

## ***The basics of Jon's approach to funerals.***

I never set out to do funerals. They've crept up on me in a way. Something tells me I'm gonna be doing more of them the older I get. It sounds a bit weird to say that I like doing funerals. But I do. I didn't say they were fun, I said I liked doing them.

Like the weddings getting rid of the fluff makes the celebration better. The life of the recently deceased becomes the total focus of the ceremony.

Let me tell you what I've learnt when it comes to putting her funeral together.

### ***First step, who to call?***

Call me 0400 365 713. I can organize most of a funeral myself.

### ***To bury or burn?***

Up to you. I like the idea of cremating her before the ceremony. After the ceremony you'll be emotionally spent. And you'll want to be relaxing with friends. Celebrating her life, not raising your stress level disposing of her body.

They call this a direct cremation and my contact would do all that. You'd have to speak to them about official stuff. But that's all. It'll cost you a whole lot more to bury her.

But you must do what you want to do. Some people feel they need to have the body at the funeral. You can take a body in a coffin to places that aren't funeral homes or churches.

How many times have you heard someone say "I don't want a fuss made about me when I go"? So don't make a fuss with an expensive fancy coffin. Get a cheap ply box if you're going to have her cremated, do something with the ashes later. If you want a coffin on display you can get a plain one and decorate it yourself.

The body can be taken away to be cremated after the ceremony. You don't need to go and be there for that. If you're burying her you've got to go and be there. That's something you really don't want to be doing after a ceremony. Better to bury her beforehand. If you want to have her coffin at the funeral and you want her buried then the flow of the day will be compromised.

And I'll stick my neck out. Don't bother with a viewing. A made up dead body is not a pretty sight. It's better for you to remember her how she looked when she was alive. And it'll save you a bomb.

## ***The venue***

If she was religious send her off in a church. Stop reading. If she wasn't religious don't contemplate a house of worship. To conduct a funeral of a non-religious person in a church will make a mockery of it all.

Most funeral chapels are pretty awful too. They're sort of like the churches you have when you don't have a church. Think about how she lived. Find a place that would suit her. A bowling club, a yacht club, her local pub, a private home, a town hall, an art gallery. Places like these are good in that you can finish the ceremony and start the wake straight away. You won't lose any momentum in the celebration of her life.

## ***The ceremony***

After the paperwork and such unpleasanties are done I'll come and sit around and talk with you and your close family and/or besties about the ceremony. At your house or someone else's. I'll talk about how what I would usually do. You'll all talk about what you want. Then we'll talk about her. I get to hear about her life and about the person she was. This is the bit I find the most fascinating. The extraordinary lives ordinary people live.

You'll need some music to start and the end of the ceremony. Music that she liked. Not music that other people think would be appropriate or funereal. Remember as with weddings good live music is always better than good recorded music. But bad live music is worse than good recorded music. Having said that good live music from someone she was associated with could be spine tingling.

I'll then get up and on behalf of the family welcome everyone. I'll tell them what I've learned about her. I'll go through her life from beginning to end. Some people won't know all that stuff. I don't carry on like I was her best friend. I'm fairly factual. I tell the story as I heard it. This is not to say that there won't be a few quiet laughs. When you're telling the story of someone's life there will be funny bits. And you'll get to read what I'm going to say about her before the ceremony. I'll get the story right and I'll set the scene for the eulogies or if you like, the tributes.

I'll then invite people to speak. People from different parts of her life. And not everyone is going to be able to speak. The thought of getting up there and talking about a loved one can be an understandably daunting prospect. I often read words on behalf of people. I'll have a copy of what that person has written, and I'll give him or her a look at that moment. Can you do it? He or she will give me a nod or a shake of the head. A nod means they'll read it, a shake means I'll read it read it. You'd be amazed at how many more nods than shakes I get.

And man, some of the eulogies I get to listen to! The raw human energy, the unintentional poetry, the humour. Life affirming stuff.

I've done a few ceremonies where I've been asked to open the floor, let anyone who wants to speak. A bit dangerous this one. It can work but I've done one where no one wanted to

talk, and then others when some people wouldn't shut up. If you're going to go down this path you need to have the first and last speaker lined up.

Someone may want to read some poetry or prose to pay tribute to her. This happens in the eulogies part. I will read poetry if you want me to. But if she wasn't a poetry type don't feel the need to include any.

After the eulogies you have what they call the reflection. Where everyone gets to catch their breath. Some music will be played, live, or recorded, and maybe some images of her will be projected if you have the equipment. And while I'm on about the A/V equipment, it's gotta work properly. I can organise someone who knows what they're doing to operate it all. Sound problems are intolerable at funerals.

Almost finished now, I tell everyone what's going to happen when the ceremony is over. When that's all been made clear I ask them all to stand and I deliver what they call in the funeral business the committal. I work with the family and besties to come up with a fitting few paragraphs to say goodbye.

Then it's time for the wake.

Like a wedding, it's not that hard, and nor should it be. But it's gotta be all about the person who has just died and not about other stuff.

A handwritten signature or mark, possibly initials, in a cursive style.