

And finally, as these good wishes come from all of us, will you <u>all</u> please repeat after me more words from the same Apache, native American blessing:

Now you will feel no rain / for each of you will be shelter for the other ;/
Now you will feel no cold / for each of you will be warmth to the other /
Now there is no loneliness. /

You are two persons / but there is only one life before you./
Go now to your dwelling to enter into your life together /
And may your days be good and long upon the earth.

The ceremony is now finished. On behalf of Colin and Paul, I thank you for being here to witness the joining and affirming of these two unique people.

We wish you well Colin and Paul, in your life and in your love.

Signing of the partnership certificate to finalise the ceremony.

FLOWERS AND THEIR MEANING.

Bluebell Everlasting love

Carnation Fascination

Chrysanthemum Truth
Daffodil Regard

Daisy Sharing/innocence

Flowering almond Hope

Forget me not Forget me not

White heather Luck

Heliotrope Devotion
Honeysuckle Generosity

Iris Flame
Ivy Fidelity
Japonica Loveliness

Lemon blossom Fidelity in love

Lilac Youthful innocence
Lily Purity/majesty

Lily of the valley Return of happiness

Mimosa Sensitivity

Myrtle Love
Orange blossom Purity

Peach blossom Captive
Pink rose Grace
Red rose Passion

White rose Love and beauty

Rosemary Remembrance

Rosemary Remembrance
Snowdrop Hope

Sweet pea Pleasure
Tulip Love
Veronica Fidelity
Violet Fidelity

POETRY AND PROSE.

Also look under 'Wedding Ceremonies'.

A WHITE ROSE.
The red rose whispers of passion,
And the white rose breathes of love;
O the red rose is a falcon,
And the white rose is a dove.

But I send you a cream-white rosebud
With a flush on its petal tips;
For the love that is purest and sweetest
Has a kiss of desire on the lips.
John Boyle O'Reilly

THE SANE SOCIETY (extract)

Love is union with someone, or something, outside oneself, under the condition of retaining the separateness and integrity of one's own self.

Eric Fromm

I KNEW THAT I HAD BEEN TOUCHED BY LOVE

I knew that I had been touched by love the first time I saw you,
And I felt your warmth, and I heard your laughter.

I knew that I had been touched by love when I was hurting from
Something that happened, and you came along and made the
Hurt go away.

I knew that I had been touched by love when I stopped making

Plans with my friends, And started dreaming dreams with you.

I knew that I had been touched by love when I suddenly stopped Thinking in terms of 'me' and started thinking in terms of 'we'. I knew that I had been touched by love when, suddenly, I couldn't Make decisions for myself anymore, And I had the strong desire to share everything with you. I knew that I had been touched by love the first time we spent Alone together, and I knew I wanted to stay with you forever Because I had never felt this touched by love.

SONNET 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds Admit impediments. Love is not love Which alters when it alteration finds, Or bends with the remover to remove: O, no! - it is an ever fixed mark. That looks on tempests and is never shaken. It is the star to every wandering barque, Whose worth's unknown, although its height be taken. Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks Within his bending sickle's compass come; Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, But bears it out even to the edge of doom. If this be error, and upon me proved, I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

7.

RESTATEMENT OF VOWS.

Becoming ever more popular is the restatement of vows by many long married couples. It can, and frequently does, apply to any long standing relationship whether it be married, same sex or partnership relationships. In these cases the important factor to bear in mind is the original partnership vows taken. Clearly, if the vows were taken in a religious ceremony and the couple want to restate their vows in a nonreligious ceremony then a completely different set of vows should be arranged. However, if the original ceremony was a civil one then there is no reason why the original ceremony shouldn't serve as a template for the arrangement of the renewal ceremony. It gives a place from which to start and it serves to remind people what the purpose of the celebration is.

On the other hand, don't be surprised to find that a long standing couple might want to have a completely different ceremony from their original one because they were very dissatisfied with the original one. In fact, in some cases the whole point of a renewal ceremony is to give the couple the ceremony they themselves might have wanted and not one which was probably arranged by their family. It is important to establish early in the discussion of arrangements, the reason why a couple want a renewal ceremony. Although we classify these ceremonies as 'a restatement of vows', the reality is that rarely are the original vows restated. In nearly every case it is an opportunity for a long married couple to declare to the world that their love has remained strong and will continue to be strong. There is an opportunity to go well beyond the original vows when each

partner declares their love for the other. There is usually an element of thanks and appreciation for the kindness of the years and the children the marriage has produced. It is a sense of pride in an achievement. Don't be afraid to approach a restatement of vows with this in mind.

There is a clear case for including the whole family. Most couples will want to ensure that as many as possible of their progeny participate. Effectively you might end up just being required to link the contributions together. Whatever the ceremony, the participants will have had time to consider carefully just what they want. It is also an opportunity for the children, and sometimes grandchildren, to express their appreciation of their parents and grandparents. You will certainly enjoy preparing the text of a family lovefest, especially if you have children and grandchildren of your own.

CHECK LIST:

- a. Full names of participants.
- b. Venue.
- c. Time and date.
- d. Will a wedding/ceremonies planner be involved?
- e. Main organiser.
- f. Fees, if any.
- g. Dress.
- h. Anticipated number of guests.
- i. Special arrangements.
- j. Copies of all participant's speeches.
- k. Video or filming of the ceremony.
- I. Rehearsal(s).

SAMPLE SCRIPT.

An example of a typical renewal of vows ceremony based on a script by Robin Wood, a veteran of the Secular ceremony.

You will note that Robin has made the ceremony as simple as possible. The symbolism has been confined to lighting candles for each of the two people who are renewing their vows. The lighting of the third candle from each of the other two is a readily identifiable symbol of the meeting of two hearts and minds to kindle one flame of a loving partnership whilst still retaining each partner's individualism. This symbolism can be used in wedding and partnership ceremonies as well.

An important part of the script is the statement of inclusion of the guests who are gathered to witness this loving ceremony.

The family, guided by the experience and knowledge of Robin, has clearly decided on the wording of the ceremony. The Celtic blessing helps to remind the family and guests of the original Irish roots of the Clarke family. The speech by Margaret and Gregory's son, Andrew, has been included as part of the record of the event. It certainly is in keeping with the rest of the ceremony and it is a loving and respectful tribute from the couple's children.

Renewal of Wedding Vows Ceremony.

Margaret and Gregory Clarke.

12th June 2006 at 6.15pm; Carlton Hotel, Philadelphia.

Music by Barry Clarke (son).

Best Man - Allan Bergman.

Matron of Honour - Mandy King Bergman.

Bridesmaid - Hazel Templeton (original 1981 bridesmaid).

Celebrant - Robin Wood.

Entrance of Margaret (on the arm of son Andrew) to music - "My Perfect Love".

ROBIN.

Friends we are gathered here to celebrate and to witness the renewal of their wedding vows by Margaret and Gregory. It will not be a religious occasion, but it will be a solemn and joyous ceremony. Margaret and Gregory have themselves decided how this renewal ceremony should be conducted and have chosen what is to be said and they want you, their friends and family gathered here, to share with them this special occasion.

My name is Robin Wood and, as a member of the Secular Society of Philadelphia, I have been asked by Margaret and Gregory to steer them through today's important event. They have invited us here to be witnesses to their public declaration of love for each other, and to celebrate with them

their continued commitment to each other in marriage.

They recognise marriage as being a co-operative venture. It is a relationship based on love, respect and a determination on the part of both wife and husband to adjust to each other's temperaments and moods whether in health or sickness, joy or sadness, ease or hardship. Together they will find honesty and understanding, and as individuals, they will use those virtues to encourage and support each other's lives, acknowledging that love helps us grow and that our partners can bring out the best in each of us. Add to this a good sense of humour, a sense of perspective and an acceptance of the other's needs for space and individuality, and you have the basis of a good relationship.

I will now invite Margaret and Gregory to each light a candle. This represents their two individual personalities.

They want today to be not just a celebration of their union but also a day to acknowledge their friends: friends that have been there when they needed them, who have carried them through the ups and downs of the years and who will support them now.

Margaret and Gregory will now renew their vows to each other in front of you all. These vows have been chosen by them and represent how they feel towards each other.

Margaret and Gregory - will you seek as mature people to have a loving marriage allowing it and each other to change and develop, supporting each other in happiness and sorrows, health and illness?

MARGARET AND GREGORY:

We will

ROBIN:

Will you seek to trust the ebbs and flows of your love, to offer your love without conditions having faith that it will always return, and understanding that its nature may change?

MARGARET AND GREGORY:

We will

ROBIN:

Will you seek always to learn from your shared experiences, and to build from them a full and caring friendship based on trust and on respect?

MARGARET AND GREGORY:

We will

ROBIN:

Having taken their vows, Margaret and Gregory will now exchange rings.

BEST MAN - ALLAN, BEARING RINGS

MARGARET:

You are the love of my life, my best friend and the father of my sons. Our time together has been precious and I know our future will be too. We only get one life and I am so happy I am sharing mine with you. I wish our parents could be here to share in our happiness but I am sure they are here in spirit, and I know they would be so proud of us and their grandsons. Like

most couples we have shared sad and happy times. But the love and understanding we have of each other has got us through. You were there for me in my time of need. Your love and devotion to me could never be questioned.

Wear this ring as a sign of my love and commitment to you always.

GREGORY:

The first time I saw you I knew you would be my wife. I didn't believe in love at first sight, but I fell in love that evening. We have been through a lot together, sadness and tears and a lot of laughter. We are a couple who like doing simple things, just being in each other's company is enough. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for giving me three wonderful sons, but most of all I want to thank you for being my wife. I am looking forward to sharing the next twenty five years with you. You are a wonderful, caring person who has been my rock all these years. You have guided us through the good and the bad times. We have a lot of happy memories but my happiest ones are the day we married, and being with you at the birth of our sons. I promise I will love you Margaret till the day I die and beyond. Wear this ring as a sign of my love and commitment to you always.

ROBIN:

From the two lighted candles, Margaret and Gregory will now light a third candle to symbolise the joining of their lives. They will try to keep all three candles alight as a symbol of their togetherness and of their continuing individuality.

VERSE BY HAZEL - BRIDESMAID

Margaret and Gregory I know that everyone here will want to join me in offering you our heartfelt good wishes. We wish you luck in the future, but more importantly, we hope that you continue to have love, friendship and trust from one another and that you continue to find strength to put effort into your relationship to keep it blooming and healthy.

As this important ceremony comes to a close, I would like to read the Celtic benediction for the happy couple.

The peace of the running water to you

The peace of the flowing air to you

The peace of the quiet earth to you

The peace of the shining stars to you

And the love and care of us all to you.

Margaret and Gregory I hope that you enjoy the rest of tonight and our best wishes for your future together.

(Exit to music:)

VERSE BY THEIR SON ANDREW

(Silver Wedding Anniversary Speech)

Good afternoon, I don't want to speak for very long this glorious evening but there are some important things I'd like to say.

First of all, congratulations, mum and dad.

25 years of doing anything is quite a long time these days, and 25 years of

happy married life is no small accomplishment. In fact we were seriously considering getting a plaque from the local historic society to put on the Philadelphia wall, where you first met all those years ago.

Seriously though, the love, family life, home and values that you have given us has been a great start in life. Even more so, the love you have for each other sets an example that we will try and follow. Your closeness and obvious friendship for each other highlights the importance in finding the right life partner to go through life with.

In fact I believe one reason people choose to get married is because they've seen people like my parents demonstrate just how well it can work.

I have tried really hard to find a form of words that expresses the feelings that we have for you and I have found 2 short poems that I think captures these emotions very well.

Mum and Dad.

When we think of all the things you do

The ways in which you care

We're filled with a sense of gratitude and pride

That is always there

No matter who or what the situation

No matter what time is on the clock

You're always there to give aid or comfort

You're our magnificent guiding rock.

We seldom take the time to tell you

That we're happy you're our mum and dad,

So we'll tell you now what's in our hearts

You're the best that we could ever have had.

25th Wedding Anniversary.

Of all the anniversaries you are blessed to celebrate
The silver anniversary we must congratulate
You have been through many seasons
And have shared so many years
You have laughed together often
And have dried each others tears
You have kept the solemn promise
Made 25 years ago
And the vows that you have honoured
Have acquired a silver glow
Joy, love and devotion
Are the fruits of being loyal
A life long transformation
Of a marriage blessed and royal

The best thing about celebrations like this, other than the bringing together of family and friends, is that it gives us an opportunity to think about how important people are to us. It is sometimes too easy to take for granted all the small things that get done for us and I would like to take this opportunity

to let Margaret and Gregory, Mum and Dad know that we all realise how lucky we are to have you in our lives.

So once again, congratulations mum and dad. I hope that today gives you a chance to look back on all of the special memories you have gathered over the last 25 years. We love you and look forward to a brilliant day and to getting together again to celebrate your Ruby, Golden and Diamond anniversaries too.

Ladies and gentlemen, please raise your glasses in a toast to my mum and dad.

Poetry and prose.

Also look under 'Wedding Ceremonies' and 'Partnership Ceremonies'.

THE ANNIVERSARY (extract)
All kings and all their favourites,
All glory of honours, beauties, wits,
The sun itself, which makes times, as they pass,
Is elder by a year now that it was
When thou and I first one another saw;
All other things to their destruction draw,
Only our love hath no decay;
This no tomorrow hath, nor yesterday.
Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keeps its first, last, everlasting day.
John Donne

THE DAY I MARRIED MY BEST FRIEND

The day I married my best friend
...the one I laugh with as we share life's wondrous zest,
as we find new enjoyments and experience all that's best.
...the one I live for because the world seems brighter
as our happy times are better and our burdens feel much lighter.
...the one I love with every fibre of my being.
We used to feel vaguely incomplete, now together we are whole.
Anonymous

OUR MOTHER

You are the mother I received
The day I wed your son.
And I want to thank you, mum
For all the things you've done.
You've given me a gracious man
With whom I share my life.
You are his loving mother
And I his lucky wife.

You used to pat his little head,
And now I hold his hand.
You raised in love a little boy
And gave to me a man.

Anon

MY TRUE LOVE HATH MY HEART

My true love hath my heart, and I have his.

By just exchange one for another given:

I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,

There never was a better bargain driven.

My true love hath my heart, and I have his,
My heart in me keeps him and me in one,
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guide:
He loves my heart, for once it was his own,
I cherish his because in me it bides:

My true love hath my heart and I have his.

Sir Phillip Sydney

TO BE ONE WITH EACH OTHER

What greater thing is there for two human beings than to feel that they are joined together to strengthen each other in all labour, to minister to each other in all sorrow, to share with each other in all gladness, to be one with each other in the silent unspoken memories?

George Eliot (adap).



FUNERALS.

Without a shadow of doubt, funerals are the most important of a celebrant's ceremonies. They can be the most delicate, taxing, frustrating, complicated and the most satisfying of all the ceremonies you will ever conduct. They are also the most frequent. Being able to present a satisfactory funeral ceremony is the basic requirement of any Secularist who aspires to be a celebrant. In fact some well experienced celebrants are of the opinion that the ability to provide a good funeral service gives the necessary insight into conducting any other Secular ceremony that will be required of you. Because of the importance of the funeral ceremony, this chapter will be the most extensive and detailed in the manual. Become familiar with the concepts and the techniques being suggested. The subject is important enough to have books written specifically on the subject of funeral presentations.

There are a few basic principles that apply to every funeral. To begin with, you aren't a funeral director or a funeral arranger, in most cases both functions are performed by the same person so we will simply refer to the funeral director to cover both cases. Don't try to usurp the funeral director's responsibilities. The FD is well versed and likely to be well trained in the job. The FD arranges the time and place of the ceremony, the means of transport, the liaison with the cemetery or crematorium and

the FD may even have sub contracted you to do the ceremony. Let the FD do his/her job. Don't make a move outside of the actual presentation of the ceremony without clearing it first with the FD. If you have agreed with the family to have flowers placed in the deceased's grave as a symbol of the return to nature, then let the FD know so that he/she can make sure flowers are available - not forgetting one for yourself. If there is to be a symbolic handful of earth cast into the grave by the mourners let the FD know. Most FD's carry a small container of clean, dry earth specifically for that purpose. You are responsible only for that part of the funeral known as the ceremony, although a family will often ask you to perform, or advise on, parts of the funeral outside of the ceremony. If in doubt always refer them to the FD and, in any case, keep the FD advised on any requests the family might make such as the provision of live music or the playing of the last post at a military funeral for example. The FD should be made aware of the special requirements of your ceremony without necessarily having details of every word.

Secondly, unless you have had special training in the subject, you are not a bereavement councillor. By all means be aware that when you meet the family of the deceased the very fact of discussing the loss of a loved one is very often the beginning of the healing process, but that does not entitle you to go any further without the proper qualifications.

Thirdly, when you offer a nonreligious ceremony, it must mean a nonreligious ceremony. There should be no hymns or prayers or an invitation to hymns or prayers. It is very tempting to introduce a hymn which is, after all, only a prayer set to music, or a small prayer in the guise of a poem by a family member, but you must do your utmost to dissuade family members from introducing religious practices into a nonreligious ceremony. The whole point of much of the Secular philosophy is to find new ways of thinking that omits religious, superstitious or similar practices.

A prayer is a religious reinforcer which should be discouraged whenever possible. However, having said that, it falls upon the celebrant to use tact and discretion in handling this sometimes tricky problem. In the past I have turned down funeral ceremonies simply because the family wanted me to lead the guests in a well loved hymn. After tactfully suggesting that maybe a Unitarian clergyman might be more appropriate, or offering the chief mourner the opportunity to conduct the ceremony with my advice, I discretely withdraw. I have known colleagues, quite wrongly in my opinion, suggest that mourners might wish to use the quiet period for silent prayer. It is a problem that must be left to the discretion of the celebrant but the general principle remains, as a celebrant you shouldn't be introducing religious practices or superstitions into your ceremonies, but if a family is insistent on such a practice then use your discretion in agreeing that a family member or friend be the presenter of such. How ridiculous would it be if you were asked to have everyone attending a ceremony to quite seriously rub a rabbit's foot for luck? What's the difference in asking people to indulge in a religious superstition and reinforcer like prayer?

Fourthly, always be aware that a death in a family is a highly traumatic experience in which a sense of perspective can disappear and the full range of emotions may come to the fore. There might be some very inappropriate suggestions being made by the family in which case you might decide to try and steer them from a potential disaster – like having a karaoke ceremony for someone who was karaoke daft. Don't be surprised to find that when anger kicks in, which often happens, either during or after the ceremony, there are bad reactions – some of which may be directed at you as the celebrant. Anger is a recognised and very common reaction to the death of a loved one. Treat it with understanding and compassion.

THE NORMAL PROCEDURE.

The Summons.

More often than not, the FD will call you and apprise you of the need for your services. Once you have confirmed that the time and place is OK, then get as much detail as possible. The name of the deceased; the place and manner of death; the next of kin; the contact details; any special arrangements requested; and lastly, ask the FD to advise the NOK that you will be calling them to arrange to come and speak to the family as soon as possible. Give the FD half an hour or so to get back to the family and reassure them that a celebrant has been appointed and the time and place of the funeral has been confirmed then phone the NOK and arrange a meeting as soon as feasible. Don't be insistent on arranging a meeting to suit you because your dog needs walking at 7 p.m. Give the care of Rover over to someone else or make some other arrangement. As soon as you accept the responsibility for conducting a funeral ceremony your first priority should be to fit in with the needs of a family who are going through a highly traumatic experience. Care and compassion are no longer just words from the dictionary, they are real Secularist characteristics that are sorely needed at such times.

The Family Visit.

The best way of explaining the family visit is to give a hypothetical example. The FD has phoned advising you that a Mr. William Penn Buckhaven died in the local Upper Derby hospital with terminal cancer. The time of death has been established as well as the cause. The widow, Alison, would like a viewing in the Sentinal Funeral Parlour in the west side of Philadelphia and

a nonreligious ceremony. Mr. Buckhaven was 79 years old. The only special request is that his grandson, a musician in the US marines, would like to play the last post at his grandfather's funeral. Contact details have been given and you have arranged to meet the widow, one of the sons, two daughters and a granddaughter at the Buckhaven's home which is in the country just east of Upper Derby. Having been given quite specific directions and got to the rendezvous and introduced yourself, in as friendly a manner as possible, repeat your commiserations to the family which you would have done at the initial phone call. Nearly all families will lead you to a quiet room where you can talk without interruption. Begin by explaining that you are here to talk about William. Secular funerals are all about the person not some obscure religious entity or place. Find out if any of the family has ever attended a Secular funeral before. If so, a quick run through of the procedure to be adopted should be sufficient, if not then a fuller explanation of what will happen at the ceremony is called for. Find out if William was called Bill and from that point on use the name he was known as. By this time you should have your notebook and pencil in hand. One small point, make sure you have plenty of notepaper in your briefcase and extra pens or pencils. It looks unprofessional if you have to ask for a pen or paper in the middle of a flowing discussion about Bill's exploits as a navy gunner. Explain that the essence of the ceremony is to distil Bill's personality, his achievements, the things he was most proud of and his family, his heritage. Suggest that it might be easier if you asked a few simple questions to begin with.

In this discussion you are trying to find out all you can about Bill. Chances are you might use less than a third of what you are told. It is unlikely you will use all of what you are given. To get an idea of Bill's background, find out where and when he was born, who his father and mother were and what they did for a living. How about Bill's siblings? Who are they and

what was the family order. Where did Bill go to school? Any stories from his childhood? When did he leave school? What was his first job? When did he join the navy? What did he do there? When did he meet Alison, his future wife?

Alison remembers that, as a young man, Bill used to go out with his gun hunting small game. He became quite an expert shot. Bill's skills with a gun were recognised very quickly and he became a sharpshooter in the navy.

What were the circumstances of their meeting? Oftentimes the family will have a photograph of Bill to show what a fine handsome figure of a man he was. Use it. If he was a handsome man, say so. By this time the family is talking freely about Bill and your list of questions is out the window. This is a great sign. Let them talk. Take as many notes as possible, ask them to slow down if need be or elaborate on a particular story you feel might help highlight Bill's character. Get into what I call 'family folklore', that is, stories that were told about Bill and passed on round the family.

Let me give you a couple of examples of what I mean by 'family folklore'. There was one grand old lady aged 104 who had passed away peacefully. During the meeting with the family it emerged that when her eldest daughter was sixteen, sometime in the nineteen thirties, she had got herself a boyfriend without her mother's knowledge. It wasn't too long before mum found out and demanded to meet this boyfriend. 'Have him here tomorrow afternoon so that I can meet him', insisted mum. Reluctantly, the eldest daughter did so. Next afternoon a knock comes to the door. Mum jumps up and declares to her daughter, 'I'll get that, you sit where you are'. Mum answered the door to the boy standing there, grabbed him by the arm and almost ran him through the hallway straight into the kitchen and sat him down. The interrogation began. Mum was one of those women who could

find out more about a person in fifteen minutes that most folk could find out in a week. Where did he come from, who was his father, what did his family do for a living, and so on and so forth. After about ten minutes the bemused lad asked, 'Missus, why do you want to know all these things?' 'Any boy', replied mum, 'who is going out with my daughter, I want to know all about him.' 'Missus,' responded the lad, 'I don't know your daughter. I only came to your door to collect the milk money.' - A prime example of family folklore that helped define this grand old lady's personality.

KEY WORDS – Bill was extremely proud of his family, and quite rightly so.

Sometimes you may be asked to tell a story that could be considered in bad taste. Here you must use your discretion wisely. Another example of family folklore is a story that one lady's four daughters insisted I tell to define their mother's personality. A fifth sibling, a brother, was outvoted and my advice not to include it was ignored. However, there was no ethical reason why the story couldn't be included in the ceremony and it did tell a lot about this particular lady. Let's call her Sally. Sally had been married young and had five children. She went through a rather nasty marriage split and subsequent divorce which meant she was left to raise her five children on her own. She had a hard time of it but never let circumstances overcome her. Sally was a resolute woman who devoted herself to her children and their upbringing. A single mother who loved her children totally. It was when her youngest daughter, Monica, was having a 'gap' year from university and was backpacking around the world the incident happened. Monica got as far as Bali and met this handsome young man and fell in love. After three glorious weeks, Monica woke up one morning to find all her stuff gone, passport, money, everything. Her fantasy lover had turned out to be a rat. In obvious distress and stranded in Bali, Monica

wired Sally explaining what had happened and asked for money to be sent out to her. Sally, being the ever practical woman she always was, wired back, 'Monica, I won't send you money but I will send you your return ticket home. You forgot what I always told you, didn't you? Well in future always remember what I said and remember it well – all men are bastards.'

Another prime example of family folklore that helped define a personality.

I look back on 'Sally's' funeral with great affection. There were tales of hardship that brought tears, there were tales of Sally's resolve that brought applause, and there were tales of the love between Sally and her family that brought a lump to everyone's throat. I wish I had known Sally as I wish I had known the grand old lady who grilled her milk boy by mistake. And I told people so at their respective ceremonies.

KEY QUOTATION – I often think that people we have loved and who have loved us, not only make us more human but they become part of us. We carry them around all the time whether we see them or not and, in some ways, we are the sum total of those who have loved us and those we have loved. - Anonymous.

But, let's get back to Bill. Two things are emerging, firstly the attitude of the family is telling you how they want the ceremony to be handled; do they want it to be more of a celebration of Bill's life than a mourning of his loss? And what theme is emerging? He was a military man who met his wife Alison at the end of the nineteen forties when Glenn Miller was all the rage. They met in a dance hall in Marple where a Miller clone band was playing. Alison recalls that Moonlight Serenade was a favourite of them both. Suggest that Moonlight Serenade played by the Glenn Miller Big Band would be very appropriate for the beginning of the ceremony. This music is personal to Bill and Alison. The theme emerging here is of a love story

between this couple who had been married for 53 years. Go with that theme. Ask questions about their early life together; Alison was a mill worker when she met the dashing young sailor. Get stories about their courtship, for example about the time when he wrapped the engagement ring in a sweet wrapper to present to her, find out where and when they married, (in this case the Unitarian church in Marple) where they set up their first home together, what were the circumstances, when the children and grandchildren or even great grandchildren came along. We are now on to Bill and Alison's heritage. List the names of the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Get the family tree - BUT - make sure you double check the spelling of all names since, especially for a child, if a name is spelt wrongly in your script, it can be slightly distressing and it just doesn't look good. Bill was proud of his family, and quite rightly - say so. Here we come to a pivotal point in our ceremony; with the agreement of Alison suggest that Bill would probably like recognised the fact that he and Alison had been married for 53 years. Ask permission to include your dedication to this achievement by playing something appropriate. On a number of occasions I have used the Eriskay Love Lilt sung by the Glasgow Orpheus Choir as a dedication to a long and loving marriage. It works and is invariably appreciated by everyone. Bill's marriage was also one of his greatest achievements, include it as a highlight.

Like all lives, it had its ups and downs. In 1950, their eldest son, Ralph, was born. Then in 1952 along came Michael followed by Selena in 1953, Andrea in 1956 and Barclay in 1958. Ralph joined the army and was married to Krista and they had three children, Bernie, Lynda and Seymour. Michael married Bernadette and they have a son Patrick. Selena married Vincent in 1986 and they had two children, Rose and Carmen. She was divorced in 1993 and has since remarried Gordon and they have a son Andrew. Andrea has a partner, Alexi, with whom she has two daughters Allesandro and Anastasia. Barclay has chosen to remain single although

he has a son Gregor by a previous relationship. Gregor, much against Bill's wishes, joined the marine corps as a musician. Although Gregor lived with his mother and her husband, he was a constant visitor to his father and grandfather who thought the world of him. They were great pals as well as grandfather and grandson. They sometimes used to go fishing along some tributary or another of the Delaware, this trio of grandfather, son and grandson. It was just an excuse to get out together since they only once ever caught a fish and threw it back, or so they claimed. Patrick, one of Bill's other grandsons, has a daughter also called Bernadette after her grandmother and Bernie has a son, Jean-Paul, who is only a few weeks old.

In 1976, Bill's son Ralph was killed in Vietnam. Bill always reckoned that what they claimed was Ralph's remains, sent back for burial, were never what was left of Ralph. The story of Ralph's death is a harrowing one. He was out on patrol and stepped on a mine. The rest of his squad had been fired upon. Three more had died and seven were wounded. The rest were lucky to get out physically unscathed. The dead were left. It was two days later before the remains of the dead could be recovered. As you would expect, this traumatised Bill and Alison. Bill became very anti war after that. He wasn't a pacifist but he was certainly anti war. He detested George Bush and his invasion of Iraq. In his opinion, Bush was the kind of chicken- hawk who was quite prepared to send people out to die for the glory of George Bush. Bill said he had come across men like him in the war. Bush had seen what the invasion of Grenada had done for the popularity of Ronald Reagan and was looking for an excuse to gain a similar unassailability in the polls. Bill wasn't a political animal but he was certainly anti Bush whom he regarded as a coward, a bully and a hypocrite who preached about the sanctity of life until it came to political gain, then life became just part of the price other people had to pay. He really hated the war and the people who advocated it.

KEY WORDS – All living things are subject to death, it is the basis of growth. Through evolution, in the course of millions and millions of deaths, humanity has evolved. We carry this inheritance but, as individuals, we have a more personal contribution to make through the value of our own lives.

Koi carp played a major part in Bill's retirement. It was after he retired at the age of 66 he began to travel the world with Alison. He also started to keep koi carp. Serena, his eldest daughter, remembered that at one time when her parent's were away on holiday she was keeping an eye on her dad's carp. One of them, a silver ghost koi, had died. Serena was afraid her dad might think she was responsible so she went out and paid a considerable sum to replace it with one that looked exactly the same. As Serena told it, her dad never knew it had been replaced and she was so relieved. But Alison chipped in at this point and told Serena that Bill had noticed but hadn't said anything because he didn't want to hurt his daughter's feelings. Serena and Alison then digressed into a duologue about the various carp Bill had kept. Take what you can from this conversation and then move the discussion on. Ask, 'what other hobbies did Bill have?'. Bill, it turns out had worked in a sawmill when he left the navy and came back home to Upper Derby. He had done quite well and when the sawmill expanded into making period furniture he became the under manager of the small factory that was set up. He loved this job and stuck to it for the rest of his working life. Bill was so keen on his work that he never really had any hobbies. He had been to the Franklin Institute Science Museum a couple of times and Barclay had taken him to a Phillies game one time but Bill just wasn't into any kind of sport. Even at retirement he would still go down to the factory to see what new tools were being introduced or new furniture was being designed. He and Alison were

invited to all the company picnics and Bill was in his element. He kept contact with all his old friends and made many new ones over the years. He was well liked and got on well with most people.

Chuck, one of Bill's friends who is now the manager of the factory, wants to say something at Bill's ceremony. Alison indicates that she would like that. At this point you should make it clear that a copy of what Chuck wants to say would be appreciated and get contact details for Chuck. Explain that everything that is to be said in the ceremony should be recorded in the script for posterity. It is also important to allow you to check the timing of the ceremony and ensure that you don't duplicate anything that Chuck might say. What you don't tell the family is that you will also need to check the content of Chuck's speech to make sure he isn't going to ask people to pray for Bill's soul or sing a hymn. Such things have been known to happen and all you can do is try your damnedest to persuade guest speakers not to include any religious element in a nonreligious ceremony as a matter of respect for the deceased and his family's wishes.

Here are two elements you must now take into consideration; Gregor, the grandson from the marines will be in full dress uniform and wants to play the last post at the committal which will take place in the funeral parlour since the crematorium, like many in the USA, is attached to the funeral parlour and this will be the only ceremony. Chuck, Bill's longstanding friend, wants to eulogise Bill during the ceremony.

KEY WORDS – This will be a nonreligious ceremony reflecting the views held by Bill. There will be no hymns or prayers but there will be a period of quiet reflection when each of you will be able to remember Bill in your own particular way. (These words are important to reassure everyone that Bill held secular views)

KEY WORDS – Finally, as we leave here to continue our own voyage of discovery in the world, let's listen to the following...(poem; piece of music; recitation; or whatever, requested by the family).

So far we have covered Bill's early years, his naval service, his career, his marriage, his family, his hobbies and his other interests. What else? What achievements other than those covered can we attribute to Bill? He won medals for his war record. List them. He achieved various industrial awards and honours for his company. List them. He won a medal at a sharpshooting contest as a young man. Mention it.

What about holidays? These can be a good source for helping to build the kind of character Bill was.

Andrea, the other daughter present, remembers that they didn't go on holiday too often but there was one time, she would be around ten years old, when they were up in Newfoundland and Bill had taken Andrea out in a small rowing boat to do a spot of sea fishing. There were a number of other boats around them that day all doing the same thing. From out of nowhere, a large basking shark appeared and began rubbing itself on the rowing boat. The shark was as big as the boat and Bill started to panic. 'Don't worry', shouted a man from one of the other boats, 'its only trying to get rid of the barnacles'. But Bill was worried in case the shark upended the boat with him and Andrea aboard. His immediate reaction was to row furiously for shore. His daughter, he told people afterwards, was far too precious to take risks with. Bill started to ease up when he created a gap between the boat and the shark. It didn't last long. The shark swam after the boat. The faster Bill rowed the faster the shark swam. It almost became a race before the shark finally gave up in about ten feet of water.

Bill was furious about losing a baseball cap he had got from friend. His daughter had never heard him cuss so much before, or after. Andrea remembers it took him almost two days to recover. They didn't go out in a boat again for the rest of that holiday.

KEY WORDS - There is no doubting Bill's secular credentials.

Alison remembers another story about the one and only time she went hunting with Bill. He didn't go too often but it was a time when Alison had wanted to share his experience. All went well, they were stalking some deer, they had the regulation orange-fluorescent jackets on and all the right gear. Bill had his favourite gun and Alison had to be content with his third favourite. Then disaster struck. Alison caught her ankle in a hole and sprained it quite badly. At the time they weren't sure if she had broken it or not. Anyway Bill decided to get her back to the main highway about half a mile away. His only option was to carry her but both Alison and their equipment was just a bit too heavy so Bill decided to hide the gear in some nearby undergrowth and come back for it later. Bill, after a mile or so struggling and panting and complaining, told Alison that she would have to lose some weight when they got home. Alison tried to make him admit that he must have made a wrong turning somewhere and got lost. It was more than two miles before they hit the highway. It seems that they had been tracking it at a parallel for a mile and a half. Bill wouldn't admit it, he just said he had taken an easier route. This was after he had told Alison that if she had been an animal he would have done the decent thing and put her out of her misery with a well aimed bullet in the back of her head and if he hadn't hidden his rifle back there, he might still have done it. They got Alison to a local doctor who strapped up her ankle and made her comfortable. In the meantime Bill had gone back to recover his equipment and his favourite rifle. After a fruitless search lasting into the night he gave up and came back to Alison and swore that some b..... had stolen his rifle

and gear. Alison, although she didn't say so at the time, was certain that Bill hadn't been able to find where he had left his gear. It was something of a family joke that Bill had a very poor sense of direction. Yet, he always insisted that he never needed a map when he was driving somewhere and most times he did manage.

At this juncture in your consultation with the family, you are discussing what will be an upbeat part of your ceremony. At some point, just before the committal, you will have to bring the proceedings back down again. In many ways, the consultation also reflects this salient fact. I usually precede the most difficult question with, 'this is the most difficult part of our discussion and sometimes it can be painful for you but, can you tell me, what were the circumstances of Bill's death?' Why would you ask this question? Two reasons; just prior to the committal the ceremony should be brought down into a mourning mode to prepare people for the very solemn business of the mourner's last rite used at the committal. Secondly, if people are made aware of the circumstances of the deceased's demise it is less likely that they will pester the family after the funeral with queries as to what happened.

KEY WORDS - I never knew Bill, but I feel it is my loss.

What else have we found out about Bill? He was in the navy and, at one time, during WWII he had been the bosun of a landing craft ferrying marines onto one of the islands where fierce fighting was taking place. Another time, because of his marksmanship skills, he had been seconded to the marines as a sniper. Bill, like many men who went through that terrible conflict, never spoke about what happened to him until many years after. The war had a profound effect on Bill. Thirty years later, on a visit to Canada with Mary, he met a Japanese gentleman who had also fought in

the war. They both had a few drinks and began talking about koi carp. It drifted into some references to the Philippines and ended in a full, cathartic discussion on the war, that terrible period in our history, and it eventually ended in the shedding of real tears for the way in which ordinary men can be set against each other. Here was one of those too rare times when men come to the realisation that all people around the world have much more in common than they have in their cultural differences. This is a direct reference to Bill's Secularism – use it.

KEY WORDS –The uniqueness of each human life is the basis of our grief in bereavement. Look through the whole world and there is no one like the one you have lost, nor will there ever be again. But he lives on in your memories and he will always remain a member of your family and of your personal circle through the influence he has had on you and the special part he has played in your lives.

In a crematorium ceremony where there is an organist who is looking after the music, I always provide a copy of the script with the organist's part marked off in yellow marker pen and any specific instructions written in the margins. If the organist follows the script, nothing should go wrong. In a funeral parlour ceremony, likewise. A copy of the script is given to the funeral director who arranges to have the music handled by one of the staff. In a ceremony that will take place at the graveside where there might be special requirements, like placing flowers in the grave, give the FD a copy of the script. If music is being provided at the graveside whether live or canned, provide the FD with a copy of the script. The script is the backbone of your ceremony.

KEY WORDS – As a Secularist, I would ask you to turn that love you have for Bill into support for his family, especially his wife Alison, at this very difficult time.

Provide a copy of the script to the next of kin. I don't have a copy of the words used at the funeral of my mother or father, I wish I had. I was there, but the words just went over my head. Grief can do that to you. Some people might not want a copy of the script but nearly everyone does. It is a valuable memento to be passed down the generations, to be cherished and looked upon as part of the written heritage of a particular family. Your script will still be there long after you have gone. It is a record of the ceremony, the personality of the deceased and an indication of the love and care a family put into the construction of a ceremony for a much cherished love one. Yes, I said 'the love and care a family put into the construction...'. You are effectively a facilitator of the family's, and sometimes the deceased's, wishes. Your script is a word for word record of what took place, what was said, what poetry was used and what music was played. It is, or should be, a distillation of the personality of the deceased, a record of their achievements and heritage. It is your craftsmanship on record. You should present it to the next of kin immediately after the ceremony with the instruction, 'this is now yours to do with as you will. Copy it to family and friends, use it for newspaper memoriam, keep it safe to pass onto future generations or destroy it, as you think fit. It is yours.'

KEY WORDS – Death is a very personal matter for those who know it in someone close to them. But we are all concerned with the death of any individual for we are all members of the human community. Though some of the links may be strong and others may be tenuous, each of us is joined to all the others by links of kinship, love or friendship, or by living in the same neighbourhood, town or country, or just simply by our own common humanity. As John Donne said, "No man is an island".

If you need to use this particular family's ceremony for any purpose, it is essential that you obtain the permission of the next of kin. The ethics of our profession so demand, and they can never be compromised.

KEY WORDS – Those of us who accept the unity and completeness of the natural order, look death in the face with dignity, with honesty and with calm.

Now we are ready to build a ceremony with the consent of the family. Suggest music that meant something to Bill and Alison, something special and personal to them. An obvious choice for the beginning of the ceremony would be Glenn Miller playing 'Moonlight Serenade'. Find out if Bill had a personal piece of music that was upbeat and could be used for the end of the ceremony. If time allows, can you play a dedication on behalf of the family, the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren? Suggest something appropriate like - 'Forever Autumn' - from Jeff Wayne's 'War Of The Worlds'. Or let the family suggest something that was played at Bill's 75th birthday party which he likened to the Godfather's party in that film of the same name. Bill thought that of all the films he had seen, the Godfather trilogy was the best. The biggest difference was that some cheeky relative had given him two Viagra pills meant, presumably, as a joke. There is no record that they were ever used - and you shouldn't ask. If the information is volunteered by Alison then ask permission to use it if you think it will help the flow of your presentation.

KEY WORDS – Bill and Alison weren't just husband and wife, they were best friends.

What about the last post? Ask the family to have Gregor phone you so that

you can explain his part in the proceedings. Tell Gregor exactly what to do. Leave nothing to his discretion. He might suggest something but, at the end of your conversation you should both know exactly what is to happen. Do the same with Chuck, have him phone you, emphasise the importance of getting a copy of his contribution to you as soon as possible. Make sure you see these two gentlemen just prior to the ceremony commencing and go over their cue's with them again.

KEY QUOTATION – Bertrand Russell, the great philosopher, has written, "An individual human existence should be like a river – small at first, narrowly contained within its banks and rushing passionately past boulders and over waterfalls. Gradually the river grows wider, the banks recede, and the waters flow more quietly and, in the end, without any visible break, they become merged in the sea and painlessly lose their individual being. The man or woman who, in old age, can see his or her life in this way, will not suffer from fear of death since the things they care for will continue". And so it will be with Bill.

Explain to the family the procedure for bringing in Bill's body, the layout of the funeral parlour if need be, the closing of the curtain if there is one, and the benefit of an upbeat ending.

On the point of closing the curtain, there can be a snag. Now and then, a family won't be able to face closing the curtain simply because they are not yet ready to begin closure and can't even face the prospect. Let's say there will be more than thirty people expected to attend, in the case of Bill's funeral the family has told you to expect around three hundred guests. In these circumstances suggest that the family's guests will be expecting some kind of closure and that it is probably better if they allow this to

happen. A way around this problem is to have the family, or any member of the family who can't face having the curtain drawn, leave just prior to the committal proceedings and then continue with the committal for the sake of those who have come to say their last farewell to the deceased. anterooms are provided in every funeral parlour for the family, and either the parlour staff or the FD will escort the family to a prearranged anteroom. Under these circumstances make sure that the FD has a copy of the script so that he knows exactly when to enter and invite the family into the anteroom. I normally ask people to stand ready for the committal and then ask them to remain standing whilst the family leaves. I then explain to the bemused guests that the immediate family will be having their own very personal and private ceremony when it comes to burying the deceased's ashes and that will be the point when they will make their last farewell. In the meantime we will continue with our last farewell to the deceased - then move into the final rite of farewell to the deceased. Do not invite this procedure. Only suggest it if the family calls for it. In fact, never suggest a procedure which could complicate things more than they need be.

KEY WORDS - Bill doted on his grandchildren, and it was reciprocated.

A cautionary tale. There was at one time a very well intentioned celebrant who decided that it would be a good idea if a brass band, of which the deceased had been a supporter, could come along to the ceremony in the cemetery and play an appropriate tune. Great idea – thought up at the last minute. There is no doubt it would have been very effective if it had been arranged two days before and not the night before. At the ceremony only two thirds of the brass band showed up. The man who had the music didn't show so the band had to play the only tune they knew without the music – 'Will Ye No Come Back Again'. A prime example of sod's law.

KEY WORDS – Bill was a man of principle who had a high regard for the truth.

The visit to the family may have taken half an hour, maybe two hours. You could have travelled one mile or one hundred miles. The thought of Rover pining for you might be in the forefront of your mind – so what? Never rush a meeting with the family. If there is urgent family business the family will indicate that the meeting should finish. Just you make sure you have as much information as you can get and that the family is aware of what is going to happen. The last thing you must do is reassure the family that the ceremony is now in your hands. If they have any questions or think of anything else they might like included in the ceremony then make sure they have your phone number. Get a contact number from the family in case there is anything you might need to check. Confirm that copies of the music are available and make arrangements to either have the FD, yourself or a specific member of the family deliver the CDs or tapes or sheet music to the parlour the day before the funeral. Leave nothing to chance - 'sod's law' is the only law that is infallible. Arrange to meet the family at least fifteen minutes prior to the start of the ceremony just to reassure them that everything is OK and to give cues where required. But above all, reassure the family that all will go well, after all, there is no reason why it shouldn't, is

Another cautionary tale. Just prior to the ceremony taking place, I was meeting the family in the anteroom reserved for that purpose. The oldest son, the chief mourner, was in a bit of a panic. His two oldest sons from his first relationship, and of whom I had been given absolutely no knowledge, had turned up for their grandfather's funeral. He took me aside and asked me what he should do. He explained that his present wife, with whom he

had six children, didn't get on with his two oldest sons and that he hadn't had any contact with them for eight years. He wasn't expecting them to show up. 'Should', he asked, 'we add their names to the list of grandchildren you have already been given?' Without hesitation I said 'yes'. The reasoning being that the boys were here for their grandfather's funeral, their stepmother had nothing to do with the relationship between the boys and their grandfather. An immediate handwritten amendment was made to the script and presented in the ceremony. A corrected copy of the ceremony was sent off to the eldest son that same evening. Be prepared to make minor alterations to your script at the very last moment.

KEY WORDS – Secular funerals, for those of you who may never have attended one, are not only to mourn the loss of a dear friend and loved one, but also to celebrate the life of the departed. To record some of the family folklore, personal memories and recollections enjoyed by Bill and his family. It is a ceremony to celebrate the life that touched each one of us here today, in some way.

OK. Now you're home with pages and pages of disjointed notes and Rover is still alive and wagging his tail off at you. What next? Have a cup of coffee, read through your notes and decide on a theme. In this case I suggest a love story is the main theme. In the case I quoted of the grand old lady aged 104, the theme became 'time'. She had lived throughout the twentieth century. She had been born in 1898 and had died in 2003. She was in her 105th year. To give a sense of perspective to this long life, a paragraph was produced for near the beginning of the ceremony where it mentioned the first flight of the Wright brothers in 1903 and Marconi's first Transatlantic communication two years earlier. It went on to say that she

would have watched the moon landings in 1969 on her television set, the culmination of Marconi's wireless and that the flight to the moon was a consequence of that first flight by Orville and Wilbur Wright. The music played was taped from old 78 records. It was old love songs like 'We'll Gather Lilacs In The Spring Again', sung by Richard Tauber and they were transcribed, scratches and all, and the sense of atmosphere was heightened. It was reminiscent of wind up gramophones and sound horns, velvet curtains and drawing rooms. It was Edwardian, it was romantic, it was perfect. It was an admired friend who conducted the ceremony, and it was incredibly impressive.

The other example I quoted about the lady who sent a wire to her daughter stranded in Bali deserved a fitting theme of 'a woman struggling to bring up five children on her own'. I painted word pictures of this lady's struggles and her determination to overcome all odds and her subsequent triumphs. It worked beautifully.

So we have our theme. The love of Bill and Alison; their struggles, if any, in setting up their first home; Bill's love for his family; how did he show his love? – tell stories that paint a picture of what Bill did. Build around your theme and the ceremony should emerge. What next?

The Script.

A script consists of a number of elements;

The introduction: Learn the first sentence of your introduction by heart.

I'll explain why later. In the introduction you should lay down the tone and the main theme the ceremony will take. Start off with some very general terms so that your audience, for that is what it is, can settle down and

become accustomed to your speech and tone.

THE FIRST SENTENCE – (Learn it off by heart). "We are here to remember and to celebrate the life of William Penn Buckhaven, known to everyone as Bill, and to bring consolation to his family and friends gathered here".

The tribute. 'Bill was born in 1925 near the small town ...' Here is where we start talking about Bill. The highlights of his life and his love for Alison. Bear in mind the theme is a love story. Where there are tributes from the family, or anyone else, include them in this section. The contribution by Chuck should come in here. Any poetry or dedications by the family should also come in here. A tribute to Bill's long marriage is appropriate. Try and end this part with an upbeat, humorous story.

Link Chuck's speech to the next part of your ceremony.

The acknowledgements. Here, just prior to the commitment part of the ceremony, you should thank all those friends and family who have been such a source of strength over the years. You will see from the examples given that I use a poem by Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel prize winning Indian poet, as a kind of catch all thanks to friends. It is aptly titled 'Farewell My Friends'. Try to get a catch all thanks like this rather than list a bunch of names that could go on forever and still someone will feel left out. Unless the family particularly wants someone mentioned like a doctor or nursing staff, then suggest to them that a catch all poem or quotation might be more appropriate.

The pre committal phase. Explain what happened to Bill. '... they

thought the cancer had been in remission but it wasn't so. Bill, being the man he was, fought bravely right up until the end. Finally his frail body could no longer fight this terrible malady and he eventually succumbed in the early hours of last Saturday morning'. Then say all those nice things you have been saving about Bill's character. ... 'Bill was a good man. He was held in high esteem by his peers. His Secular credentials are beyond question. He was an inspiration to all of us. The world will be a poorer and sadder place without him. As a Secularist, I would ask you to turn that love you have for Bill into support for his family, especially his devoted wife Alison, at this very difficult time.' ... you get the picture?

End by saying, 'this seems an appropriate moment to sit quietly to allow each of us to think about Bill in our own particular way'. Then step back from, or even sit down behind, the lectern.

At this point I normally have Debussey's 'Clair de Lune' played very quietly and unobtrusively in the background. This period of quiet reflection should last about one minute to ninety seconds. The organist, or whoever is looking after the music, should be cued to fade the music out when you approach the lectern. Then move into the committal.

The Committal. Here is the wording I use.

'Ladies and gentlemen, please stand for the committal. (pause)

Here, in this last rite, immune to the trials and tribulations of his mortal lot, Bill's body we commit to nature. We are glad that we saw his face and felt the pressure of this hand. We cherish the memory of his friendship and his sincerity. And as we mourn here, we are reminded that time and life passes and that there passes with it so many opportunities to do good. We

leave our dear friend Bill in peace, and with due regard, honour, love and respect we bid him farewell.

Ladies and gentlemen, please be seated.'

I also find it to more effective if I have the organist play something slow and sad in the background with instructions written into his or her copy of the script that the music should end immediately after the word 'farewell'.

The post committal. The peak of the ceremony is concluded. You must now return it to 'normalcy', for want of a better word. A phrase like, 'In sadness of his death but with appreciation of his life, we remember Bill. Finally, as we leave here to continue our own voyage of discovery in the world, let us listen to the following poem by ...', is useful.

The ending. At this point you simply thank all who attended and if there is to be a small get together invite people on behalf of the family to wherever, 'for light refreshments'. If there is to be a collection for charity, this is the place to announce it; 'and as you leave here there will be a collection for cancer research to which you can contribute if you wish'. Then introduce the closing music, which hopefully will be an upbeat piece.

When the closing music begins, leave the lectern and go straight to the family. Show concern, ask the widow or chief mourner if she is OK. Explain that the FD or parlour/crematorium attendant will show them out or, if it is the local custom, to a place where they can shake hands with their departing guests and thank them for coming to the ceremony. It also allows for mourners to express their sympathy to the family. If the widow or the family feels too distressed to do this, then ask if they would like you to perform this small but very important courtesy. It is up to you to ensure

that the family is handed back to the gentle care of the FD – do it. Your responsibility doesn't end at the point you announce the closing music.

Sometimes, you will be invited back to participate in the post ceremony drink if there is to be one. Most times this is really just a courtesy and the best thing to do is to politely decline. I make it a habit, as do most of my colleagues, not to accept such invitations unless there is a good reason for doing so.

The foregoing is a suggested script format. Some celebrants will begin with a poem, others will launch straight into the tribute, there is no hard and fast rule. However, as a beginner, you can do little better than to copy a tried and well tested method. Eventually you will find your own 'voice', your own way of presenting your scripts, your own style, and from here you will build your own library of basic ceremonies which you will adapt for each situation.

Music during the period of quiet reflection, the committal, or any other time during the ceremony should be cleared with the family. Music should only be used to provide atmosphere or invoke memories. Never use it just to fill in gaps in your ceremony. If you have nothing to say, then say nothing. Never invent stories, or tell lies even if the family ask you to do so. However, if the family tells you a story that you suspect might be pure invention then by all means go with it. If it is derogatory story about someone or something, don't use it. Your script must always be as positive as possible.

On the odd occasion a family might request what is regarded as a hymn tune. There is nothing wrong with that provided it remains an instrumental. Bear in mind that many of the best hymns were prayers set to music that already existed. However, in her excellent book, 'Funerals Without God', Jane Wynne Willson has suggested that there are some secular 'hymns' that can be sung to popular music like 'Aurelia' by Wesley and 'Eventide' by Monk. If you feel confident enough to attempt to set a secular poem to music – fill your boots, as they say.

Your script layout and format will eventually become part of your recognisable voice. Get as many examples of other celebrant's scripts as you can. We all use phrases and quotations from all sorts of sources, especially from each other. You will always find help available from fellow celebrants. You would never turn down a request for help from a colleague, and by the same token, your request for help would never be ignored.

Be satisfied that your script is as good as you can get it. You may never be completely happy with it but bear in mind you are trying to convey a celebration of a life as well as a mourning of someone's passing. You are not composing a legal document or competing for the Nobel Prize in Literature. You are attempting to put into words the feelings and wishes of the family. You are building a ceremony and it is unlikely that you will be able to do so at the first attempt. I have known people make numerous attempts to get a script 'right' by their way of thinking and, in the end, the product they weren't satisfied with was enthused over by the family.

Having done the best you can with the material available we go on to the next step;

<u>The presentation.</u> I strongly recommend that you learn the first couple of sentences of your script off by heart. At the very least, learn the opening sentence. The reason is that when you come to present your ceremony.

You will say, 'Good afternoon/morning ladies and gentleman.' That gets peoples attention and they will sit up and look at you. You look straight back at them and say, -

'We are here to celebrate and remember the life of, known to everyone as, and to bring consolation to his family and friends gathered here.' (PAUSE)

By doing this you have got yourself off to a good start. That good start allows you to project your voice, look straight out to your audience, and it gives you the confidence to continue.

Next part – 'This will be a nonreligious ceremony reflecting the views held by'

Next - 'My name is I'm a member of the

Atheist/Secular/Humanist Society, and it is my privilege to have been asked by the family to present this ceremony.'

Great! From this point on there will be no stopping you. Refer to your script as required during the rest of the ceremony. Remember to keep looking up when you're talking and don't mumble or speak with your head down. Look up, speak up.

At my second ceremony, I was feeling bad with a sore throat and a bitch of a sinus problem. Nonetheless, I decided to continue with a ceremony I really should have handed over to someone else to present. The result was that my voice wasn't being projected, I mumbled and I had my head down a lot of the time. It was an abysmal, appalling, and an atrocious performance and I've never got over it. The widow said it was very good and she fully understood that I wasn't feeling well but the ceremony got her husband's character just right. The point was that I wasn't happy with it. That evening I wrote a letter of apology to the widow and returned her fee

suggesting that she might like to give it to her favourite charity. Personal integrity is everything in our business.

Another method I've adopted is, since my eyesight isn't the best in the world, my scripts are typed up in 20 point script spaced 1.5 times or even double spaced. The numbered pages are inserted into the plastic sleeves of a black folder (white for weddings and blue or pink for naming ceremonies), this ensures that they don't get mixed up and I simple turn the pages as I go through the ceremony. Now and then I have little notes scribbled in the margin. No one but myself is going to see my script. The lecterns are always slanted upwards and if I come to a particularly difficult passage in my script, I use my finger in the manner I did when learning to read as a young child, and follow the passage with my finger. No one in the audience ever sees it. Of course the scripts I present to the family or provide for the organist or FD are simply 12 point, single spacing and laid out differently from my reading script.

The most important part of the presentation is the rehearsal. Rehearse, and rehearse as many times as need be until you are familiar with your script. It has to be read out loud to allow you to time your presentation and to hear how it sounds, to hear if you are able to easily enunciate every part of what you have written. The written script isn't necessarily as good as the spoken script. By all means keep the written script to pass on to the family, but make those little changes to your script that present a colloquial flow to your presentation. That doesn't mean you have two different scripts but it does mean that you change written text like, 'they have', to 'they've', or 'he had', to 'he'd'. The written text can look messy if it is full of the kind of punctuation we use when we speak. If you are fortunate enough to be one of those persons who can read from cryptic notes, then I have no advice for you. I've tried using cryptic notes and I just got lost. I missed out a few important phrases and quoted a passage wrongly so, in the end, I

reverted to the method in which I felt more comfortable. Use what makes you feel most comfortable.

Timing is also important. I invariably use music, the period of quiet reflection and some introductory passages to pick up time, or stretch time if required. I use a quotation like '... through evolution, in the course of millions and millions of deaths, we have ', and if time is against me, I just cut that part out. I keep it in the copy of the script I hand to the family, but it is useful to build in some 'elastic' into your presentation. Likewise, the music is useful for this purpose. Nearly every piece of music, except the final piece, is faded out, unless the family has requested otherwise, and this allows you to either extend the time allocated to the music or cut it down to pick up a few minutes. Same goes for the period of quiet reflection. Oftentimes a guest speaker will ad lib a few minutes into a carefully timed script. This you must accept with good grace and for which you should try and compensate if possible. If you can't, you can't. It might mean that a family waiting to cremate their loved one next is having to wait outside a few extra minutes but, there is really very little you can do about it. Be aware that guest speakers can throw everything off, so allow a little more time than the guest speaker claims to need.

Always credit poetry or music as required. It should be credited to the author in your script and it should be credited to the author in your presentation. All the ceremonies, with very rare exceptions, will be private ceremonies and the fact that the family has purchased a CD or a book of poetry from which you can quote is bought with the rights to use the material in private. Nonetheless, it is standard practice to quote all authors or artists of poetry or music. There are international copyright standards and it is unlikely that you will fall foul of any of these standards.

The ceremony isn't a competition. Don't try and outdo a guest speaker or

steal a guest speaker's thunder. Say what you have to say in your own way. I give you fair warning, if you have a situation where a ten year old granddaughter of the deceased stands up and reads her own badly written, child's poem of love to granny, there won't be a dry eye in the house and you won't be able to follow it - so don't try (incidentally, remember to include the child's poem in your script - AS IT STANDS - bad poetry, bad spelling, poor grammar and all. If her parents didn't see fit to correct a poem from the child's heart, who are you to do otherwise?). Most telling emotional experiences are words spoken by a loving son or daughter straight from the heart. Allow a pause after such an event when you thank such a guest speaker. A member of the family often would like to speak but is too nervous. In this case reassure the intended speaker that you will be there right at their elbow to take over if they dry up, or better still, have another member of the family or a close friend come up to the lectern and simply stand beside the speaker with a hand on the speakers' back, you will be amazed at the difference this can make. Both emotional and physical support is being provided - it works.

So remember, rehearse, rehearse and rehearse your presentation. Don't be a smarty pants. This ceremony is not going to be a rehearsal. You have one crack at it, and one only. You have got to get it as correct as you can first time. There are no second chances.

KEY WORDS – We also meet here to express in spoken word or in silence, full of tenderness, our tribute of respect and affection to Bill and to say our last farewell. We meet in solemnity but not in despair. In quiet submission of that which must be.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN.

You have been given as much information, probably more, than you need to compose a ceremony for William Penn Buckhaven. Write up the script, not the presentation, just the script.

I will give you the beginning;

'Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We are here to remember and to celebrate the life of William Penn Buckhaven, known to everyone as Bill, and to bring consolation to his family and friends gathered here.

This will be a non religious ceremony reflecting the views held by Bill. There will be no hymns or prayers but there will be a period of quiet reflection when each of you will be able to remember Bill in your own particular way.

My name is ...'

... and I will give you a last rite. Special instructions are always given in brackets.

'Here, in this last rite, immune to the trials and tribulations of his mortal lot, Bill's body we commit to nature. We are glad that we saw his face

and felt the pressure of this hand. We cherish the memory of his friendship and his sincerity. And as we mourn here, we are reminded that time and life passes and that there passes with it so many opportunities to do good. We leave our dear friend Bill in peace, and with due regard, honour, love and respect we bid him farewell.'

(Background organ music to be ended when the words '..bid him farewell'., are pronounced.

The curtain remains open and Sergeant Gregor Malone plays the 'Last Post' at which point the curtain will be drawn. Then everyone will be invited to sit down.)

A A THE REAL PROPERTY.

... and finally, I will give you an upbeat poem to finish with.

'You can shed tears that he has gone
Or you can smile because he has lived.
You can close your eyes and wish that he would come back
Or you can open your eyes and see all that he has left.
Your heart can be empty because you can't see him
Or it can be full of the love that you shared.
You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday
Or you can be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.
You can remember him and only that he has gone
Or you can cherish his memory and let it live on.
You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back
Or you can do what Bill would want,
Smile, open your eyes to reality, love and go on.'

Anonymous.

...and, finally, here is Chuck's speech.

'Bill was twenty year older than me, but he was never what you would call, my senior. I never throught of him being older than me till the time came for him to retire. He had been my friend as well as my boss for eighteen years. He was more than a friend at times, he was almost a father to me. It was Bill who took me under his wing when I moved into the design office of the new factory. He had a flow of ideas that was sometimes difficult to keep up with. When he got carried away with something that had set his imagination on fire, he used to talk so fast as though he was trying to get things out before he forgot them. One time I said to him, "Bill, you must be breathing through your backside because you haven't taken a breath in five minutes". He just burst out laughing and told me that he wasn't, but it if helped get things moving, he'd sure as heck learn to. That was Bill. He had an enthusiasm for everything he did in that factory that there wasn't a damn thing he didn't know about building furniture. Bill was an inspiration to many of us youngsters. He was also good at taking care of us. He really made you feel somebody. He let you know you were important.

I remember a time when I had to put in an expense account for a trip to Bethlehem, and Bill called me into the office to talk about it. Naturally, I thought I had done something wrong. That wasn't it at all. Bill went through my expenses claim and told me the things I hadn't claimed. He wanted to make sure I got everything I was entitled to. Bill did that with most of the guys. He looked after us. That was what Bill was like.

One time at a conference, Bill took the heat for running up a liquor bill at our hotel. He rarely ever took a drink, but most of us younger guys did and it was us who run up the tab. He just told us to remember and clear it with him in future, and that was it. No recriminations, no balling out. Mind you he didn't suffer fools gladly. He was a straight guy who didn't like folks who tried to snow him as some sales guys who came to sell him things tried to do. More than a couple of them found there gate passes revoked because they'd tried to get something past old Bill.

Only a few weeks ago, a couple of us were saying how we've missed Bill ever since he retired. How much more are we going to miss our friend, our advisor and our mentor now that he won't be around to ask his advice, to laugh with and to just plain enjoy.

Bill, we'll miss you more than we will ever be able to tell you. You guided many of us through difficult times and hard times. You were an inspiration to a lot more than me. I only hope that we can pass down to other guys what you passed down to us. You gave us such a lot and it's only fitting that we honour your memory by doing just as you did.

Goodbye, Bill, from all your friends. We will never forget you.'

Now, complete the script for Bill's ceremony. It should last no more than thirty minutes from the beginning when the first mourners, or guests, enter until the last one leaves.

SUMMARY.

There is some vital information you require when your services are requested;

- 1. Get the full name and age of the deceased.
 - 2. Find out when they died and where.
 - 3. Get details of the next of kin and a contact number.
 - Who is taking care of the funeral arrangements? Is it a funeral director or arranger. Get full contact details.
 - 5. When and where is the funeral to take place?
 - Arrange the family visit, to suit the family. Make sure you get detailed directions to the rendezvous.
 - Restate your commiserations when you get there.
 - 8. Explain how a Secular ceremony works.
 - 9. Get details of the deceased. Where and when born. Parent's names and occupations. Siblings. Schools attended. Stories from early childhood. School stories and qualifications if any. First job. Early working experiences. Stories from youth. Relationships. Married? Where, when and to whom. Divorced? Military service? Where and when. First married, first home. Children. Grand/great grandchildren. Stories from early marriage. Hobbies. Work. Holiday stories. Family folklore. Favourite and meaningful music, poetry or quotations. What, if anything, led up to the demise. Paint a picture of the deceased's character. Friends and family tributes.
 - 10. Reassure the family before you leave that the ceremony is now in good hands and that if they need to know anything more then they should ring you. Remember to leave your card. And, just one more time, go over what is to take place at the ceremony.
 - 11. When you get home with your sheaf of notes, relax, read them and decide a theme if possible.

- 12. Begin outlining the ceremony.
- 13. Advice the FD about the music to be used and let the FD arrange to advise the crematorium/parlour when the music will be supplied and by whom.

The FD might pick up the music and deliver it.

- 14. Now start writing out your script in earnest;
- a) The introduction.
- b) The tribute.
- c) The acknowledgments.
- d) The pre committal.
- e) The committal.
- f) The post committal.
- g) The ending.
- 15. Copy your script and adjust it slightly into a presentation script.
- 16. Read it out loud to check if it flows and to check the timing.
- 17. Rehearse it and rehearse it.
- 18. Learn the first couple of sentences off by heart.
- 19. Prepare a copy(s) of the script, properly marked with instructions, for the person(s) handling the music and arrange to have it handed over prior to the ceremony.
- 20. Attend the ceremony properly dressed in appropriate attire.
- Meet the NOK (and the FD if needs be) before going into the ceremony.
- 22. You don't need luck, you are prepared.

SAMPLE SCRIPT 1.

This ceremony is based on one of the most difficult one I have ever done. It was for a young couple who had lost a baby at the 26th week of the girl's pregnancy. It was a shattering blow for the family. The young couple were confused, stunned and in nearly every way, totally lost. This was something they had never contemplated. It was an experience in tragedy they couldn't cope with. It needed a high degree of compassion and care. They looked to me to tell them what to do. When I went to visit them, I simply held the young girl's hand and put my hand on the boy's shoulder. What could I do? What could anyone do? There was no biography to discuss. The child had never developed to maturity. Yet, it had been given a name. I knew then that the moment that the child had been given a name she existed as a person in her own right. I also knew that all my previous experience of funerals was of no consequence in this situation.

The clear priority was the young couple and their anticipation of their baby. Ann Marie was real to them. They had provided clothes, were preparing a nursery room and doing all the happy things expectant couples do. They already had a little two year old girl on whom they both doted. They were excited about the prospect of a sister for Marianne, their two year old. They were ecstatic.

Then, literally within hours, their world was shattered beyond repair when Annette had a miscarriage. It all happened so quickly, without warning, without mercy. Nature can be cruel.

What I didn't do was try to comfort the young couple with inappropriate and idiotic nonsense like, 'You're still young. You can have more children'. Or

the equally idiotic, 'Never mind, you still have Marianne'. Such insensitivity is unforgivable but yet, you hear it from thoughtless people.

I didn't know what to do, but I didn't tell the young couple that. I simply reassured them that I would see that Ann Marie would have a caring, respectful and loving ceremony. I then invited them, if they felt like it, to tell me what happened as best they could. The young girl wasn't able to, but the boy, with tears in his eyes, managed to give me the story of what had gone wrong. I didn't press for details but just allowed the boy to tell me what he could. I am forced to admit, I was looking for a place to go and, rightly or wrongly, I wanted to help the couple talk about their horrific experience if they were up to it. They needed my strength and experience and my reassurance that their loving child would be treated with care and respect. I gave them that reassurance.

The first thing I did when I got home was contact my colleagues. 'Help', I shouted over the phone. 'What do I do here?' The replies came back, bit by bit, and the end result is what you see attached.

When I got to the funeral parlour where the first part of the ceremony was to take place, there was a tiny, white, shoe box of a coffin ornately decorated and placed on a large bier which only emphasised the smallness of Ann Marie. I wasn't able to go through the ceremony without breaking down. I had to stop and pause for a minute while I regained my composure. When the parlour ceremony ended and we left for the graveside ceremony, the boy was handed Ann Marie's tiny coffin in the back seat of the FD's limousine. The boy had wanted to carry his child on his knee on her last journey.

It wasn't over. The grave in which Ann Marie's coffin was placed was meant for an adult. A tiny white shoebox placed on a single plank of wood over a large adult size grave, six feet deep. Under any other circumstances it would have looked ridiculous. But under these circumstances it only added to the distress of the tragedy.

Each one of the grandfathers took a chord attached to the head and foot of the tiny coffin and gently lowered it into the cavernous grave. Then the second part of our funeral ceremony began.

TEXT OF THE
SECULAR CEREMONY
TO MOURN THE LOSS,
AND TO CELEBRATE
THE TOO SHORT
LIFE, OF
ANN MARIE STEPHENSON.

3RD OF SEPTEMBER, 2005,
AT THE HAMILTON
BROTHERS FUNERAL
PARLOUR, AND
CHESTERFIELD CEMETERY.

OFFICIATED BY JOHN MCKENZIE
OF THE ONTARIO ATHEIST ASSOCIATION.

OPENING MUSIC - Annie's Song - James Galway

Thank you for being here. It isn't easy for any of us at this time. What has happened is a most harrowing experience for any family. To lose a baby when you are expecting so much is particularly tragic. There are no words to express, or even come close to expressing, the grief that each of you must be feeling.

My name is John McKenzie and I'm a celebrant of the Atheist Society of Ontario. My role, as a secularist, is to conduct a brief, non religious, ceremony and to offer what words of comfort can be found to help Annette and David, who at this time are having to go through the harshest experience any parents can be asked to bear.

We meet here today, in a thoughtful and compassionate frame of mind, to mark and celebrate the brief life of Anne Marie. It may seem strange to speak of celebrating an existence so tragically short as just six months, the time Anne Marie spent enclosed in Annette's body, but, as poets have observed through time, a lovely flower is no less beautiful because it bloomed for only a short time; and Anne Marie's life, for all it's brevity, brought much happiness in anticipation to her family.

The cycle of life turns with generation succeeding generation. Death is the natural end and this is easier to accept when it comes, as it usually does, in old age at the end of a long and full life span. It is much more difficult to accept the death of a child; after all, death does not belong at the beginning of life. It is an affront to our perception of the natural order of things. Our children are meant to live on after us.

This then represents a double loss and is doubly hard to accept. As well as the Anne Marie who stepped for a brief moment over the threshold of life,

there is also the Anne Marie of your hopes and dreams. Your minds, your loves, will have been full of imminent realities of parenthood, grand parenthood and even great grand parenthood, and of expectations for the baby who would grow through all the phases of childhood to maturity. And all that anticipation, all that wondering, has evaporated, leaving the harsh truth of what has happened, together with a profound sense of emptiness and unreality.

We have learned that grief, in its many guises, affects us in different ways and is not something to try and ignore; rather its expression is an acknowledgement that something precious has been lost – and it can help in adjusting to that loss, however terrible.

Here, for example, is a small poem written by a mother who also lost her daughter in very similar circumstances. I am sure you will be able to identify with her feelings. She wasn't a poet, she was just an ordinary mother who wanted to tell us how she felt;

We'll never see you smile
We'll never hear you cry
We had no chance to say hello
We could only say goodbye.

The twenty six weeks we knew you

Gave us such a thrill

The dreams and hopes we had for you

Our dearest baby girl.

The memories we have of you

Will help to see us through

You're in our hearts and thoughts
In everything we do.

So we'll talk and we'll cry
Bonded close in our sorrow
We'll remember our baby
And be brave tomorrow.

There is LOVE
There is HEALING
There is HOPE.

The years will pass and the circumstances of Annette, David and Marianne's life will change. There will be times when Anne Marie will fade very much into the background – but she will never disappear. There will be other times, at first hard to bear, when she will come very much to the foreground. We now know that the acute emotional pain of early death is no reason to deny, or to blot out, the memory of the child who has died. We can still value and celebrate that life, and that memory, within the warm sanctuary of the family.

A wider circle of friends, and family are all affected and draw together empathetically to offer support and comfort to Annette, David and Marianne. All I can say is that grief goes hand in hand with love. The grief felt by the family waiting to welcome Anne Marie is a measure of the love that had already grown around her. That love must be turned into thoughtful care and support for each other and especially for Annette, David and Anne Marie's sister, Marianne.

Of Anne Marie herself, we can say that she did acquire an identity on her way into the world, as well as receiving the love that parents bestow on

their babies even before birth. That identity will live on in Annette and David, and ultimately in her sister Marianne, in ways that cannot be predicted now. Inevitably, as part of their future, what has happened will help them come to a greater understanding and deeper compassion for others who may share the same experience. As a result, Anne Marie will have made her own contribution to life and to the shared community which enables us to care for each other. Human life is based on caring.

Everyone here will have their own perspective and their own thoughts about what has occurred, and the things I have had to say about it here today. We will now have a few moments of silence for a private thought, and for you to reflect on this tragic event.

PAUSE. MUSIC - Clair de Lune played very quietly. Thank you.

I've been asked to read out two loving messages from Anne Marie's grandparents. Firstly from Granny Jean and Papa Samuel. 'Little Anne Marie, we held you in our arms for such a short time, but you will be in our hearts forever. Sweet dreams little princess. Love always.'

And from Granny May and Papa Ronnie who want to convey their message through the words of a song sung by Celine Dion. These beautiful words, I'm sure, speak for all of us.

CLOSING MUSIC - Fly - Celine Dion

We now come to the most difficult part of our formal farewell, when, in keeping with the natural cycle of life and death we return to nature that part of Anne Marie that cannot remain with us.

(LEAVE FUNERAL PARLOUR FOR GRAVESIDE.)

GRAVESIDE VALEDICTION

Anne Marie, you are a much loved and wanted child. So many people's thoughts are with you today, sending you love and cuddles to keep you warm. Mummy and Daddy want you to know just how special you really are and how much a part of their family you will always be.

Anne Marie's memory is already committed safe and warm to our hearts.

In sorrow, but with much love and affection, we have been remembering the short but significant life of Anne Marie Stephenson. Now is the time for us to let go of this beloved child in quietness of spirit.

I'd like to end this simple, heartfelt and loving tribute to Anne Marie with a valediction used by native Canadians;

EACH NEW DAWN

I give you this one thought to keep;
I am with you still - I do not sleep.
I am a thousands winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.

I am the gentle autumn's rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush

Of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not think of me as gone
I am with you still, in each new dawn.

(CONCLUDE THIS PART OF THE CEREMONY BY DROPPING A RED ROSE INTO LITTLE ANN MARIE'S GRAVE.)

Our short ceremony is now concluded, I would like to thank everyone who has come here today, and for the support that your presence symbolises.

If you would like to place flowers and personal items in or by the grave, please feel free to do so as we leave this place of sadness.

CLOSE

SAMPLE SCRIPT 2.

The script is based on an original by Gordon Ross. It begins with a poem and it has on the front page a photo (replaced here by a piece of clip art) of the deceased as a young man.

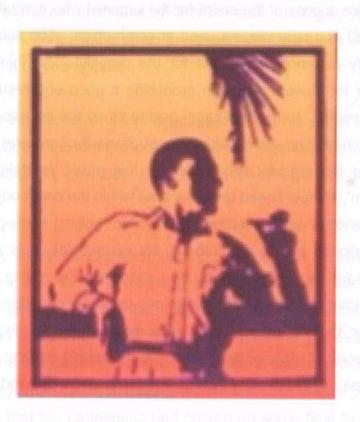
You will note that Gordon's script is adapted to suit his particular auditory presentation and, of course, the vocal nuances and techniques he uses can't be transcribed (not without a lengthy course in linguistics or discourse analysis).

Gordon nearly always uses a flattering photograph of the deceased. Some celebrants will ask for a photograph so that they can see what the deceased looked like. Sometimes this helps to establish a theme. If the deceased was particularly handsome it would help the proceedings if you were to include this fact in the script. However, in this case the deceased was an average man. Not too much was mentioned of Sean's partnership. The fact was that the partnership had broken up some time before it was discovered that Sean had cancer. Gordon doesn't spell this out because those who attended the ceremony are all well aware of this fact. But Sean, by this time, was living on his own although his son was a regular visitor.

Gordon makes play of the fact that Sean 'was joker and a windup merchant'. He illustrates this by telling the story Sean put about that he worked on the home of the Beckams, David and Victoria Beckham, the famous soccer player married to the equally famous Spice Girl, whose splendiferous residence has been given the nickname, 'Beckingham Palace'. The implication being that this was another one of Sean's tales for which he was famous, or infamous.

The instruction printed in italics, 'Press button to close curtain', refers to a button usually attached to the lectern which, when pressed, either signals the crematorium staff to draw the curtains around the catafalque, or it is a direct control button for the same purpose. Gordon, like many celebrants, supplies a copy of the script for the organist who normally also looks after the CD and tape players used at ceremonies. The italics helps to easily identify ceremony directions for the organist. Anything that makes life easier for those involved in producing a good end result is always to be encouraged. In my own case, having timed the ceremony at my personal practice reading, the ceremony instruction will often have handwritten notes asking the organist to, 'fade out this music as celebrant approaches lectern', if I feel I need to garner time within the ceremony. The music and the period of quiet reflection are useful for helping to keep to the time within that allotted by the crematorium for ceremonies. It is part of the elastic within the ceremony. I also use a yellow marker pen to highlight the parts to which the organist will have to pay particular attention. In addition, each CD or tape is marked with a number giving its sequence within the ceremony. On the organist's copy of the script I add the number of the CD or Tape and the track or side on which the music referred to, can be found.

Funeral Celebration for Sean Sandford 1952 – 2004



Dublin Crematorium
Thursday 20th August 2004

Celebrant

Alexander Swinton

Irish Secular Association

Opening Music "Pride of Donegal"... repeated.

Can I remind everyone to switch off mobile phones and pagers.

Pause

In the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson:

To laugh often and love much;

To win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children;

To earn the approbation of honest citizens and endure the betrayal of false friends:

To appreciate beauty; to find the best in others;

To give of one's self;

To leave the world a bit better;

To have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation;

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived;

This is to have succeeded.

Such was the life of Sean Sandford

We meet here today to celebrate and pay tribute to that life, and to express our love and admiration for him, and to bring some consolation and comfort to those of his family and friends who are here and have been hurt by his death. In accordance with his and his family's wish this will be a nonreligious funeral.

My name is Alexander Swinton and I am here today from the Irish Secular Association to conduct a Secular funeral. There will be no hymns; I shall not be leading you in prayer. However, there will be a short period of silence for contemplation.

We are all concerned directly or indirectly with the death of any individual for we are all members of one human community Though some of the links between us are strong and some are less strong each of us is joined to all the others by links of kinship love or friendship; by living in the same neighbourhood or town or country; or simply by our common humanity.

A Seculart funeral ceremony is an opportunity to join in taking leave of someone we have loved, or someone for whom we have had the greatest affection and respect, but it is more than that. It is the celebration of the life and personality that has been. In Sean's case a full life and a greatly loved personality.

The death of each of us is in the order of things: It follows life as surely as night follows day

We can take the Tree as a symbol.

The human race is the trunk and branches of this tree, and individual men and women are the leaves, which appear one season, flourish for a summer and then die.

Each of us is like a leaf of this tree and one day we shall be torn off by a storm or simply decay and fall - and mingle with the earth at its roots.

But while we live we are conscious of the tree's flowing sap and steadfast strength.

Deep down in our consciousness is the consciousness of a collective life, a life of which we are part and to which we each make a minute but unique contribution.

When we die and fall the tree remains, nourished to some small degree by our manifestation of life.

Millions of leaves have preceded us and millions will follow us: but the tree itself grows and endures.

Pause

Sean Sandford was born on the 24th of February 1952 in Bray. The fifth child to Sandra and Patrick Sandford. He was named after his Uncle Sean, who is sadly dead, but his wife Auntie Alice survives.

He had 5 brothers and sisters, Caroline, Jamie, Roberta, Gerard, and Alvin. A family of six kids.

His sister Roberta sadly cannot be here today as she herself is in hospital. His brother Gerard died, also to cancer, seven years ago.

Sean attended Bray Primary School and St Joseph's High school.

Sean, when he was living with his partner Edna, had a son Warren who became very close to his father in the last few months.

He had a lifelong friendship with a guy called Tommy Leonard. They had been best buddies since there were 18 years old, and were like brothers.

Sean spent most of his working life in Dublin working as a bricklayer. At one time, in his younger days, Sean and Tommy went across the Irish Sea to London to work on various building projects including, <u>if Sean was to be believed</u>, Number 10 Downing Street, ...

... or was that the Queen's Private Apartments at Buckingham Palace?

No,no, it was more important – it was Posh and Beck's place Beckingham Palace !!!!

But they both missed home and eventually after eight months they returned

to Ireland. Sean spent many happy years in Dublin especially with his pals at The Green Apple Bar.

When I spent some time with his family I heard so many happy stories of his childhood in Bray.

Sean's expertise at school football and hurling, his enjoyment of the sea cadets, his winning two cups, one for cross-country running, and one for scoring the winning goal for the school, and I heard especially about the happy large family holidays at Wexford, were among the many memories that his family talked about.

I was told of the occasion when Sean and Gerard first got a room to themselves and were given the right to decorate it. The family were banned from the room for a week until the final unveiling. The room was painted royal blue and bright yellow; Wicklow Rangers hurling team colours.

Although Sean claimed to be a Bray supporter, it was often thought that it was just to wind up his Dublin friends.

As a youngster Sean learnt to love dogs. He earned money walking the local dogs and used that money to buy the family's first telephone; a shared "party" line, which got on his nerves.

As I said, there were six children in the Sandford family, but there were also five children in the O'Conner family next door and when they got together all hell could break loose in Bray.

On Sundays one family went to the Gospel Hall Sunday school, and the other to the local chapel. More often than not they dogged off and went to play on a local area known as the rocks. Then they could go to the

sweetshop and spend the collection money. But Sean pointed out to them that jumping around the rocks they could lose their collection money so they should put it all together and hide it under a stone while they played. When they came to collect it; some bad boys had stolen it. It wasn't until years later that Sean admitted he was the bad boy.

Sean attempted to learn the flute without great success and when he woke up the family one morning practising, his sister, Caroline, hit him over the head with the flute. Sean was less concerned with his head and more with the damage to the school orchestra's flute.

Sean, 14 months ago was diagnosed with cancer and suffered it bravely.

Sean would want me to mention and thank cousin Eamon, who, although in his sixties, helped look after, and was there for, Sean through the last few months. Sean spent the last weeks of his life in the Laoghaire Hospice and his family would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to the staff at the hospice for his time there and their kindly care.

Sean died on Friday, 23rd August.

Pause

Can I now ask you all to sit in silence for a few moments, while each of us remembers Sean in our own way, with affection and with gratitude.

Pause - less than 1 min.

Sean was a gentleman; a joker and a windup merchant but always a gentleman.

Pause

We now come to the final act in our formal parting

We have reached the part in today's ceremony when Sean's body will be taken from our view. Would you please stand.

With great love and respect We have remembered the life of Sean Sandford. He is immune now From the changes and chances of this life, And is beyond any harm, pain or sadness. In love and sorrow, but without fear, We commit his body to its end, And leave him in peace. But his memory we will keep in our hearts. We rejoice that he lived, We are glad that we saw his face, We took delight in his friendship. We treasure that we walked life with him. With love we leave him in peace, With respect we bid him farewell.

Music "Gymnopedie No.3 by Sartre"

Press Button to close curtain.

Wait for music to end.

A poem by Anne Bronte

Farewell to you! But not farewell

To all my fondest thoughts of you;
Within my heart they still shall dwell
And they shall cheer and comfort me.
Life seems more sweet that you did live
And men more true that you were one;
Nothing is lost that you did give,
Nothing destroyed that you have done.

Please sit

In a little while we will be going out into the world renewed and heartened. Some of you will be returning to your homes or to work. Find friends and support each other. Remember how much more bearable your pain is when it is shared.

On behalf of Sean's family I would like to thank you for joining with us to celebrate his life and all that he was, and for all the support and sympathy that you have given to them and to Sean, and to invite you all to join them at the Bray Bowling Club in Bray Road for a bite, and an opportunity to share your memories. To send us on our way let us sit for a few minutes and listen to favourite piece of music of Sean's – "Home is Where You're Heart Is" sung by Joey McLeod.

Thank you all for being here.

Music "Home is Where You're Heart Is" - Joey McLeod.

Play till crematorium empty.

SAMPLE SCRIPT 3.

The following beginning and ending is taken from a script by Alastair Douglas. The beginning and ending have been edited from the colloquial presentational script. Once again, these are to be recommended to beginners as excellent examples to follow.

However, note in particular the manner in which Alastair deals with the deceased's biography. It is split into two parts, it begins with the deceased's life with his family and friends and this is followed by a more detailed portrait which helps to capture the person as an individual. Two examples are given, biography A and B. The colloquial presentational script is retained because of the sheer richness of Alastair's descriptive technique. At some point you may decide to present your script in such a manner to describe a particular type of local personality who was known for his or her local characterisation. A telling example of what I mean is the phrase constantly used by that great writer and atheist, Kurt Vonnegut, who will, I am certain, have included in his eulogy when that sad day comes, the colloquialism... "and so it goes".

(OPENING MUSIC: Meditation by Massenet.)

Good Morning

We are meeting here today to honour, remember and celebrate the life of Gerry Mason who sadly passed away on the 15th of January in his 93rd year.

All of us here today, close immediate family, and friends are concerned with the death of any one individual for we are all members of one human community. Though some of the links between us are strong and some are tenuous, each of us is joined to all the others by links of kinship, love or friendship; by living in the same neighbourhood or town; or simply by our own common humanity.

This was put most succinctly by the philosopher Herbert Read and this is what he had to say:

'The Tree of Life'

The death of each of us is in the order of things; it follows life as surely as night follows day.

We can take the Tree of Life as a symbol. The human race is the trunk and branches of this tree, and individual men and woman are the leaves, which appear for one season, flourish for a summer, and then die.

I too am a like a leaf from this tree, and one day I shall be torn off by a storm, autumns winds or simply decay and fall mingling with the earth at it's roots.

But while I live, I am conscious of the trees flowing sap and steadfast strength.

Deep down in my consciousness is the consciousness of a collective life of which I am a part, and to which I make a minute but unique contribution.

When I die and fall the tree remains, nourished to some small degree by my manifestation of life.

Millions of leaves have preceded me and millions will follow me: but the tree itself grows and endures.

We are here today not only to mourn for but also to celebrate his most happy life within which he made such a positive contribution to his family and friends, and in fact, all those who had the good fortune to be associated with him. I myself never met, however following my meeting with his much loved son, felt that I really got to know the good and interesting man that he was, and I will now commence my tribute to him.

BIOGRAPHY 'A'.

James Gardner McClure known to most as Jimmy and Jak to others was born on the 22nd of May 1928 this to his parents Walter and Vera. Jimmy was the youngest child of three his sisters Sandra and Marion deceased. His father James, in fact died when Jimmy was only a wee boy and was almost brought up by his older sisters who made a huge fuss of him. Jimmy was a southsider hailing from the Cathcart district of the city he so loved, and attended the renowned Queens Park Secondary.

After leaving school Jimmy did his National service doing his duty to King and country for three years. It seems that for two of those years he was a driving instructor in Germany this a period in his life that he enjoyed, attaining the rank of sergeant, no mean feat on a three year term of service, though Corinne his daughter found it amusing that her father who was famed for tending to abandon his car when reverse parking, was an instructor in that area.

Back to civvy street, Jimmy a highly intelligent individual attended Strathclyde University obtaining his diploma in business studies, and later obtained his BSc. At London University this on an external basis. He for sure was a bright man.

Getting a touch for overseas travel whilst in the army, Jimmy applied for, and obtained a position with the well respected Bedford Trading Company based in Liverpool who had a major export import trading business primarily in West Africa which resulted in Jimmy spending many years gainfully employed in that region, a part of the world he came to love. During his ten years with Holt's he moved around quite a bit this a district manager in

places such as Burundi and Zaire, buying commodities such as coffee, cocoa and cotton, and selling the products exported from the U.K. such as Whisky or whatever. It was whilst in West Africa this in the early 1960's, that he was to meet and marry a young woman namely Emily Garrity who very much to the pleasure of Jimmy brought into this marriage a young daughter namely Belinda who is with us today. In 1966 their much loved daughter Catherine came along born in Kinshasa, Zaire as it was then known. Their cup at that time must have been full and running over. After his eleven years with Bedfords, Jimmy joined the petroleum company of Texaco. In the early seventies Jimmy and Emily separated which found Jimmy and Catherine for a couple of years in Brussels and then this what was the end of an exciting and fulfilling period in his life it was back to Glasgow, young Catherine facing school life in Glasgow with hardly a word of English, but again with excellent French.

Thus commenced in 1981 a second phase to his life, which again was fulfilling, this using his commercial skills as a lecturer. Jimmy, never a man to rest on his laurels went to teacher training college at Motherwell obtaining his teaching qualification, which took him to Paisley College where he taught, with some style according to an old colleague Economics and Modern Studies. With his style and hands on experience his students must have revered him. Another ten years on saw Jimmy retiring, a well earned retirement after more than forty years providing for the family. Life took an nice turn on retiral in that a lovely lady namely Margery Gibson who also lectured at the college and retired at the same time as Jimmy, found one another, this by all accounts a happy and loving partnership, which saw them travelling, and sharing so many interests absolutely having the best of times, in particular sharing a precious bolt hole in Loch Striven. Sadly Margery passed on so prematurely just four years into this partnership, which Catherine would say was a devastating blow to her dad, which she felt took quite a bit of the light out of his life.

But what of Jimmy the man:

In my meeting with Catherine, what came through so clearly was just how much she loved, respected and admired this man, as did Belinda. As many here this morning will be aware this was no ordinary man, rather a man who could be described as a legend in his time. He was absolutely a free spirit beholden to no one, and in many respects could be described again as a man who lived his live very much on his terms, but with a huge regard for all those around him. Catherine would describe him as a lively man, a supreme story teller, a life so full that there was always a story to be told. He was a humorous man who loved to tell and hear a good yarn, who liked to laugh with people but never to laugh at them. He was a man of the highest integrity caring deeply for the environment in essence living his life in the Secular Humanist style. Using the word style it could be said that he in fact lived his life in his own style, really not giving a fig as regards p.c. when it came to how he ate, drank or whatever, this despite all the worrying Catherine would do on his behalf. In fact the truth be told, he didn't give a hoot, he prided himself in living his life as it came, and why not. Catherine would laugh as she recalled how her father would dance around the floor listening to his beloved jazz, a whisky tumbler in his hand, keeping time to the music. Music was so important in his life, something which is being reflected here today as chosen by Catherine. She would say his choice in music was eclectic this ranging from classical to sea shanties to Portuguese Fado, which he would play loudly whether or not it was on his boat or wherever, driving everyone to distraction. He loved guitar and would work hard at it but not really succeeding, with it sitting forlornly in the corner with it's cover on. As so many here will subscribe to, this was a highly sociable man, who appreciated good company the best of friends around him. That was happiness to Jimmy. Going back to his Paisley College days one of his very best friends Garry MacKenzie who in fact goes further back than that, and who I have to say is so upset at being unable to be with us today,

currently in Italy, though it is pleasing that his daughter Minnette is with us today representing Garry and Jean who so loved this man, as he did them. Garry would tell the story that it was the practice at the end of term to have a drink or as it was put a small refreshment with the students with Jimmy inviting his class to join him, exuberance all round. There was however a small problem, in that one of the pupils was a nun, and not unreasonably she told Jimmy not unreasonably and somewhat sadly that she had to decline. The Chieftan Bar in Kilbirnie Road was not the sort of place she could be seen, she gently explained. But Jimmy, always the pragmatist had a solution. He was a member of the Glasgow University Alumni club on the shores of Loch Lomond, the wonderful Ross Priory. Ever gallant Jimmy suggested that his students would have no objection to accepting his hospitality in a priory, and so it came to pass! As Roddy put it, 'that was Jimmy', Jimmy the man who had time for everyone. Jimmy was the man who counted his friends, those of all beliefs, faiths, opinions and cultures. He was all things to all people. As regards hobbies this was a man with so many interests. He read extensively, he loved music and his was a fine cook to boot. He believed in self learning and right up to recent times would attend various classes held by Glasgow University. Time was there to be used, not ignored.

The big interest as so many here will be aware was sailing which became so important to him especially when he retired. Jimmy wasn't just a fair weather sailor simply happy to sail over to Kilchatten Bay on a good day. Rather he took this activity seriously studying to obtain his sailing tickets including navigation and the help of many close and wonderful friends such as Robert Gray, Arnold Simpson, Archie Ventner and Smout. His first boat was the 'Sula Sgier' and then for the more serious sailing the beloved 'Tico Tico', his crew many and varied and excluding the afore mentioned there was Reg McGuire, Sonny Blackwell, Eric the Viking and Sarah of the Long Knives. As Catherine put it so well, her dad liked nothing better than after a

great, usually arduous sail, to have the boat tied up, all ship shape, a large whisky in his hand and planning where they were going to eat that evening. His tastes were simple, i.e. sailing, eating and socialising. It sounds all right to me!. He sailed with his crew down to Brittany, and in fact Roddy recalls the time that Jimmy was thinking of buying a property in Brittany to be close to the good sailing also with a love of all things French and asked Garry to go with him to look for such a property. They came upon a place that was suitable and he was exhorted to buy it being called Govan, and everyone wanted the opportunity to say they were off to Govan to fish and sail their yacht. He decided to stay on the west coast I am sure to the great joy of all his friends in Tarbert.

As we all know Jimmy was such a sociable man and enjoyed a visit to his local which was the Lighthouse, just across the road from his wonderful, gracious and stylish apartment. It was through the Lighthouse that he became known as JAK this from putting his initials up on the board to await his turn on the pool table. I believe some of his friends are with us today.

At the end of the day what really was important to Jimmy was his family having such a wonderful relationship with both Belinda and Catherine. He was the bane of Catherine's life, who tended to worry about her beloved father, the all time bon vivant, who in reality needed no worrying about, always so well in control of his life, or so he thought. Catherine and Jimmy had great holidays together all over Europe and Scotland always companionable, absolutely the best of friends. He must have been so proud of her as she so herself made a success of her life along with her partner Roderick. As Catherine herself put it so nicely and I quote 'My dad was a great adventurer, a fantastic father and a great friend to so many out there, too numerous to mention, from all walks of life and interests. He packed so much into what she would describe as his short 79 years. The loss to Catherine in particular will be overwhelming, however she must look

back and think of all the wonderful times they shared together, and how much love they had for one another, and so importantly how many others loved and respected him, likewise Belinda and the rest of the remaining family.

Essentially what we are saying here this morning is that this was an uncommonly good man who had an enormously varied and interesting life, a longish life that for sure could and should have been a bit longer, but nevertheless was a life that was so meaningful and worthwhile, and again so importantly was a life that was patently appreciated and fully enjoyed by Jimmy himself. What more can one say. Jimmy McClure for sure left his mark on all who knew and loved the man, and I know we can say that this world has been a much better place for his presence.

Thank you.

BIOGRAPHY 'B'

Sandy Wallace was born on the 12th of January 1916 this to his parents Archie and Glenys. He was a Glasgow man born and bred and was one of four children his sister Caroline here today helping to celebrate the life of a much loved and cherished brother. He also had a brother Robert and another sister Barbara. Sandy had an interesting start to his life being born into a publican family and in fact was born in The Four Bells Tavern in Glasgow where his mother was the Landlady. For business reasons the family moved to Kirkaldy where the family became involved in a laundry business, and this was where Sandy spent his formative years and where he attended school. On leaving school Sandy did various jobs, this till his eighteenth year 1934 when he enlisted into the Royal Navy, the Senior

Service, which was to become a most significant part of his life. With the second world war coming along in 1940 this saw Sandy very much involved seeing serious active service this with destroyers such as the 'Formidable' then the 'Indefatigable' operating in areas from the North Atlantic against the U-Boats and later protecting the convoys in the Med., heading for Malta. For reasons very understandably, Sandy, who was well decorated, did not speak too much over these experiences till later in his life.

As we will all recollect from the ceremony last year for Sarah, Sandy on leave from the Navy went on a blind date making up a foursome, meeting on the Waverly steps in Edinburgh a young woman namely Sarah Menzies an interesting young woman who had previously worked in service and during the war with the railways. They duly as they say 'clicked' and again as they say the rest is history with them marrying in 1943 a meaningful partnership that was to last almost sixty years. They firstly lived with Sarah's parents for the first five years in Fauldhouse the small village where Sarah hailed from, and then moved to Overton near Wishaw. Sandy had served a further two years after marrying and on return to 'civvy' street found work still within the Wishaw region, this within the shale oil business. This productive union produced two fine and loving daughters, firstly another Marjorie and then a couple of years later Alice, both of whom are here this afternoon helping celebrate the life of a much loved father.

Sandy was in work in which was susceptible meaning shale oil, and paraffin, and was continually forced to change jobs to ensure that he was able to provide for the family. So, it was on to Helensburgh where Sandy found himself working for the Electricity Board which was to be his main line of work for the rest of his working life. Helensburgh, according to the girls, was a happy time in their lives and they were sad to leave that place. However, with a new job beckoning it was off to work at Irvine with the family moving to Ayr and then to Troon. As I said at Sarah's ceremony the

family must have been adept at flitting having so much practice.

Sandy having worked so hard all his life, with never a break for illness or ever being unemployed took a well deserved early retirement this in 1979 at the age of sixty three. By this time the girls had of course flown the nest getting on with their own lives, and it was then in 1998 that they were to make their final move this to Helensburgh this to be closer to Sarah and her husband Jack. This was a good time in their lives enjoying the open outlook from their pleasant and comfortable home. There was bit of sadness in that Sarah not long back in Helensburgh suffered a heart attack which was a bit debilitating, however she was secure in the knowledge that Sandy was there for her.

But what of Sandy the man:

It was so clear from my meeting with the family that this was a man who was well respected and who had all times made his decisions in life to ensure that the family was well provided for. He was what we would today call a good man, a man very much in the traditional image of the old west of Scotland style, very much the master in his own home, with perhaps a bit of a reputation of insisting that things be done as he instructed, however that was the man he was and that was fully understood and appreciated by all who knew him. He wasn't really known for his sense of humour and could be a bitty dry. His daughters would say that he was truly a man's man and was at his happiest in such company always enjoying tinkering with things, whether or not it was the car or whatever. He had the reputation of being a bit of a collector of things, and when out walking which was a favoured pastime, he would pick things up, it wouldn't matter what it was he would bring it home and a use would invariably be found for it. Son in law Jack who was very close to Sandy would describe him as a bit of a Heath Robinson person, repairing things out of his collection of collectables.

Having said that Sandy from all his days in the Navy and engineering was well endowed with good hands and was an accomplished fixer of things. Despite his liking for bits and pieces he was not a man for trivia or small talk. In fact with Jack being so close to Sandy he was the one person who could tell him that he was a and I quote 'a crabbit old git' and get away with it, duly pulling him into line. As regards hobbies Sandy in his time had plenty. Going back to the earlier days in Cumnock or wherever he was a passionate and successful gardener taking pride in winning the prizes at the various shows for both flowers and vegetables. He was a dedicated bowler which played a major role in his life wherever he lived, and was indeed fortunate that whilst his wife Sarah had no interest in the game never protested at being termed a bowling widow, however would share in the social aspect involved with the sport. As regards sport this he followed having a soft spot for the Partick Thistle. Also the family could say that in his earlier days, this going back to Kirkaldy, he enjoyed a game of shinty. Music was important having a particular liking for classical, particularly opera, and one of his wishes in his life would have been for a good singing voice but alas did not. He was a fairly temperate man in all things, however possibly going back to his navy days he did like his 'tot' before dinner, something he would refer to as his milk, maintaining that it did him good, and who could argue with that remaining as fit as a fiddle right up to the day he died. He was a totally independent individual person, asking for little, always in the secure knowledge that his family and friends were there for him at all times as of course they were. There were good friends such as Terry and Angela who have been so supportive, and again Sarah and Hamish, with Sandy feeling the recent loss of Hamish so deeply. The wonderful holidays spent with them out to Italy to visit daughter Sarah and Jack when they lived there. Terrific caring neighbours as Jenny and Valerie and others too numerous to mention. He was never short of support when it was required.

What however was of paramount importance was the family Sarah Mary and of course his buddy Jack who later this month had booked for himself and Sandy to go to Cyprus to see Norma who has made her life there, and who will just miss this ceremony coming back tomorrow. There were lovely loving grandchildren Winifred, Selena and Geoffrey and Bernard. Bernard is presently in South Africa and cannot be with us likewise Winifred who has given the family the great grandchild of Megan who we mentioned last year was welcomed into the family by his wife Sarah and I understand that Winifred will shortly be adding to the dynasty. So in reality there have been so many positives in Sandy's life with precious few negatives. All in all he has been a fortunate man, compared to so many out there.

Essentially what we are saying here this afternoon is that this was a good man who lived a good life. A man who was a wonderful provider all his life, no one ever lacking for anything. A life in many ways that was lived on Sandy's own terms, but as was said earlier that was the man he was and that was understood. You were not going to change him, very much a man of the old school. What you saw was what you got. The biggest loss will be to the two girls who have so sadly lost both caring parents in such a short period, which must be hard to take, however they have their own lives and close family to share all the memories with and they for sure will be o.k. Sandy Wallace has for sure left his mark on all who have known the man, and I think we can say for sure that this world has been a much more interesting place for his presence.

Thank you.

ENDING.

Let us now pause and quietly reflect on's life in our own way, whilst listening to a piece of music chosen by the family.

(PAUSE. MUSIC: Liebestraum by Liszt played very quietly)

We have now reached the part of this ceremony when we will say our formal farewell to, and I would ask you to stand.

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose on earth, a time to be born and a time to die., we are glad to have known you, knew your friendship, enjoyed your company. And as we mourn here, we are reminded that time passes and that there pass with it, so many opportunities to do good. The best of all answers to death is the wholehearted and continuing affirmation of life, this is for the greater fulfilment of mankind.

Please be seated.

I am now going to a short but lovely reading, and hope it will give some comfort to the family. It is entitled 'Each New Dawn'.

EACH NEW DAWN

I give you this one thought to keep;
I am with you still – I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn's rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,

I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not think of me as gone —
I am with you still — in each new dawn.
Anonymous (Canadian Native American origin)

Today we have been remembering with so much love and so much affection a life now ended. Now we must return to living our own lives, enriched by those memories. Hold on to in your thoughts and in your hearts, talk of him often and enjoy your memories of him. Remember him in sorrow but also in happiness for the way he so touched and so benefited your lives.

Finally, I will read a short poem this written by Joyce Grenfell, at the time of the blitz in 1941. The poem is entitled 'If I Should Go Before The Rest Of You'. I think with his zest for life and music would have fully approved.

If I should go before the rest of you,

Break not a flower, nor inscribe a stone,

Nor, when I'm gone, speak in a Sunday voice,

But be the usual selves that I have known.

Weep if you must:
Parting is hell,
But life goes on
So....sing as well!!

I would now, on behalf of the family, like to thank everyone who has attended this celebration of's life today. Such a nice gathering of

friends is a sure indication of the love and respect in which he was held.

Following this ceremony, refreshments will be offered at TheHotel, located, and the family has asked me to extend a warm invitation to you all. The music you will hear on retiral, a firm favourite of's, has again been chosen by the family.

Thank you very much indeed

(END MUSIC: Blue Danube Waltz.)

SAMPLE SCRIPT 4.

This adaptation is from a script for the funeral of a five year old child who died from cancer. It follows, in many ways, the script for any child funeral.

On this particular occasion I broke down twice and had to simply take a minute each time, to recover. Unless you have a heart of stone and can detach yourself from the proceedings, it is unlikely that you will be able to sail through such a ceremony without having to pause and get hold of your emotional reaction.

What I experienced was an overwhelming urge to break down and cry. It arises from within you and simply sweeps over you like a tidal wave. Such emotions can overwhelm you during a ceremony. Deal with it. You are conducting the ceremony, you are the one the family looks to for strength at these times. When you feel the urge to burst into tears rising within you, don't try and fight it. Let it happen. Take a minute – take two minutes and let that terrible feeling subside. Breath deeply as it passes. There is nothing you can do to stop your feelings grabbing you by the throat and daring you to try and speak through the surge of emotion you will feel. Let it subside and, as soon as you feel able, carry on from the beginning of the last sentence you were at before you had to take a moment to allow the peak of the emotional surge to pass.

At the end of this particular funeral, the funeral director whispered to me as we left the graveside, "I thought I was going to have to step in and take over from you", and, the truth is, he had no idea just how close it came to that.

TEXT OF THE
SECULAR CEREMONY
TO MOURN THE LOSS,
AND TO CELEBRATE
THE LIFE, OF
TIMOTHY VERNON JACKSON
1999 - 2005.

26[™], OF APRIL, 2006. AT SCARBOROUGH, DUNSTALL FUNERAL PARLOUR AND SCARBOROUGH CEMETERY.

> OFFICIATED BY GARY RENDAL, TORONTO SECULAR SOCIETY.

OPENING MUSIC - Theme from Winnie The Pooh.

GARY. I'd like to begin this ceremony with a poem written by Mary Yarnall.

Yours was a life that had hardly begun No time to find your place in the sun No time to do all you could have done But we loved you enough for a lifetime.

No time to enjoy the world and its wealth

No time to take life down off the shelf

No time to sing the song of yourself

Though you had enough love for a lifetime.

Those who live long endure sadness and tears

But you'll never suffer the sorrowing years:

No betrayal, no anger, no hatred, no fears,

Just love – only love – in your lifetime.

Thank you for being here. It isn't easy for any of us at this time. What has happened is a most harrowing experience for any family. To lose a child of such a tender age when you are expecting so much is particularly tragic. There are no words to express, or even come close to expressing, the grief that each of you must be feeling.

My name is Gary Rendal and I'm from the Toronto Secular Society. My role, as a Secularist, is to conduct a brief, non religious, ceremony and to offer what words of comfort can be found to help Alicia and Toby, who at this time are having to go through the harshest experience any parent can be asked to bear.

We meet here today, in a thoughtful and compassionate frame of mind, to mark and celebrate the brief life of Timmy. It may seem strange to speak of celebrating an existence so tragically short as just five years, but, as poets have observed through time, a lovely flower is no less beautiful because it bloomed for only a short time, and Timmy's life, for all its brevity, brought so much happiness to his family.

The cycle of life turns with generation succeeding generation. Death is the natural end and this is easier to accept when it comes, as it usually does, in old age at the end of a long and full life span. It is much more difficult to accept the death of a child; after all, death does not belong at the beginning of life. It is an affront to our perception of the natural order of things. Our children are meant to live on after us.

This then represents a double loss and is doubly hard to accept. As well as the Timmy who stepped for a too brief moment over the threshold of life, there is also the Timmy of your hopes and dreams. Your minds, your loves, will have been full of the realities of parenthood, grand parenthood and even great grand parenthood, and of expectations for the child who would grow through all the phases of childhood to manhood. And all that anticipation, all that wondering, has evaporated, leaving the harsh truth of what has happened, together with a profound sense of emptiness and unreality.

We have learned that grief, in its many guises, affects us in different ways and is not something to try and ignore; rather its expression is an acknowledgement that something precious has been lost – and it can help in adjusting to that loss, however terrible.

Here, for example, is a small poem I have written specially for this ceremony. It's based on a poem written by a mother who also lost her child in very similar circumstances. I am sure you will be able to identify with her feelings. She

wasn't a poet, she was just an ordinary mother who wanted to tell us how she felt;

We'll never see you smile again
We'll never hear you cry
The music of your laughter
And the joy of days gone by.

The five years that we knew you

Gave us so much joy.

The dreams and hopes we had for you

Our dearest, darling boy.

The memories we have of you
Will help to see us through.
You're in our hearts and in our thoughts
In everything we do.

So we'll talk and we'll cry
As we'll all share our sorrow
We'll remember our child
And we'll be brave - tomorrow.

There is LOVE
There is HEALING
There is HOPE.

The years will pass and the circumstances of Alicia, Toby and Timmy's extended family will change. There will be times when Timmy will fade very much into the background – but he will never disappear. There will be other times, at first hard to bear, when he will come very much to the foreground. We now know that the

acute emotional pain of early death is no reason to deny, or to blot out, the memory of the child who has died. We can still value and celebrate that life, and that memory, within the warm sanctuary of the family.

A wider circle of friends, and family are all affected and draw together empathetically to offer support and comfort to Alicia and Toby.

Now let's hear from one of those friends, someone who got to know Timmy well, his nursery school teacher, Evelyn Brooks.

EVELYN. It is a great privilege to be asked here today on behalf of the staff, children and parents of Happy Land Nursery.

From day one of Timmy's arrival into the nursery, his warm gentle and quiet personality shone through, in particular the way he would tilt his head to one side when he smiled at you, it won many a heart.

Although at times he could be shy, when he thought we weren't looking he would run wild just like the other children, he liked nothing better than playing with his nursery friends on the bikes and outdoor toys in the garden, but I think his favourite toy was most definitely Spider Man. Timmy had a special friendship with Helen and Jennifer and they always played together. Meal times were Timmy's favourite, he enjoyed both his food and the chitchat with all the children together.

When Timmy became ill the children maintained contact by way of cards drawings and they made a video for him of all the children sending love and messages.

Alicia and Toby kept regular contact with updates of Timmy's progress, which we were able to pass on to the children and their parents.

It was great to see Timmy return to the nursery after treatment, he even managed to join us in welcoming the Hamilton children's taxi outing, where he sat as proud as punch on the nursery big toy tractor waving to all the children.

Timmy also made a visit to the local primary school with a group of his friends,

both days he thoroughly enjoyed.

We all feel great sadness at the loss of Timmy who will always be in our thoughts and we hope these following words offer comfort to his parents and family.

Although words seem to say so little, we hope they help in some small way to ease the sense of loss that you are experiencing today.

Hold fast to your memories, to all of the cherished moments of the past, to the happiness and the laughter, the joys and the celebrations the sorrow and the tears.

They all add up to a treasure of fond yesterdays that you shared and spent together, and they keep the one you loved close to you in spirit and thought. The special moments and memories in your life will never change.

They will always be in your heart, today and forevermore.

GARY. Thank you Evelyn for those very kind thoughts.

What can we say about this marvellous little boy? He was an early talker. He brought sunshine into the lives of so many people. Timmy was just like most other children of his age when it came to those children's characters who capture the young imagination. As you heard, just like my own four year old grandson, he was a Spiderman fan. His room was decorated with the Spiderman motif. And, as you will have guessed from the music with which we opened this ceremony, another of his favourite characters was Winnie the Pooh. It seemed most appropriate to use this music on this occasion. He had the usual enthusiasm for games like snakes and ladders and hot wheels. He loved visits to the beach and he enjoyed cuddly animals, real cuddly toys like the rabbit he got for his 5th birthday. He gave it the name Blackie. And there was the kitten, a kitten he named Tania. Another great pleasure for Timmy was swimming. He loved the water and never showed any fear of it.

Timmy was a happy child who had a wisdom and maturity that belied his years.

As you heard he was good at making friends at nursery. Timmy had a superb

ability to interact with other children. His social skills were excellent. He was in the forefront of social skill development. Timmy was an intelligent little boy who could write his own name from the age of three. His parents are of the opinion that because he spent such a lot of time in hospital in the company of the medical staff, he developed a maturity beyond his years.

As you all know, Timmy had a tumour removed when he was only two years old. At one point it seemed as though the cancer he had was in remission, but it wasn't. Timmy went through sheer hell at times because of this terrible malady. But, he wasn't one for complaining or whinging. For a child of such tender years there was a nobility about him that older and wiser people might well be encouraged to emulate. This young boy was special in every sense of the word. Timmy is a light that will shine forever in your lives. During his short life he set up home in your heart. There he will stay, the happy, laughing, five year old who gave unconditional love. He is part of you as surely as your genes were part of him.

An unknown author has said;

Those we love remain with us,

For love itself lives on,

And cherished memories never fade

Because a loved one's gone

Those we love can never be

More than a thought apart,

For as long as there is memory

Timmy will live in our heart.

Inevitably, as part of their future, what has happened will help them come to a greater understanding and deeper compassion for others who may share the same experience. As a result, Timmy will have made his own contribution to life

and to the shared community which enables us to care for each other. Human life is based on caring.

All I can say is that grief goes hand in hand with love. The grief felt by the family for Timmy is a measure of the love that had already grown around him. That love must be turned into thoughtful care and support for each other and especially for Timmy's parent's Alicia and Toby and for Timmy's extended family. Everyone here will have their own perspective and their own thoughts about what has occurred, and the things I have had to say about it here today. We will now have a few moments of silent reflection for a private thought, and for you to remember Timmy and the effect he had on your life and the lives of others.

PAUSE. MUSIC - Gymnopedia No. 3 - Sate.

Thank you.

I have two loving messages from Timmy's extended family.

Stella and Arnold would like me to read this small dedication on their behalf:

'The heartache that we are now going through is only made more bearable by the joy he gave us in his short life. We will try to find comfort by remembering all the happy days we spent with him. But we will miss him forever.'

And from members of the family who weren't able to be with Timmy as often as they would have liked because of various genuine reasons. 'Little Timmy, we held you in our arms for such a short time, but you will be in our hearts forever. Sweet dreams little prince. '

As you will all know, Timmy could no longer fight this terrible cancer and he finally succumbed at home, in the bosom of his family last Thursday.

As a final tribute before we leave here, let's listen to this song by Celine Dion. It tells its own story.

CLOSING MUSIC - Fly - Celine Dion

The family would like to ensure that you all know that you are invited back to Balmoral House after the ceremony for light refreshments. The family would also like to thank the many friends and medical staff, especially those at Scarborough Children's Hospital, who have been so supportive over the years. There are far too many to mention but they will always be remembered for their kindness and dedication to the welfare of this very special little boy. We now come to the most difficult part of our formal farewell, when, in keeping with the natural cycle of life and death we return to nature that part of Timmy that cannot remain with us.

LEAVE PARLOUR FOR GRAVESIDE.

GRAVESIDE VALEDICTION

GARY. Timmy, you are a much loved and wanted child. So many people's thoughts are with you today, sending you love and cuddles to keep you warm. Mummy and Daddy want you to know just how special you really are and how much a part of their life you will always be.

(Move to the foot of Timmy's grave)

Here, in this last rite, immune to the changes and chances of his mortal lot,
Timmy's body we commit to nature. We are glad that we saw his face and
experienced the pleasure of his laughter. Timmy's memory is already committed
safe and warm to our hearts. Now is the time for us to let go of this beloved wee
boy in quietness of spirit. We leave this dear child in peace and with due regard,

honour, love and respect, we bid him farewell.

(Cast a flower into little Timmy's grave then step back))

In sorrow, but with much love and affection, we have been remembering the short but significant life of Timmy Vernon Jackson.

I'd like to end this simple, heartfelt and loving tribute to Timmy with a valediction used by native Canadians;

EACH NEW DAWN

I give you this one thought to keep;
I am with you still - I do not sleep.
I am a thousands winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.

I am the gentle autumn's rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush,

I am the swift uplifting rush

Of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not think of me as gone
I am with you still, in each new dawn.

Our short ceremony is now concluded, I would like to thank everyone who has come here today, and for the support that your presence symbolises. As a Secularist, I would ask you to turn that love you have for Timmy into support for his family at this very difficult time.

On behalf of the family, I'd like to, once again, invite all of you back to Balmoral House for light refreshments.

If you would like to place flowers and personal items in or by Timmy's grave, please feel free to do so as we leave this place of sadness.

CLOSE.

SAMPLE SCRIPT 5.

This is another script based on one compiled by my mentor, Robin Wood. It was a ceremony to celebrate the life of a young man who committed suicide. Such scripts are very difficult. Invariably total confusion reigns within a family if the reasons for the suicide aren't clear. Who can tell what goes through a person's mind when they decide that the quality of their life is such that it is no longer worth sustaining? Some cold, frightening and disquieting questions must inevitably reach into the minds of those remaining. Very often the 'blame game' kicks in and people, reasoning numbed by shock and disbelief, can be unpredictable. In these ceremonies, a low key response is invariably the best course. The how and the why of a suicide is for the next of kin to come to terms with through other agencies. The job of the celebrant is to highlight the positive aspects of the deceased's life. Whether or not to include humorous stories is very much a judgement call in consultation with the next of kin. When in doubt, leave them out.

Robin's script is a masterful piece of low key presentation. The beginning of paragraph three establishes that Simon 'chose' to do what he did. It was no one else's decision – it was Simon's.

And note, later in the script, - 'There is this consolation, Simon can never suffer more, never part again from his family and friends; from those he loves, he rests in perfect peace.' Throughout the ceremony the theme is that of Simon's choice. He chose not to go looking for help and comfort from his friends and family, nor did he choose to seek professional help. Those he left behind may not have approved of his method of dealing with his problems but, in the end, it was Simon who decided. However, this message is conveyed in a most subtle and compassionate manner. You will also note that the script doesn't contain any 'family folklore' or

humorous stories. Such an approach would simply be out of place. Although it does highlight the loving and 'gentle giant' image of Simon. His character is distilled but stories helping to define Simon's personality have been excluded.

As an exercise in playing a personal and family tragedy as sympathetically as possible, Robin's script and method is to be highly recommended.

FUNERAL OF SIMON EVANS AT NEWTON HEIGHTS CREMATORIUM. 21 JANUARY 2005

Opening Music: Pachelbel Canon in D

We are meeting here today to celebrate and remember the life of Simon Evans, and bring consolation to his family and friends gathered here today.

This will be a nonreligious ceremony reflecting best the views held by Simon. There will be no hymns or prayers; however there will be a period for quiet reflection when each of you will be able to remember Simon in your own particular way. My name is Tobias Jones. I am from the Welsh Secular Society and it is my privilege to have been asked by the family to officiate at this ceremony.

Secular funerals for those who have never attended one, are not only to mourn the loss of a dear friend and loved one, but also to celebrate the life of the departed.

Simon chose to leave this life now. Perhaps we will never know exactly why he took the decision he did. However, whenever a person dies and in whatever circumstances, it is natural for us, his family and friends, to say something of his life, to express a deep sense of loss and to say words of consolation.

All living things are subject to death; it is the basis of growth. Through evolution, in the course of millions upon millions of deaths, humanity has evolved. We carry this inheritance. But as human individuals we have a more personal contribution to make in the value of our own lives. And those of us who accept the unity and completeness of the natural order and

believe that to die means the end of conscious personality, look death in the face with honesty, with dignity and with calm.

It was two thousand years ago that Seneca wrote: "If I can choose between a death of torture and one that is simple and easy, why should I not select the latter? As I choose the ship in which I sail and the house which I inhabit, so I will choose the death by which I leave life."

So we are not here just to mourn but to celebrate Simon's life. It was a relatively short life, but I would suggest to you that our habit of measuring the worth or the quality of a life by its duration is a bad one. Time does not bring out what matters most in life. I can best illustrate what I mean by quoting the words of the great Russian novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn who wrote:

"Some people are bound to die young. By dying young a person stays young forever in people's memory. If he burns bright before he dies, his light shines for all time." It is this enduring brightness of Simon's life that I now want us to reflect upon.

Simon was born in Clapham, London in 1972, the second youngest in a family of four. He is survived by Bernard, Jemima and Ruth.

The family moved to Swansea in 1979 and Simon was educated at Pontyprith Primary School and Swansea Academy. He left school with few qualifications and during his working life undertook a variety of jobs. His recent employment was with Camberwell Engineering who employed Simon as an I.T. hygienist.

He will be sorely missed by the many people he came into contact with through his work as he moved from office to office. Everyone seemed to have a good word for him and described Simon as a "gentle giant".

He loved tinkering with things mechanical, particularly cars and many motors are on the road today thanks to Simon's ability and assistance. Sometimes he called upon one of his brothers to help him but, more often than not, it was one of his many friends.

His other interests included computers and watching TV. Although born in England, Simon considered himself very much a Welshman and supported all things Welsh.

He was a quiet introverted man whom people took to very easily; he was not political or religious or, if he was, he kept his thoughts to himself. However, he could be quite fiery when challenged and could give as good as he got.

The important things in Simon's life were his family. Besides his brother and sisters, there were Helen, Bill, Marge and Phil, his brothers and sisters-in-law and their children and, of course his mum and dad, Eunice and Gerald.

But above all, Simon was devoted to his two daughters Carol, and Alicia and he was so pleased to have recently become reconciled with his son Grant from an earlier relationship.

The circumstances of Simon's death are tragic; but let us remember the young man and what he achieved in his short life. He gave pleasure to his

family and to those who knew him well and he obviously helped many people who had mechanical problems to solve.

His Dad, Gerald, has written "It is often difficult to understand why we do what we do or even the reason why we do these things. That's why; when we care about a person (love them), we forgive their sins and trespasses."

There is a poem which reflects upon Simon. It is from "A Time To Dance" by Cecil Day-Lewis.

His laughter was better than birds in the morning, his smile

Turned the edge of the wind, his memory

Disarms death and charms the surly grave.

Early he went to bed, too early we

Saw his light put out; yet we could not grieve

More than a little while,

For he lives in the earth around us, laughs from the sky.

Helen Keller said "We bereaved are not alone, we belong to the biggest company in all the world, the company of those who have known suffering. When it seems that our sorrows are too great to be borne let us think of the great family of the heavy-hearted into which our grieving has given us entrance and, inevitably, we feel about us their arms, their sympathy, their understanding."

An unknown author said the following: "I often think that people we have loved and who have loved us, not only make us more human, but they become part of us. We carry them around all the time, whether we see them or not, and, in some ways, we are the sum total of those we have loved and those who have loved us."

The separateness, the uniqueness of each human life is the basis of our grief in bereavement. Look through the whole world and there is no one like the person you have lost. But Simon will live on in your memories and, though no longer a visible part of your lives, he will always remain a member of your family or of your circle, through the influence he has had on you and the special part he played in your lives.

Our lives, which were part of his life, go on, and the ripples of his life are still passing outward in known and unknown ways with those present, with those who have gone before and with those who are not yet born. Simon has his place in the procession of mankind and the procession of life.

There is this consolation, Simon can never suffer more, never part again from his family and friends; from those he loves, he rests in perfect peace.

I now ask you to sit quietly for a few moments whilst each of you remembers Simon in your own particular way, with gratitude and affection. And whilst you do this, we will listen to a song by Queen which was a favourite group of Simon's.

Music: Song by Queen.

Thank you

Will you now please stand for the committal.

Here in this last rite, immune to the changes and chances of our mortal lot, Simon's body we commit to nature. We are glad that we saw his face and felt the pressure of his hand. We cherish the memory of his sincerity and his friendship. And as we mourn here we are reminded that time and life passes and that there pass with it so many opportunities to do good. We leave our dear friend in peace and with respect we bid him farewell.

Please be seated.

Finally as we leave to continue our own voyage of discovery in this world, let us listen to the following poem by Birago Diop called "The Dead Are Not Dead" and which I hope will bring some comfort to you all gathered here today.

Those who are dead are never gone
They are there in the flickering shadow,
The dead are not under the earth
They are in the tree that rustles,
They are in the wood that groans,
They are in the water that runs,
They are in the hut, they are in the crowd,
The dead are not dead.

Those who are dead are never gone, They are in the breast of the woman, They are in the child who is wailing, They are in the firebrand that flames. The dead are not under the earth,
They are in the fire that is dying,
They are in the grasses that weep,
They are in the whimpering rocks,
They are in the forest, they are in the house.
The dead are not dead.

Thank you.

On behalf of the family, I would like to thank you for attending. Your attendance here is very much appreciated but the family trust that you will understand, if they feel unable to thank each of you personally after this ceremony.

Thank you.

Closing Music: "Now We Are Free" (from Gladiator) by Hans Zimmer

SAMPLE SCRIPT 6.

This script covers the tragic death of a handicapped woman who led a somewhat incident ridden life. For all that, she was a perpetual optimist and her nephew, a single man who was her only kin, thought that this should be captured in the ceremony. So there was the theme – 'The Eternal Optimist'.

Tommy, the nephew, as is frequently the case with such relatives, didn't know too much about his aunt Meg's early life. Since he was the only living relative I sought some further information from two of Meg's friends who also weren't aware of much of Meg's early life. So in the end I had to go with what I had been given and concentrate on Meg's optimism.

Tommy reckoned that there would be around fifty people at the ceremony some of which were handicapped and in wheelchairs and a number of elderly people. This meant that two things had to be taken into consideration; firstly, time would need to be allowed to let the FD arrange for those in wheelchairs and some of the elderly to be seated or placed appropriately around the graveside. Secondly, since there would be a number of elderly people at the graveside, a short version of the ceremony would need to be made available so that folk wouldn't be left standing, or in case there might be inclement weather. As it turned out the weather wasn't too good so the shorter version was used.

In this ceremony, although some might think it inappropriate given the circumstances of Meg's life, I used the poem 'All Is Well'. However Tommy had thought it was very appropriate because Meg had never looked upon herself as one of life's unfortunates. When I had been given the

opportunity to speak to two of her friends, they told me the same tale, Meg was always there for them – even though she was in a wheelchair and was generally housebound. A remarkable woman.

The script has the ceremony directions in bold type. What follows is a copy of the script given to the family immediately after the ceremony. The copy prepared for the organist, who handled the music, had additional instructions marked 'CD1 track 7', etc. These were highlighted in yellow. This helped the ceremony to flow smoothly.

TEXT OF THE
SECULAR CEREMONY
TO MOURN THE LOSS
AND CELEBRATE THE
LIFE OF MARGARET
SNEDDON
1925 – 2004

15TH SEPTEMBER, 2004,
AT GREGORY'S FUNERAL
PARLOUR AND
OBAN CEMETERY.

OFFICIATED BY HUGH HILL SECULAR SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND

OPENING MUSIC. Ella Fitzgerald – 'Moonlight In Vermont' with Louis Armstrong.

We are meeting here today to remember and to celebrate the life of Margaret Sneddon, known to everyone as Meg, and to bring consolation to her family and friends gathered here.

This will be a nonreligious funeral reflecting the views held by Meg. There will be no hymns or prayers; but there will be a period of quiet reflection when each of you will be able to remember Meg in your own particular way.

My name is Hugh Hill. I'm a member of the Secular Society of Scotland and it is my privilege to have been asked by the family to officiate at this ceremony.

The song you have just been listening to is 'Moonlight in Vermont' sung by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong. It was chosen not just because of Meg's particular fondness of Ella Fitzgerald but also because it serves, in some ways, as an analogy for Meg' own life. I'll come back to that point later.

Secular funerals for those who may never have attended one, are not only to mourn the loss of a dear friend and loved one, but also to celebrate the life of the departed. To record some of the family folklore, personal memories and recollections enjoyed by Meg and her family. It is a ceremony to celebrate the life that touched each one of us here today, in some way.

We also meet here to express in spoken word or in silence, full of tenderness, our tribute of respect and affection to Meg and to say our last farewell. We meet in solemnity but not in despair. In quiet submission of that which must be. All living things are subject to death; And those of us who accept the unity and completeness of the natural order, look death in the face with honesty, with dignity and with calm. But as individuals we have a more personal contribution to make through the value of our own life.

Death is a clearly a very personal matter for those who know it in someone close to them. But we are all concerned directly or indirectly with the death of any individual, for we are all members of the human community and no one of us is independent or separate. Though some of the links are strong and others may be tenuous, each of us is joined to all the others by links of kinship, love, or friendship, or by living in the same neighbourhood, town or country, or just simply by our own common humanity. As John Donne said, 'No man is an island.'

Meg was born in 1924 at Minishant, a small village in Ayrshire. Her father was a coal miner and her mother made artificial flowers both semi skilled trades in their own right in those days. Meg never really knew her father, he died when she was only two years old. There were also a brother and a sister in the family, Albert and Teresa. She attended Hopetown school until she was 14 years old. Meg had a variety of jobs as a teenager. All through her life she would seek jobs where she was always in contact with members of the public. This was Meg' nature. She was a highly gregarious individual and her choice of job invariably reflected this side of her character. For example, during the war she was a bus conductress. One other job she held was at Thornleybank, in a dress manufacturers.

It was at this time she met Ronald James Sneddon. The family remembers the story she used to tell about their first date. Ron disappeared for three weeks after that date and, naturally, we can assume that she thought he had lost interest. But that wasn't so. Poor Ron, he had come down with pneumonia and that's why she didn't hear from him. Anyway it sorted itself out and they got married in 1949. In 1958, Meg and Ron had decided to go and settle in Canada. Then, at that point in their early married life, they were offered a house in Oban. It was Canada's loss.

But that urge to travel didn't go away. As many of you know, Ron in his capacity as a baggage handler with British Airways, managed to get travel concessions which they used to good effect. Travelling abroad became a feature of their life together. It was almost a joint hobby of theirs. Even days out to the borders or up north became a regular event in their life. Meg and Ron had a happy marriage for 55 years.

Meg had her own hobbies. Cooking, and giving cooking advice whether it was wanted or not, was at the top of her list. Then came reading and music. One of her favourite authors was Dylan Thomas. Her taste in music ranged from pop through jazz to classics. She especially liked Mozart and many of the operatic arias. It would be nice to put yourself in the position of Meg and sit back and enjoy as she did this beautiful piece of music from the opera,' Madam Butterfly'. This is the Humming Chorus.

MUSIC - The Humming Chorus from Puccini's Madam Butterfly

As a couple Ron and Meg lived for and within each other. They had tried to start a family but it just wasn't to be. On no less than three occasions the child Meg was carrying didn't develop to maturity. They weren't just husband and wife, they were also best friends. And that was something Meg was good at – making, and keeping friends. Some of her childhood friends still kept in touch right up to the end.

In the days before dial out telephones you had to go through the operator.

It was a measure of her popularity that on some occasions the incoming caller had only to ask for Meg instead of giving the phone number. She was well known and well liked in this town.

Many of you will remember her from the jobs she held in various shops in Oban. Tommy, her nephew, recall with fondness her job in a local record shop. Auntie Meg used to make sure he got a copy of the latest top twenty releases as soon as they arrived in Oban.

Sadly, about twenty years ago, Meg was diagnosed with diabetes. Over the years her health became progressively worse and two years ago she entered hospital to have both legs amputated. It was during her hospitalisation that Ron died suddenly from a heart attack. A devastating blow in already distressing circumstances. We can't even begin to imagine what this tragic experience must have done to Meg. But, always a strong person, Meg's determination and fortitude meant that she came home to her house in Oban and got on with her life.

Meg never lost her sense of humour. She used to get around in her electric wheelchair like nobody's business. She became so expert it wouldn't have surprised anyone if she started doing wheelies in the lobby, and, from what I've learned of Meg, she probably did when nobody was looking. Her sense of humour was incredible for a woman in her position. She could find humour in her day to day life that most of us would have been hard pressed to come across. Last year Tommy asked her what she wanted for Christmas and Meg replied, 'anything, except a pair of slippers'. She was known to tell the doctor when he called at her door to come back later, she wasn't ready for him. What this usually meant was that she hadn't had time to hide the Thornton's chocolates and the vodka she had decided to add to her diet in spite of medical advice.

Meg was very independent so far as she could be and she was what we have come to describe as 'being her own person'. Even though she was going blind and her hearing was getting worse she was always ready to see the funny side of things. A great personality who always made callers feel welcome. She had a host of friends who frequently left feeling a lot better after visiting her. Such was the quality of this fine woman's character. And here is where we return to the analogy with our opening music by Ella Fitgerald and Louis Armstrong. The contrast between Ella's sweet melodic singing voice and Louis' rough, broken vocals was the difference between Meg's mind and her body. Her mind remained sharp, precise and alert while her body deteriorated. That's how she will be remembered. Oban will be a sadder place without her.

As you all know, Meg was recently taken back into hospital with a plethora of ailments. This grand lady finally succumbed last Wednesday. Each one here will have fond memories of Meg and I'm now going to ask you to sit quietly for a few moments and think of Meg in your own particular way.

PAUSE. MUSIC – 'Gymnopedie No.1' by Sate played very quietly.

Thank you.

Before we leave here there are many people Tommy would like to thank; good friends, caring hospital staff and home visitors. There are far too many to mention. Tommy has asked me to dedicate to all of you, this poem which helps to put a perspective on this sentiment.

ALL IS WELL

All Is Well

Death is nothing at all,

I have only slipped into the next room

I am I and you are you Whatever we were to each other that we are still. Call me by my familiar name Speak to me in the easy way that you always used Put no differences in your tone Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together Play, smile, think of me, speak of me Let my name be ever the household word that it always was Let it be spoken without effect Without the trace of shadow on it Life means all that it ever meant It is the same as it ever was There is unbroken continuity Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight? I am living in a quiet, peaceful corner of your heart Where you go I go, forever. So always remember, All is well.

After the poem by Henry Scott Holland 1847-1918

Thank you.

(DEPART FOR OBAN CEMETERY.)

CLOSING MUSIC - 'Koanga:La Calinda' by Delius.

GRAVESIDE EULOGY.

Ladies and gentlemen, may we have a few moments of silent respect before we say our last farewell to Meg.

(15 SECOND PAUSE)

Thank you. We will now continue with our last rite.

Here in this last rite, immune to the changes and chances of her mortal lot, Meg's body we commit to nature. We are glad that we saw her face and felt the pressure of her hand. We cherish her memory, her sincerity and her friendship. And as we mourn here, we are reminded that time and life passes and that there passes with it so many opportunities to do good. We leave our dear friend Meg in peace and with due regard, honour, love and respect, we bid her farewell.

(END BY CASTING A FLOWER INTO MEG'S GRAVE)

In sadness of her death but with appreciation of her life, we remember Meg. Finally, as we leave here to continue our own voyage of discovery in the world, let us listen to the following poem by Joyce Grenfell which was written in 1940 at the height of the London blitz.

If I Should Go Before The Rest Of You.

If I should go before the rest of you,

Break not a flower, nor inscribe a stone,

Nor, when I'm gone, speak in that Sunday voice,

But be the usual selves that I have known.

Weep if you must:
Parting is hell,
But life goes on
So...sing as well!!

On behalf of Meg' family, I would like to thank you all for attending and invite you to join them after the ceremony at Cameron Hotel in Oban for light refreshments.

From what I've learned of Meg, I have no doubts that she would be highly appreciative of the ceremony her family has arranged here today. And now, ladies and gentlemen, as officiate, it is my task to formally bring to a close this simple, heartfelt and loving tribute to this grand lady, Margaret Sneddon.

As you leave you may wish to place a flower in the grave of Meg. Thank you.

CLOSE.

SAMPLE SCRIPT 7.

The following is an actual script used at the funeral of a well known local resident. It is a simple, straightforward example of the formula used in this manual.

The deceased, Helen Downie, had written various notes and had left instructions about the type of ceremony she had wanted. It was a simple matter to fit Helen's notes into the script along with the eulogy of her son, Roger. Both her grandsons wanted to make a contribution so, because of a time restriction on this ceremony, I suggested they present the poetry, 'Farewell My Friends' and 'If I Should Go Before the Rest of You', which I would normally have read as part of the ceremony.

My thanks go to the family for their kind permission to use this script as it was written. As with many of the Secular scripts presented every year, this script contains material about a local personality who gave quite a bit to the community. Local historians regard such scripts as valuable sources of cultural history and, as a consequence, this particular script has been stored in the archives of the Carnagie Library in Ayr, Scotland. It isn't available to members of the general public but it is available to local historians who will, I am sure, make good use of it in the decades, even centuries, to come.

TEXT OF THE

SECULAR CEREMONY

TO MOURN THE LOSS,

AND TO CELEBRATE

THE LIFE, OF

HELEN DOWNIE

1921 - 2004.

9[™], OF JUNE, 2004. AT MASONHILL, AYR, CREMATORIUM.

OFFICIATED BY HUGH HILL,
SECULAR HUMANIST SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND

(OPENING MUSIC: Eriskay Love Lilt - Glasgow Orpheus Choir)

(HUGH) We are meeting here today to remember and to celebrate the life of Helen Downie, and to bring consolation to her family and friends gathered here.

The music you heard as we began this ceremony was 'The Eriskay Love Lilt' sung by the Glasgow Orpheus Choir and later I'll come back to the reason for this piece of music.

This will be a nonreligious funeral reflecting the views held by Helen. There will be no hymns or prayers; but there will be a period of quiet reflection when each of you will be able to remember Helen in your own particular way.

My name is Hugh Hill. I'm a member of the Secular Humanist Society of Scotland and it is my privilege to have been asked by the family to officiate at this ceremony.

Secular funerals, for those who may never have attended one, are not only to mourn the loss of a dear friend and loved one, but also to celebrate the life of the departed. To record some of the family folklore, personal memories and recollections enjoyed by Helen and her family. It is a ceremony to celebrate the life that touched each one of us here today, in some way.

So we are not here just to mourn but to celebrate Helen's life.

Helen was born in 1921 in a small town on the USA border with Mexico called Eagle Pass, so named because of the numerous eagle's nests in the

Pecos trees. Her father, Roger Carson, was the local drug store owner and her mother, also called Helen, was the local school cook, which is quite different from what we here in Scotland would call the 'dinner lady'. But let's listen to Helen's own words about her early life in that small border town. She left some notes about her life to which we will refer throughout this ceremony.

I was born in Eagle Pass, Texas, a small border town separated from Mexico by the Rio Grande River. I went to Elementary school and High school there, remembered for providing opportunities for extra-curricular activities like competitions for music memories, declamation and recitation, and the chance to participate in various occupations including journalism. On graduation from High School, I was off to the University of Texas, sorrowful that my father had died just two months previous. The intention I had of studying medicine was abandoned in favour of sociology. After four years, I was awarded a degree and a scholarship to Columbia University in New York, but met an RAF pilot who sang me 'cornkisters' and told me about Scotland before that university term began.

lan recalls that meeting in 1943. It was at what they called a 'gutter party' and it literally was held in the gutter. Word went out and the young folk met on a particular street corner and held a party. In wartime that wasn't unusual. Ian, who was a flying instructor to USA pilots at that time, was completely enamoured by this incredibly beautiful young woman. It turned out she worked at the airfield in the administration section. Ian, who looked the dashing young RAF officer complete with moustache, and who should really have been appearing in RAF recruitment posters, asked Helen out. Anyway, after what can only be called a whirlwind romance, they were married within six weeks in Eagle Pass. Ian recalls he sent a telegram home to his parent's in Aberdeen. It said, 'Just got married- stop. Letter and wife to follow – stop.'

Let's get back to Helen's notes; We married and I arrived in Scotland in 1943. That autumn, I was lucky enough to get a post at Torry nursery school- a sharp learning curve about local speech followed. Peace time and two children later, I started a pre-school group for American air force personnel at Prestwick.

There is a story from this period about Helen's early attempts to grasp the local dialect. One young child asked her for the 'lavvy', which meant the lavatory or rest room. Helen thought the child was asking for loving, so she simply put her arms around the poor child and gave him a cuddle.

It was around this time, in 1945, Helen and Ian's first child Roger, was born, then in 1948 along came Ann. Then in 1960, a second son Brian was born. Tragically, Brian died at the early age of 26 in a climbing accident, a blow from which no parent ever recovers.

Here to tell you about his mother is Roger.

(ROGER) My role is to celebrate Helen's life from the perspective of her children. When you are a child, if you are lucky enough to have loving parents as Ann and I did, you tend to take them for granted: they are simply there for you: to sort out the illnesses, quarrels and upsets of life; to provide your meals, your clean clothes; to encourage you to develop your talents, whatever they are. And for us, it was largely mum who did all this, since dad had to be out long hours earning a living in those threadbare post-war years.

It's only later that you begin to realise how remarkable these parents are. A whirlwind romance of a mere six weeks in war-time, leading to Helen forsaking the heat of Texas and all her family and friends...also giving up the alluring prospect of a postgraduate sociology degree in New

York...leaving all this to cross the dangerous Atlantic by convoy and join lan in the austerity of wartime Aberdeen. Her wedding message to him was: "Whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people will be my people and thy ways my ways". And she stuck to that pledge...they were a couple who were rarely apart...till she died last week, 61 years later.

Another thing you don't think of as a child: Helen's portraits from around her marriage show what a beautiful young woman she was. No wonder the Scottish pilot was so struck...and he was pretty dashing too.

For us growing up in 1950's Ayrshire, our American side marked us out as different. Christmas was a bigger event than for most Scottish kids at that time: always with a tree and masses of gifts from mysterious relatives abroad. Aunt Sophie, Uncle Arthur, Dorothy and Grandmother-in -Texas (all one word, always). The only downside was the absolute requirement to write thank-you letters...and Easter with cascarones, a Mexican custom of decorating eggshells and filling them with confetti... real leather cowboy and cowgirl suits. Birthdays with impossibly-tall angel-food cakes... playing card-games that no-one else had heard of like Flinch.

Mum actively encouraged our development, not only in school, but also beyond the curriculum. Music lessons: Ann tried piano: to be different, I went for the violin. But I note from mum's memoirs, written 10 years ago, that history repeated itself; she didn't practice much and neither did we, though Ann was the more assiduous. The same went for music and movement: I remember mum hopefully taking me to a gruesome organisation called the League of Health and Beauty: this was me and a bunch of girls in pretty dresses jumping about to music... which might have excited me a few years later, but not at 10! Again, in mum's memoirs, she didn't enjoy dancing lessons much.

But this was one of her characteristics: she wanted us to have the opportunity to try things for ourselves - even religion. Dad is famously an atheist; mum was a sort of Anglican, and we went to Sunday School to see for ourselves. She threw herself into the role of Sunday School teacher, sessions which were short on solemnity and long on enjoyment.

Helen had a life-long interest in good food and cooking, and encouraged us to be likewise: I'm pretty sure that her extravagant claim that I prepared the best possible home-made mayonnaise was her subtle way of developing my cooking skills: not so common in boys in those days; and I remember that our varied cuisine at home made me one of very few Ayrshire kids to enjoy the garlicky food on a school trip to France.

For mum and dad, good food combined naturally with lively conversation. A fact I've just learned is that Eagle Pass, on the Mexican border, where Helen grew up, is in Maverick County:" maverick = a person of independent or unorthodox views". Anyone who knew Helen knows that she was born in the right place: perhaps it was her independent outlook, rather different from the conservative norm in Eagle Pass, that attracted her to her radical Scottish pilot, as well as his piercing blue eyes... So our dinner table resounded with debate on world affairs, politics, the latest books, history, religion.. and we kids were fully encouraged to join in. For mum, it was natural that wide interests should be extended into higher education, not as automatic then as it is now. I remember she was a bit frustrated at the Scottish University tradition for specialisation: she liked the breadth of the American first degree, and argued with Glasgow's principal adviser of studies that I should combine history with science.

For me, mum's most surprising act of encouragement was into cricket.

When doing the housework on long summer's days, she would listen to the

radio and became captivated by the rich voice of John Arlott, describing mysterious happenings on the cricket field. She never went to a match, but bought me a cricket set, and I was hooked. She probably regretted it later, since the cricket field was not a good place to meet girls (another of her encouragements: she was always worried about the absence of the American dating system). Cricket wasn't so good for Ann either, as a younger sister got the unenviable task of perpetual fielder.

I've concentrated on some early personal memories, rather than on recent times. Helen later extended her nurturing role to being a welcoming gran, always glad to see her extended family and debate over the dinner table. And always posting interesting cuttings we might have missed in the newspapers. Her later years were greatly saddened by the tragic deaths of two fine young men, Brian and Stuart, but she bore these blows with great fortitude, never turning away from her interactions with the world.

Dad has told me that the main thing he wants said is how extremely lucky he was to find her. I'd add, on behalf of all our extended family, how fortunate we all have felt to be part of Helen's life: she gave us all so much, and with a self-effacing welcome we probably took too much for granted. We will all miss her deeply.

(HUGH) Thank you Roger.

Helen was a caring and loving person. Her Secular Humanist credentials are beyond question. Let's listen to more of the notes she has left us;

My major voluntary work was in the family planning service in Ayrshire and with Marriage Guidance. In 1968 I took teacher training at Craigie College and had Primary one classes for many years. My husband and I saw local press coverage about an organisation called Opportunities in Retirement,

and we joined it when it was just beginning, served as chair persons and then on the executive for some 10 years.

Helen's life, like every life, had its ups and downs. She mentioned these in her writings;

My major sorrows were my mother's death after sharing our home for 17 years, our younger son's death the same year and some years later, the death of one of my grandsons in a climbing accident.

What Helen clearly considered a major joy was her marriage to this Scotsman with the funny accent. As Roger has mentioned, they have been together for 61 years, a remarkable achievement. And now we come back to our opening music. This marriage was a love story, no question of that, and I'm certain that Helen would have wanted that fact recognised at this ceremony. Which is why we played one of the greatest love songs ever to have come out of Scotland and sung by the greatest songsters this country has produced? The Glasgow Orpheus Choir became famous in the early days of that marriage and its fame is legendary around the world to this day. The Eriskay Love Lilt seems a most appropriate tribute to lan and Helen.

Helen was good at making friends. There were so many of them. As a local teacher she was well known and highly respected in the community. We could spend the rest of the year eulogising Helen. She really did make a difference to so many lives.

As you all know, Helen suffered from cancer. It proved to be terminal. She finally succumbed last Friday at her home in Tarbolton. Unquestionably, the world is a sadder and poorer place without her.

At this point I'd like you to listen to a poem by Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian Nobel Prize winning author, and which is read by Ewan, one of Helen's grandson, which helps to get into perspective the thanks the family would like to pass on to the medical staff, the care staff and to the many friends friends who have been so supportive over the years. There are far too many to mention, but this poem is dedicated to all of you from Helen's family.

(Ewan reading)

FAREWELL MY FRIENDS

It was beautiful
As long as it lasted,
The journey of my life.

I have no regrets
Whatsoever save
The pain I'll leave behind.
Those dear hearts
Who love and care...
And the strings pulling
At the heart and spirit...

The strong arms
That held me up
When my own strength
Let me down

At every turning of my life

I came across

Good friends,

Friends who stood by me

Even when time raced me by.

Farewell, farewell
My friends.
I smile and
Bid you goodbye.
No, shed no tears
For I need them not.
All I need is your smile.

If you feel sad
Do think of me
For that's what I will like.
When you live in the hearts
Of those you love
Remember then,
You never die.

(Hugh) Thank you, Ewan.

This seems an appropriate moment to sit quietly and think about Helen In your own particular way.

(60 SECOND PAUSE; Silent Worship – Stuart Burrows, played very quietly.)

Thank you.

Our grief in bereavement is based on the separateness and the uniqueness of each human life. Look through the whole world and there is no one like the one you have lost. Nor will there ever be again. But she lives on in

your memories, and, though no longer a visible part of your life, Helen will always remain a member of your family, and a member of your personal circle, through the influence she has had on you, and the special part she has played in your life.

And at this point ladies and gentlemen. I invite you to stand for the committal

Here in this last rite, immune to the changes and chances of her mortal lot, Helen's body we commit to nature. Her memory is forever in our hearts. Her honesty, sincerity, kindness and friendship will remain with us. We have gained so much from our dear friend. Her contribution to this world can never be quantified. Now the time has come to leave our dear friend Helen in peace and with due regard, honour, love and respect, we bid her farewell.

Thank you. Please be seated.

In sadness of her death but with appreciation of her life, we remember Helen. Finally, as we leave here to continue our own voyage of discovery in the world, let us listen to the following poem by Joyce Grenfell which was written in 1940 at the height of the London blitz and read by Colin, another of Helen's grandson.

(Colin reading) If I Should Go Before The Rest Of You.

(Hugh) Thank you Colin.

On behalf of Helen's family, I would like to thank you all for attending and invite you to join them after the ceremony at the Burnbank Hotel in Maybole Road, Ayr, for light refreshments.

From what I've learned of Helen, I have no doubts that she would be highly appreciative of the ceremony her family has arranged here today. And now, ladies and gentlemen, as celebrant, it is my task to formally bring to a close this simple, heartfelt and loving tribute to Helen Downie.

Thank you.

(CLOSING MUSIC: Yellow Rose of Texas - Mantovani orchestra)

Poems and quotations.

REQUIEM

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor; home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.
Robert Louis Stevenson

If I SHOULD GO BEFORE THE REST OF YOU

If I should go before the rest of you,

Break not a flower, nor inscribe a stone,

Nor, when I'm gone, speak in a Sunday voice,

But be the usual selves that I have known.

Weep, if you must:

Parting is hell.

But life goes on

So ... sing as well!

Joyce Grenfell (Written 1940, at height of the London Blitz)

LOVE LIVES ON

Those we love remain with us,

For love itself lives on,

And cherish'd mem'ries never fade

Because a lov'd one's gone.

Those we love can never be

More than a thought apart,

For as long as there is memory

They'll live on in the heart.

Unknown Author

I fall asleep in the full and certain hope
That my slumber shall not be broken:
And that though I be all-forgetting,
Yet shall I not be all-forgotten,
But continue that life in the thoughts and deeds
Of those I loved
Samuel Butler

DYING SPEECH OF AN OLD PHILOSOPHER
I strove with none, for none was worth my strife:
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art:
I warm'd both hands before the fire of Life;
It sinks; and I am ready to depart.
Walter Savage Landor

Death stands above me, whispering low
I know not what into my ear:
Of his strange language all I know
Is, there is not a word of fear.
Walter Savage Landor

Extract from A TIME TO DANCE

His laughter was better than birds in the morning, his smile

Turned the edge of the wind, his memory

Disarms death and charms the surly grave.

Early he went to bed, too early we

Saw his light put out; yet we could not grieve

More than a little while,

For he lives in the earth around us, laughs from the sky.

Cecil Day-Lewis

IF I SHOULD DIE

If I should die and leave you here awhile,
Be not like others, sore undone, who keep
Long vigils by the silent dust, and weep.
For my sake, turn again to life and smile,
Nerving thy heart and trembling hand to do
Something to comfort weaker hearts than thine.
Complete these dear unfinished tasks of mine
And I, perchance, may therein comfort you!

Mary Lee Hall

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory;
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.
Percy Byshe Shelley

DO NOT STAND AT MY GRAVE AND WEEP

Do not stand at my grave and weep;
I am not there. I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow,
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn's rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there. I did not die.

Anonymous

(Found, addressed to his parents, among the belongings of Stephen Cummins, British Soldier killed in Northern Ireland, March 1989)

ANOTHER VERSION OF THE PREVIOUS POEM

EACH NEW DAWN

I give you this one thought to keep;
I am with you still – I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn's rain.
When you awaken in the morning's hush,
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not think of me as gone –
I am with you still – in each new dawn.
Anonymous (Canadian Native American origin)

IF IT MUST BE

If it must be
You speak no more with us,
Nor smile no more with us,
Nor walk no more with us,
Then let us take a patience and a calm.
For even now the green leaf explodes.
Sun lightens stone, and all the river burns.
Anonymous, from Central America

Never more will the wind cherish you again never more will the rain

Never more shall we find you bright in the snow and wind

The snow is melted the snow is gone, and you are flown:

Like a bird out of our hand, like a light out of our heart, you are gone.

Hilda Doolittle ("HD")

Come to the stolen waters

And leap the guarded pale,

And pull the flower in season

Before desire shall fail.

I shall not last for ever

No more than earth and skies:

But he that drinks in season

Shall live before he dies.

A E Houseman

With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot lads are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.
A E Houseman

FAREWELL

Farewell to Thee! But not farewell
To all my fondest thoughts of Thee;
Within my heart they still shall dwell
And they shall cheer and comfort me.

Life seems more sweet that Thou dids't live
And men, more true that Thou wert one;
Nothing is lost that Thou dids't give,
Nothing destroyed that Thou hast done.
Anne Brontë

THE DEAD ARE NOT DEAD

Those who are dead are never gone,

They are there in the flickering shadow,

The dead are not under the earth,

They are in the tree that rustles.

They are in the wood that groans,

They are in the water that runs.

They are in the hut, they are in the crowd,

The dead are not dead.

Those who are dead are never gone.

They are in the breast of the woman,

They are in the child who is wailing,

And in the firebrand that flames.

The dead are not under the earth.

They are in the fire that is dying.

They are in the grasses that weep.

They are in the whimpering rocks.

They are in the forest, they are in the house.

The dead are not dead.

Birago Diop
(A francophone Senegalese, born 1906, died 1990)

THE DEAD

These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,
Washed marvellously with sorrow, swift to mirth.
The years have given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,
And sunset, and the colours of the earth.
These had seen movement, and heard music; known
Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friended;
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;
Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended.

There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,
Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance,
A width, a shining peace, under the night.
Rupert Brooke

EXTRACT FROM FOR THE FALLEN (1917)

They shall not grow old, as we are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning

We will remember them.

Lawrence Binyon

IMAGINE

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today...

Imagine there's no countries

It isn't hard to do

Nothing to kill or die for

And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Lving life in peace...

Imagine no possessions

I wonder if you can

No need for greed or hunger

A brotherhood of man

Imagine all the people

Sharing all the world...

You may say I'm a dreamer

But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us

And the world will be as one.

John Lennon

EPITAPH ON MY EVER HONOURED FATHER

O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious rev'rence, and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father and the gen'rous friend;
The pitying heart that felt for human woe,
The dauntless heart that feared no human pride;
The friend of man – to vice alone a foe;
For "ev'n his failing lean'd to virtue's side."
Robert Burns

REMEMBER

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land:
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you planned:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.
Christina G Rossetti

SONG

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet;
And if thou wilt, remember;
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale

Sing on, as if in pain;
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.
Christina G Rossetti

SO MANY DIFFERENT LENGTHS OF TIME

How long does a man live, finally?
Is it a thousand days, or only one?
One week, or a few centuries?
How long does a man's death last?
And what do we mean when we say, "gone forever" *

Adrift in such preoccupations, we seek clarification.

We can go to the philosophers,
but they will weary of our questions.

We can go to the priests and the rabbis,
but they might be too busy with administrations.

So, how long does a man live, finally?

And how much does he live while he lives?

We fret, and ask so many questions –

then when it comes to us

the answer is so simple.

A man lives for as long as we carry him inside us, for as long as we carry the harvest of his dreams, for as long as we ourselves live,

holding memories in common, a man lives.

His lover will carry his man's scent, his touch;

His child will carry the weight of his love.

One friend will carry his arguments,

another will hum his favourite tunes,

another will still share his terrors.

And the days will pass with baffled faces,
then the weeks, then the months,
then there will be a day when no question is asked,
and the knots of grief will loosen in the stomach,
and the puffed faces will calm.
And on that day, he will not have ceased,
but will have ceased to be separated by death.
How long does a man live, finally?

A man lives so many different lengths of time.

Brian Patten, after Pablo Neruda

*¿Cuanto vive el hombre por fin?
¿Vive mil dias o uno solo?
¿Una semana o varios siglos?
¿Per cuanto tiempo muere el hombre?
¿Que quiere decir "para siempre"?

Preocupado per este asunto me dedique a aclarar las cosas.

Pablo Neruda

AFTERWARDS

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new spun silk, will the neighbours say,
"He was a man who used to notice such things"?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,
"To him this must have been a familiar sight".

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,

But he could do little for them; and now he is gone".

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door.

Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,

Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,

"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things".

Thomas Hardy

HEREDITY

I am the family face;
Flesh perishes, I live on.
Projecting trait and trace
Through time to time anon,
And leaping from place to place
Over oblivion.

The years-heired feature that can
In curve and voice and eye
Despise the human span
Of durance – that is I;
The eternal thing in man,
That heeds no call to die.
Thomas Hardy

This poem by Rabindranith Tagore is particular favourite of mine. It has been slightly adapted to retain the context of a Secular ceremony. I've also adapted the following version when the family considers that the deceased had a bad time either through illness, penury or some such. The word 'heart' clearly means 'feelings', and the word 'spirit' I take to mean the person's personality, sense of self, introspective self. I frequently use this poem in my ceremonies as a general 'thank you' by prefixing it with the following paragraph;

'At this point I'd like to read you a poem by Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian Nobel Prize winning author, which helps to get into perspective the thanks the family would like to pass on to the many friends and medical staff who

have been so supportive over the years. There are far too many to mention, but this poem is dedicated to all of you from Andrew's family. It's entitled 'Farewell My Friends'. This is the alternate version to that used in funeral sample script 7.

It was strewn with trials
And it was often hard
As long as it lasted,
The journey of my life.

But I have no regrets
Whatsoever save
The pain I'll leave behind.
Those dear hearts
Who love and care ...
And the strings pulling
At the heart and spirit ...

The strong arms

That held me up

When my own strength

Let me down.

At every turning of my life
I came across
Good friends,
Friends who stood by me
Even when time raced me by.

Farewell, farewell

My friends

I smile and
Bid you goodbye.
No, shed no tears
For I need them not
All I need is your smile.

If you feel sad
Do think of me
For that's what I would like
When you live in the hearts
Of those you love
Remember then
You never die.

Rabindranath Tagore

FUNERAL BLUES

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead

Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,

Put crèpe bows round the white necks of the public doves,

Let the traffic policeman wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East, my West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.
W H Auden

THE JOY OF LIVING

Farewell you Northern Hills, you mountains all, goodbye:
Moorland and stony ridges, crags and peaks, goodbye.

Gylder Fach farewell, Cul Beig, Scafell, cloud bearing Suilven.

Sun-warmed rock and the cold of Bleaklow's frozen sea —
The snow and the wind and the rain on hills and mountains.

Days in the sun and the tempered wind and the air like wine,
And you drink and you drink till you're drunk on the joy of living.

Farewell to you, my love, my time is almost done.

Lie in my arms once more until the darkness comes.

You filled all my days, held the night at bay, dearest companion.

Years pass by and are gone with the speed of birds in flights.

Our life like the verse of a song heard in the mountains,

Give me your hand then, love, and join your voice with mine,

We'll sing of the hurt and the pain and the joy of living.

Farewell to you, my chicks, soon you must fly alone.

Flesh of my flesh, my future life, bone of my bone.

May your wings be strong, may your days be long, safe be your journey.

Each of you bears inside of you the gift of love,

May it bring you light and warmth and the pleasure of giving;

Eagerly savour each new day and the taste of its mouth, Never lose sight of the thrill and the joy of living.

Take me to some high place of heather, rock, and ling,
Scatter my dust and ashes, feed me to the wind,
So that I will be part of all you see, the air you are breathing –
I'll be part of the curlew's cry and the soaring hawk,
The blue milkwort and the sundew hung with diamonds;
I'll be riding the gentle wind that blows through your hair,
Reminding you how we shared in the joy of living.
Words sung by Ewan MacColl

SPELL OF SLEEP

Let him be safe in sleep

As leaves folded together

As young birds under wings

As the unopened flower.

Let him be hidden in sleep

As islands under rain,

As mountains within their clouds,

As hills in the mantle of dusk.

Let him be free in sleep

As the flowing tides of the sea,

As the travelling wind on the moor,

As the journeying stars in space.

Let him be upheld in sleep

As a cloud at rest on the air,
As a sea-wrack under the waves
When the flowing tide covers all
And the shells' delicate lives
Open on the sea-floor.

Let him be healed in sleep
In the quiet waters of the night
In the mirroring pool of dreams
Where memory returns in peace,
Where the troubled spirit grows wise
And the heart is comforted.

Kathleen Raine

No single thing abides; but all things flow.

Fragment to fragment clings – the things thus grow

Until we know and name them. By degrees

They melt, and are no more the things we know.

Globed from the atoms falling slow or swift
I see the suns, I see the systems lift
Their forms; and even the systems and the suns
Shall go back slowly to the eternal drift.

Thou too, oh earth – thine empires, lands and seas –
Least, with thy stars, of all the galaxies,
Globed from the drift like these, like these thou too
Shall go. Thou are going, hour by hour, like these.

Nothing abides. Thy seas in delicate haze

Go off; those mooned sands forsake their place;
And where they are, shall other seas in turn
Mow with their scythes of whiteness other bays ...

The seeds that once were we take flight and fly,
Winnowed to earth, or whirled along the sky,
Not lost but disunited. Life goes on.
It is the lives, the lives, that die.
Lucretius, translated W H Mallock

For, thou shalt sleep and never wake again,
And, quitting life, shall quit all loving pain;
But we, thy friends, shall all those sorrows find
Which in forgetful death thou leavs't behind.
Lucretius, translated Dryden

HERACLITUS

They told me, Heraclitus, they told me you were dead,

They brought me bitter news to hear and bitter tears to shed.

I wept as I remember'd how often you and I

Had tired the sun with talking, and sent him down the sky.

And now that you are lying, my dear old Carian guest,

A handful of grey ashes, long, long ago at rest,

Still are thy pleasant voices, thy nightingales, awake;

For Death, he taketh all away, but them he cannot take.

Callimuchus, translated by William Johnson Cory

DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

Do not go gentle into that good night,

Old age should burn and rave at close of day;

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight.

And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay, Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Dylan Thomas

COMPOST

Once I've bade my last goodbye, cut the cord to take my leave,
Don't be sorrowful and cry or sit in solitude and grieve.
Shout me your last farewell, making sure I'm dead asleep,
Then without prayers or tolling bells just dump me on the compost heap.

Play for me some red-hot jazz, then some Benny Goodman swing,
Jive and twist and razzamatazz, joke and laugh, and dance and sing.
Be happy through the night-long wake, don't think about me being missed,
Just carry on for old time's sake 'til everyone's completely pissed.

Then go your ways and be not sad, and think about me not at all,

Except if things go really bad, when all you have to do is call.

Go to where the compost's spread, shout my name up to the sky,

And if you wake me from the dead, you'll not be more surprised than I.

Don Lampard, 1923 – 2000

(The above was read at the author's own funeral in 2000. It has never been officially published. His widow is happy for the poem to be used by us any time, but anyone using it should always mention the name of the author, who came from Ayrshire in Scotland.)

A little while and you will be nobody and nowhere,
nor will anything you now behold exist;
nor one of those who are now alive.

Nature's law is that all things change and turn, and pass away,
so that in due order
different things may come to be.

Marcus Aurelius

Not How Did He Die, But How Did He Live?

Not, how did he die, but how did he live?

Not, what did he gain, but what did he give?

These are the units to measure the worth

Of a man as a man, regardless of birth.

Not what was his church, nor what was his creed?

But had he befriended those really in need?

Was he ever ready, with word of good cheer,

To bring back a smile, to banish a tear?

Not what did the sketch in the newspaper say,

But how many were sorry when he passed away?

ANONYMOUS

Love You Mum

Everything I ever learnt
Has all come from one source,
And who was that great teacher
It was you, my Mum, of course.
Watching me through childhood
Teaching me right from wrong,
Filling my life with happiness
By making me belong.
I think you did a great job Mum
When I look at us today,
We respect and love each other
In every single way.

Taken from a card produced by Alan Guest.

Miss You Mum, Goodnight.

When I think about the old days
I want them back again,
Our house was always happy
And full of laughter then.

We'd all be there together

Content in every way,

Then the mainstay of the family

Simply went away.

We, all of us, do the best we can
But it will never be the same,
We can't tell you how often
We all still speak your name.

All I wish is that once more

Before I lower the light,
I could only kiss her on the cheek
And say..."I love you, Mum. Goodnight".

Author unknown.

THE UNKNOWN SHORE

Some time at eve when the tide is low
I shall slip my moorings and sail away
With no response to a friendly hail
In the silent hush of a twilight pale.
When the night stoops down to embrace the day
And the voices call in the water's flow.

Sometime at eve when the water is low
I shall slip my moorings and sail away
Through purple shadows
That darkly trail o'er the ebbing tide.
And the unknown sea,
And a ripple of waters' to tell the tale
Of a lonely voyage sailing away
To mystic isles
Where at anchor lay the craft of those who sailed before
O'er the unknown sea
To the unknown shore.

A few who watched me sail away
Will miss my craft from the busy bay.
Some genial barques were anchored near
Some loving friends my heart held dear
In silent sorrow will drop a tear.
But I shall have peacefully furled my sail
In moorings sheltered from the storm and gale
And greeted friends who sailed before
O'er the unknown sea
To the unknown shore.

Anonymous.

I AM THERE

Look for me when the tide is high
And the gulls are wheeling overhead
When the autumn winds sweep the cloudy sky

And one by one the leaves are shed

Look for me when the trees are bare

And the stars are bright in the frosty sky

When the morning mist hangs in the air

And shorter darker days pass by.

I am there where the river flows
And the salmon leaps to a silver moon
Where the insects hum and the tall grass grows
And sunlight warms the afternoon.

I am there in the busy street
I hold your hand in the city square
In the market place where the people meet
In your quiet room – I am there

I am the love you cannot see And all I ask is – look for me.

Unknown author

SHORT FUNERAL PROSE READINGS

It is often said that something may survive of a person after his death, if that person was an artist and put a little of himself into his work. It is perhaps in the same way that a sort of cutting taken from one person and grafted onto the heart of another continues to carry on its existence even when the person from whom it has been detached has perished.

Marcel Proust

from À La Recherche du Temps Perdu (Remembrance of Things Past)

I want to be thoroughly used up when I die ... Life is no frail candle to me. It's a sort of splendid torch which I've got to hold up for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to the future generations.

George Bernard Shaw

I often think that people we have loved and who have loved us, not only make us more human but they become a part of us. We carry them around all the time, whether we see them or not and, in some ways, we are the sum total of those who have loved us and those we have loved.

Unknown author

He is lucky who, in the full tide of life, has experienced a measure of the active environment that he most desires. In these days of upheaval and violent change, when the basic values of today are the vain and shattered dreams of tomorrow, there is much to be said for a philosophy which aims at living a full life while the opportunity offers. There are few treasures of more lasting worth than the experience of a way of life that is, in itself, wholly satisfying. Such, after all, are the only possessions of which no fate, no cosmic catastrophe, can deprive us; nothing can alter the fact if, for one moment in eternity, we have really lived.

Eric Shipton, mountaineer

We bereaved are not alone, we belong to the biggest company in all the world, the company of those who have known suffering. When it seems that our sorrows are too great to be borne let us think of the great family of the heavy-hearted into which our grieving has given us entrance and, inevitably, we feel about us their arms, their sympathy, their understanding.

Helen Keller

ON THE DEATH OF HIS BROTHER ("AVE ATQUE VALE")

I come, my brother, to these sad rites, to perform the last obsequies and speak in vain to your silent ashes; for fate has snatched, even thee, away from me. Alas! My brother, so cruelly torn from me, accept at least these funeral gifts, much beloved with a brother's tears, which, by ancestral custom, have been laid here as offerings to the dead; and for ever, brother, hail and farewell.

Catullus

Become accustomed to the idea that death is nothing to us. For all good and evil consists in sensation, but death is deprivation of sensation. And therefore a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not because it adds to it an infinite span of time, but because it takes away the craving for immortality. For there is nothing terrible in life for the man who has truly comprehended that there is nothing terrible in not living.

Epicurus

ON SUICIDE

If I can choose between a death of torture and one that is simple and easy, why should I not select the latter? As I choose the ship in which I sail and the house which I inhabit, so will I choose the death by which I leave life.

Seneca

Some people are bound to die young. By dying young a person stays young forever in people's memory. If he burns bright before he dies, his light shines for all time.

Solzhenitsyn

ENDNOTES.

There is much we haven't covered but, considering that this manual is intended for beginners, there is sufficient material to ensure that almost all of the funerals at which you will be asked to officiate can be handled quite effectively. Of course there will be the odd curve ball, life wouldn't be the same without them, would it?

Euthenasia.

A suicide by any other name would ..., well, maybe not. Euthenasia, in many countries is considered to be a taboo. Assisted suicide is still illegal in most countries. However in the United States, the state of Oregon legalized assisted suicide in 1997 and it has been legal in the Netherlands since 2002, Belgium since 2002, and Switzerland since 1941. Much controversy still surrounds this subject. Does a person have the right to decide when to end their life when the quality of that life has become untenable? Whatever your opinion, I suggest you keep it to yourself. In a case of voluntary euthanasia, a celebration of life is called for, tempered with the need to contrast the best of the deceased's life with the need to reassure the family that the decision of the deceased, under the circumstances, was correct. Remember, we aren't judgemental.

Double deaths.

Accidents can frequently claim the lives of partners. In many cases a double funeral is called for. Obviously there is a relationship between the deceased which should be addressed. Tragic accidents usually don't call for an element of humour.

Multiple deaths.

In this case the tragedy that led to this circumstance must be the main theme. The value of the lives lost can never be overstated.

Death by murder.

Oftentimes such a ceremony will be many weeks, or even months after the event. Usually there has been sufficient time to consult the family on the ceremony down to the fine detail. This isn't the time to go to town on the lack of gun control, or whatever. Political messages should be left to the family and the lawyers and they should be kept out of the ceremony. Here is another tragedy, similar to an accident, where the life cut short could be the theme.

When there is no body.

Tricky one this. What do we do when we come to that part off the proceedings that would normally be our last rites? Once again there will probably be time to consult with the next of kin. In effect a memorial ceremony will be taking place. If the NOK want the last rite read then by all means do so. The fact that the actual deceased isn't present really shouldn't present a problem. The last rite helps to facilitate some kind of closure, however unsatisfactory, for the NOK and the deceased's friends, so, why not? The song, 'I Ain't Got No Body', is not an appropriate joke.

Infanticide.

How can anyone deal with such an evil act within a Secular ceremony? There are no words of consolation and we have to be prepared to admit that salient fact. But what we can't and shouldn't do is dwell on the horror of an infanticide. As in all infant deaths, the emphasis must be on the life cut tragically short. What could have become of that life if it hadn't been so traumatically taken away? Try treating the ceremony as a normal infant death which, in itself, is tragic enough.

9.

OTHER CEREMONIES.

'Bless This House' use to be an old television comedy series. The title was based on a commonly held notion that a house could genuinely be blessed by some divine spirit. A piece of nonsense you may say, and you would be correct, however, many of the ceremonies we carry out as Secularists arise from ceremonies carried out by the religions. This simply follows on from ceremonies the churches took over from their predecessors, back into antiquity. So, when we think of other ceremonies, we can safely think of those ceremonies done by the churches and which are now still being requested by people - but without the religious element. In addition we are devising our own ceremonies where none exist – but should or could.

Consider tradition for a moment. Does tradition and ceremony within a culture go hand in hand? My contention is that, in the main, it does. Where there is tradition there is likely to be a place for ceremony. Rites of passage are the obvious example but there is, in addition, cultural rites which could be addressed and marked by ceremony. Going back to 'Bless This House', there is a tradition in many cultures called a 'house warming'. Often this is accompanied by a minor religious ceremony. Quite clearly, here is a tradition which is a candidate for a Secular ceremony. Already there are ceremonies for celebrating the menopause, the opening of a new building, the opening of a new facility such as a new funeral parlour, the

launching of a new boat, and many others. Let's briefly look at some other potential candidates.

How about;

When an adolescent leaves home?

A special milestone birthday? 16? 18? 65? 70? 80? 90? Certainly 100 years old.

Foundation laying ceremony for a new house?

Retirement?

Personal degree award ceremony within a family?

Coming home ceremony?

Going away ceremony?

Launch of a new business venture?

Beginning school?

Leaving school?

Launch of a charity campaign?

Launch of a campaign to further the community – new hospital, school, health clinic, etc.?

Launch of a new product that will benefit the community?

A new football team?

A new street or housing scheme?

A new school? (this is a must).

Any education establishment?

Major science projects?

The inauguration of a president?

The confirmation of a Atheist Humanist celebrant?

The list goes on to infinity. As with all of our ceremonies the composition and the criteria for selection of where and when Secular ceremony takes place is based not on a set of rules but on a set of universal Secular principles. But, as Shakespeare says, 'Aye, there's the rub'. The

Humanist manifesto agreed at the Amsterdam Conference of 2002 is as good a guide as any. It doesn't lay down a set of rules but it certainly gives a clear set of principles by which Secular Humanists could live. As a starting point for constructing a ceremony, where better place to begin?

The point, which you will already have gathered, is that Secularism quite naturally pervades every sector of our society. Sadly it has been hijacked by the religions who have grabbed our Secularism and subsumed it into a set of rules designed to create a particular religious power foundation. Our Secularism has been swamped by religious superstition. When we claim that there are religious people who are good people, we are in reality, highlighting the fact that there are religious people who are exhibiting the Secular ethics to which we all aspire. The Secularism was there before the religions claimed it for themselves. It hasn't gone away, but it is certainly obscured by religious nonsense.

The religious nonsense flows like a stinking river through our society and one of its major routes is via ceremony and symbolism. We need to remind people that Secularism is the basis of all that is good and decent in our society. Ceremonial and symbolism can do just that. Positive ceremonies reflecting the high ethical standards of our philosophy will go a long way to re-establishing our Secularism.

10.

WHAT WE HAVEN'T COVERED.

Coming of age ceremonies.

Coming of age? When? 14, 16, 18 or 21? Remember that a coming of age ceremony for a fourteen year old won't be the same as that for a twenty one year old. Consultation with the family will determine the ceremony to be used. In general a coming of age ceremony will celebrate the transition from an adolescent to an adult. Gear your presentation to this particular rite of passage. Ensure that the subject of the ceremony is consulted. It wouldn't do for the celebrant to simply reiterate the parent's wishes for the adolescent to act like an adult in accordance with the parent's concept of what constitutes adulthood. It is a ceremony to emphasise the need for existing adults, especially parents, to help the adolescent through what can be a very difficult transition. It is also an opportunity to remind the adolescent that adult advice isn't always bad. 'Think for yourself – in earnest', seems a reasonable approach.

Change of name ceremonies.

This has been covered in passing during the chapter on naming ceremonies. Again, discovering why a change of name ceremony is being requested will usually dictate the approach to be taken. Full consultation will allow a ceremony to develop. Initially though, a good framework on which to hang your ceremony would be a normal adult naming ceremony to which the subject's wishes have been superimposed.

Divorce ceremonies.

Usually this is celebrated by a more sombre version of the hen or stag party. Invariably a divorce ceremony will be a prelude to a good party. Don't be used as a slanging machine. There is an element of tragedy when a marriage breaks down and ends in divorce. The circumstances of the divorce, remember you will only be hearing one side, will dictate what sort of ceremony you can agree with the person celebrating. Remember that word 'agree'. If you feel you are only being used as ammunition in a hostile post marital battle, decline the ceremony. Be careful, - you have been warned.

Burials at sea.

A burial at sea is very rare and the likelihood is that you will never be called upon to conduct such a ceremony. It is virtually the same as a normal burial except that your last rite wording at the committal stage would read – "... Bill's body we commit to the deep...", instead of, "... Bill's body we commit to nature...".

Scattering of ashes

Short and sweet. Unless there is going to be a large number of people present, a scattering of ashes will usually be brief and to the point. Family members who might have been reluctant to stand up and give a speech at the actual funeral might be persuaded to say something in the comfort of a small, intimate family group. Spoken tributes will be much more informal and personal. The family will take a greater role in this ceremony and the

celebrant will have only to knit it all together and repeat an appropriate version of the last rite.

Scattering of ashes at sea or into a river are common ceremonies. The phrase, "we confine Bill's ashes to the deep are, of course appropriate for a sea scattering whilst ashes scattered into a river could still carry the phrase, "we confine Bill's ashes to nature". Bear in mind that in most cases, the scattering of ashes into a river usually requires some kind of permission from the river authority.

One last point; make sure the wind is at your back.

Memorial or commemoration ceremonies.

A memorial ceremony will depend on the reason for the ceremony in the first place. For those who have fallen in a war, a memorial ceremony should indicate the justification for the victims who made the ultimate sacrifice – however difficult that might be for the celebrant. For victims of war, which could include those soldiers who gave their lives, the emphasis could be on the failure of humankind to find less barbaric solutions to age old problems.

Whatever the occasion, the ceremony scripted by the celebrant should reflect the tone of the event, otherwise it might be an idea to decline to do the ceremony. In these instances we should always be aware that we don't use these occasions to make political statements. It isn't the time or the place. Because religious extremists use funerals and memorial ceremonies to whip up anti social hysteria doesn't mean we should follow suit. Secularism is about alternative lifestyles to those being proffered by the religions.

In the case of memorial ceremonies for the great and the good, like Isaac Asimov for example, there will never be a shortage of material to compile a really good script. And the same applies to John Smith, the man next door who may have been buried a month ago. By the time the memorial

ceremony comes along a lot of useful material should have been gathered and guest speakers prepared.

Departure ceremonies.

The favourite son or daughter is leaving home to work with UNICEF or going to university. The ceremony should consist of the achievements of the person leaving. How did this come about? The hopes and aspirations of the family for the person leaving. Emphasise the love, the support and the good wishes of the family. "... you leave us here tomorrow, but remember you carry us with you and we will always be here for you at the end of a phone... "In otherwords, "don't forget to phone your mother".

Green earth burial ceremonies.

In our environmentally aware age, green earth burials are becoming more popular. The ceremony should follow the usual burial procedures but with a plan 'B' in case of inclement weather. A local hall, even a local church hall, could be hired for the ceremony before proceeding to the site of the intended burial. All symbolism should be environmentally friendly. The coffin will probably be made of wicker or cardboard which will have been arranged by the funeral director or the family. Evergreen cuttings can be used to place in the grave as a symbol of the return to nature. It will generally be left to the family or the funeral director to replace the earth in the burial site but the family might well want to take part in a symbolic spadeful of earth ceremony to complete the proceedings. In some cultures it will be the sons who will fill in the grave after the funeral. Green earth burial ceremonies are still developing as we become more environmentally conscious. In some countries green earth burial sites have been established in various locations which should be known by your local ceremonies advisor. Once again, these burials will probably require some sort of permission from the local authorities.

Anniversary ceremonies.

Like commemorative ceremonies these should be organised in accordance of the wishes of the client. Fairly straightforward celebration of an event or person. A wedding anniversary ceremony should be similar to a restatement of vows ceremony – without the vows.

Music.

As we all know, music can enhance or diminish a ceremony. Mostly, especially in funerals or weddings, the music should be the choice of the family and should evoke some memory, public or very private and personal. In some cases the celebrant will be asked to suggest an appropriate piece of music. At a funeral, during the period of quiet contemplation, I generally suggest to the family that Debussy's 'Clair de Lune' on the solo piano could be played very quietly and unobtrusively in the background. Some celebrants prefer complete silence during this period. It is simply a matter of taste. But always be aware that music is extremely important in your ceremonies.

'C'mon Baby, Light My Fire' is not an appropriate song for a cremation.

Some favourite pieces of pop(?) music used at mainly funerals, are;

Sinatra – My Way (Top of the list for popularity)

Lennon - Imagine

Streisand - Memories

Glenn Miller - Moonlight Serenade

'Forever Autumn' from Jeff Wayne's 'War Of The Worlds'

Classical pieces include extracts from Beethoven's 6th symphony; Debussy's 'Clair de Lune'; Satie's 'Gymnopedia No.1 and 3'; Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons'; Pavarotti's rendition of 'Nessun Dorma'; Dvorak's symphony No.9; Albinoni's 'Adagio for organ and strings'; Pachelbel's 'Canon'; Puccini's 'Humming Chorus' from 'Madam Butterfly'; our world is full of beautiful and evocative music that can bring a ceremony to life. Build your own collection of favourites that you can suggest to people when they would like music but 'aren't quite sure'.

One funeral I did was for a family who had lost the breadwinner to an asthma attack. He was a man in his early forties who was an Elvis Presley impersonator. Presley was his idol. The ceremony took almost three hours. The deceased was cremated in his Presley suit and the music played was straight pop. Each member of the family had a musical tribute which they introduced themselves. The widow had played as her tribute, Tina Turner singing her hit, '(You're Simply) The Best'. There were over 300 people present. They tapped their feet, they applauded, they laughed at the stories, they wept, they expressed their love for this devoted father, son, brother and husband. It was the most enjoyable, (if that expression can be used) funeral I've ever conducted. A copy of the script, with the permission of the widow, is now in the historical archives of the district library for the benefit of future generations. Never underestimate the power of music in your ceremonies.

Local customs.

In some places the use of garlands of flowers is a local custom during almost any ceremony. In Scotland, for example, after a cremation, the chief mourner shakes hands with the guests as they leave and thanks them for attending. In the country next door, England, this is almost unheard of and the guests simply leave. You know your own area. Get to know what traditions are used and under what circumstances. Talk to your local funeral directors, wedding and party planners, and to your local fellow celebrants.

11.

THE SECULAR FELLOWSHIP

The Secular Fellowship is an atheist humanist organisation set up to, quite simply, perform good works within the world community. It's main aim is to provide Secular education programmes where these are needed. There is a need for children's secular education programmes to be established not only all over the developing world but in many first world countries as well. There is much more the Secular Fellowship aspires to provide but, in this particular manual, our aim is to ensure home and distance learning for celebrants to a very high standard.

Briefly, since the Secularist movement is based on a set of universal principles, it follows that the Secularist movement is international, therefore, a set of basic ceremony standards on which local cultures can be superimposed, is considered desirable. These standards are constantly being monitored and improved. In many areas of the world our ceremonies are the best. Our aim is to ensure that our ceremonies become the best in all of the world.

We, at the Secular Fellowship, are a non profit making body committed to training at an international level to a very high standard. How do we finance this? By Direct subscription; Voluntary Donations; Support by Secular branches throughout the world and by our benefactors.

What service do we provide as back up?

An internet site giving updates on Secular ceremonies and news is in place. It also contains a list of celebrants available to conduct ceremonies in each area. There is, as part of the site, an internet library of ceremonies to which the celebrants we train will have access through a discreet password. In addition, help and advice will be constantly on tap via the same route. There will also be a sample constitution and a suggested Code of Practice to be invoked if a complaint is lodged against a celebrant.

What training do we give? At present distance learning via the internet is the main method. When there are sufficient numbers to warrant a school, we can do this. Introductory lectures at seminars and meetings can be arranged. Trained celebrants who are willing to travel and train others are always needed. A system of accreditation via local and national organisations is in place.

What can be done to bring trained celebrants to an area will be done. Our ceremonies are a shop window for our Secularism. We are very conscious of this and will certainly continuously monitor performance and presentation of our Secular ceremonial.

We are all Secularists at heart. Training is free although a small charge to cover administration costs will be made at the time of issue of the required certification. Anyone can apply for training through their local or national organisation but, and this must be emphasised, only your local or national Secularist body can provide proper accreditation. Most applications for training will come through your own organisations and the Secular Fellowship is committed to working with Secular organisations throughout the world. If you aren't already a member of a local organisation, then we would urge you to join. There is no independent accreditation through The Secular Fellowship.

However, there will be a Certificate in Secular Ceremony(C.S.C.) issued at the end of your training period which, provided you complete the course satisfactorily, will declare your competence to conduct a ceremony to the high standards we seek to achieve. There is a further qualification available through the Secular Fellowship and that is the Diploma in Secular Ceremonial (Dip.S.C.) This can be sought after you have been practicing for a minimum of one year as a certificated celebrant and, if achieved, will allow you to train others to C.S.C. level. It will also be a declaration that you have become a member of one of the most respected fraternities within the worldwide Secular movement.

The Secular Fellowship is about compassion, standards, integrity and support. That lone lady in the hills of West Cape in New Zealand who started out doing a nonreligious funeral for a relative and slowly became the local focus for nonreligious ceremonies need never feel alone again.

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