

Lester Wertheimer realized many years ago that each of us is allotted a limited time on earth. Eventually, therefore, someone would be selected to write his obituary. "Why can't that someone be me?" I asked. Who knows more about me than I? I was obviously there at my birth, as well as when I took my last breath, and I know about every important incident that took place between those two landmark events"

Writing one's own obituary is not as radical as it sounds. There are several advantages to reviewing the important incidents in one's life and determining which deserve to be memorialized, And who knows more about the deceased than you?

Furthermore, by writing your own obituary you can more easily avoid the cliches that plague most obituaries. For example, are you certain you were "beloved" And is it really necessary to list the name of every grandchild?

Being born to a wealthy family is a matter of good luck. I was far luckier, however, to be born to parents who truly adored one another. Neither my father, Sam, or mother Jenny, had more than an 8th grade education. But they knew what was important in life. They could sing, dance, tell jokes, and enjoy raising their two sons.

My first genuine success was at the age of five, when I gained free admission to the Chicago World's Fair. It was Freckle Day, and there I was with more than the requisite number of freckles, The Fair was titled "A Century of Progress", and so began my progress that was to last nearly that long. I was always a more than adequate student in Chicago, city of my birth, as well as after moving to Beverly Hills - that is until my first semester at UCLA. That experience was so disappointing I dropped out after three months and became a merchant seaman. As an innocent eighteen-year-old my year at sea became a post-graduate course in the basic elements of life. During the following year, while visiting friends at Berkeley, I toured the Department of Architecture. The dilemma concerning my future suddenly vanished as I realized this is where I belong. A few years later I earned a Masters Degree with Highest Honors. Simultaneously, I won a valuable Traveling Fellowship that enabled me to spend the next year visiting the most prominent architectural monuments in Europe and the Middle East.

I have always enjoyed writing, and with the help of a few colleagues we produced study material for candidates taking the national architectural licensing examination. This side interest continued for a few decades until a famous corporation purchased our successful company. I have also enjoyed the world of finance, which has been an interesting and profitable pursuit. Together with my architectural practice these interests made for a successful career that included my year as President of the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. A few years later, as a result of my accomplishments, I was elevated to Fellowship in the AIA.

Regrets? I have but one. I might have spent more time early on with my two sons. Both Adam and Peter Wertheimer are successful adults with enviable families of their own. I hope they know how much I have always loved and admired them.

I began to play tennis fairly late in life. It soon became my exercise of choice as I played for physical as well as social reasons three times a week. I gradually improved

my game, but more serious players rarely lost a point against me. In my late 80s I awoke one morning with a detached retina, and just like that my exercise of choice shifted to long, boring walks on a treadmill.

I have been in love before, but never in the way I fell for Elyse Lewin. She has created a wonderful life for us, as she remains the brightest, most talented, and generous person I have ever known. Between us we had five children, who have produced eight grandchildren, four boys and four girls. Each of this latest generation is bright, talented, and on a path to a successful life. It is unnecessary to furnish names, as you will undoubtedly read about them in the future.

Living a relatively long life has convinced me that love is better than hate, making friends is preferable to making enemies, and laughter just sounds more agreeable than someone weeping. Beauty is important in life, whether natural, designed, or glowing from within, we should embrace all things beautiful.

Finally, I do not believe in an afterlife. When it's over, it really is over. So, I do not intend to meet friends or relatives in heaven or in any less desirable place. I have enjoyed knowing and cherishing a great many wonderful people throughout my life, and those who remain know who you are; but enough is enough.

Many wonder if they will be seriously missed or long remembered, and perhaps that's a bit narcissistic. More important, I think, is one's aim in life. We all would like to believe our life has made the world a better place. My personal aim has always been to maintain a sense of humor while doing my best work, and in that regard, I have few regrets. Some wonder whether all their life's dreams have been fulfilled. Probably not, I think, because when we stop having dreams, there is little more to live for. So dream on, and while you're at it, call home every so often.