

Leave Death for the Dying & Take Life for Yourself



By Dr. Chance T. Eaton

I stand over his grave – saying goodbye for the final time. He was a complex man, with as many demons in his soul as spiritual servings. He lay in a special place in this world, a place that in 1909 brought hope for his homesteading ancestors, a new life, a new way, a new beginning. The name of this place is Union Valley. This is where so many Montana homesteaders came in the early 1900's to stake their claim in the American dream – to become people of the land, to struggle, to overcome, to be free. Today, hundreds have come to honor his death, and now he returns home.

Few can say they came from somewhere and did much with their lives. He did. From humble beginnings, he ventured out with his soul brothers to simply 'build'. If these soul brothers were born of railroaders, they would have built track from coast to coast; if they had been miners, they would have mined metals from ridge to ridge. But instead they were farmers – and he helped lead the charge to become one of the most prominent cattle breeders, ranchers, farmers, and land owners in the northern Plains.

One month before his death, he sat on my couch, speaking of succession, speaking of transition to one more generation of farmers and ranchers. He was a person gifted with context and history, so I was curious as to why his intentions were now suddenly on a day that would come past his time. When it dawned on me in that living room – he was dying. Though he had no known physical conditions, and was deemed healthy, I knew he was subconsciously sharing his desires before he would pass on. People often know when their time is coming, they prepare, they give, they share, they speak of a better tomorrow. I knew his time was short.

Standing over the grave, this lifeless box containing what was once a man of belief and value, I know my time would come too. We are all beings-toward-death. I don't how, nor do I know when, but I know with certainty I too will one day be buried in that same cemetery in Union Valley. Despite the anxiety that comes from one's inevitable death, I realize the absurdity of placing my attention on death, when in fact I am alive. With life comes this moment; this space, this unique experience that is solely mine. This moment is mine, and I can make it stretch to feel like

an eternity. It is upon me to make this space one of glory, one of triumph, and one of impact. The dead can not do this, only the living.

Death gives meaning to life. Without the context of death, we wouldn't have the pressure of an ending to give life its intensity. An absolute ending means this moment in time is precious – this moment is all that we have. Life needs death, and death needs life. We all return to where we came from, and we all came from where we return.

Standing over this grave, I wonder who I am, who I am becoming, where I am going, and whether any of it really matters. This lesson is one that we often ignore due to our DNA and ego's desire to push legacy and genetic fitness into eternity. But this is the thought of an animal, and though much of our species may be nothing more than slightly evolved animals – we have the potential to bring peace, harmony, and singularity to our cause. I too have this potential, as do we all. My father always said "leave everything you touch better than when you arrived". I can do that, I will do that. This death gives me the inspiration to make anew, to leave all that I touch a little better than when I arrived.

I now leave him to rest; he need not get up tomorrow to check cows and he need not farm into the dark of night to fill the bins with crop. Now he rests, peacefully, in a place that I don't understand. But I know his life meant something, and in his death, he is speaking to me. He says, get up – go out into the world, create, live, breathe until you have no breath left; express your will, bring peace to those in fear; get up and challenge the status quo, build anew, see the textures and hear the sounds which were silent before – do this and everything before you too return to your home, here in Union Valley. Leave death to the dying and take life for yourself.

Elnor Donald Eaton April 26, 1943-June 5, 2018

Dr. Chance Eaton has over a decade's worth of experience working in the field of learning and organizational development. Due to his unique educational and work experiences in finance, psychology, leadership and management, education, noetic sciences and agriculture, Dr. Eaton provides his clients with relevant business solutions grounded in theory and research. To learn more about Dr. Eaton's services, visit www.HCSinter.com

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