

Wake this way: Web site is last word in funeral planning

By Lauren Beckham Falcone | Tuesday, July 8, 2008 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Lifestyle

As Yoda once said, "Death is a natural part of life" - but it's one that requires some planning.

What was once the mother of all grim conversations, funeral planning has met the Facebook age, with a new Web site letting the very-much-alive make arrangements for the very end.

MyWonderfulLife.com is a free online service that lets users plan and personalize their send-off - from writing their obituary to compiling a church playlist to designing headstones. It's like Evite, but with a last hurrah theme.

"There's no question that the topic of death is becoming less and less taboo everyday," said MyWonderfulLife.com co-founder Nancy Bush, a radio sales executive in Minneapolis, Minn. "The boomers, as they age, are paving the way."

Bush came up with the idea two years ago after the death of her husband, who, while fighting lung cancer, didn't want to talk about the details of his death and funeral.

"He thought talking about it was like giving up," said the mother of three. "Then the time came when we had to have his funeral and we knew very little about what he wanted other than that he wanted to be cremated."

Bush and friend Sue Kruskopf launched the Web site six weeks ago, and it already has had 20,000 visits and 1,200 registered users.

"The other thing I found interesting is that funeral homes could have felt threatened by this, but they're embracing it, too," she said.

Indeed, the nation's 78.2 million baby boomers are bent on putting the "fun" in funerals these days. According to the National Funeral Directors Association, 62 percent of boomers want a "personalized funeral" and 71 percent don't want a traditional funeral. Some wacky wakes featured on the Web site include Rockland native Henry Ewell's. An ice cream vendor, he arranged to have his funeral procession led by his ice cream truck and all the mourners got a Popsicle at the end of the service.

For filmmaker Barry Norman, the end, whenever it comes, is something to be proactive about, which is why he signed up for the service.

"I'm not married, I have no kids and I just thought, 'Let's take care of the details,'" said the perfectly healthy 50-year-old Boston native. "It's one less thing on your plate to worry about."

Article URL: <http://www.bostonherald.com/entertainment/lifestyle/view.bg?articleid=1105568>

