

Opinion: Have your funeral before you die

By Mary Elizabeth Williams, Salon

A few months ago, I attended one of the best memorials I've ever been to. It was a glorious, sunlit afternoon full of friends and music. It was just weeks after my friend Jessica's birthday. And a month before she died.

Life doesn't often give us the luxury of being able to ballpark our date of departure. When a male friend died suddenly last winter, I grieved not just for him but for all the things I hadn't said in our final conversation, a conversation that presumed there would be others to follow. But when a person is facing a certain fate, I wonder why more people don't throw a party like Jessica's.

We had met in a cancer support group when we were both in treatment. Last spring, six years after being diagnosed with ovarian cancer, her doctor said she presented no evidence of disease. We went out for a celebratory brunch, toasting the good fortune we shared. Six months later, she was gone.

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