

## HOW TO PROTECT DIGITAL LEGACIES AND USE TECHNOLOGY TO SHARE LEGACIES AFTER SOMEONE DIES (EVEN YOU!)

Digital legacy is a collection of data and overall presence left behind online when someone dies.

Learn how and why to make a plan for your digital accounts which includes social media profiles, email accounts, photos stored online, online shopping accounts, investments and other digital interactions.

Learn how technology can help you get all "your "ducks in a row" to make it easier for your loved ones when you die.

Learn how and why to use online digital resources to share obituaries and reasons why you might want to consider writing your own obituary now.

### PRESENTATION

INTRO: Why I am doing this topic. Not intended to treat death flippantly. Slides are to illustrate and entertain. Have sent my actual presentation to the Technology Club so you can skip taking notes unless you choose to.

Over the holidays, I found out that my husband had never watched the iconic Christmas favorite, "It's a Wonderful Life." **SLIDE 1** I could hardly believe that he hadn't seen it, so we sat down one evening, turned on our fake fireplace, and watched it. We both cried... and of course, he loved it!

Afterwards, I found myself wondering how my life made a difference in this world. A "legacy" is anything – material, emotional or digital – that we leave behind when we die. When people talk about "getting their ducks in a row" before they die, they usually are talking about material things. I know I cringe when I think about my poor kids having to sift through all the stuff I have accumulated over the years. My financial legacy may be limited, but I sure have a lot of STUFF! **SLIDE 2** Most of us try to plan ahead and make a will or trust to deal with who will get what from all our stuff. Dave and I have a will and a trust so we can check that off the list.

My emotional legacy is pretty much already accomplished, because I am who I am and have done what I have done, although I am committed to keep plugging on trying my best to make this world a better place. 17 years in the convent, **SLIDE 3**. many additional years as a mom and wife, **SLIDES 3,4, & 5**, going through a divorce and then remarriage, **SLIDE 6** good relationships with my kids and step-kids and friends, **SLIDE 7** all in place. I am not sure I would do anything differently at this point.

But a DIGITAL LEGACY? All my Facebook and Instagram posts over the years, all my essays, letters to the editor and other newspaper articles about me, **SLIDES 8 AND 9** journal writings and an old blog that I have written over the years, all my online shopping sites – especially AMAZON- all of whom have my financial information and know what I liked to buy, what about all of that? What about all my subscriptions, most of which I pay for?

If you had your own business, with a website, sales info, product info etc., how should you protect all that, or do you need to?

What do I hope that people will know or say about me when I am gone? Do I even care? Well, my family might care. Do they even have the information they need for an obituary?

Your wishes about all of your digital legacy can be summarized in a simple letter that you write and leave with your will to your loved ones. Even if it is as simple as, "I don't give a fig what you do with any of my online stuff!" will be helpful to them! The risk you take with doing nothing is that bad actors may use your Facebook/Instagram/shopping info to do whatever they want to do, get into your bank accounts, investments, post on your pages, etc. You can prevent this from happening by planning ahead and taking a few simple steps to prevent others from messing up your digital legacy for your loved ones.

Today I would like to talk about two topics: how to set up things so that your digital legacy is protected and how to make it easier for your loved ones to remember you through leaving them your life story or obituary to share with those who loved you.

First, how do you protect your online legacy?

Many of you are probably on Facebook, Threads, Instagram and other similar groups. What happens to your Facebook account after you die depends on whether you choose to have it memorialized or permanently deleted: **SLIDES 10 & 11**

- **Memorialized**

If you don't choose to delete your account, Facebook will memorialize it if they learn of your passing. This means:

- Your main profile will remain visible, but it won't appear in friend suggestions, ads, birthday reminders, or other public spaces
- Friends can continue to post on your timeline
- Your account is kept secure so that no one can log in
- It's a place for friends and family to share memories

- **Permanently deleted**

If you choose to have your account permanently deleted, all of your content will be removed from Facebook, including your main profile and any additional profiles.

- **Unchanged**

If no one tells Facebook about your death and no one contacts them to memorialize or delete the account, it will remain active. Your page will stay unchanged, and your friends will still receive notifications on your birthday.

You can manage your memorialization preferences in your Accounts Centre. You can also include instructions for closing your account in your estate plan.

To report a deceased person's account to be memorialized, you can contact Facebook.

Let me share a true story: my best friend, Terrie, **SLIDE 12** whom I have known since we were 19, died two years ago. I recently was notified on Facebook that Terrie was celebrating her birthday, so I went to her Facebook page. It is STILL THERE.

The person you designate on Facebook can also choose to add the word “Remembering” in front of your name and leave your profile up for a period of time so that others can share their memories of you for the family to see.

Unfortunately, Facebook does not make it easy to figure out how to set this up on your profile. Here are the steps to go through: (Feel free to do this on your phones as I go through the steps if you want.) **SLIDE 13**

## **Add a legacy contact for your main profile**

1. Click your profile picture in the top right of Facebook.
2. Select **Settings & privacy**, then click **Settings**.
3. Click **Accounts Center**, then click **Personal details**.
4. Click **Account ownership and control**.
5. Click **Memorialization** and select your account.
6. Click **Memorialize account**, then click **Next**.
7. Type a friend's name into the text box, then click on their profile picture.
8. Select whether to give your legacy contact permission to download a copy of what you've shared on Facebook
9. Click **Save**.
10. To let your friend know they're now your legacy contact, click **Send**, or click **Skip** if you do not want to notify them.

To change a legacy contact, follow steps 1–6 above, then select your legacy contact. From there, you can choose a new legacy contact if you'd like.

To remove your legacy contact, follow steps 1–5 above, then click **Delete after death**.

If your main profile is memorialized, your legacy contact will be notified. Learn more about [what a legacy contact can do](#).

**Note:** You must be 18 or older to select a legacy contact.

If you use Apple products, you can select an Apple Legacy Contact for all your Apple Devices. Just search for "Apple Legacy" to find the steps to take to set that up. The person you select will need a copy of the death certificate.

You can set up other profiles on web sites to be deleted or memorialized by searching online for "How to memorialize my Instagram account" or whatever platform it is.

Please make sure that you talk to the person you are designating to handle your accounts so that they agree to do it!

This brings up a whole new issue, that of PASSWORDS and your contact information for your friends and family. When my friend Terrie died, her siblings could not find her address book and did not have the code to unlock her phone! This created all sorts of issues for him. They did have a list of passwords, but not for her phone.

Some people swear by certain online "Password Manager" systems. Others- like me- just keep a file of passwords on their computers and printed out, making revisions as needed. Your loved ones need to know where to get the most up-to-date list of your passwords. Do any of you have a system that you have found effective for storing passwords? (ask)

If you or your family are entrepreneurs and have a business that has value, you will need to consult with a lawyer about the best way to pass on your online business presence, bank accounts, etc. Giving you advice about how to pass on your business is way above my pay grade! [Insert story about my Baby Basket Business!] **INSERT SLIDE 14**

By the way, if you still are hanging on to some old passwords that are not very strong, this is a good time to create better ones. Just be sure to write them down!

About your photos, if they are stored on your computer and in the cloud, and your loved ones have the passwords you are fine. It is also a good

idea to put photos on a USB drive and save them every once in a while. If you have a collection of photos of you throughout your lifetime in one place, that will make it much easier for your family or friends to find appropriate photos to include in a slide show for a Celebration of Life or Memorial. Just give them a copy of tell them how to access it.

Be sure and list all your paid digital subscriptions somewhere with passwords so that your loved ones can cancel these, if you want them to.

Have I forgotten anything before I talk about our second topic, life stories and obituaries?

How many of you occasionally or regularly read obituaries?

Are you aware that often the funeral home will write obituaries for a fee, and that's why so many sound all the same? Do you know how much it costs to publish an obituary in a newspaper? (Discuss)

Discuss use of trite phrases in Obituaries

died doing what he (or she) loved

now doing [activity: baking, fishing, etc.] with Jesus

would do anything for anyone

smile lit up the room

didn't suffer fools

lived life to the fullest

chose his (her) own path

only saw the best in people

generous to a fault

will be sorely missed

an inspiration to us all

**SLIDE 15**

## 10 REASONS TO WRITE YOUR OBITUARY BEFORE YOU DIE

1. Because then your family won't have to. (Although they may want to add or edit it a bit!)
  2. To save your family/loved ones the hundreds of dollars that it may cost to have the funeral home write one.
  3. Because you know your own life better than anyone.
  4. Because writing your own story can be fun/educating and is really not that hard to do.
  5. So your grandkids and great grandkids can have a sense of who you really were.
  6. Because- let's face it – most obituaries are filled with trite phrases and boring as hell!
  7. Because you can expand your obit into a "Life Story" to leave as a legacy with your family and close friends.
  8. Because then you can control to some extent what will be said about you.
  9. Because even if you are not an adept writer, you have time to get someone to help you put your life story into words.
- And finally, to give your loved ones one last laugh or smile!

Writing a good obituary begins before the person dies. **SLIDE 16, 17** My mom and I sat at her kitchen table over the years before she died at 92, with me writing as fast as I could and her telling me stories, names, dates. I used questions from "A Grandmother's Book" but you can make up your own or just ask them to tell you their life story. Be sure and ask about spelling for names and places. You may end up doing a "G-rated" version for immediate sharing and an "X-rated" version for sharing later with intimates, as I did!

Alternatively, you can talk to someone else who knew the person well, and take good notes. Ask them about stories the person used to tell, what made them laugh or cry, and what they cared about the most in life. Did they have a favorite joke? What were the high points and low points in their life? Did faith play a role in their life and how did that change over the years? What issues did they care most about? What role or job did they love the most? How did their friends describe them? Do they have a favorite charity in case others want to donate in their name?

Must you compile a list of dates, parents' names, siblings, spouses, children, jobs, places lived, and so on? Yes, if you can, but not necessarily to include all of it in the obituary. This important information can be given to the survivors for their own use. How about birth dates? A friend's mom really did not want others to know her age, so she wrote, "Mary was born sometime in the 1920's!"

But there is another reason to avoid using exact birth dates. Identity theft often happens using data from obituaries, so consider using the birth year and place, but not the date. And NEVER list a home address.

Most obituaries include the cause of death. If a person died in an accident or by suicide, some families may wonder if they should leave out the cause. If they don't, some readers may read the obit and wonder, "Well, what happened?" This is a very personal decision, however, and satisfying readers' curiosity should not be the deciding factor.

Full disclosure, I have a lovely niece who died at age 33 by suicide, and a beautiful nephew who died many years ago from complications of AIDS. Our family chose not to publish the causes of death in both these cases.

Much of the stigma attached to suicide has diminished, though, and perhaps we can acknowledge that by being honest and saying "died by suicide." This may too



difficult for some families, however, so whether or not to share cause of death should be discussed thoroughly by the family in hard cases like suicide.

There are a lot of trite phrases that are often used when some dies from cancer. “They fought bravely but lost their battle at the end. “ It is important to be sensitive in writing about cancer deaths. I survived colon cancer, so that means I “won?” Really? Would you like a list of the conditions I suffer from that resulted from having cancer? Somehow, I am grateful to be alive but don’t really feel like a winner.

What should you actually include in the obituary? It doesn’t need to be a play-by-play of the person’s entire life nor a list of accomplishments. The obits that make me smile give a glimpse into a real person, not a saint. You may also consider what photos to leave – hopefully all in one place - that your family can post with your obituary. **SLIDE 18**

My final tip – and this is a big one- is to make sure you share your loved one’s obituary on the funeral home’s website. (Explain why) Publishing obits in newspapers can cost \$300 to \$1000 or more.

In 2021 I started writing obituaries and helping others to write them. I call my small business “Postscript by Kath” and have written and helped write obituaries for several best friends, some residents of this park and am working on my own. I even wrote one for Jo Carrithers’ wonderful dog, Maggie.

If there is enough interest, I would be willing to host a small class for those who want to write their own obituaries. Let me know if you would be interested!

Finally, here are two examples of obituaries, one that I wrote about Jo Carrither’s dog, Maggie, and one I found in a newspaper.

**SLIDE 19**

RIP MAGGIE CARRITHERS

1/11/2006 to 1/10/2021

“I was a good dog!”

Ten years ago was a lucky day for four-year-old Maggie, a yellow lab mix. Our own Jo Carrithers rescued her new dog – named Darla at the AZ Animal Welfare League Shelter - and brought her home. Maggie suffered a stroke while at the dog park and died the next day on January 10, 2021. Those who knew her at Viewpoint – especially the Viewpoint Dog Park group, both dogs and parents - will miss her!

In addition to Jo and Maggie, a third family member, Payson the kitten, joined them around 5 years ago. Says Jo, “At ten weeks old, that tiny kitten walked right up to this fifty-pound dog and made it clear that HE was in charge. Maggie was fine with that!” No longer a tiny kitten when Jo and her crew moved to Viewpoint three years ago, Payson and Maggie had a regular afternoon “play date” every day around 5 PM. Observers might think they were fighting, but they were having a blast playing with each other.

Maggie was happy with Jo and Payson and was trusting and friendly to her many friends at Viewpoint. She happened to be the first dog I met when we moved to Viewpoint on July 4, 2018, and Jo and Maggie stopped by to welcome us and offered to show me around in her golf cart, Maggie riding along, of course. Dave and I consider Jo part of our VP family now and will miss Maggie, but not nearly as much as her mom will miss her.

Whenever we ran into Jo at the mail box, Maggie would come over to say “Hi!” and even jumped into our cart, but if we started to drive away, she always hopped off to go back to Jo. If they came over to visit pre-COVID, Maggie would sit at Jo’s feet, occasionally getting up to

patter around our various rooms to see if we had any pets she could visit. (Sadly, we didn't.)

Maggie was the very definition of "a good dog." Unlike Jo's rascal cat, Payson, Maggie only ran away once when she first became Jo's dog (probably looking for some friends to play with) and loved everyone, even Payson.

Many of us know the hole left in your heart when losing your dog, so we offer virtual hugs to Jo and want her to know how much joy Maggie brought to all of us. Maggie, you really were a good dog!

By Kath Noble #2820

## PINK's Obituary

Mary Agnes Mullaney, affectionately known as "Pink", passed away on September 1, 2013 at 85 years old.

*"If you're about to throw away an old pair of pantyhose, stop. Consider: Mary Agnes Mullaney (you probably knew her as "Pink") who entered eternal life on Sunday, September 1, 2013.*

*Her spirit is carried on by her six children, 17 grandchildren, three surviving siblings in New "Joisey", and an extended family of relations and friends from every walk of life.*

*We were blessed to learn many valuable lessons from Pink during her 85 years, among them: Never throw away old pantyhose. Use the old ones to tie gutters, child-proof cabinets, tie toilet flappers, or hang Christmas ornaments.*

*Let a dog (or two or three) share your bed. Say the rosary while you walk them.*

*Go to church with a chicken sandwich in your purse. Give the chicken sandwich to your homeless friend after mass.*

*Go to a nursing home and kiss everyone. When you learn someone's name, share their patron saint's story, and their feast day, so they can celebrate.*

*Invite new friends to Thanksgiving dinner. If they are from another country and you have trouble understanding them, learn to "listen with an accent."*

*Never say mean things about anybody; they are "poor souls to pray for."*

*Put picky-eating children in the box at the bottom of the laundry chute, tell them they are hungry lions in a cage, and feed them veggies through the slats.*

*Correspond with the imprisoned and have lunch with the cognitively challenged.*

*Do the Jumble every morning.*

*Keep the car keys under the front seat so they don't get lost.*

*Make the car dance by lightly tapping the brakes to the beat of songs on the radio.*

*Offer rides to people carrying a big load or caught in the rain or summer heat. Believe the hitchhiker you pick up who says he is a landscaper and his name is "Peat Moss."*

*Help anyone struggling to get their kids into a car or shopping cart or across a parking lot.*

*Give to every charity that asks. Choose to believe the best about what they do with your money, no matter what your children say they discovered online.*

*Allow the homeless to keep warm in your car while you are at Mass.*

*Take magazines you've already read to your doctors' office for others to enjoy. Do not tear off the mailing label, "Because if someone wants to contact me, that would be nice."*

*In her lifetime, Pink made contact time after time.*

*Those who've taken her lessons to heart will continue to ensure that a cold drink will be left for the overheated garbage collector and mail carrier, every baby will be kissed, every nursing home resident will be visited, the hungry will have a sandwich, the guest will have a warm bed and soft nightlight, and the*

*encroaching possum will know the soothing sensation of a barbecue brush upon its back.*

*Above all, Pink wrote—to everyone, about everything. You may read this and recall a letter from her that touched your heart, tickled your funny bone, or maybe made you say “huh?”*

*She is survived by her children and grandchildren whose photos she would share with prospective friends in the checkout line: Tim (wife Janice, children Timmy, Joey, T.J., Miki and Danny); Kevin (wife Kathy, children Kacey, Ryan, Jordan and Kevin); Jerry (wife Gita, children Nisha and Cathan); MaryAnne; Peter (wife Maria Jose, children Rodrigo and Paulo); and Meg (husband David Vartanian, children Peter, Lily, Jerry and Blase); siblings Anne, Helen, and Robert; and many in-laws, nieces, nephews, friends and family too numerous to list but not forgotten.*

*Pink is reunited with her husband and favorite dance and political debate partner, Dr. Gerald L. Mullaney, and is predeceased by six siblings.”*