

## Introduction - Prologue

*"The past is Prologue"*  
National Archives Building, Washington, DC

*"Appetizing Delicacies were the Prologue to a Long Dinner"*  
Anon.

Pure chance left the last empty seat beside her on a Greyhound bus about to leave New York City. It was midnight of election day, Truman's victory in doubt. In Boston, she sent her mother a postcard, "Harry and I arrived safely," and then traveled to Concord, NH, to visit an aunt. He went to Gloucester to apply for a job. The postcard's joke about Truman's squeaky victory frightened her mother, who thought her daughter had taken up with a strange man.

They corresponded and were married the following August, settled near the ocean in an undeveloped part of North Carolina, raised four children, built houses, and in many ways achieved an enviable home life. She died forty years later. He was thirteen years older and had complacently believed he would never have to face this devastating event.

A widower at seventy-six. An empty house shared only with an eight-year-old Golden Retriever, Dora. What do we do now, Dora? Where do we go from here?



He recalled how Dora's quiet, loving, relaxed manner had sometimes caused them to substitute her name in the venerable song, "Old Dog Trey," and to sing:

*Old dog Dora, ever faithful  
No one can drive her away!  
She is faithful, she is kind,  
I'll never never find -  
A BETTER DOG THAN OLD DOG  
DORA.*

In happier days they had joked about this treacly song, but now it was reality: An old man, loved ones departed, with only Dora (Trey) at his side.

During the early '50's, the wonderful beginning of their marriage, there was a song about restless free spirits, "Call of

the Wild Goose" by Frankie Lane. One day she said in jest what later was prophetic, "That's you alright, a wild card who will leave me some day, with a rope around his waist, to seek adventure."

Sobeit, Dearly Beloved, you predicted this departure and it's time to go, destination unknown, but not a rocking chair.

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## **Preface**

The chapters that follow describe how an old man with the help of his dog companions, bypassed the dreadful cul-de-sac which society frequently imposes on the elderly, to hold them in readiness for Heavenly City, Valhalla, or up Stygian Creek. Any relevance this has to persons living or dead is intentional, since most everyone fears the boredom and mental deterioration that usually follows separation from everyday life.

This narrative is especially dedicated to those endangered people who have lost a marital partner, the end of intimate love and partnership, the start of loneliness and vanished hopes. Its advice is to use every resource: mental physical, material - create a new life - do not give up.

"May you get what you wish for and may it be what you meant," wrote an excellent author, Jane Urquhart. The outcome of what you try is unpredictable, but the end justifies the means.

The author of this manuscript claims that when he looked inside, he found an active boy insistent upon pursuit of youthful dreams. So far this pursuit has added nine active years, away from the doldrums and the rocking chair.

Belief in life as a renewable resource for those who seek, makes infinity a comfort. Life spans, long or short, are equal compared to forever, and "remaining years" become equal in the light of this mathematical certainty.

Ponce de Leon's search for a miraculous spring to keep people youthful and abreast of the mainstream, bore all the markings of this modern age, where aging millions are spiritual and social isolates and castoffs of a hard-edged society. There is no attempt to be specific about the onset of this eventually fatal disease, old age, only defined by when the victim begins to be bruised by the pecking system.

In short, when life expectancy and its quality is measured by a second hand, and judged second rate, it's time to give the clock and the judge the finger. Ignore the deadline, seize the lifeline!

*March, 1999*

