

# **On the Path of the Perfecting Caregiver**

**Theme Based Quotations  
Leading to Reflections in Verse  
Current Edition: 12/18/25**

**Ernest L. Pancsofar**

*There are various themes that emerge among the collective quotes contained in my journals. I referred to the first theme I noted as “Here and Now.” I randomly picked a week and looked for the next ten quotes that connected to this theme. I surrounded the acrostic HERE AND NOW with words from these quotes and then wrote a poem using a word or phrase from each quotation. The process for developing subsequent poems followed this same sequence of steps.*

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# HERE AND NOW

**Continuity:** You don't have to reinvent the wheel every day. Today you will do what you did yesterday, and tomorrow you will do what you did today. Eventually you will get somewhere.

Chuck Close

I always thought every day was a gift, but now I am looking for where to send the thank you note.

Randy Pausch

Another morning comes. It always does. Time always moves at the same rate, only feelings have different speeds. Every day can mark a whole lifetime or a single heartbeat, depending on who you spend it with.

Fredrik Backman

There is only one day left, always starting over: it is given to us at dawn and taken away from us at dusk.

Jean-Paul Sartre

The real meditation practice is how we live our lives from moment to moment to moment.

Jon Kabat-Zinn

Today is Thursday: a **PERFECTING** day – a day to practice again! There will never be a perfect day, but there will always be a **PERFECTING** day!

Ernie Pancsofar

Of the **moment, be.**  
In the **moment, live.**  
The art of remaining in the present, learn.  
Neither the past nor the future exists.

Yoda

One day at a time  
We can learn to leave our fears behind  
**One day at a time**  
We can stare our hopes in the eye.  
One day at a time we can learn to live.

Cat Stevens

I am in the present. I cannot know what tomorrow will bring forth. I can know only what the **truth** is for me today. That is what I am called upon to serve, and I serve it in all lucidity.

Igor Stravinsky

Maybe there is no such thing as time; there are only moments, each with its own **story**.

Robin Wall Kimmerer

## HERE AND NOW

T **H**ank you!

P **E** rfecting

T **R**uth

Mom **E** nt, Be

Medit **A** tion

**o N**e

Spee **D** s

Conti **N**uity

St **O**ry

Da **W**n

Let the **moment be**.

**Truths at dawn** to see

Our lives form a **continuity**.

**Thank you for helping me**

Tell my **perfecting story**.

We each have **unique, personal histories**  
As I slow down to reduce my **anxieties**.

There is only **one** you – think about

This as you breathe in and then breathe out.

When **meditating**, remove **distraction**.

Slow your **speed** of thoughts and action.

# QUESTIONS

**Don't listen to the person who has the answers; listen to the person who has the questions.**

Albert Einstein

*Whatever you are thinking right now, that's what's on your mind. Whatever has happened to you, it has already happened. The important question is, how are you going to handle it? In other words, "Now what?"*

Jon Kabat-Zinn

*There's more than one answer to these questions  
Pointing me in a crooked line  
And the less I seek my source for some definitive -  
Closer I am to fine.* Indigo Girls

**We thought that we had the answers, it was the questions we had wrong.**

Bono

*I'm no longer quite sure what the question is, but I do know that the answer is Yes.*

Leonard Bernstein

*The answers I remember longest are the ones that answer questions that I didn't think of asking.*

Jonathan Kozol

**More often than not, there are no right answers, just different perspectives.**

Rick Rubin

**There ain't no answer.**

*There ain't going to be any answer.  
There never has been an answer.  
That's the answer.*

Gertrude Stein

*The test of a good teacher is not how many questions he can ask his pupils that they will answer readily, but how many questions he inspires them to ask him, which he finds it hard to answer.*

Alice Wellington Rollins

*The answer is never the answer. What's really interesting is the mystery. If you seek the mystery instead of the answer, you'll always be seeking. I've never seen anybody really find the answer, but they think they have. So, they stop thinking. But the job is to seek mystery, evoke mystery, plant a garden in which strange plants grow and mysteries bloom. The need for mystery is greater than the need for an answer.*

Ken Kesey

## QUESTIONS

### Inspired Q uestions

### Untho U ght

Y E s

Listen to the silence

Of the unthought question

Per S pective

From a perspective of

Inspired inquiry.

Lis T en

Yes – there ain't no single answer.

Don't get me wrong,

I am fine with mystery.

Now what? Ask on!

Wr O ng

Ain't N o Answer

My S tery

Now What?

## LIFE TRUTHS

*A great truth is a truth whose opposite is also a truth.*

Thomas Mann

**Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth.**

William Blake

**There are only two mistakes one can make along the road to truth; not going all the way, and not starting.**

The Buddha

**Discovering the truth about ourselves is a lifetime's work, but it's worth the effort.**

Fred Rogers

**If we all worked on the assumption that what is accepted as true is really true, there would be little hope of advancement.**

Orville Wright

**The folks who know the truth aren't talking.... The ones who don't have a clue, you can't shut them up!**

Tom Waits

*It's like the elephant in the poem your father loved. Everyone has their hands on a tiny piece of the truth, but nobody can see the whole thing.*

Lemony Snicket

*I think truth is a layered phenomenon. There are many truths that accumulate and build up. I am trying to peel back and explore these rich layers of truth. All truths are difficult to reach.*

Sally Mann

I appreciate the truth contained in the following quote, especially as it pertains to Alzheimer's: Ask not what disease the person has, but rather what person the disease has.

Sir William Osler

*I'm trying to play the truth of what I am. The reason it's difficult is because I'm changing all the time.*

Charles Mingus

## LIFE TRUTHS

**L**ayered

**I** mage

**Li** **F** etime

**Pi** **E** ce

**S** **T** arting

**Pe** **R** son

**Cl** **U** e

**Assump** **T** ion

**c** **H** anging

**Oppo** **S** ite

Each **person** has a glimpse,  
A **clue** perhaps – a small **piece**  
Of an **image** of **layered** elements  
That are **changing** all the time.

**Opposite** points of view  
Can be equally valid,  
**Starting** with our **assumptions**  
That are formed over our **lifetime**.

# MYSTERIES

*I think the labyrinth is an interesting metaphor for our lives as musicians. We're always being drawn toward the center of it because that's where the mystery is. What is music? It's a journey.*

Sting

*Every mystery solved brings us to the threshold of a greater one.*

Rachel Carson

*Everybody is a wonderin' what and where  
They all came from.  
Everybody is a worryin' 'bout where  
they're gonna go  
When the whole thing's done.  
But no one knows for certain  
and so it's all the same to me,  
I think I'll just let the mystery be.*

Iris DeMent

*Unless they've had some experience with it,  
the hospice is still a mystery to most  
people. Because hospice deals with death,  
people tend not to talk about it.*

Art Buchwald

*Adult life is dealing with an enormous amount of questions that don't have answers. So I let the mystery settle into my music. I don't deny anything, I don't advocate anything, I just live with it.*

Bruce Springsteen

*I was listening to a song by Jackson Browne and was more intrigued by the title than the actual lyrics: My Stunning Mysterious Companion.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*The heart of experiment is mystery.*

Rick Rubin

*What happens in the morning is often forgotten later in the day.  
What happens by night is a mystery unfolding in its own way.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*A wonderful fact to reflect upon, that every human creature is constituted to be that profound secret and mystery to every other.*

Charles Dickens

## MYSTERIES

M orning  
Ever Y  
Thre S hold  
CenT er  
H E art  
Wor R yin'  
Stunn I ng  
D E ath  
S ettle

As **death** knocks on our door,  
Each **morning** brings on a new day  
To **settle** into routines in a way  
That form messages from the **heart**  
Not **worryin'** what's next - we do our part.  
We **center** ourselves and wonder why  
**Every** question provides a **stunning** reply.  
The **threshold** we enter cannot be known  
Since this journey we take is on our own.

# PERSPECTIVE

*What we see depends mainly on what we look for.*

John Lubbock

*People may spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success only to find, once they reach the top, that the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall.*

Thomas Merton

*We always did feel the same.  
We just saw it from a  
different point of view ...  
Tangled up in blue. Bob Dylan*

*Outside of their particular area of expertise, scientists are just as dumb as the next person.*

Richard P. Feynman

*I want to be famous in the way a pulley is famous, or a buttonhole, not because it did anything spectacular, but because it never forgot what it could do.*

Naomi Shihab Nye

*When you are young, there are many things which appear dull and lifeless. But as you get older, you will find these are the very things that are most important to you.*

Kazuo Ishiguro

*Radical empathy ... means putting in the work to educate oneself and to listen with a humble heart to understand another's experience from their perspective, not as we imagine we would feel.*

Isabel Wilkerson

*And I want to thank you  
For giving me the best day of my life.  
Oh, just to be with you  
Is having the best day of my life.*

Dido

*I might be in the basement.  
I'll go upstairs and check.*

M. C. Escher

*Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement. ....get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed.*

Abraham Joshua Heschel

*There are two stories for every life;  
the one you live & the one others tell.*

Mitch Albom

## PERSPECTIVE

De **P** ends

**E** mpathy

Sto **R** ies

Famou **S**

**S** **P** iritual

Bas **E** ment

**C** limbing

**T** hank You

Expert **I** se

Point of **V** iew

Old **E** r

The **point of view** I take  
Form the **stories** that I make  
In the **basement** of my being  
As I am **climbing** up the ladder for seeing  
The **spiritual** dimensions of my life.  
And **thank you** to my wife  
For her **empathy** and support.  
I have no **expertise** to report  
From the perspective of an **older** writer.  
I hope to make the journey a little brighter.  
You don't need to be **famous** – you hold the key.  
But it all **depends** on what you see.

# OUR JOURNEY

*It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that **matters**, in the end.*

Ursula K. Le Guin

*Everybody is on a lifelong journey toward trying to live more deeply. There is nobody who can say, “Well, I’ve got that one checked off my to-do list.” We have to be honest with ourselves about where we are on this journey and about the difficulty of living in our own identities and **integrity**.*

Parker J. Palmer

*The journey is **essential** to the dream.*

Francis of Assisi

*There is a road, no simple highway  
Between the dawn and the dark of night  
And if you go, no one may follow  
That path is for your steps **alone**.*

Grateful Dead “Ripple”

*Not everyone will **understand** your journey.  
That’s okay. You’re here to live your life,  
not to make everyone understand.*

Banksy

*The most important **reason** for going from one place to another is to see what’s in between, and they took great pleasure in doing just that.*

Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*

*All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is **unaware**.*

Martin Buber

*To **travel** hopefully is a better thing than to arrive.*

Robert Louis Stevenson

*The excursion is the same when you go looking for your sorrow as when you go looking for your **joy**.*

Eudora Welty

*How do you know what is the right path to choose to get the **result** that you desire? The honest answer is this: You won’t. And accepting that greatly eases the anxiety of your life experience.*

Jon Stewart

## OUR JOURNEY

Al **O** ne

Res **U** lt

**T**R avel

**J**oy

Reas **O** n

**U**naware

Matte **R** s

Understa **N**d

**E** ssential

Integrit **Y**

We may be **unaware**  
Of all the **reasons** we care  
Or the values we share.

We have created our identity  
As we **travel** through life with **integrity**  
On our own unique journey.

You are not **alone**.  
The end **results** cannot be known.  
How the years have flown!

When an event that **matters** is through,  
I think of the **joy** when I'm with you;  
It is **essential** in all that I do.

In **understanding** what's important,  
Mindfulness is the main component  
As we live our life moment to moment.

# SAGE WISDOM

**It's amazing the wisdom that can be captured during a recent trip to Goodwill!**

Ernie Pancsofar

**In examining disease, we gain wisdom about anatomy and physiology and biology. In examining the person with disease, we gain wisdom about life.**

Oliver W. Sacks

**Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.**

Rumi

**Wisdom begins in wonder.** Socrates

**Wisdom cannot be imparted. Wisdom that a wise man attempts to impart always sounds like foolishness to someone else ... Knowledge can be communicated, but not wisdom. One can find it, live it, do wonders through it, but one cannot communicate and teach it.**

Hermann Hesse

**We don't receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.**

Marcel Proust

**To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong. ... growing up is about growing in wisdom and virtue and learning to curtail our selfishness so that we can give ourselves selflessly to others.**

Joseph Pearce

**Follow me, the wise man said, but he walked behind.**

Leonard Cohen

**Science is organized knowledge. Wisdom is organized life.**

Immanuel Kant

**The wise man does not grow old, but ripens.** Victor Hugo

## SAGE WISDOM

**S**ounds

**W**alked

**Chan** G e

**Virtu** E

**W**onders

**L**ife

**Ripen** S

**D**iscover

**O**rganized

**A** Mazing

**The sounds of change echo**  
**throughout my life.**

**When youth ripened into adulthood,**  
**my career path was organized and**  
**influenced by a search for virtue and truth.**

**As I walked this labyrinth of experiences,**  
**I discovered amazing wonders.**

# UNCERTAINTY

*Each day I move toward that which I do not understand. The result is a continuous **accidental** learning which constantly shapes my life.*

Yo-Yo Ma

*The only thing that makes life possible is **permanent**, intolerable uncertainty; not knowing what comes next.*

Ursula K. Le Guin

*Uncertainty is a **truth** that lingers near; It's a fact of life and not to fear.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*Since we don't know where we're going, we have to stick **together** in case someone gets there.*

Ken Kesey

*Long **live** uncertainty!*

Ernie Pancsofar

*The willingness to consider possibility requires a **tolerance** of uncertainty.*

Rachel Naomi Remen

*You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to **recognize** the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to **embrace** them with courage, faith and hope.*

Thomas Merton

*Uncertainty is the refuge of **hope**.*

Henri Frederic Amiel

*I am alone here in my own **mind**. There is no map and there is no road. It is one of a kind just as yours is.*

Anne Sexton

*Life is. I am. Anything might happen. And I believe I may invest my life with meaning. The uncertainty is a blessing in disguise. If I were absolutely certain about all things, I would spend my life in anxious misery, fearful of losing my way. But since everything and anything is always possible, the miraculous is **always** nearby and wonders shall never, ever cease.*

Robert Fulghum

## UNCERTAINTY

Tr **U** th

Recog **N** ize

Ac **C** idental

Hop **E**

Pe **R** manent

**T** ogether

Embr **A** ce

**L** **I** ve

Mi **N** d

**T** olerance

Alwa**Y** s

Recognize that the future is **always** uncertain.

We can **live together** with mindfulness  
And for **tolerance of accidental**  
improvements.

We need a **permanent frame of mind** to  
embrace **hope** as a fundamental **truth**.

## ENRICHMENT

*I like the ecological idea of aging as progressive enrichment, rather than progressive loss.*

Robin Wall Kimmerer,  
*Braiding Sweetgrass*

*When you regain a sense of your life as a journey of discovery, you return to rhythm with yourself. When you take the time to travel with reverence, a richer life unfolds before you. Moments of beauty begin to braid your days.*

John O'Donohue, *Divine Beauty*

*I've been pretty blessed.  
Sometimes it comes in disguise.*

Clarence Clemons

*We're taught to be ashamed of confusion, anger, fear and sadness, and to me they're of equal value to happiness, excitement and inspiration.*

Alanis Morissette

*Perhaps our core set of values remain constant over our lifetime, but the truths that compose these values change as we mature and gain experiences in our lives.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*All experience is an enrichment rather than an impoverishment.*

Eudora Welty

*It isn't your sweet conversation  
That brings this sensation, oh no  
It's just the nearness of you.*

(song written in 1937 by Hoagy Carmichael with lyrics by Ned Washington)

*It's not all bad. Far, far from it. There's clarity, the simplicity of living in the moment and knowing what really matters. Kindness. Company. Gentle care. We laugh a lot, and God knows there's plenty to laugh about. And there are moments of deep peace and contentment.*

(Louise Penny – *A Great Reckoning* – comments on living with a spouse with Alzheimer's disease.)

*As your brain changes, I am changing too.  
As we age together, I pledge my love to you.  
My life is different than what I had expected  
Much richer and meaningful as we are connected  
To the beauty life has to offer each and every day  
As we live in a mutually contented way.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*It's all a matter of paying attention, being awake in the present moment, and not expecting a huge payoff. The magic in this world seems to work in whispers and small kindnesses.*

Charles de Lint

## ENRICHMENT

**E**xperience

**Contentment**

**Nearness**

As we **mature**,  
Our lives become more **meaningful**.

**Magic**

When we take an **ecological** approach,  
All our **experiences** are influenced  
By the **magical** interplay  
Of events that bring us **happiness**.

**Eco**logical

**Happiness**

My **contentment** is enhanced  
By the **nearness** of you.

**Mature**

I am **blessed**:  
You help me see the **beauty** around me.

**Blessed**

**Meaningful**

**Beauty**

# RECIPROCITY

*During the support group meeting, someone raised the issue of how caregivers become transformed into different versions of who they are because of what is happening to their loved one. I sincerely believe that to be true. I am a better person because of my relationship with Marsha as she navigates late-stage experiences with Alzheimer's disease. The way I support her, reflect on life and plan my daily writing tasks make me a different, and I believe better, person.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*For 40+ years Marsha provided the strong base from which I could shape my career.*

*Now, it's time for me to put her first in this chapter of our lives that shape our elder years.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*The relationship between reader and writer is reciprocal in a way. We co-create each other. We are constantly emerging out of the relationship we have with others.*

Ruth Ozeki

*There is one word that can be the guide for your life - it is the word reciprocity.*

Pearl Buck

*To me, having the courage to tell your own story goes hand in hand with having the curiosity and humility to listen to others' stories.*

Sarah Kay

*... the key variable in helping one another change is the mutuality of our relationships; how we cannot change others in a real way without ourselves in turn being changed; that difficult behaviors call us to listen to the person and to reflect what we need to change in our own lives and practices.*

Herb Lovett

*I am not a wealthy person  
But I certainly am a rich one.  
We are growing older together  
And when each day is done  
I am thankful for your presence.  
You are the best person I know  
And I continue to be surprised  
At just how much I grow  
When I support and care for you.  
There's richness in the air.  
Love surrounds and flows through us.  
We are a lovely pair.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*If you have something to offer,  
someone will learn something from  
you. It's a beautiful reciprocal  
arrangement. And it isn't  
education. It's history. It's poetry.*

J. D. Salinger

*When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves.*

William Arthur Ward

## RECIPROCITY

Transfo **R** med

Off **E** r

Refle **C** t

Gu **I** de

Sha **P** e

**R** ichness

Disc **O** ver

Presen **C** e

Emerg **I** ng

Curiosi **T** y

Mutualit **Y**

As I reflect on my time with you,  
There's a richness in all that you do.  
You are my guide who has much to offer me:  
A life of wonder and curiosity.  
I have been transformed as I discover  
A continuing presence like no other.  
You help shape my emerging identity  
By a life lived in mutuality.

## COMMUNICATION

[E = Ernie M = Marsha]

M: Who are you? Why are you here?

E: I'm your best friend. I don't want to be alone, so I am living here with you. Is that OK?

M: Yes, that's OK. I don't want to be **alone** either.

M: By the time we get there, we'll **already** be there!

M: I like it when you're here because when you're here, **everything**'s going to be all right.

E: It's a little cold to go **outside** in your nightgown.

M: I could say a few things about you.

M: I've got everything I need because of you.

E: What a **nice** thing to say. **Thank you!**

E: Some stores/**places** are closed and some are open today. Where would you like to go?

M: Some place that's **open**.

E: Do you know when the best **time** of day is?

M: No.

E: Right now!

M: When will you be back?

E: I'm not going anywhere. I'm **staying** here with you.

M: (with tears in her eyes and a big hug) I'm glad **you're staying** here.

M: You told me you'd come to bed now.  
(5:00 pm!)

E: I'll be right in.  
[After laying down for about 10 **minutes**.]

M: I'd like to get up now.  
E: OK.

## COMMUNICATION

Pla **C** es

**O** utside

**Ti** **M**e

**M** inutes

Yo **U** 're

Alo **N** e

Everyth **I** ng

**Ni** **C** e

**A**lready

**T** hank You!

Stay **I** ng

**O** pen

**N** ow

**Now** is March 22nd. The **time** is 4:22 pm.  
Marsha's spirit has transitioned **outside** her body.  
How **nice** it was to have known both her spiritual  
essence and physical presence.

**Thank you for everything!**

I will never be alone because I **already** have  
permanent **places** in my heart and soul where  
**you're** always invited to return.  
Staying with you **opened** my eyes to all that is  
good. All the **minutes** of my future life will be  
influenced by the time we shared together.

# TRANSFORMATION

*The path I choose through the maze makes me what I am. I am not only a thing, but also a way of being--one of many ways--and knowing the paths I have followed and the ones left to take will help me understand what I am becoming.*

Daniel Keyes

*If we are always arriving and departing, it is also true that we are eternally anchored. One's destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things.*

Henry Miller

*... The creative care approach invites us to shift away from the temptation to focus so heavily on losses and instead train our eyes and hearts on the strengths that remain.*

Anne Basting

*We never know how much longer we will live  
Or how much more to our projects we will give.  
It's not the completion of our work that gives meaning;  
It's how that work changes our inner core feelings.  
We are who we are --- not what we have done.  
The journey is long, we have only just begun!*

Ernie Pancsofar

*Everybody is on a lifelong, journey toward trying to live more deeply. There is nobody who can say, "Well, I've got that one checked off my to-do list." We have to be honest with ourselves about where we are on this journey and about the difficulty of living in our own identities and integrity.*

Parker J. Palmer

*When you're finished changing, you're finished.*

Benjamin Franklin

*I think I'm constantly in a state of adjustment.*

Patti Smith

*Maybe the journey isn't so much about becoming anything. Maybe it's about un-becoming everything that isn't really you.*

Paulo Coelho

*All of us every single year, we're a different person. I don't think we're the same person all our lives.*

Steven Spielberg

*Life is a process of becoming, a combination of states we have to go through. Where people fail is that they wish to elect a state and remain in it. This is a kind of death.*

Anaïs Nin

## TRANSFORMATION

Integri <b>T</b> y	
Hea <b>R</b> ts	
Underst <b>A</b> nd	I now understand that nothing totally prepared me for the <b>death</b> of a loved one.
A <b>N</b> chored	The caring <b>process</b> for my daily <b>journey</b> was <b>different</b> and ever-changing.
<b>S</b> trengths	My <b>adjustment</b> to becoming a caregiver was anchored in the <b>meaning</b> I attributed to this experience.
Dif <b>F</b> erent	I knew I had to be <b>creative</b> in offering supports that honored Marsha's <b>strengths</b> .
J <b>O</b> urney	Our two <b>hearts</b> met at the crossroads of identity and <b>integrity</b> .
P <b>R</b> ocess	
<b>M</b> eaning	
Ch <b>A</b> nging	
Dea <b>T</b> h	
Creat <b>I</b> ve	
Bec <b>O</b> ming	
Adjustme <b>N</b> t	

# GRATITUDE

*But you brighten up for me all of my days with  
a love so sweet in so many ways . . .  
I just want to stop and thank you baby.  
How sweet it is to be loved by you, feels so fine.*

James Taylor

*Times have been a little rough over  
these past few days, but I don't lose  
sight of the **beauty** and love you bring  
into my life. Tough times pass as I  
journey on with you by my side. Your  
inner presence surfaces at all times.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*When you are old and pale and gaunt  
And a **gentle** hand is all you want,  
I will give you mine to hold.  
I'll be here when you are old.*

Gretchen Peters

*For me, every hour is **grace**. And I feel  
gratitude in my heart each time I can meet  
someone and look at his or her smile.*

Elie Wiesel

*Gratitude bestows **reverence**,  
allowing us to encounter everyday  
epiphanies, those transcendent  
moments of awe that change forever  
how we experience life and the world.*

John Milton

*You are calm, peaceful, **content** and serene  
As I sit in front of my computer screen.  
I am blessed by your presence every day.  
Thank you for **everything**! What more can I say!*

Ernie Pancsofar

*You lay in your bed across the room.  
Music is playing softly in the air.  
It's **peaceful**, calm and quite serene.  
I appreciate your presence being there.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*Some day, I will look back on this point  
in my life and thank you for making  
each day a **blessed** opportunity to  
share our love for each other.*

Ernie Pancsofar

## GRATITUDE

**G** entle  
**R** everence  
**Gr** **A** ce  
**Beau** **T** y  
**Everyth** **I** ng  
**Con** **T** ent  
**Peacef** **U** l  
**Blesse** **D**  
**Swe** **E** t

Looking back to four days ago, I am grateful to have been present along with my daughters (one in person and one in spirit), to honor Marsha during her dying process. Overall, and with Marsha at home, it was a **peaceful** experience. I feel **blessed** to be witness to Marsha's passing. She handled the final stage of Alzheimer's disease with **grace**. There is a **beauty** in witnessing such an occasion.

Everyone who supported Marsha did so with **gentleness** and treated her with the **reverence** she deserved. **Everything** I needed was always available by the hospice visiting nurses and home health aides. Claudia, a home companion and friend to Marsha, was a dedicated and valuable member of Marsha's support team.

I am **content** with my role as her primary caregiver. This unexpected part of my life's journey has enriched my being.

*How sweet it was to be loved by you.*

## A STITCH IN TIME

*Breath, breath in the air  
Cherish this moment  
Cherish this breath  
Tomorrow is a new day for everyone*  
Follow the Sun, lyrics by Xavier Rudd

*Life is a life sentence; life is  
passing time; life is freethinking.*

Tehching Hsieh

*How we spend our days is of  
course how we spend our lives.  
What we do with this hour and  
that one is what we are doing.*

Annie Dillard

*Because once we've spent time  
sitting with the histories and  
relationships and realizations  
of the past, it's time to tend to  
our grief in the present tense.*

Carla Fernandez

*When you pay attention to your in-breath  
and out-breath, you bring yourself home  
to the present moment, to the here and  
the now, and you are in touch with life.*

Thích Nhất Hạnh

*People always say time heals. Time doesn't  
necessarily heal anything. It allows you to  
manage things. There are occasions where  
you feel the pain as if it just happened, but  
you know that it's a fleeting moment.*

Jason Reynolds

*When I was young, I admired  
clever people. Now that I am  
old, I admire kind people.*

George Saunders

*... by spending time with their objects or  
telling their story, and continue coming into  
presence, to not ignore the range of  
emotions related to your grief, but to get  
curious about what lessons it has to offer; ...*

Carla Fernandez

*If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal  
duration but timelessness, then eternal life  
belongs to those who live in the present.*

Ludwig Wittgenstein

**Etern Al Life**

**Cheri Sh**

**PresenT Moment**

**Free ThInking**

**Manage Things**

**Clever**

**Heals**

**Kind People**

**SpeNd**

**HisTories**

**RealizatIons of the Past**

**Range of EMotions**

**LEssons**

## A STITCH IN TIME

A stitch in time saves nine, as the expression goes  
As my life continues in ebbs and flows  
Of time to **spend** on many an activity  
To test the boundaries of my creativity.

The **present moment** is where we live  
But memories form that daily give  
Me pause to dwell on all we've achieved  
Amid the blessings we've received.

**Eternal life** is all a big question to me  
So I'll just let the mystery be  
And let our values be our guide  
Formed from years with you by my side.

My journal has hundreds of pages of entries  
That form the basis for the **histories**  
Of activities and events of the past  
To which I can reflect to make them last.

I want to be among **people** who are **kind**  
It is in their presence where I usually find  
The very same qualities I saw in my wife  
As we both tried to lead a satisfying life.

I **cherish** the memories that begin to unfold  
When I read through my journal and if truth be told  
There is richness in what I read on each page  
As the years went by - age after age.

I don't believe any one religion or entities  
Have **THE** answer for most of life's complexities.  
We need **Free Thinking** individuals who don't cower  
To dictates of those currently in power.

## A STITCH IN TIME (continued)

There is no magic response to one's grief  
Yet we **manage things** for occasional relief  
From its connection with a love that's lost.  
It's a reminder of what being human cost.

**Realizations of the Past** cause me to wonder  
About the wisdom we find in our younger  
Days that is refined upon further reflection  
In our days of current inspection.

Life's **lessons** result in asking better questions.  
The answers often appear as mere suggestions  
To the challenges that can come our way.  
What comes next? No one can say.

A **clever** caregiver offers their proactive assistance  
To daily challenges as the dementia experience  
Continues to decrease a loved one's abilities  
And alters their perceptions of ongoing realities.

There is a **wide range of emotion**  
When I think of Marsha's transition  
Outside her physical body into an unknown space  
Void of time but rich with grace.

Our emotional wounds do take time to **heal**  
But they leave scars to remind us to feel  
The importance of a loved one's absence  
Especially in the quietude of silence.

## TOWARD ACCEPTING LOSS

*It's the most four-dimensional experience I've ever had - the gratitude and sorrow and exhaustion and love all knotted together and pulsing, pulsing, pulsing under the din of your days with no clear end in sight.*

Courtney Martin

*For in grief nothing stays put. One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always recurs. Round and round. Everything repeats. Am I going in circles, or dare I hope I am on a spiral?*

*But if a spiral, am I going up or down it?*

C.S. Lewis

*Life is enriched by difficulty; love is made more acute when it requires exertion.*

Andrew Solomon

*... the ultimate touchstone of friendship is not improvement, neither of the other nor of the self. The ultimate touchstone is witness, the privilege of having been seen by someone and the equal privilege of being granted the sight of the essence of another, to have walked with them and to have believed in them, sometimes just to have accompanied them for however brief a span, on a journey impossible to accomplish alone.*

David Whyte

*Ultimately, time is all you have and the idea isn't to save it, but to savor it.*

Ellen Goodman

*Caring for a dying loved one is a powerful way to express love, devotion, and reverence. Allowing a spouse or grown child to care for one becomes a final gift from the person dying. The physical acts of caring can help family members in their own grief.*

Ira Byock

*Everyone that leaves your life leaves a subtle trail of connection with you; and when you think of them, and miss them and desire them, your heart journeys out again along that trail towards them in the elsewhere that they now find themselves.*

John O'Donohue

## TOWARD ACCEPTING LOSS

Trail of Connection

Heart Journeys

Sorrow

Exhaustion

Enriched

Gratitude

Savor

Essence

Accompanied

Privilege

Pulsing

Exertion

Emerging

Revere Nce

Gift

Family

Love

Witness

Spiral

Yes, there is sorrow, but gratitude, too  
For the privilege of being in love with you.  
The path of our lives together  
Formed a spiral to always getting better.  
I was enriched to have been a witness each day  
As I accompanied you and let me just say  
I was in reverence  
Of your essence.  
I savored each gift I received and who knew  
The trail of connections I would discover as you  
And I were on our Heart Journeys  
That help form our emerging families.  
It was exhausting each day as dementia took hold  
When your physical body was just 75 years old.  
The exertion it took I can only imagine  
As your brain and body were rapidly changin'.  
And yet, in ways I still cannot quite explain,  
Kindness was pulsing through your veins.

## FUTURES PLANNING

*Just improve yourself; that is the only thing you can do to better the world.*

Ludwig Wittgenstein

*Life wasn't about becoming, was it? It was about being.*

Kate Atkinson.

*We have two lives; the first one ended yesterday, and the second one begins today.*

Ernie Pancsofar

*Don't be afraid to be confused. Try to remain permanently confused. Anything is possible. Stay open, forever, so open it hurts, and then open up some more, until the day you die, world without end, amen.*

George Saunders

*Asked what he wants out of his final stretch of "life-time," his response was at once simple and opaque, To spend the time left, he replied.*

Tehching Hsieh

*You have to go where the truth takes you, and that doesn't always take you in exactly the same place where people you speak to might want.*

David Grann

*I am glad that I paid so little attention to good advice; had I abided by it I might have been saved from some of my most valuable mistakes.*

Edna St. Vincent Millay

*There's a certain grace in accepting what your life is and embracing all the good things that have been - but there's still an expectation of good things to come. Not necessarily what you expected.*

Emmylou Harris

*We must let go of the life we have planned, so as to accept the one that is waiting for us.*

Joseph Campbell

*It had taken Beauvoir years to see the power of pausing. And of patience. Of taking a breath to consider all options, all angles, and not simply acting on the most obvious.*

Louise Penny, *All the Devils Are Here*, p. 222

Con **F** used  
Pa **U**sing  
At **T**ention  
Tr **U**th  
Imp **R**ove  
B **E**ing  
Begin **S**

Sim **P**le  
Possib **L**e  
Mist **A** kes  
Waiti **N**g  
Embraci **N**g  
Obv **I** ous  
Spe **N**d  
**G**race

## FUTURES PLANNING

What kind of future am I viewing?  
What to **spend** my time on doing  
Or is just being present enough?  
Will my path be smooth or rough?

Now is the time of **pausing**  
To note what may be causing  
Me to better understand that future wealth  
May be better tied to my overall health.

Of course, wealth in my view is not tied to money  
But living my **truths** on my continuing journey.  
It's been a lifetime development so far  
Not to keep those truths from hiding in a jar!

Sometimes I'm **confused** about just where to go  
And who to meet who might just know  
The opportunities that exist around every bend  
As the questions are more important in the end.

Where should I focus my **attention**  
Amid this time of reflection?  
Does it matter where I go in this search?  
Do the birds know the way from their higher perch?

We all can **improve** in everything we do.  
This I know In my own life is true.  
Perfection is a myth that cannot be attained  
Perfecting our lives, though, can be gained.

**Being** present, as I take a deep breath within  
Brings me peace of mind from where to begin  
Activities that flow in their own time and space  
As I continue my day in my current place.

Each dawn a new day **begins**  
My aching body calls from within  
“Get up!” it warns, “If you want to make any progress.”  
As it reminds me of my aging process.

## FUTURES PLANNING

(continued)

**Simple** is as simple does  
Today is now, yesterday was.  
It's already a distant memory  
Filed in its very own category.

It is **possible** to achieve much more  
But in the end who's keeping score?  
It's not a game that one can win  
It's a sense of satisfaction within.

Making **mistakes** is all part of living  
In doing so we are giving  
Others our own personal history  
Filled with growth and mystery.

**Waiting** for something to happen  
Can, itself, be a critical time in  
Which we prepare for where  
To go from here to there.

**Embracing** uncertainty can be fun.  
It's not really the work to be done,  
But the way in which we move about  
Amid the chaos and the doubt.

There is no future that is **obvious** to me  
So I'll just have to let it be  
And stay in the moment and see  
What will be a next opportunity.

As I conclude this Futures Planning  
On Thanksgiving day while granting  
Myself an ending poetic space,  
I am content as I say **grace**.

## PAST REFLECTIONS

(Unless otherwise noted, the quotes below are my own.)

02/10/1979

*If it's all been decided by the stars,  
Why have I **struggled** so?*

*If it's only the position of Mars*

*Why was I the last to know?*

James Kavanaugh

04/26/1979

*Where to live in these United States  
Is one place bad while the other great?  
Southern Illinois or to go to Maine  
Isn't it really all the **same**?*

03/17/1979

**A lot of questions** – no answers in sight;

*Wrong is wrong but is right always right?*

*Why can't there just be **shades of grey***

*With people listening instead of having to say  
I'm right so you must be wrong.*

*What are you doing in my song!!*

08/04/1979

*Don't grow up fast  
Make the second year last  
... and last and always be young  
And swing – I'll **listen** to the song  
you've sung.*

06/26/1979

*Live each **five minutes** and take what  
comes.*

*Do what you want and strike up the drums.*

*Forget the clock – I hear someone talk*

*"Oh what a **beautiful day**!"*

09/09/1982

*The **rainbow** is more beautiful than the pot  
of gold at the end of it because it is now.*

Hugh Prather

07/24/1981

*There is a compelling Israeli **dialogue**  
wherein a visitor asks,  
"Why did you come here?"*

*The Israeli replies,*

*"I came to Israel to **forget**."*

*"To forget what?"*

*"I forgot."* cited by Burton Blatt  
in *Man Through a Turned Lens*

04/15/1982

*The right question is, What job or  
professional experience will help me  
become a **better person** and allow me to  
first **change** then think about impacting a  
wider audience? I have much to learn!!!*

12/31/1982

*A **journal** is most beneficial for the  
person doing the writing, but a lot of  
**value** can be gained by another.*

11/09/1982

*Looking back to events of thirty years ago  
brings a type of **self-reflection**  
that is important to do (every thirty years or so).*

**A Better Person**

**S Ame**

**Shade S of Grey**

**Lis T en**

**St R uggled**

**Fiv E Minutes**

**A lot o F Questions**

**Beautifu L Day**

**Valu E**

**C hange**

**Forge T**

**Ra I nbow**

**Dial O gue**

**Jour N al**

**S elf Reflection**

## PAST REFLECTIONS

In reading the words from my journals,  
I am a **better person** for all the experiences of the past.

In looking back at the places I have been,  
I appreciate the present and wonder what the last

Years of my life will bring,  
Knowing no two days will ever be the **same**;  
Realizing more is in store for me -  
More wisdom for me to claim.

Life is lived among the **shades of grey**  
Not in the either-or-choices that may  
Seem more appealing and easier to make  
At the end of each upcoming day.

**Listen** to the truths  
Wherever they may appear  
Amid the noises all around;  
They are sometimes hard to hear.

I **struggled** to make sense of my experiences  
Moving from coast to coast.  
It was with individuals with disabilities  
Where I learned the most.

I quiet myself for **five minutes**  
As I slowly breath in and out  
In times of stress and frustration  
At times when I want to shout.

My earlier years yielded **a lot of questions**,  
The answers to which I was seeking,  
Until I realized the importance  
Of the very questions I was speaking.

## **PAST REFLECTIONS**

**(continued)**

**Each morning can yield a beautiful day  
Influenced by attitudes and dispositions.  
I just need to begin afresh and rid  
Myself of my inhibitions.**

**There is value in making mistakes  
As we engage in self-reflection.  
It enhances our future outlook  
And sets the course of our direction.**

**Change occurs whether we prepare  
Or are caught off guard.  
Change is inevitable  
It's not announced in a birthday card.**

**I try to remember, but I often forget  
The important events of my past.  
But if I record them on my journal pages,  
I enable these memories to last.**

**A rainbow is a welcome sight  
As its colors light up the sky.  
It's a beautiful, natural reminder  
That the rain has passed us by.**

**Our dialogue with others  
Encourages our search for truth.  
Our interactions with the wise  
Begin in our early youth.**