

## Plan your own funeral online

The generational cohort known as the baby boomers brought us the anti-war movement, the civil rights movement, the women's movement and the gay rights movement.

Could the death movement be next?

Friends and businesswomen Sue Kruskopf and Nancy Bush are as certain of that notion as they are of taxes.

Last week, the pair launched [mywonderfullife.com](http://mywonderfullife.com), a website aimed at boomers who want to take charge of their own funeral arrangements. The goal is to help people who might otherwise resist thoughts of the hereafter to plan their exit strategies.

"What this audience really wants are tools to make their lives easier -- how can this help me save time, how can this help me cross one more thing off of my to-do list?" said Kruskopf, whose Minneapolis ad agency Kruskopf Coontz spent a year designing and developing the site along with Bush.

The free site lets people (who become "members" after signing up) plan their funerals right down to music, readings and photographs. The information is in a password-protected area available only to selected friends and family. Your site also tells survivors how to find such key documents as your will and financial information.

Kruskopf and Bush landed on the idea after Bush's husband, John, a nonsmoker, died of lung cancer about two years ago, when he was 45.

"I tried to broach the 'what if,'" said Bush. "But he felt if he went there, he'd be giving up. When he died, I only knew a couple of things he wanted. There are so many decisions that have to be made within the course of 48 hours. It's a time when you really shouldn't be making those decisions."

The women, both baby boomers, initially set out to start an event-planning business that would help people settle on a more customized funeral than those available through funeral homes, Bush said. They quickly realized that the business model would be limited by geography and their time. Then they landed upon the very boomer-like thought of giving power to the people.

Kruskopf and Bush, an account executive with Clear Channel Radio in Minneapolis, know of only one other online funeral planner, a London-based site called [www.yourdeathwish.com](http://www.yourdeathwish.com). Its home page is a bit cheekier than Kruskopf's stylized mod design. [Yourdeathwish.com](http://Yourdeathwish.com) has images of fluffy clouds and peace doves one side and devilish details on the other. Its subtitle: Don't wait until it's too late.

Kruskopf and Bush offer plenty of fun with their business, which they say aims to put the traditional funeral to rest. A video on the home page shows people at a funeral parlor doing the wave while an organ pulses out the riff to baseball's "charge!"

The site also provides how-to information on such topics as budgeting for a funeral, writing your own obituary, even planning a burial at sea. To inspire those who lean toward the nontraditional, the site offers more than a dozen ideas, including actor Heath Ledger's funeral (where mourners jumped into the sea) and gonzo journalist Hunter S. Thompson (whose ashes were shot from a cannon).

To date, [mywonderfullife.com](http://mywonderfullife.com) has about 200 members and no advertisers, though Kruskopf said she and Bush have gotten interest from businesses related to health care, financial services and retirement planning. Neither are quitting their day jobs.

Kruskopf and Bush hope news of their site will travel by word of mouth, as it did for [caringbridge.org](http://caringbridge.org), a personalized website for people facing critical illnesses or undergoing treatment.

But James Love, Web master of the satirical site [boomerdeathcounter.com](http://boomerdeathcounter.com), said he finds the notion of planning one's own funeral just another self-centered act from the "Me Generation." Death is a time to ponder the sacredness of life, said Love, a former pastor, in an e-mail from Vernon, British Columbia.

"Boomers in their vanity often attempt to cut this short through having the funeral be all about them," he said. "Funerals are for the living to honor the dead. Not the dead to express the last of their over-inflated sense of

self."

Still, Kruskopf and Bush know the market for such a funeral planning service could be huge with some 70 million baby boomers still breathing.

And by Love's own count, a boomer dies every 49.1 seconds.

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