

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

The Last Time

By Diane Haines, UU Fellowship of La Crosse, Wisconsin, September, 2015

Opening Words and Candle Lighting:

“When was the last time you spent a quiet moment just doing nothing - just sitting and looking at the sea, or watching the wind blowing the tree limbs, or waves rippling on a pond, a flickering candle or children playing in the park?”

Ralph Marston

Check in: Take a moment to share some thoughts with friends, connected by the bonds of this covenant group.

Introduction:

At the beginning of life, we recall wonderful, joyful and fearful stories about our first times: the first bike rides; the first kiss; the first fisticuffs; the first dance; the first baby, and on and on. We also have wonderful, joyful and fearful stories about our *last times*. It may be an activity we love, or it may be a habit we've developed that has become harmful. Sometimes *last times* creep up on you and you don't realize it is the last time, and sometimes *last times* are intentional. Last times are not always painful, they can be freeing, even encouraging, i.e. a physical therapist saying good, well done, now one last time and you're through for the day!

Topic:

For one last time by Bart Astor

My wife and I recently bought a new mattress — probably the last mattress we'll ever buy, given that we're in our 60s and not likely to outlive its life expectancy. Our 5-year-old border collie, Skye, immediately bounded up onto the mattress and it then occurred to us that Skye will likely be our last border collie since the breed will be way too much for us to handle in our late 70s and 80s.

Facing these “last in our lifetime” experiences may seem morbid. But we've come to realize they are a gift, a nudge for us to think more about what we want to do with the rest of our lives.

My older friends say, getting old isn't for wimps. I come from hardy stock, a family of oaks and redwoods, but somehow wound up an orchid.

I'm perfectly healthy, and indeed enjoy the calm waters of middle age, but somewhere along the way I became conscious of the dark clouds of mortality, and the possibility that everything I do is the last thing I'll do, or at least the last time I'll do a particular thing. For example, the other day I was in my home town with my three kids and I thought this might be the last time we go to my home town. Of course, we might go another 37 times. You never know.

Shared Thoughts:

Can you remember a story about a last trip, or a last motorcycle ride, or a last drink, or reading the last book of a beloved author who had the audacity to grow dull and repetitive? The key idea is you realizing that this particular occurrence will probably be the last time you do it. Will you tell us your *last time* stories? How do these stories make you feel?

Closing Words:

Never Say Never

“Man will never reach the moon regardless of all future scientific advances.” — Dr. Lee DeForest, “Father of Radio & Grandfather of Television.”

“The bomb will never go off. I speak as an expert in explosives.”— Admiral William Leahy, US Atomic Bomb Project

“There is no likelihood man can ever tap the power of the atom.”— Robert Millikan, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1923

“Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons.”— Popular Mechanics, forecasting the relentless march of science, 1949

“I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.”— Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943

“The wireless music box has no imaginable commercial value. Who would pay for a message sent to nobody in particular?”— David Sarnoff’s associates in response to his urgings for investment in the radio in the 1920s.

“I’m just glad it’ll be Clark Gable who’s falling on his face and not Gary Cooper.”—Gary Cooper on his decision *not* to take the leading role in “Gone with The Wind.”

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