

Life reflections



Jenny Jones

"I have faith that things will work out, maybe not in the way you want them to exactly. But we take what we can and make the most of what we've got, because you never know when it's going to go. That's something you can hang on to even though sometimes it's not that easy."



Jenny was interviewed according to the Dignity Therapy protocol (see Appendix) at Barwon Health's McKellar Centre in November 2014.

Interview, editing and transcription by
Barwon Health Palliative Care volunteers

Please note:

This is an educational/promotional sample of a legacy paper created according to the style of Barwon Health's Dignity Therapy program.

Jenny is a pseudonym for a patient who greatly appreciated her participation in Dignity Therapy, and voluntarily gave permission for her *Life Reflections* to be used to help explain the process to others. Her husband and daughter support that decision as an expression of their appreciation too.

To protect the privacy of the family, all potentially identifying names, photos and locations have been changed. The text and layout is otherwise as per the original document.

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Some life reflections of Jenny Jones

BH: Jenny, I'd like to invite you to tell me a bit about your life story, and particularly the memories that are strongest for you.

It's funny isn't it, because I guess where you kind-of think your life story starts is different for everybody. For me, I think life really started in my teens and early twenties. This is when I remember things that were special and wonderful in my life. I suppose meeting my husband, Ron, and going on our big trip around Australia for six months are really strong memories. That trip was full of wonderful expeditions and crazy things that we did. We didn't go the whole way around Australia, just some of the way, and it was just wonderful. It was just like we were the only two people there. We were just having a ball. I suppose after that we tried to settle down but it was hard after a great holiday like that.

The most significant things that happened after moving down to Anglesea were getting a job, starting to renovate our house and finding out I was pregnant with my beautiful little girl, Evie. That was a very special time.

I almost find it a bit sad to talk about that right now [*said with tears and laughter*].

BH: As we said before we started, it is sad that we're doing this, because something we wish wasn't happening is happening

Exactly. It's happening, can't run away from it. Nor do I want to, but I don't want it to happen.

BH: It'd be nice if it would just nick off and leave you alone

Yes! That would be perfect. Let's try for that. But that's not going to happen.

My family, Mum, Dad and my brother, followed us down here, which was nice. My mum is Mary and my dad's name was Bill. My brother's been in Lara for a long, long time so we're all fairly close, which is great. My brother is Tony. He's really good. He'll come down at the drop of a hat, even though it's forty-five minutes away. "Can you come and do this?" "Oh yeah, okay". It's really good. Dad's passed on now; he died a couple of years ago and so did Ron's Dad. His name was Bob. He passed on the year before my Dad, so we've had that little bit of grief in there. Ron's mum is still with us; her name's Mary too. Then there's Ron's two sisters, Julie and Sharon and their kids, Jack and Tim and John and Sam. There's quite a few of us. I didn't realise our family was so big!

BH: Mindful of what you said about feeling that life really began for you in your teenage years are there any significant things from your early childhood that worth noting?

Well, my brother went off to the army at a very young age so it kind of made me an only child. I think Mum and Dad kept me closer. I didn't really get out much. Well, back then you didn't get out much when you were just thirteen or fourteen. I met up with my friends and we played tennis and all that sort of stuff. Prior to that I don't really remember very much, which is strange I guess.

I do remember something from Kindergarten. How's that for a long way back? I remember they had those metal tricycles. I remember a few of us kids sitting around the sand pit. There we were, talking about how we couldn't wait to grow up, so they wouldn't talk to us like kids any more. It's brilliant, isn't it? We were pre-schoolers! And the day before we were crying over the fish that jumped out of the fish bowl and died! I can actually see us all sitting around the sand pit saying, 'Oh, gee when will they start treating us like adults?'

That is funny. I'd forgotten all about that. I'm sure there are funnier things than that, but to me that's funny. Here we all were thinking we were the bees-knees, sitting there around the sand pit. It cracked us up! I don't know if I ever told my Mum and Dad about that. Mum would probably think it was funny but Dad would have told me off, no doubt.

Dad was quite strict but he was still a great Dad. My brother was a little rat bag; he used to get me into so much trouble. One night Mum must have been at work because sometimes she'd work a couple of jobs, one during the day and one at night. So this night, Dad was looking after us and I'd cut my toe. I said to my brother, "I have a bloody toe". Well, we all know what happened next, don't we? I got into really big trouble for swearing and I had my mouth washed out with soap – literally.

All the while I was trying to explain, "But I didn't mean it. My toe's actually bleeding!" I can laugh at that now. I just think it's funny that he was so angry at me for swearing, that he didn't take the time to figure out what had actually happened. "My little girl doesn't swear!" I suppose you'd be mortified if your child was running around swearing. Just hang on a minute there Dad! That would mean nothing to kids now. It probably wouldn't even be considered a swear word, not in the way I used it, anyway.

I remember we used to go on camping trips with Mum and Dad and other family. I don't remember much about them which is a shame but I do remember going to those places and having a really good time. We used to go up to Shepparton a lot. We stayed at the caravan park, right on the lake. When we went there it had just been built; there was nothing else there. One day Dad was out swimming in the lake and he'd forgotten he had his watch on. He called out to me to come and get his watch. "Yeah, no worries" I said. So out I went and of course I swam back with the watch under water [laughing]. They were all laughing but Dad wasn't! I just didn't get it. I didn't understand what the problem was!

We went back to the caravan park in Shepparton about three years ago. It's quite amazing how it looks now. It was the first time I'd been back there since I was a little tacker.

BH: You said life really started as a teenager. If you had the photo album of your life, and picked out some of those key photos of your teenage years, what would you show us?

I grew up in the eighties; that's really sad fashion wise! I used to enjoy tennis and, I remember getting the tram home from school with my friends. We'd hop off and go and get some hot chips at the milk bar and then decide to meet each other down at the tennis courts to work off those hot chips [*laughing*].

We were living in Melbourne at the time, in Footscray, which was good. We got the tram straight to the front gates of the school so it was very easy. I went to Maribyrnong High School. I think they call it College now. It also would have been easy not to go to school and to just keep on going on the tram! But we didn't ever do that. Okay, we did! [*more laughter*]

We'd go roller skating a lot. It's like that ad on TV. Have you seen the roller skating one where they do an eighties flashback? It's an ad for health insurance. Well, it was like that only we weren't that good.

BH: So how does Ron come into the story?

I don't know if I should tell this story! We actually met at the pub, the old Station Hotel. Ron was a bouncer there. He was going to throw me out. That was his line anyway. He said I was drunk and disorderly and I was about to be taken outside. I was mortified. I thought, 'Oh my God!' So I picked up my bag and my keys and everything and started to walk out. He was like, "Oh no, no! I'm only joking. It's alright." It was actually his pick-up line! It would have worked on all the girls I reckon. Not a bad line, not a bad one at all. So that's how we met and I kept going back every weekend. [*Lots of laughter through this whole story*]

We'd go out after he'd finished work so that was often pretty late. I think a lot of times I might have gone into work a little bit hung over. That's pretty bad, I know!

We met when I'd just turned twenty-two. He would have been twenty-three. It's funny you know. My birthday is the 2nd of February and his is the 3rd of February, so it's a little bit scary. I didn't believe him when he told me that. I said, "You're joking. I'm up to your fibs now." That's how we met. We just matched. We just fit in really well together. We got engaged but we never actually planned a wedding. It just didn't happen! It takes us a while to make up our minds! We didn't get married until last year.

Ron and I were engaged for twenty-five years! Not bad, is it? We think we should go in the Guinness Book of Records. The amazing thing is that I stuck around that long! It's not something that we planned. We were going to get married; we just didn't get around to doing it. We were busy having fun! Ultimately, we were together. It was as if we were married even though we hadn't signed a piece of paper to acknowledge it. And we're not religious at all. I think it worked out better in the end because neither of us are big on groups being around. On our wedding day it was just our family - nice and intimate and quiet.

It was like we were testing the waters to make sure. I did say we are not good at making decisions. It was quite bizarre because we thought, well, we've had some bad luck and everyone's been a bit down, so we'll get married and make everyone happy. We thought that would be a nice thing for them. We only had our mums and my brother and Ron's sisters. It was very small, just in the law courts. We went out for lunch with the family and it was beautiful. It was a really nice day. Of course, Evie was there too. She was our ring bearer. The girl in the law offices was calling on the two bridesmaids, which were my mum [laughing] and mother-in-law. The two of them looked at each other and had a bit of a giggle. That was a lovely moment.

The wedding definitely picked everybody up a bit. It was a fun day. It wasn't anything big or dramatic or that sort of thing. It was just a small celebration with the family having lunch together. We actually had ice cream cake for our wedding cake! It was good. We all liked ice cream cake; there's no wastage there. They wouldn't let me get the one with the little Freddo heads in it. It had to be more conservative [laughing]. That was a shame. Freddo heads would have been good.

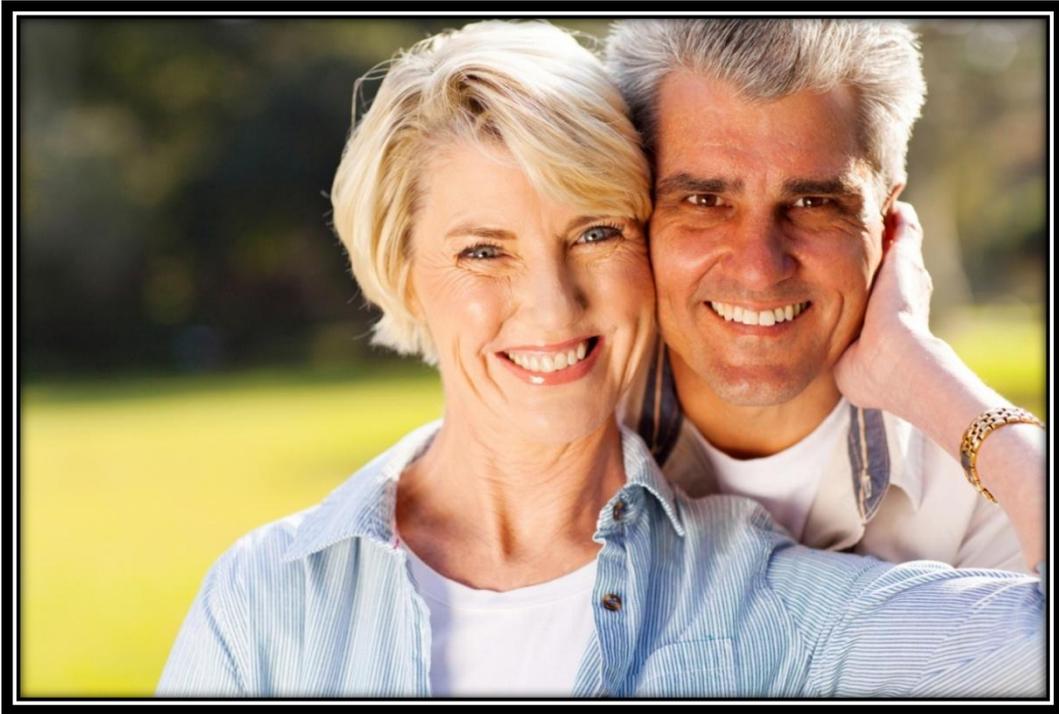
Ron and I have a good laugh at each other. We found it quite funny calling each other husband and wife at first. I still struggle saying 'husband'. I inevitably laugh when I say it because it just sounds hysterical to me. On the day it was just so funny, almost like a prank. "Nah, we didn't really get married. We're only kidding!"

We didn't tell anybody, that was the other thing. We didn't tell anybody that we were getting married, anyone except for our families. We had to tell them because we worried that if we just invited them for lunch they might say that they were busy and they had something else on! So we had to tell them to make sure they came. But we didn't tell anyone else. I sent a text and a photo to my work afterwards of us all dressed up, saying, "Guess who tied the knot?" They were quite impressed that we managed to keep it a secret.

One of my friends bought us a very unique wedding present - a terracotta flower pot with Chuppa-Chups in it for flowers and petals cut out of cardboard [laughs]. That was nice. We'd already managed to collect all those things that people normally give as wedding presents: electric knives and towels and all those sorts of things. So it actually would have been a really good wedding to go to because you didn't have to fork out for anything. You even got your lunch paid for!

BH: You said that you and Ron just sort of felt like you clicked together.

We did. Everything that we liked to do, we *both* liked to do. I think that maybe I'm speaking for him when I shouldn't be. He would probably say, "Oh no, I hate doing that!" [laughing]. But in general terms, things that I like, he likes too. We are both quiet people and we enjoy each other's company and our own company, too. We are both very family orientated. So we are the same and it works. I suppose we are the same but we're different too. It just works really well.



Jenny and Ron smile at the thought of finally being married.

BH: So what are some of the highlights of that time together?

I don't know that I should tell this story! Well, yes, Ron's a naughty boy! We've done a lot of camping so I guess a lot of our experiences are around camping and being outdoors and that sort of thing. We would often go away when it was cold so he was very, very good at making fires. He made one in the Flinders Ranges once. That was frightening! He actually built this great fire base. There was wood everywhere but then he decided to get some petrol, just a little bit. Well, he put the petrol on the wood and lit it up like a fireball, an absolute fireball. It was like the atomic bomb! Oh my gosh! I couldn't believe it. But then it just died and thankfully we didn't burn anything down. Surprisingly, he still had his eyebrows even though they were a little singed. He has quite a reputation for lighting camp fires! *[lots of laughter]*

We went to Fraser Island a few times and made friends with the dingos. I know you're not meant to do that but we still did. I think everyone does it anyway. You can't help it; they're dogs. But when they raid your esky, you're not happy. Ron's always been an outdoorsy person. He probably made me more of an outdoor person than what I was before. I was probably the sort of person to sit around and read a book. I was always comfortable in my own skin, in my own presence I suppose. Ron's a Gung-Ho camping nut. We have our caravan now but back then we had a Kombi. We would go off camping in the Kombi but it was getting a little bit small for three of us.

We've got a caravan now but we haven't really been out anywhere with it yet. We had a test run out at the Bellarine Big 4 and had a night out there. It's only ten minutes from home! Just in case we didn't like it, we knew that our beds were not that far away!

Our first real trip with the caravan is coming up soon. We're going to do our big 1770 trip and see how we go with that. We've changed from campers to caravaners! I don't know if that makes us grey nomads. I've got a few grey hairs! But I suppose seeing as we have a thirteen year old, it cuts out the grey nomad tag. Mind you, I don't want to have that title just yet!

BH: From what you said the other day, I have a clear impression that 1770 is a special destination for you.

It is; it's a very special place. There's not much there but it's the tranquillity of it and the people. It's similar to being at home, I suppose. The people there are very open and will say, 'Hi' to you when you're walking down the street. They're the sort of people who'd ask a total stranger to look after their shop for a minute while they duck out. The beach there is beautiful. Just to go and sit and relax and not have a care in the world, that's what it's like. It certainly is a very special place for us. It was the first place where Evie went out on a boat and swam on the Barrier Reef. It was my first time out on the Barrier Reef, too. So it holds a lot of memories, very, very special memories. There are too many memories to actually talk about but we have got lots of photos that anybody's welcome to look at [*laughing*]. How boring is that when someone talks about their photos?

The caravan park is right on the beach and it's so pretty. You can hear the waves at night. The weather there is so much better. You can walk down the street in your shorts and T-shirt of a night, get a cold drink and wander back. It's just lovely. It's something for us to look forward to. I think everyone needs to go there.

You hear of people going to Europe and it's all hustle and bustle. They feel like they've got to see the whole of Europe in four weeks. But we take our time and explore places and just find their beauty. It's not hard to find beautiful places in 1770.

We take our time driving up. We don't just hike it straight up there because we like the small country towns. Some of the places on the way up are a challenge though! We stop and have a look around and enjoy the time. But Evie doesn't like that. She says it's very boring! We understand that from her perspective it is. We'll have to get her a series of books this time, I think, so she can just sit and read out on the lawn while Ron and I go exploring. So that's our destination once again. The plan is to get up there, to 1770.

BH: If we change tack a little, what roles in work or community or family do you identify as having been the most important and the most significant in your life?

My relationship with both Ron and Evie are *the most* significant. And obviously, my relationships with my Mum and Dad and my brother.

Getting married and having a baby, those are the most significant things in my life. Having a baby is particularly significant, although she's not a baby anymore.

They grow up too quickly, don't they? I remember cradling Evie in my arms when she was just born. I put my thumb against her foot. Her little foot was the same length as my thumb. I thought, that's the way I'll remember it. If I took a photo of her foot and my thumb [*laughs*] and looked at it in years to come, I'd think, why did you take that?. But that's how I'll always remember it. My thumb will never change but her foot will. I can see the changes which are so very special to me.

Beyond that I really only ever had one particular job: medical reception. Work is not a big deal in my life. I'd much rather just enjoy life than go to work. In saying that, the people that I have worked for over the past fifteen years are just wonderful. The Anglesea Medical Centre is very close to home, only five minutes away which is lovely. I could go home for lunch. I continued on my lazy streak and drove to work; walking is another thing! It was a really good place to work, probably the best place I've ever worked. I've met the nicest people there and I've made some really good friends there.

There's one girl in particular, Mary Ann. She's a Buddhist and a lot of her beliefs are just really lovely. When she speaks to you, you can feel her calmness and her presence. She's just a really beautiful person. I like having chats with her. Maybe that's selfish because I'm drawing off her beautiful energy. I think the best boss I ever had there would be Phil. I suppose you don't stay in one place for fifteen years and not get along with people, do you?

BH: Within all of that, I'm wondering about the things in life that have given you the greatest sense of pride.

I don't know; I'm not much of a big achiever [*laughing*].

Being a mum, that's a pretty huge achievement in itself. Being parents to Evie, Ron and I coming together in our different roles, I guess that would probably be our biggest achievement. There's nothing else that I could compare that to. Our relationship changed when we became parents but we've still managed to work together to figure out the best way to do things for Evie.

Ron will do well raising Evie, he'll be fine. I can see him sitting on the front porch with his shotgun waiting for when that first boyfriend comes. I feel sorry for that lad, whoever it's going to be. Ron is quite a big bloke so you wouldn't want to mess with him.

We have an actual skeleton in our garage. I can see Ron with the skeleton as the new boyfriend turns up. "This is Evie's *first* boyfriend [*laughing*]. Meet Kevin. He brought Evie home half an hour late! Poor Kevin!" Well, you can see the dust as the new boyfriend runs away up the road!

BH: When you think of Evie what do you see and what are you feeling?

I'm seeing my precious little baby growing up very quickly. I'm watching all these wonderful things that are happening through her life as she grows up. I just think

it's really sad that I won't be able to see her growing up. All the firsts: her first dance, her first boyfriend. And she better be prepared for her Dad to find that first boyfriend!

Evie has done very, very well. She's pushed herself in her school work and in her relationships at home and at school. She's sat back and listened and learned a lot of things from people and she handles herself very well. I am so proud of her and I respect her. She can do anything she wants to do. When she grows up, whatever she wants will be there. She's just got to continue to work as hard as what she does now [*all said with a lot of emotion*].

Evie is definitely more like Ron. She's a tomboy and just like her dad. I don't think she realises how strong she is these days. She takes after him in so many ways. She's come out of her shell in the last couple of years. It's quite amazing to watch that transition from being a quiet person, bordering on shyness, to blossoming and almost becoming an extrovert. And I think, wow, what happened there? [laughs] It's absolutely incredible. I wish I had half of her confidence. She's done very, very well. I'm very proud of her.



Evie is going to have a wonderful life. Everyone will be there for her. I'd like to believe that I will be there in spirit with her. I'll be watching over her. I just won't be there physically, to see her doing all these wonderful things. It doesn't mean I'm not part of it though, as much as I'd like to be watching her, standing next to her and holding her hand. That's what I think about a lot: not being there for Evie, not being there to see her life change and the cycle she'll go through [*said with a lot of emotion*].

BH: I'm wondering what would be the greatest compliment someone could pay you?

That's a beauty is isn't it? I don't think it'd be about my grey hairs – they're not very attractive [*laughs*]. It would simply come back again to my family: how well we've done and are still doing, how well we work together, how we blend, how we just fit together as a family. I'd like for other people to see that. I'm sure they do. Everyone likes to think they're the greatest parents, don't they? That would be a great compliment for me I think.

BH: I heard you express before all the confidence you have in Ron in his role as a dad.

Ron's not one for taking compliments but he is a really good dad. I don't think he realises just how good he is.

I guess I want to reassure him that everything will be alright. I want to tell him that he can do it and he will. And although Evie sometimes says, 'I don't love you, Dad', she doesn't mean that. He'll do fine. As with most things that Ron does, it all usually just falls into place and works well for him. He's got a knack for making things right. So I have complete confidence in him that he'll do a great job bringing up Evie. I want him to know that he just needs to keep on going as he is right now and have the confidence to know that he's doing the right thing. There's really no right or wrong. I want him to be happy and get on with his life. Just be happy and everything will be alright. That's pretty much what I would say.

I'm not going to be there for Ron and that's incredibly sad to me [*tears*]. He might be thinking, 'party time', but he still doesn't know how to work the washing machine! [*laughing*] Yeah, I'll miss him a lot and I'll miss him forever. I guess we're lucky that we found the time we've had together. A lot of people don't get that so I'm grateful for what I've had. [*lots of emotion*]

BH: When you talk of that quiet confidence that things will work out, I think of a mystic who lived several centuries ago, Julian of Norwich. Perhaps her most famous saying was "All will be well and all manner of things will be well."

I've not heard that; that's amazing isn't it? What a great statement, I like that. It works out, it really does. Really, if you think of everything in life, it does work out. We don't need to interfere in the way things are going to go. We don't have to try and fix it. It generally works out well. I really like that saying.

BH: There's a bit of a parallel in that to how you're dealing with your health and your prognosis.

There's really nothing we can do about it. It's going to happen. We'll just live well and deal with things as they come up. Everything will work out as best as it possibly can. It may not be what we want, but ultimately it'll be the best outcome possible. We're all good people and we deserve that. I just think things always do work out in the end, to some degree.

It's happening and I can't run away from it, nor do I want to. It would be perfect if it could just go away and leave me alone but that's not going to happen.

BH: I'm digressing here to connect with our conversation yesterday when you spoke about meeting our spiritual care worker, and your belief that everyone has faith [Jenny starts to laugh]. Am I right in hearing here there's a sense in which you have got a deep faith in the future and in your family?

I do have faith. It may not be in the way that people tend to use that word. I have faith that things will work out, maybe not in the way you want them to exactly. But we take what we can and make the most of what we've got, because you never know when it's going to go. That's something you can hang on to even though sometimes it's not that easy.

You have to pick yourself up and pull yourself back together. We know that it is going to be alright. Everything will be alright. We all just pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and move on. There's nothing else you can do.

BH: Which ties in beautifully with what's been one of my favourite questions, one I think you've already starting answering. What would you say you've learned about life that you'd like to pass on?

Now that could keep us going for a while! *[laughs]* I've learned that most of the things in your life that are going to happen you can't change, regardless of what you do. Some things are just going to happen. If it's not what you wanted well, that's OKAY. It may not be perfect but you deal with it. If you can change it, fantastic, go for it, try and change it. But if you can't, just make the most of it. Move on and look for something else. Obviously you weren't meant to have that. I guess that's the way I look at life and at what life's given me.

I don't want to mope around and say, "Oh, I'm so tired", like some sort of Penelope Pitstop! *[laughs]* It doesn't make any sense to do that; it just makes everyone sad. We've all got to die. It's just that I know what's going to get me and I know it's not going to be too long now. Maybe knowing that makes me more fortunate than other people. I can set plans in place. I can tell people that I love that I love them. So maybe it's easier for me. I think we're all just frightened of that word, that death word.

You just deal with it the best way you can. There's no point doing anything else; it doesn't achieve anything. It doesn't make anyone feel better. You just do what you can and make the most of it.

It's interesting how we all deal with that concept of dying. Some people are a little scared of it, other people don't care and others, I guess they're wondering if anything is next. I don't know if there is anything next. I'm not scared of dying. We all die; we were born to die. No, I'm not scared of it. I often wonder if there is something else. I wasn't brought up religiously. But I don't think you can discount things when you just don't know. I'd be interested to see! I'll let you know somehow. I'll turn the light bulb off and on for you *[laughs]*.

BH: I'm wondering if there are any other particular words of guidance or encouragement that you'd like to offer the people you love?

Just to say that I'm not scared, I'm okay. I'm going to miss everybody and hope that they'll be okay. I'm sure they will be because they've coped with things in the past, and they'll cope with this. It will be hard. I'm glad I'm dying and not them so I don't have to deal with it [*laughter and tears*]. I think my family is very resilient and they have good coping mechanisms. They'll come together and use each other as a way to cope as well. I think they'll all be fine.

Hopefully it will help them get through knowing that I'm okay with it, or at least as okay as you can be. I'm not in pain, I'm not upset with the world, I'm just who I am. They'll move on. I'll always be a part of their lives in some way [*said with tears*] I don't really know how that can be because that kind of relies on their being something afterwards, doesn't it? I think that I will always be in their thoughts because we are a strong family unit. I don't mean just myself, Ron and Evie. I mean our extended family as well: our mums and brothers and sisters, our nieces and nephews. They'll use each other, support each other and be together as a family. And they'll be fine. Absolutely!

You don't, you won't ever get over something like this. It's horrible. No one wants to get over it. But you can know that they're alright with it, that the loved ones you've left behind are going to be alright with it. That's half the road I think, most definitely.

BH: The beautiful words you've shared today and have already shared with people you love will be the sorts of things that live on in their memories. It will be a different sort of relationship they have with you.

Just because you're not physically there doesn't mean that you haven't got a relationship with that person. I still talk to my Dad. I don't need to go to the cemetery and talk to him because I feel that he's with me. So I have a chat with him and everything's good! I get angry with him about that bloody toe [*laughing*]. Did you hear that Dad? And that watch! [*laughing*] I can't remember if I ruined the watch or not but there's a good chance I probably did. I don't think they made them waterproof back then [*more laughter*].

I think I do believe that there is something afterwards. I don't know what that is though. Maybe it's a spiritual thing. I don't think there's another life. I don't think it's that but I do think there's something. It's a shame someone just can't tell us, that they can't just come back for a while and say, "Hey, it's really good here!"

BH: There's a quote from a novel a friend of mine was reading: "Maybe death isn't just an anticlimax. Maybe death is actually something really important. Maybe there are things that we discover in dying that we can't discover in life."

Well, there may well be. We just don't know, do we? Isn't that interesting to think of something like that? I'm sure there's a way that I can let you all know!

Start to look over your shoulder! If you don't notice me, I might get frantic though [*laughing*]. You'll think I'm a poltergeist! You'll be thinking, "She's back!"

BH: Is there anything else that would be really important for you to add?

I guess I just want to tell my family that I love them deeply, in a way that I guess words can't describe [*said with tears*]. And I know that they love me. I know that. Nobody has to feel they didn't say goodbye or they didn't tell me something they wanted to tell me. I know that we all loved each other. We still do. And we always will.

I do think there will be a meeting spot on the other side, somewhere under a tree with a picnic. I guess that's it.



Appendix: The Dignity Therapy question protocol

This *Life Reflection* was prepared using the Dignity Therapy question protocol.

Dignity Therapy, a psychosocial intervention developed by Dr Harvey Max Chochinov and his international team, has been designed specifically to address many of the psychological, existential, and spiritual challenges that patients and their families face as they grapple with the reality of life drawing to a close. Growing out of research into how patients understood and experienced dignity, Dignity Therapy invites patients with a life-limiting illness to reflect upon matters of importance to them, particularly key aspects of their life and its significance for them, and their hopes and messages for the loved ones they will be leaving.

The interview(s) is recorded, transcribed, then skilfully edited to enhance readability as a printed document and chronological sequencing, as well as to link common themes, while still maintaining the authenticity and individuality of the original spoken words.

The ten questions that loosely frame the protocol are:

1. Tell me a little about your life history; particularly those parts that you either remember most or think are the most important?
2. When did you feel most alive?
3. Are there specific things that you would want your family to know about you, and are there particular things you would want them to remember?
4. What are the most important roles you have played in life (family roles, vocational roles, community service roles, etc). Why were they so important to you and what do you think you accomplished in those roles?
5. What are your most important accomplishments, and what do you feel most proud of?
6. Are there particular things that you feel still need to be said to your loved ones, or things that you would want to take the time to say once again? What are your hopes and dreams for your loved ones?
7. What have you learned about life that you would want to pass along to others?
8. What advice or words of guidance would you wish to pass along to your [son, daughter, husband, wife, parents, other(s)]?
9. Are there words or even instructions you would like to offer your family, to help prepare them for the future?
10. In creating this permanent record [reflecting upon important dimensions to your life story], are there other things that you would like included?

