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Can We Learn to Contemplate the End of Our Lives Without Fear? One Pilgrim Spirit Among Us Explores This Terrain

(Madison, Wisconsin, May 2008) We all take journeys in our lives, sometimes as a leader and often as a follower, seeking guidance from a trustworthy companion to offer comfort and enlightenment. We do not always know these guides personally, so we find their messages in the stories they are willing to share. These are the pilgrims of the modern age, encouraging us to contemplate our deepest emotions by exploring our inner landscape.

Georgia Weithe is that kind of pilgrim. She asks us to consider death, not when it is at our door but at a time when we can place it in the context of our lives, turn it over, examine it carefully and then move to acceptance of its inevitability that will ultimately change how we live.

“We live in a culture that denies the inevitability of death, and denies it more vigorously than ever before,” says Georgia Weithe, author of “Shining Moments: Finding Hope in Facing Death” (Reflections Press, September 2008). Georgia had examined the idea of death with some regularity throughout her life, but always on her own terms (when she felt like it). Then, when her father was in the last stages of dying, she was determined to stay at his side to be there if he needed help. In the course of several days she watched him die a peaceful and accepted death. To her amazement, she found the experience was charged with a feeling of spiritual wonder and grace.

In the act of writing her book, Georgia spent an extended period of time carefully examining the topic of death and dying and our cultural attitudes toward it, and she shares these insights about living and dying, or as she calls them, Shining Moments.

- Death is about “letting go,” and in a sense we’re preparing for it all our lives.
- By not facing our fears about death, we compound them. Just as we channel surf when we land on a program we don’t want to watch, we turn away from reminders of our mortality.
- If we can be here today, gone tomorrow, all we have is the present.
- Out of the awareness of the endings, create new beginnings and work through problems with others while we have the chance.

- Death's gift is to help us realize that life doesn't go on forever, that all pleasure is finite and all beauty is transient. Since we cannot assume there will always be another day, we must appreciate life now!
- The joy in life comes from experiencing the ride, rather than resisting the pull. Whether we enjoy the journey depends on our ability to surrender to the movement that is carrying us forward.

It is often said that people die the way they live. If this were true, wouldn't you want to live each day to the fullest, experiencing joy and sorrow and be the architect of your death in the same way you are the architect of your life?

Georgia Weithe, M.Ed., is the founder of the Reflections Educational Consulting Firm and has spent her professional life as a teacher, educational consultant and alternative healer. She has served as a consultant to universities, public and private schools, health care facilities and social service organizations, giving lectures, workshops and retreats. Most recently she has enjoyed a ten-year affiliation with the Center for Courage and Renewal's *Courage to Teach* Program, created by the Fetzer Institute.

Shining Moments: Finding Hope in Facing Death

Published by Reflections Press

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