

At Journey's End: A Complete Guide to Funerals and Funeral Planning

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Often with disquieting ease, the cessation of life lifts the tapestry of years — threaded in hues of toil and triumph — which blankets the living in the intricacies of their own mortality. For those who suffer the passing of a loved one, grief oftentimes may be compounded by the burden of impromptu funeral planning, an unresolved estate or the shroud of uncertainty regarding the wishes of the deceased, clouding every decision made. Preparing to greet death, in life, in order to slay the needless anguish that frequently becomes a distraction from true bereavement, is the stratagem proposed with *At Journey's End*.

In addition to culling from the exhaustive resources provided by professionals within the medical field and funeral services, as well as the comments of the average consumer, Fatteh offers his own veteran insights. A pathologist and medical examiner with nearly four decades of experience, Fatteh also holds a law degree, collectively electing him a nearly authoritarian voice. In a surprisingly heartening approach for a topic so commonly held as morose, Fatteh functionally dispels any stigma attached to funerals by offering a personal example of his own funeral plans, and also relays current trends in the funeral industry and their extrapolated paths. Concepts such as “virtual funeral homes” and perpetual Internet memorials, which once would seem fantastic, for example, are now features upon the shifting face of “death care.”

Ushered through the structured form of this comprehensive guide, readers fall into a metered stride past every fathomable aspect of the funeral, each outlined with the distinctive sensitivity of their escort. By considering both “at need” funeral options for those faced with the crisis of a death without advance funeral arrangement, and its antitheses, the emphatically recommended “preneed” funeral; the book is granted vast accessibility. Fatteh comfortably explores such physical processes as embalming, burials, cremation and autopsy and examines the legal processes and their economic wake with a layman's tongue. Chapters which highlight various cultural death rites, and those which waylay apprehensions of fraud via explanations of laws governing funerals, are a notable credit to the book, as are inclusions of addresses, appendices, sample forms, a glossary and an index.

Sweeping across an oceanic range of material, *At Journey's End* labors to successfully ease the burden of a loved one's passing by removing tiers of peripheral distress. The residual sorrow is that which no words can soothe, as death rarely emerges from the placidity of life, while bordering life's rich tapestry, without its predestined purl.

KAREN WYCKOFF (January / February 2000)

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