

On the Path of the Perfecting Caregiver

**Theme Based Quotations
Leading to Reflections in Verse
Current Edition: 03/25/26**

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

Per**S**pective

Lis**T**en

F**I**ne

Wr**O**ng

Ain't **N**o Answer

My **S**tery

Now What **?**

Listen to the silence

Of the **unthought** question

From a **perspective** of
Inspired inquiry.

Yes – there **ain't no** single **answer**.

Don't get me **wrong**,

I am **fine** with **mystery**.

Now what? Ask on!

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

Layered

Image

Li**F**etime

Pi**E**ce

STarting

Pe**R**son

Cl**U**e

Assump**T**ion

CHanging

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

Morning
Ever **Y**
Thre **S**hold
Cen **T**er
H **E**art
Wor **R**yin'
Stunn **I**ng
D **E**ath
Settle

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

Joy

Reas **O**n

Unaware

Matte **R**s

Understa **N**d

Essential

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

Sounds

W **A**lked

Chan **G**e

Virtu **E**

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.

Wonders

L **I**fe

Ripen **S**

Discover

Organized

A **M**azing

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

*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

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

Rachel Naomi Remen

*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

Experience
Conte**N**tment
Nea**R**ness
Mag**I**c
Ecological
Happiness
Mature
Bl**E**ssed
Mea**N**ingful
Beau**T**y

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

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

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

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

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

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

Benjamin Franklin

... 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

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

Patti Smith

*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

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

Paulo Coelho

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

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.

Anais Nin

TRANSFORMATION

Integri **T**y

Hea **R**ts

Underst **A**nd

A **N**chored

Strengths

Dif **F**erent

J **O**urney

P **R**ocess

Meaning

Ch **A**nging

Dea **T**h

Creat **I**ve

Bec **O**ming

Adjustme **N**t

I now **understand** that nothing totally prepared me for the **death** of a loved one.

The caring **process** for my daily **journey** was **different** and ever-changing.

My **adjustment** to **becoming** a caregiver was **anchored** in the **meaning** I attributed to this experience.

I knew I had to be **creative** in offering supports that honored Marsha's **strengths**.

Our two **hearts** met at the crossroads of identity and **integrity**.

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

Gentle

Reverence

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*

*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

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

*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

*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*

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

George Saunders

*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

*... 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 **A**l Life

Cheri **S**h

Presen**T** Moment

Free Th**I**nking

Manage **T**hings

Clever

Heals

K**I**nd People

Spe**N**d

His**T**ories

Realizat**I**ons of the Past

Range of E**M**otions

L**E**ssons

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 Connec **T** ion

Heart J **O** urneys

Sorro **W**

Exh **A** ustion

En **R** iched

Gratitu **D** e

S **A** vor

Essen **C** e

Ac **C** ompanied

Privil **E** ge

P ulsing

Exer **T** ion

Emerg **I** ng

Revere **N** ce

G ift

Fami **L** y

L **O** ve

Witnes **S**

S piral

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

*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

*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

*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
Grace

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 P erson
S A me
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.

PASSAGE OF TIME

To me, **a day is a day**. They just have different names for them.

Thaddeus Mosley

The path that winds before us
is not for us to know.

One step and then another
is the only place we have to go.

Karine Polwart

Time marks us while we are **marking time**. Theodore Roethke

Your **present circumstances**
don't determine where you can
go; they merely determine where
you start. Nido R Qubein

Everybody's born with one or two
songs to sing. That's it. And we keep
repeating them and repeating them
until we get them **sort of right**.

Guillermo del Toro

Do not dwell in the past, do not
dream of the future, **concentrate
the mind** on the present moment.

the Buddha

In the short term, as long as I
can reason, reflect and write, I
intend to keep on **journeying
inward** and reaching out.

Parker Palmer

Begin doing what you want to do
now. We are not living in eternity.
We have **only this moment**,
sparkling like a star in our hand –
and melting like a snowflake.

Francis Bacon

Enjoy the journey and learn from
the process, not just the end result.

Edward L. Deci

To **slow down** is to be taken into the soul of
things. Terry Tempest Williams

Let go of the thing that you're
trying to be (the noun), and **focus**
on the actual work you need to be
doing (the verb). Austin Kleon

I'm vain enough to think that I've
made **a successful life**. I've had
everything I've ever wanted. You can't
beat that. Jack Gilbert

You can measure your worth by your
dedication to your path, not by your
success and failures.

Elizabeth Gilbert

One Step **P**
A Day is **A** Day
Slow Down
A Successful Life
Present Circumstances
Sort of Right
Enjoy the **E** Journey

Dedication To **O** Your Path
Focus

Marking **T**ime
Journeying **I**nward
Only This **M**oment
Concentrate **E** the Mind

PASSAGE OF TIME

I can only go **one step** at a time
As I begin my reflection once again in rhyme.
It's been nearly a year since Marsha's passing;
My love endures and will be everlasting.

A day is a day

I sometimes stop to say.
No matter what day it was this week,
It's the moment to moment that I most seek.

I need to **slow down** and ease my pace;
I'm not competing in any sort of race.
One breath in and one breath out
Suits me fine as I walk about.

I have led **a successful life**
Enriched a great deal by Marsha, my wife
Of 48 years with her by my side -
We took all of life's challenges right in stride.

Present circumstances provide time to reflect
And write my thoughts so that I can detect
Lessons from experiences year after year -
At least what I can recall when my memory is clear.

Mostly, I tend to be **sort of right**
When I ponder what's in my sight
Perfecting a path from here to there
I'm not that anxious to go anywhere ...

But to **enjoy the journey** from just where I'm at
Not particularly concerned where I put my hat
Or where I live or where I'll go;
Home is where I continue to grow.

PASSAGE OF TIME

(continued)

My **dedication is to make my path** meaningful and true.
That's what's most important in all that I do.
Quality of life is not measured in wealth
Quality of life is enhanced by good health ...

As I **focus** on figuring out what's next.
This can't be found in any text
As I look for signs for what's up ahead
Somewhere between now and the time I am dead ...

While **marking time** with the entries in my journal
That may just explain in small, ever-changing kernels
Of different truths I have discovered in days gone past:
Truths that endure - Truths that will last ...

As I **journey inward** to ponder and discover
That wisdom can be sought in the presence of another
Seeker who is also on a personal quest
To be better today - - - and to be the best ...

Person they can be in **only this moment** that is near
And maybe help to make my path more clear
And make sense of events that come my way
To where I am now - and that I may ...

Concentrate my mind on what is in front of me
And visualize the wonders that I can see
In the Passage of Time as I go about my day,
Thanks for listening to me have my say.