

Appendix B: Additional Examples of Personal Tangible Legacies

• **Photo books** (or albums) with text commemorating important family events. My friends Roberta and Betsy independently decided to take each grandchild on a trip of his or her choice to celebrate the milestone thirteenth birthday. Afterward, each used an online photo service to capture this special legacy in photo books, with text. I followed suit when my daughter-in-law, granddaughter, and I vacationed in Paris a few summers ago. An old-fashioned picture album could serve the same purpose, especially if accompanied by written memories.

- My daughter-in-law Debbie, a busy working mother, invented a wonderful legacy when she began sending the extended family regular email dispatches about their kids' cute doings and sayings, with "Slice of Life" in the subject line. By recording them more or less in the moment, she preserved them fresh; and after about four years, she "slurped" them up, along with many photos, into an Internet publishing program (in this case, Blurb.com's BookSmart). *Voila!* Out came the *Slice of Life* book, which is a priceless legacy for the family now—and will be even more so for her children and their children.
- I have created a few photo books of my grandchildren's lives and *How Did You Get To Be Forty!* books for each of my sons, containing a chronology of their lives, memories from all the nuclear family members, including their spouses, and many photos.
- Pat decided to write a little book for her granddaughters about a contemporary grandmother because she couldn't find an existing book that related to her life. This story, which she called *My Grandmother is Hip*, forced Pat to think about what values she wanted to share with them. When her first grandson arrived, she wrote a more ambitious fairy tale, a book within a book, titled *Quinn the Cerebral and the Book of All Wisdom*. (Example is from Rachael Freed's *Women's Lives, Women's Legacies*, 216.)

• **Genealogy and Family Histories.** There is a resurgence of popular interest in tracing family genealogies as well as histories, aided by the new resources, often web-based, for conducting this research. The more family stories attached to the genealogy, the better. Paula Solomon, who has no biological children, is creating an ambitious hybrid genealogy/family stories legacy project for her cousins, nieces, nephews, and their progeny. She has a strong desire to preserve her father's stories: his emigrating from Hungary to the United States as a seven-year-old with his mother and older sister just after World I; surviving the Depression; and losing many relatives in the Holocaust and World War II. Unable to get the stories from her dad, she has located and interviewed five surviving cousins and expanded the project. She envisions a book with a family tree, photos, and stories of as many relatives as possible through her generation, as well as photos of important places and meaningful material objects.

- **Memoirs.** You will recall that among my prize possessions is my paternal grandfather's autobiography, *This World My Home*.

The existence of thousands of memoirs by published writers should never discourage potential memoir writers—myself included! Writing from our hearts about the adventures, patterns, lessons, and meanings of our lives cannot be meaningless to the intended recipients. Today, in response to the increasing popularity of this genre, would-be memoirists can find many software programs, self-help books, and other resources for written, scrapbook, and video memoirs, including people who will guide you through the process. (See Resources.)

- **Special books and poems.** Also among my treasures is a leather-bound, pocket-sized 1899 edition of Thoreau's *Walden*, handed down from my grandfather, who modeled his life style after the author. In searching through the bookcase containing books inherited from grandparents, I rediscovered a treasure trove of works they prized, from Homer, Dante, and Goethe to Ben Franklin, Emerson, Whitman, and even a McGuffey Reader. (Clearly, I need to find homes outside the family for most of these.) Even more valuable to me is my grandfather's hand-bound, typewritten collection of his favorite poems, numbering over a hundred, most of which he knew by heart. Then there are poems that my sister and other friends have written and given as gifts, sometimes for special occasions.

- **Artistic creations: Collages.** My college roommate, Julia, an estate attorney by profession, fell in love with collage a few years ago. I am the lucky recipient of several of her beautiful personalized collages, and I assume her children and other friends are as well. My intention is to leave one each to my two sons, along with a note explaining our fifty-plus-year friendship.

- **Artistic creations: Quilts.** Three friends of mine came relatively late in life to quilt-making. Their quilts are stunning. I commissioned one of my friends, Judy, to create a child-sized quilt for each of my grandchildren. (See her website, <http://www.ross-park.net/>.) I've told them, but not yet written, the story behind why she would not let me pay her: I fixed her up with the man she has happily lived with for the past thirty-five years. One of my own treasured possessions is a somewhat tattered quilt of tiny hexagons, painstaking hand-stitched by my great aunt, Dada, profiled in Chapter 4. I wish I knew the story behind her quilts. Did she quilt to relax at home after her taxing hours tending patients, or did she resort to quilting after she retired more or less into oblivion?

- **Artistic Creations: Photographs.** Joyce Pearson, a social worker and hospice caregiver, has embarked on project of photographs of hands as legacies to pass on. She first started photographing hands of individuals in hospice care, but she has expanded her work to include multigenerational families, their hands arranged artfully, with and without jewelry or other meaningful objects.

SIX KEYS TO LEGACY LIVING

I have largely refrained from giving overt advice and strategies for action in this book, preferring instead to let the stories speak for themselves and, along with the questions for reflection, inspire each reader differently. But, of course, advice is embedded throughout this book, and as we near the end, I want to encourage you to take action in whatever way you are ripe for, called to, or willing to risk stretching for.

To that end, I leave you with these six keys to legacy living:

1. Live your legacy consciously *now*.
2. Live, as best you can, from the heart.
 - Cultivate the qualities of compassion, love, generosity, openness, and trust.
 - Use the heart (or soul, higher self, or whatever other name you choose) to guide your life and legacy choices.
 - Find your purpose or purposes, develop and express your gifts and your unique “signature presence.” Live *your* life, not someone else’s.
 - Forgive yourself and others, and make amends when possible.
3. Consider your legacy inheritance, especially those pieces that strongly affect who you are. Strengthen your ability to choose whether and how you want to pass them on.
4. Be aware and thoughtful about the legacies you have left and those you still want to give, whether through your essence, words, actions, public legacies, or personal artifacts, in your roles as parents, grandparents, and other family members, and as teachers and mentors; citizens of your communities of work (paid and volunteer), of leisure, of faith, of

Six Keys To Legacy Living, from *Legacies of the Heart: Living a Life That Matters*

neighborhood, town or city, country, and world; trustees of the earth and the life and societies we bequeath to future generations.

5. Seek company and support for the legacy journey. Consider gathering or joining a legacy circle for exploring and creating legacies (see Appendix D). Let me know how it's going; I welcome your stories, comments, and suggestions.

6. Enjoy the ride! Just because your legacy is important does not give it leave to become a grim taskmaster. The hallmarks of living from the heart are feelings of aliveness, deep satisfaction, and joy. And that in itself leaves the world a better place.

My hope for *Legacies of the Heart* is that it will constructively change the way you think about your life and legacies and that, as a result, you will cultivate and disperse your blossoms, fruits, and seeds from your heart with more awareness and satisfaction. The world needs you to do this!



Suggestions for Personal Tangible Legacies

Definition: intentional gifts of our authentic self to people we care about in a way we want to be remembered - our "internal wealth" - values, wisdom, life story and lessons, for example:

- Heirlooms (e.g., furniture, jewelry, rare books) with attached notes explaining history and significance.
- Hand-made crafts of all kinds, furniture, and artistic creations, also with explanations.
- Scrapbooks, photo books, memoirs, family histories, genealogies, letters, etc.
- Recordings, CDs, videos/movies (with commentary)
- Family recipes and food/holiday traditions
- Ethical wills and legacy letters
- Monetary gifts for education, camps, special events, etc.



Suggestions for Leaving Legacies in the Public Square

Huge range of possibilities for “Sacred Activism” in the Public Square:

- Political/civic activism of all kinds (check out www.consciouselders.com)
- Volunteering with non-profits effectively addressing our myriad social, economic, educational and environmental problems
- Working for pay in socially responsible institutions, organizations, businesses.
- Creating public art of all kinds
- “Subtle activism: e.g., spreading loving kindness in daily life, meditating (perhaps in synchrony with others), having respectful conversations with diverse others.

Drew Dellinger: The Hieroglyphic Staircase (excerpt)

It's 3:23 in the morning, and I'm awake, because my great-great grandchildren won't let me sleep. My great-great grandchildren ask me in dreams: What did you do while the planet was plundered? What did you do when the Earth was unraveling?

Surely you did something when the seasons started failing; the mammals, reptiles and birds were all dying. Did you fill the streets with protest when democracy was stolen?

What did you do, once you knew?"

<https://humanisticpaganism.com/2014/11/05/hieroglyphic-stairway-by-drew-dellinger/>