

A mid 20<sup>th</sup> century author once wrote that tragedy is the minor key of human existence... Speaking of... do you ever read the obituaries ~~in the newspaper?~~ I do. I notice the ~~Times-Standard actually calls them Deaths and Funeral Notices, not to mince words, I guess.~~ Obituaries remind me how mortal we all are; how brief life can be. Sometimes I read them and find a life that was well and long lived. Other times I think the life-eulogized sounded empty—perhaps tragic. I pay particular attention to obituaries where the deceased was younger than me. Maybe because, when someone you love dies in the springtime of their youth, it's especially sad, even tragic.

It seems that tragedy sang out in a major key last week! Two obituaries a couple of days ago were especially untimely. Fellow Rotarian, Scott Guild was a person I knew fairly well. Scott was energetic, friendly, involved in the life of his family and community. Scott appeared to be in excellent physical shape; so I was stunned to hear of his passing. My condolences go out to his family. Immediately following Scott's death notice, there was the sad news of Suzanne Seeman. A mother of two young children, wife, teacher and outdoorsy person. It is shocking to think of someone so alive just a week ago: suddenly snatched from those she loved. She was merely jogging along the road and was struck down by an auto driven by a guy who seems to have little respect for life. I have to confess, looking at the guy's picture in the paper makes me want to strangle him—reasonably assured that the world would be a lot better off without a person like that. But then there would only be one more obituary: ~~it leads me to wonder how his obituary will read, if anyone would care enough to write it.~~

The suddenness of the passing of these two young lives reminds me again how perishable is this gift of life. It also pushes me to say: I think it a good idea to talk to loved ones about what you want at or near the end of life. The documents that certify such talks are sometimes called Advanced Directives, or Five Wishes or POLST (Physician Ordered Life Sustaining Treatment). All of these more or less say what you want and don't want in the final days of life; that is especially important these days because hospitals and physicians can not only make you live longer, they have the power to make you die longer, and longer and longer--well beyond the time when life has any meaning or purpose. I am not advocating for euthanasia: not active euthanasia at least. But passive: hey. Why cling to the shred to the whisper of bodily shell—especially if someone has lived a full course of years. My belief in a next life makes me especially unwilling to burden friends and family with tons of medical bills and unwarranted heroic measures when I could go on to a life that I believe will make this one look pale in comparison.

Sometimes, I ponder how my own obituary will read; such thinking sobers me, and I think, "If I want my surviving loved ones to say something nice, I had better spend the remaining years well." My recently deceased friend Ken Meece would often encourage people in his prayer groups to write their own obituary. Try it. I have started mine... Viewing life from the perspective of its end can make the distance between here and there more intentional and meaningful: *and its end perhaps a little less tragic.*

~~My heartfelt sympathy goes out to both families—as well as the families of Suzanne's two friends who were badly injured. Our community is saddened and deprived by these tragedies. May God provide comfort and courage for those of us who remain.~~

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment