

Grandfather's Final Letter To His Grandkids – Brilliant & Inspiring

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On Sept. 3, 2012, James K. Flanagan of West Long Branch, N.J., died unexpectedly of a heart attack. He wrote this letter to his five grandchildren just months earlier and it is reprinted here with the permission of his daughter Rachel Creighton.

Dear Ryan, Conor, Brendan, Charlie, and Mary Catherine,

My wise and thoughtful daughter Rachel urged me to write down some advice for you, the important things that I have learned about life. I am beginning this on 8 April 2012, the eve of my 72nd birthday.

1. Each one of you is a wonderful gift of God both to your family and to all the world. Remember it always, especially when the cold winds of doubt and discouragement fall upon your life.

2. Be not afraid . . . of anyone or of anything when it comes to living your life most fully. Pursue your hopes and your dreams no matter how difficult or “different” they may seem to others. Far too many people don't do what they want or should do because of what they imagine others may think or say. Remember, if they don't bring you chicken soup when you're sick or stand by you when you're in trouble, they don't matter. Avoid those sour-souled pessimists who listen to your dreams then say, “Yeah, but what if . . .” The heck with “what if. . .” Do it! The worst thing in life is to look back and say: “I would have; I could have; I should have.” Take risks, make mistakes.

3. Everyone in the world is just an ordinary person. Some people may wear fancy hats or have big titles or (temporarily) have power and want you to think they are above the rest. Don't believe them. They have the same doubts, fears, and hopes; they eat, drink, sleep, and fart like everyone else. Question authority always but be wise and careful about the way you do it.

4. Make a Life List of all those things you want to do: travel to places; learn a skill; master a language; meet someone special. Make it long and do some things from it every year. Don't say "I'll do it tomorrow" (or next month or next year). That is the surest way to fail to do something. There is no tomorrow, and there is no "right" time to begin something except now.

5. Practice the Irish proverb: *Moi an olge agus tiocfaidh sí* "Praise the child and she will flourish."

6. Be kind and go out of your way to help people – especially the weak, the fearful, and children. Everyone is carrying a special sorrow, and they need our compassion.

7. Don't join the military or any organization that trains you to kill. War is evil. All wars are started by old men who force or fool young men to hate and to kill each other. The old men survive, and, just as they started the war with pen and paper, they end it the same way. So many good and innocent people die. If wars are so good and noble, why aren't those leaders who start wars right up there fighting?

8. Read books, as many as you can. They are a wonderful source of delight, wisdom, and inspiration. They need no batteries or connections, and they can go anywhere.

9. Be truthful.

10. Travel: always but especially when you are young. Don't wait until you have "enough" money or until everything is

“just right.” That never happens. Get your passport today.

11. Pick your job or profession because you love to do it. Sure, there will be some things hard about it, but a job must be a joy. Beware of taking a job for money alone – it will cripple your soul.

12. Don't yell. It never works, and it hurts both yourself and others. Every time I have yelled, I have failed.

13. Always keep promises to children. Don't say “we'll see” when you mean “no.” Children expect the truth; give it to them with love and kindness.

14. Never tell anyone you love them when you don't.

15. Live in harmony with Nature: go into the outdoors, woods, mountains, sea, desert. It's important for your soul.

16. Visit Ireland. It's where the soul of our family was born – especially the West: Roscommon, Clare, and Kerry.

17. Hug people you love. Tell them how much they mean to you now; don't wait until it's too late.

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