



## What I Learned from My Aunt

On the Tenth Day of Christmas my wife's and my dear Aunt Joy died, a very fulfilled nonagenarian whom we already miss very much. I learned important lessons from her living as well as in her dying.

From her living:

- I learned to live life to the max. A retired school teacher, Joy lived on saltines and cottage cheese to be able to afford the opera which was her passion.
- I learned not to fold when your legs are shot out from under you by the death of a beloved and loving spouse. Widowed, Joy traveled the world for twenty years to see opera and made new opera-loving friends wherever she went.
- I learned that an olive will do very well with excellent gin to make a martini; no vermouth is necessary.

In her dying:

- I learned courage in not shrinking from a decision to undergo a medical procedure that might make me better enough to return to the opera but is just as likely to release me to join my long-departed spouse in heaven, and to fear not death but rather lingering.
- I learned that having an executed Advance Medical Directive will avoid unwanted attempts at resuscitation.
- I learned that if I do not make funeral pre-arrangements myself, then my loved ones will have to scramble to do so at the awkward time of my death.
- I learned by her example to follow *The Book of Common Prayer* (p.445) rubric to make a will, "arranging for the disposal of temporal goods, not neglecting, if able, to leave bequests for religious and charitable purposes." Joy remembered her church.
- I learned to keep a will up to date, making necessary adjustments dictated by changes in my financial and personal circumstances-- hopefully making amendments in a more timely manner than between heart-attacks, as Aunt Joy did.

Keeping my desk and attic cleaned out would undoubtedly also be a mercy to my survivors-- but this is probably more than I can do. I feel that I'll do well enough to practice the items above.

How about you? What mercy will you show your survivors? Please call me if I may assist you.

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