



*This special section includes listings of community members who were featured in the obituaries section of our newspapers between April 1, 2021 – June 30, 2021 You will find a truncated version of the notice featuring the following information, if provided: a photo, date of birth, date of passing, and city of residence.* 

We publish this to remember those who passed and to create one more keepsake for those who remain.

If so included, please take another look at the guestbook featured on our newspaper website to send another note of support to the bereaved or if you have been affected by a death please visit to remind you of the love and support around you during this difficult time. The guest book lives online in perpetuity.

We also invite you to receive daily updates of those who have passed in your email by going online and subscribing our newspaper website.

*We ask that you take the time to remember those that were lost and join us in a celebration of life. The next publication will be October, 2021.* 

All our best,

Newspaper Obituary Team. obits@newspaperclassifieds.com

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ADVICE & SUPPORT How to Express Sympathy & Grief While Social Distancing By Linnea Crowther April 1, 2020

One of the most basic impulses when someone we care about is grieving is to give them a hug. It's a very human thing to do — seeking and giving comfort through touch.

But as we fight the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, hugging is no longer recommended outside your own household, and we can't gather in person for large funerals and memorial services. So how do you express your sympathy when a friend or loved one is grieving?

Here are some suggestions for sending your sympathy even while you're social distancing during COVID-19:

## Send a card

The mail is still running these days, just like it always does, and you can send a sympathy card to someone who's grieving. You don't even need to have a card or a stamp on hand — you can choose a card from Legacy's online selection of sympathy cards, type in your note and the recipient's mailing address, and it will be sent to them. Or you can write and send a card from home. If you do send your own card, make sure to thoroughly wash your hands before writing it.

## Pick up the phone or make a video call

You may not be able to hug a grieving friend in person and tell them how sorry you are for their loss, but you can still share sympathy voice-to-voice. It's as simple as making a phone call — or you can make a video call using Facetime, Skype, or any other video call app that you both have installed on your phones or computers. In the difficult days following a death, it might be a good idea to start by reaching out with a text or email before calling, to make sure the person is ready for a phone call or video call.

## Sign the Guest Book

We're truly discovering the power of virtual connections. As much as we love to see each other in person, we're finding that our online communities can keep us going through these hard times. One place where you can gather virtually after a death is the Legacy Guest Book. The Guest Book is part of an obituary published online through one of Legacy's affiliate newspapers and funeral homes. There, you can offer condolences, share favorite memories, upload a photo, and read what others have said.

## Forward a photo

If you have a favorite photo of the deceased, others who are missing them would probably love to see it. It's easy to share a photo via email or text, especially if it's a digital photo. If the photo you want to share is a print, you can take a picture of it with your smart phone or digital camera and share that. The photo will feel even more special if you include a note with your memories of the time it was taken or a favorite story about the deceased.

## Have a memorial tree planted

One way to honor someone's memory is to plant a tree in their name. You can do this even if you don't have a place to plant a tree or you're unable to do the physical work involved. A Legacy Memorial Tree can be planted in someone's honor by certified arborists in Minnesota's Superior National Forest. When you choose one, five, or 10 trees to be planted in someone's honor, you'll receive a digital certificate via email. You can let the family of the deceased know about the planting by printing the certificate and mailing it to them, or you can forward them the digital certificate.

## Send a customized memorial gift

There are many options to choose from to send a gift of remembrance to someone who's grieving, customized to reflect the loved one they lost. You might consider a memorial windchime, candle, plaque, blanket, or charm bracelet — they're all things that can be customized and sent directly to your grieving friend. While many larger businesses are temporarily closed because of stay-athome orders in various states, small businesses and individual artisans are often still working. Try searching for memorial products at Etsy or Zazzle, where artists and craftspeople can sell their work. You can work with the artist to customize the item you choose, and you can ask to have it sent directly to the home of the bereaved.

## Send a gift card

Gift cards have been a popular memorial gift for a while now, especially for restaurants local to the bereaved. When you're feeling debilitated by grief, it's hard to find the time and energy to cook for yourself, and restaurant gift cards make it easy to get a quick meal. During COVID-19, dining rooms are closed in many states, but you can often still get curbside pickup or delivery. A delivered meal could make a big difference for a grieving friend. Before you buy a gift card, it's a good idea to call the restaurant to make sure they're open and offering pickup and/or delivery. If they have an online order form that allows you to send an emailed gift certificate to the recipient, that's a great way to do it. They may also be able to mail a gift card or certificate directly to the bereaved.

## Donate in memory of the deceased

There are so many organizations that can use a donation you make in a friend or relative's memory. Their obituary might specify where the family requests memorial donations. If it doesn't, one important need right now is relief for the many people who have been affected by COVID-19. You can donate in someone's memory to GoFundMe's\_COVID-19 Relief Fund, and your donation will be managed by GoFundMe and distributed to people affected by the coronavirus and organizations working to fight it.

## Tend to your own grief

While you're expressing condolences to the immediate family of a friend who has died, don't forget to take care of yourself. Your own grief is important, and you can't put off feeling it and expressing it until this is all over and we're back to normal. There are grief resources that you can make use of without ever leaving your home, and they'll help you deal with your feelings of grief after a dear person's death.

Legacy offers grief support groups on Facebook, where you can connect with others who have experienced a similar loss. Each group focuses on a specific loss loss of a spouse, loss of a friend, loss of a veteran, and more. You can open up about your own loss, or simply read what others have said and what kind of support and advice they've received.

Here are some additional resources that can help you with your grief even when you can't hug a faraway friend or attend a grief support group in person:

- The Grief Recovery Method is offering one-on-one online sessions with specialists who can help you through your grief from home.
- Grief expert David Kessler has created a pop-up Facebook support group for anyone experiencing grief during COVID-19.
- Better Help offers grief counseling that you can do online or via phone or chat.
- The National Alliance for Grieving Children has resources designed to help children who are grieving at this unusual time.
- Your local hospice organization or hospital may be able to provide grief support via phone or internet. If you're not sure where to start, ask a local funeral director for a reference.



## It's never too late: Hold the memorial service you couldn't in 2020

By Linnea Crowther June 23, 2021

For an entire year, pandemic restrictions meant we couldn't say goodbye to our loved ones the way we wanted. Often, we were unable to be with them when they died—and to make matters worse, we weren't able to gather to hold the funerals that would help us mourn properly. Whether we could only gather with a few close family members, or we watched a small service online, or we skipped the funeral altogether, pandemic funerals have often been unsatisfying and left us feeling unresolved grief.

Now, grief researchers say that holding that missing memorial service, even a year or more later, can still be a good idea to help us heal.

### Funerals are for the living, because we need them

Many of us who lost a loved one during the pandemic have not been able to fully process the loss, no matter whether the cause of death was COVID-19 or something else entirely. Here are some of the things people who suffered a family death in 2020 have told Legacy:

- "No funerals were allowed in the state at that time... It still doesn't seem real."
- "It was awful not having loved ones, friends, former coworkers, etc., in attendance at the funeral, which was five people in person, plus the officiant, and livestreamed online."
- "Most of my family is in Massachusetts, and I'm in Arizona. They did some sort of drive-thru ceremony in Massachusetts that was at a time that didn't work for me here in Arizona, and of course I haven't flown back there yet. So, to me, it's really weird, because it feels like it didn't actually happen."
- "The lack of being able to hug my sister-in-law, niece, and nephew, in particular, was painful."

Some of these people were able to attend a small, socially distanced funeral and others weren't, but they all missed out on a crucial part of the grieving process. Funerals are about much more than the practical consideration of burying a recently deceased person. Here are some of the purposes funerals serve:

- They help us understand that the death really happened.They bring many people together to comfort and support each other.
- They give us a chance to hug, which is clinically proven to reduce stress.
- They allow us to celebrate and honor an important life.They encourage us to mourn, cry, and express our grief
- in a supportive place.

Everyone who couldn't have a full funeral, with no attendance restrictions and all loved ones able to attend, missed out on at least some of those things. Those who could only watch a funeral via a video stream missed out on more of them. And for those who weren't able to attend a funeral at all, it may still be hard to grasp the fact that the death even happened.

For some, missing out on the funeral ritual is contributing to more severe grief than normal.

## Research shows we're grieving worse this year

Psychology professors Robert A. Neimeyer and Sherman A. Lee have been studying grief among people who lost someone during the pandemic.

Dr. Neimeyer, the director of the Portland Institute for Loss and Transition and professor emeritus at the University of Memphis, is known as the author of the *Techniques of Grief Therapy* series. Dr. Lee, of Christopher Newport University in Virginia, collaborated with Dr. Neimeyer to study 831 American adults who suffered the loss of a loved one during the COVID-19 restrictions of 2020. Their research, published in the academic journal *Death Studies* under the title "Circumstances of the death and associated risk factors for severity and impairment of COVID-19 grief," found that the occurrence of dysfunctional grief this past year has been far higher than usual.

Dysfunctional grief is a severe form of grief that makes it hard to carry on with our normal lives. People experiencing it might wish they could die so they can be with their loved ones, and they might feel unable to take care of their families or do their jobs.

In normal times, approximately five to 10 percent of grievers experience clinical levels of dysfunctional grief. In 2020, the study found, that number had skyrocketed to an alarming two-thirds of the people surveyed.

"Even as the specter of the coronavirus pandemic begins to recede in many nations," Dr. Neimeyer says, "our studies of Americans who have lost a loved one to COVID-19 suggest that it will be followed by a second 'shadow pandemic' —one of acute and potentially lingering grief." That grief, he says, is accompanied by "significant anguish and impairment in people's ability to function in key roles as a parent, partner, friend or worker."

Drs. Neimeyer and Lee found this dysfunctional grief to be caused by several factors specific to the pandemic, including the inability to be with a loved one while they died and unhappiness with a small or nonexistent funeral service.

But there's good news, too: The experts say we don't have to live with this excessive grief forever. Dr. Neimeyer tells Legacy that grievers can still get back what they missed when they couldn't have a full funeral. "We have an opportunity to press rewind," he says, "and play it again in a more satisfying way."

### It's never too late: Hold the memorial service now

That opportunity can begin right now. The pandemic isn't entirely over, but with more people vaccinated every day and warm weather making outdoor events easier, it's safer to gather than it was just a few months ago. Many families decided to postpone the funeral altogether until a time when they could be with loved ones, and the summer and fall of 2021 offer that chance.

The memorial service you have several months after a death won't be the same as the funeral you might have had immediately after a death. But it can still be a very healing ceremony that serves all the important purposes of a funeral. It can still bring family and friends together from all over the country and allow them to hug, cry, and share favorite stories and photos.

A memorial service is different from a funeral in that the body is not present. But you can display photos and favorite possessions of the deceased, and these can help with that important step of coming to terms with the reality of the death. Even just the simple act of attending a memorial service – something many weren't able to do during the pandemic – goes a long way toward that understanding.

Planning a memorial service can seem like a big job, but you don't have to do it alone. A funeral home can help you plan a memorial service, even if it's been months – or a year or more – since the death. They can help you secure the right location, arrange photos and other memorabilia, organize any speeches and readings, and all the other details that go along with planning an event.

While many families are already planning their summer memorial services – and a few even had a service already this spring – some families are reluctant to revisit the feelings they associate with a funeral all these months



later. Here are a few hesitations Legacy has heard:

- "We're all just ready to move on from this year."
- "It just feels weird to me to do something a year later."
- "I don't want to reschedule because things are still so iffy."
- "Doing a memorial might just bring up the hard parts."

Those are all valid feelings. While we all grieve, everyone experiences their own grief differently. Even if you didn't feel satisfied with a socially distanced or video funeral, maybe redoing it in person now doesn't feel like what you need. And for some, planning a memorial service now just isn't an option – maybe the rest of the family doesn't want to do it, or can't gather at this time, or maybe you're simply not the right person to do the planning (e.g. you're an in-law or a friend rather than an immediate family member).

While a funeral is an important ritual, it's not the only ritual you can do to help work through your grief. Dr. Neimeyer suggests approaching the situation by asking: "What can I do? Not what can't I do. What is feasible here?" So if you're not in a position to plan a memorial service – or you and your family just don't want to do it – you can turn your thoughts to what *will* work for you. Here are a few ideas:

• Hold a ceremony to dedicate the headstone. This is a common ritual in Judaism, when family and friends come together for the unveiling of the monument. Prayers and scripture are read, and family members might say a few words about the deceased. No matter what your faith, you can bring loved ones together when the headstone is placed at the grave. Seeing their name and dates carved in stone can be an important step in coming to terms with the death, and gathering together can offer a supportive environment for that step.

• Gather to celebrate the deceased's birthday. Many families do this for a lost loved one's milestone birthday, but you can do it no matter what age they would have been turning. It's a perfect opportunity to tell stories, look at photos, and share memories.

 Have a family dinner. A ritual in honor of a life doesn't have to be an elaborate affair. It can be as simple as going out to dinner, or having a dinner at a family member's house. You might decide to leave one empty chair at the table to symbolize your lost loved one. With your loss so fresh, the conversation is bound to turn to memories that you had together.

- Get the cousins together. Not every memorial gathering has to involve all the family and friends. Maybe it's been a while since the cousins (or the siblings, or the ladies, etc.) got together. You can invite them for a drink or a meal, and you can all remember your loved one together.
- Create an online memorial. This can mean building a website in the deceased's honor, or it could be as simple as turning their social media profile into a memorial. You can invite family and friends to contribute, making it a place for everyone's favorite memories and photos.
  Look at photos. There are some remembrance rituals
- that you can do all by yourself. Even if the rest of the family doesn't want to have a memorial service, or you're not in a position to plan one, you can mindfully take some time to sit with your memories of the deceased. Look through old photos of them, whether they're in a photo album or on social media. Think about your favorite memories together. Thank the person for the good they brought to your life.
- Make a memorial donation. You can contribute to your loved one's favorite charity in their honor, or if you don't know what that is, you can contribute to your own favorite charity and indicate it's in their memory. Or you can have memorial trees planted in their name – visit <u>legacy.com/trees</u> to learn more.
- Write a condolence letter. Buy a nice card and sit down to handwrite a condolence to the spouse, parent, or child of the deceased. It will be even more treasured if you share a specific memory or a favorite story. You can include a photo, too, if you have one. It doesn't matter if it's been months since the death and you never sent a condolence at the time. Dr. Neimeyer reminds us that there's no time limit on sending a condolence. In fact, it might be especially impactful later, he says: "We tend to get a lot of support in the first few weeks, and then that tapers off." Many grievers deeply appreciate those who reach out after those first few weeks. And the act of writing down your favorite memories will be healing for you, too.

One of these suggestions might be right for you, or you might want to think of your own idea. What's important is that you do something, especially if you're dealing with lingering grief after missing out on a full funeral for someone you loved. It's not too late to honor and celebrate their life.



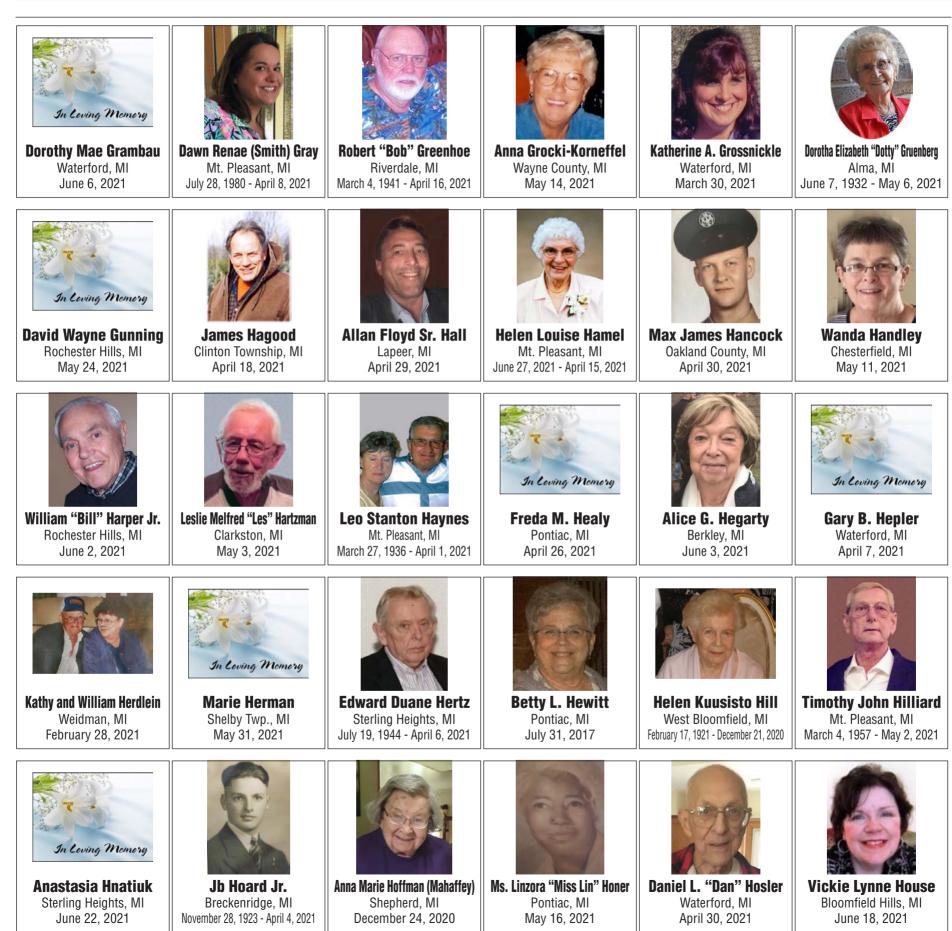


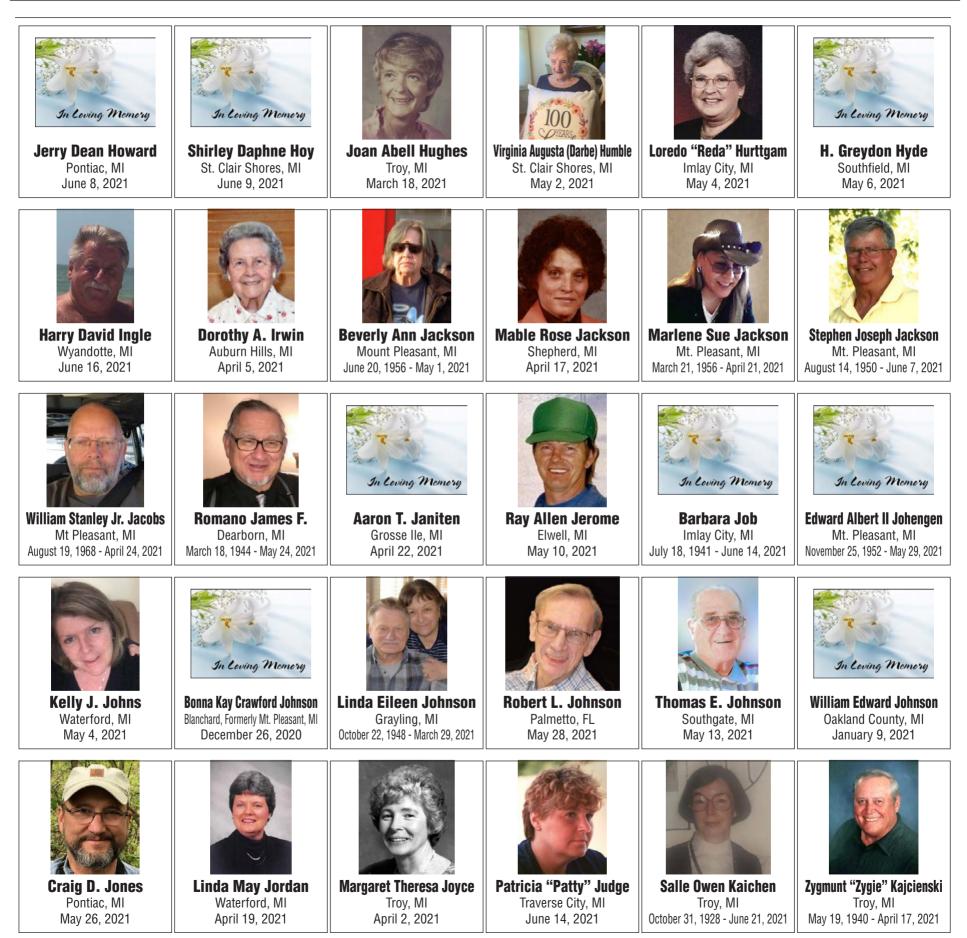
























Elm Hall, MI

June 19, 2021

Mount Pleasant, MI

October 12, 1968 - May 2, 2021

St. Clair Shores, MI

February 11, 1999 - June 18, 2021

Mount Clemens, MI

May 20, 2021

Auburn Hills, MI

April 26, 2021

Shepherd, MI

December 5, 1951 - May 4, 2021













JULY 2021



# How to Write an Obituary

By Legacy Staff | December 12, 2020

Writing an obituary for someone you love is an important way to honor and celebrate their life. The obituary acknowledges your loss, informs the community of the death, and invites those who knew your loved one (as well as people who care about you) to attend the funeral and offer sympathy and support.

An obituary is where we record a loved one's life story to live on forever. More than a simple death announcement, an obituary pays tribute to someone by saying something about who they were as a person. This can be done in many ways: sharing a story from their life, writing about their hopes and dreams, listing their accomplishments, telling about their loves and favorites, reflecting on what they meant to you. The most memorable obituaries often touch on all these aspects of a person's life and legacy.

Writing an obituary can feel daunting. You may feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of writing about a loved one who has died. Or you may worry that you'll forget important facts or that the obituary won't fully capture your loved one's life. This is one reason why many families begin preparing the obituary in advance.

Talking with a loved one about their life can give you the chance to reminisce and learn about your family history. Some people even choose to write their own obituaries ahead of time, relishing the opportunity to reflect on life, share what they've learned along the way, and maybe even get the last laugh.

If you are like most people, you will be writing an obituary in the aftermath of your loved one's death, when the obituary just one of many things to be done during this exhausting and emotional time. Legacy can help guide you through all the difficult decisions and tasks that come at the end of life, including how to write and publish the obituary

The funeral home is also a great resource — funeral directors can help with many details related to your loved one's death, including writing and publishing the obituary in local newspapers. If you are handling the obituary on your own, be sure to check with newspapers for publication deadlines and pricing.

## Essential Elements of an Obituary

Announce the death

- Share their life story
- List family members
- Include funeral / memorial information
  Add charity information
- Select a photo

Here is a step-by-step guide to writing an obituary and the important information to include. Keep these things in mind, but also feel free to be creative. Some of the most beautiful obituaries are ones that don't follow the standard formula. Whatever style of obituary you choose to write, include as many of these key obituary details as you can.

## 1. Announce the death

Begin the obituary with a statement that highlights basic facts about your loved one, including their full name (first, middle, and last names, maiden name, nickname, and suffixes like Jr. or Sr.), where they lived, age, date and place of death, and how they died. You can present this information in a straightforward, factual way, or more uniquely.

And there are many ways to say that someone has "died" ("departed," "passed away," "went to be with her Lord," and "entered eternal rest" are some of the most common), so choose the expression you prefer. Traditional obituary samples:

"HINKLE, OZELL STERLING, age 79 of Cullman, passed away November 9, 2006..." Read more

"Jean Frances Breland Campbell, age 90, of Tuscaloosa, Alabama died August 30, 2018, in her hometown..." Read more

"Margaret Bunting Wyman Tent, mathematics teacher and author, died on September 20, 2014, at Kline Hospice House, Mt. Airy from inflammatory breast cancer..." Read more

These obituaries examples are more unique:

"Terry Wayne Ward, age 71, of DeMotte, IN, escaped this mortal realm on Tuesday, January 23rd, 2018, leaving behind 32 jars of Miracle Whip, 17 boxes of Hamburger Helper and multitudes of other random items that would prove helpful in the event of a zombie apocalypse..."

"Robert Clyde Drew, beloved husband, father, and Papa, drew his last breath January 25, 2018, mainly, we suspect, to prevent himself from having to watch the Patriots and Eagles in the Superbowl."

"Purmort, Aaron Joseph age 35, died peacefully at home on November 25 after complications from a radioactive spider bite that led to years of crimefighting and a years-long battle with a nefarious criminal named Cancer..."

There are many reasons to include cause of death in the obituary: to inform the community, to acknowledge your loved one's battle with illness, to raise awareness about a disease, or simply to reduce the number of times you are asked "How did he die?" That said, some families are not comfortable sharing this information. Do what is best for you and your family.

## 2. Share their life story

An obituary does more than simply announce a death — an obituary tells us something about a person's life. Most people go their whole lives without their life story being written. An obituary is the place where we do them justice and record their memory to live on forever. If appropriate, don't be afraid to have a sense of humor!

That said, an obituary doesn't need to be a complete biography. You can hit the highlights of your loved one's life story, share a favorite memory, talk about what was important to them and/or what about them you will miss the most.

- Biographical information you may wish to include in the obituary:
- Date and place of birth, marriage, and death
- Hometown, places lived
- Schools attended, degrees earned
- Places of employment and positions held
- Military service and rank
- Membership in organizations
- Place of worship
- Hobbies or special interests



## 3. List family members

Most obituaries name surviving family members of the person passing as well as those who died previously. Deciding whom to include in the obituary can be difficult. Start with next of kin (spouse or partner, parents, children, siblings, grandparents and grandchildren) and list individually by name or group together as needed (e.g. "five grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren").

Consider the people most important to your loved one — nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, cousins, a fiancé, closest friends. Even if they were not blood relatives, you may wish to include these loved ones in the obituary. Nowadays, obituaries commonly include devoted caregivers, life-long friends, and even pets.

## 4. Include funeral or memorial service information

The obituary typically is published at least a day or two before the funeral service will be held and provides the community with important service information. Include the dates, times, and locations of the visitation, funeral, burial, and/or memorial service. Also include the name of the funeral home so that others can contact them with any questions about the services or sympathy flowers. Be sure to indicate if services are private.

## 5. Add charity information

Obituaries often request donations to a specific charity. There may be charities or organizations that were important to your loved one. Or perhaps the family would like to "pay it forward" by asking for donations to an organization that raises awareness about an illness.

The family may wish to have people donate to memorial fund started at your loved one's alma mater, or a fund to help cover funeral expenses. For any donation request, be sure to include the name of the charity or fund as well as an address or website where people can send donations.

If the family prefers charitable donations or monetary contributions rather than flowers, include a phrase such as "In lieu of flowers," followed by "please consider a donation to the American Heart Association," "contributions suggested to the family," or "the family is requesting financial assistance for the services."

## 6. Select a photo

A photo helps bring the obituary to life, so choose

a photo that shows your loved one's personality. A portrait or close-up of your loved one's face typically works best. The photo can be recent or from their youth, it's up to you. Some newspapers may even allow you to choose more than one for print. Be sure to check with the newspaper for any specific requirements.

If you are working with a funeral home, they will be able to assist you with formatting the photo and obituary and submitting to newspapers. If you're having a hard time selecting just one photo, keep in mind that you likely will be able to add more photos and even video on the online version of the obituary. Want your loved one's obituary to be extra special?

Consider these tips from Legacy experts. According to obituary writing expert Susan Soper,

the founder and author of *ObitKit*\*, *A Guide to Celebrating Your Life*, the interesting and memorable obit is in the details:

"Try to dig for the intimate details that will keep the person alive in memory: quirks, hobbies, favorite passions, oft-heard quotes, travels, food or unusual pursuits. It doesn't matter if the person was a company president, an electrician, a cook or ballerina, everyone has a story to tell.

"But that story doesn't come together by itself. Ask friends, children, parents, co-workers and spouses for details they recall and favor. How did the person look or dress? What was his daily routine? Where did she find most happiness? Be creative, look outside the box to find the personality traits and characteristics to recall."

Condolence and eulogy expert Florence Isaacs, author of *My Deepest Sympathies: Meaningful Sentiments for Condolence Notes and Conversations*, encourages obituary, eulogy, and sympathy card writers to reflect on what made this person unique:

"Try to remember specific instances where she made a difference in the lives of others, in her profession or field and/or in the community. Instead of just listing her achievements, tell a little story about some of them. Keep an eye out for moments that speak eloquently of her humanity, kindness, zest for life or even her cranky disposition—whatever fits.

"Did she take tango lessons or play poker in her eighties? Say so. Such information inspires people and helps them connect with the deceased. Before you sit down to write, take a day or so to think about what you want to say, and take notes as ideas come to you. Then get started."



## **CULTURE & HISTORY**

## Why Newspaper Obituaries Are So Valuable for Genealogy Research

By Linnea Crowther December 2, 2019

When it comes to researching family history, the obit is a treasure trove of information.

Genealogists hunt down a family's history by using a wide variety of resources, from church records to census data to gravestones. Sometimes they have to get creative, poring through bank records and coroners' reports. One thing never to forget when researching your family's genealogy, though, is the humble newspaper obituary. Even a short, perfunctory obituary is one of the most important documents there is for providing crucial information, often leading to important research breakthroughs.

**Philip Sutton**, a genealogy librarian at the New York Public Library, tells Legacy: "Obituaries help researchers identify female ancestors married names. A daughter listed in the 1940 census by her maiden name, for instance, may be listed by her married name in a parent's obituary years later."

Diane Haddad, editor of Family Tree magazine, points out how information in an obituary can open up a research rabbit hole abroad: "An immigrant's obituary may give the name of the European town or village where he was born, so you can start tracing your family there." Irene Walters and Joy Oria of the Clayton Library Center for Genealogical Research in Houston found another rabbit hole an obituary can lead you down: "[It] can lead you to other records. If it mentions a church membership, look at church records; if it gives locations the deceased lived, you now have other places to look for records."

Lorine McGinnis Schulze of Olive Tree Genealogy finds that an obituary can help broaden the picture we have of an ancestor we never met: "Some obituaries include details of a person's life — when they settled in a specific area, what their hobbies were, any military service they were part of, and so on." Cheryl Lang of the Midwest Genealogy Center in Independence, Missouri also points to this important role of an obituary in family history research: "Where were they born? Where did they go to school? Where did they work? What fraternities did they join? All of that nice juicy information that makes our ancestors more than just a name on a chart." This broader understanding of an ancestor. Sutton says, can point us toward new avenues of research to discover even more of our family tree: "Clues to other sources of information for the deceased might be suggested, professional, political, or religious affiliations for example."

Gail Dever of Genealogy a la Carte noted that like many other kinds of records, obituaries aren't necessarily 100%

accurate: "A death notice is only as accurate as the person who provided the information. In the case of my great-grandmother's death notice, her husband's and her middle name were both incorrect. A corrected version was only published a full ten days later." Walters and Oria agree: "Information is from those left alive, who were grieving and not necessarily concerned with complete accuracy." So it's important to take the information in obituaries with a grain of salt and try not to feel too dejected when it leads to a dead end rather than a research breakthrough.

But when those breakthroughs do happen, they can be so glorious. Our experts had stories to share of research breakthroughs that started with obituaries. We'll let them tell their stories in their own words:

**Diane Haddad:** "One of my first big genealogy finds that got me started researching was my great-grandfather's 1949 obituary. I used the information to find his death certificate and funeral record. My third-great-grandmother's 1894 obituary in a local German-language newspaper gave me her maiden name and her birthplace in Germany. I found it using an index the local genealogical society created from newspaper death notices. And a distant cousin's obituary in 1900 gave me a lot of interesting details about his life including how his family believed the start of his medical problems was a head injury received in a fight. It also had a picture of him!"

**Gail Dever:** "The best obituary I have found is about my Scottish-born great-great-grandfather James Young who lived in Montreal and fought in the American Civil War and Fenian Raids in Canada. In fact, I found three obituaries.

"Knowing that obituaries are usually published toward the back of the newspaper, I easily found the very brief notice paid for by the family. Unfortunately, it offered little information beyond his date of death, age, and burial place.

"If I had stopped looking after finding the paid notice, I would never have learned he had been a prisoner of war in the United States and also fought in Canada.

"I reviewed every page in the newspaper.

"On page two of the same newspaper, I found a detailed obituary that explained how and exactly where he died and that he walked 'as lightly as many men twenty years younger.' It provided his photo, a list of family members, his date of birth, the year he arrived in Canada, what he did for a living, and his military service. The line, 'He fought and bled with the Northern Army and went through the incredible horrors of the war prisons, Andersonville and Libby,' opened the floodgates and led me in pursuit of his civil war service record, which listed the name and date of birth of each of his 11 siblings.

"I also looked at the newspaper published the next day and the day after the funeral, and I again hit pay dirt. The day after my great-great-grandfather's funeral took place, the newspaper published an article that listed the names of the pallbearers and family and friends who attended. Those names, many of which were unfamiliar to me at the time, eventually helped me break down a few brick walls."

Joy Oria: "I have a family photo from 1905 of a seated mother and father, Christina and George Waldham, surrounded by fourteen kids. Christina looks exhausted. The story I've tried to remember from my grandmother was they took in the kids of a neighbor or a relative after the parents died, effectively doubling their family. "When I found the obituary for George, it neatly explained the situation, 'Besides his own family he adopted seven children of his deceased sister, which he raised.' It goes on to say two of the children preceded him in death, and then lists the five living children by name and current residence. The 1910 federal census lists six children as nephews and nieces living with the Waldham family, giving me those names to compare to the obituary from 1942. The obituary has the name of one child not on the 1910 census, one that I suspect was the oldest of the adopted children, and probably out on his own by 1910."

**Philip Sutton:** "A researcher was trying to discover the maiden name of the novelist Ursula Zilinsky. He knew she was born in 1931, immigrated to the United States in 1949, to study at New York University, that she lived in Huntington Station, NY, and married her classmate Pieter Zilinsky.

"The date of immigration, 1949, and the later marriage, seemed to preclude me from looking at records that might describe Ursula's maiden and/or birth name in U.S. censuses and marriage records. So, I searched for an obituary for Ursula. I could not find one. I then searched for an obituary for her husband. I did not find one for Pieter Zilinsky, but did find an obituary for one Tom Griessemer, a 'birth control leader' who died in June 24th. 1966. According to the Long Island Star-Journal (June 28, 1966, p.18) Griessemer was married to Winifred, and had two daughters, including one 'Mrs. Pieter Zilinsky.' I suspected this might be Ursula, but I needed confirmation, so I searched for records describing Tom Greissemer and chanced upon a ship's manifest for Otto (Tom) Greissemer, 44, his wife Winifred, 31. and daughter Ursula Griessemer, 17, arriving at the Port of New York aboard the Merchant Ship Battory, December 6. 1948.

"So, a combination of known information, Tom (Otto) Griessemer's obituary, and a ship manifest helped me identify his daughter the author Ursual Zilinsky's maiden name, Griessemer."

Lorine McGinnis Schulze: "I hunted for many years for the death of an ancestor who lived in Ontario Canada. He did not appear in the Death Registrations even though he died during a time period where registration was mandatory. "I finally found his obituary and discovered that he died in Colorado (hence no death registration in Ontario) and his daughter travelled by train to bring his body back to Ontario for burial. That led me to Colorado records where I was able to obtain his death record and learn more details about his death, how long he had lived in Colorado and who he worked for while there."

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