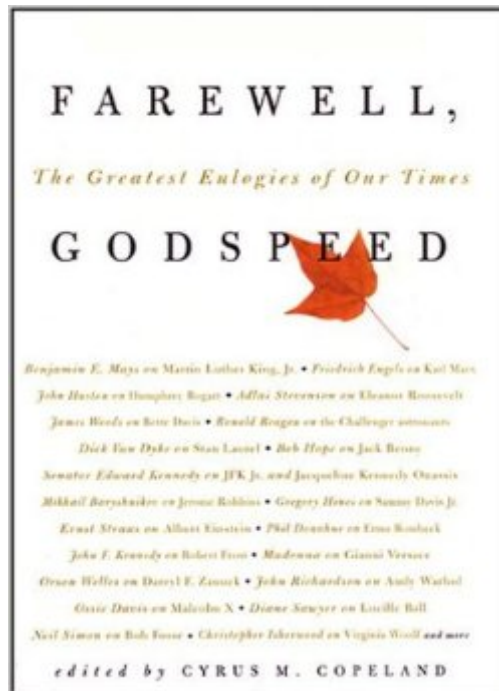


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Farewell, Godspeed: The Greatest Eulogies Of Our Time



Synopsis

Farewell, Godspeed is a remarkable collection of eulogies for some of the most notable figures of our time, delivered by the people who knew them best. In the words used to eulogize the great and celebrated men and women of the world "sometimes reverential, sometimes funny, always poignant" we come as close as perhaps we ever will to seeing the warm humanity beneath their public personas. Cyrus M. Copeland has gathered some of the greatest of these writings about artists, scientists, authors, public servants, entertainers, and others who have captured our attention by making the world a better, or at least a livelier, place. Here is Andy Warhol's close friend describing Warhol's hidden spirituality. Albert Einstein's assistant recounting his humanism. Edward Kennedy remembering with a brother's tenderness the life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Larry McMurtry's lively and loving tribute to Irving "Swifty" Lazar. And Robert Bernstein, longtime publisher and friend of Dr. Seuss, memorializing him with special, never-before-published verse. Also included are the eulogies of the Challenger astronauts by President Ronald Reagan; Charles Schulz by Cathy Guisewite (creator of the comic strip Cathy); Bette Davis by James Woods; Bob Fosse by Neil Simon; Lucille Ball by Diane Sawyer; Martin Luther King Jr. by Benjamin E. Mays; David O. Selznick by Truman Capote; Karl Marx by Friedrich Engels; and Gianni Versace by Madonna. In these moving and personal tributes we see at last the vulnerabilities and nuances of character that are often hidden from the spotlight, and the true personalities behind the names we remember.

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Customer Reviews

I am not inclined to agree with the sub-title of "Farewell, Godspeed" that these are indeed "The Greatest Eulogies of Our Time," simply because I think there are so many eloquent farewells given to loved ones who have passed away that never see the light of day. But that hardly detracts from the point of Cyrus M. Copeland's collection, which serves as a potent reminder of a neglected art form by providing sixty four examples from the past century. Of the sixty four the one that will be recognized and remembered by most readers is President Ronald Reagan's eulogy for the "Challenger" astronauts, a most atypical eulogy in that it was probably the one written the quickest, delivered the same day that the shuttle exploded before the television cameras of the nation. Older readers might recall Chief Justice Earl Warren's remarks following the death of President John F. Kennedy, but clearly you will be reading almost all of these sixty four eulogies for the first time. These eulogies are collected into sections representing the vocation of the dearly departed. Copeland has sections on Maestros like Isadora Duncan and Andy Warhol, Visionaries from Susan B. Anthony to Ryan White, Wisecrackers from Lucille Ball to Charles Schulz, Captains of Industry such as Henry Ford, Matinee Idols from Humphrey Bogart to River Phoenix, Explorers & High Flyers in the mode of Amelia Earhart and Timothy Leary, Tunesmiths & Troubadours from Irving Berlin to George Harrison, Movie Moguls like David O. Selznick, Wordsmiths from Emily Dickinson to Dr. Seuss, and a final section devoted to the eulogies for the three principal figures of America's Camelot. Clearly, our time extends beyond this century when we go back to Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman, which is another reason to take the sub-title with a grain of salt. But it is not like a century or two ago people talked about death in ways that we cannot understand today. After each eulogy Copeland provides a brief time line for the historic figure who was the subject of the eulogy. For some of these figures it may be helpful to read these biographic outlines before the speeches, especially if you have no idea as to the identity of a Quentin Crisp, David Ogilvy, or Irving "Swiftly" Lazar. Some of the speakers who gave (or wrote) these eulogies will be familiar to the reader as well. Madonna writing about Gianni Versace, Bob Hope speaking about Jack Benny, Garrison Keillor eulogizing Chet Atkins, and Orson Welles on Darryl F. Zanuck, for example. One figure who is eulogized, John F. Kennedy, delivers a eulogy of his own for the poet Robert Frost. To my surprise my favorite eulogies were the ones that managed to bring humor to the situation. Just the idea of Monty Python's Eric Idle giving the eulogy for George Harrison of the Beatles has to bring a smile to your face. That does not mean that you cannot be smiling through the tears, as is the case when fellow cartoonist Cathy Guisewite shares memories of the man she called Sparky and that the world knew as the creator of "Peanuts," Charles M. Schulz. There is also something to be said for

eulogies given by family members, even when the subject is famous and the sibling is not. Certainly there are examples that come to my mind that I could argue should be included, from Margaret Thatcher's words on the passing of Ronald Reagan, to Bill Clinton's eulogy for Richard Nixon, and the two speeches Robert F. Kennedy gave following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. Copeland includes two eulogies by the man who fate has called upon to deliver more than his fair share of such speeches, Ted Kennedy, but not the one he gave for his brother Bobby, which remains his most memorable. The way that speech contrasts with the eulogies given for his nephew, John Kennedy, Jr., and his sister-in-law, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, would be insightful. However, in the final analysis Copeland's collection is inspirational, specifically in the sense of showing how various speakers have responded to this particular rhetorical situation. In that regard the most public examples of such discourse, delivered in the wake of the death of the most prominent citizens, can readily be seen as being beyond the scope of most funeral orations. "Farewell, Godspeed" is an excellent book to loan to a friend or family member who has to deliver a eulogy, for it will show the range and scope of what can be done (I say "loan" because that strikes me as being more appropriate than giving it as a gift under such circumstances). Certainly within these sixty four farewells there will be speeches, or specific passages, that resonant and can inspire the expression of similar thoughts. Even in grief, there can be moments of profound eloquence.

What a book. It is the compilation of about eighty eulogies of some of the most influential persons of their times, given by a myriad of people. There is neither rhyme nor reason, save the fact that they have touched people; some millions, some few. We find words by John Kennedy, and of John Kennedy. Of Albert Einstein, David O. Selznick, Charles Schultz, Che, Martin, the Duke and the Challenger astronauts. Anyone smart enough to be able to read will go through this book and come to its end with one thought: "What would I want to be said about me?" And after that thought, who knows what action may follow! Damn.

This may not be the kind of book you would expect to find interesting, but once you pick it up, you'll find it difficult to put down. This is a compilation of 64 eulogies for the famous by the famous or articulate people who knew them best. Many are moving, all are interesting. Divided into sections called Maestros (Bob Fosse, Andy Warhol), Visionaries (Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King Jr, Ryan White), Wisecrackers (Gilda Radner, Lucille Ball), Captains of Industry (Andrew Carnegie, Henry Ford), Matinee idols (Humphrey Bogart, James Dean), Explorers & High Flyers (Challenger

astronauts, Albert Einstein), Tunesmiths & Troubadours (Janis Joplin, Lawrence Welk), Movie Moguls (Stanley Kubrick, Billy Wilder), Wordsmiths (Mark Twain, Walt Whitman) and Camelot (JFK, JFK Jr and Jackie Onassis), often the eulogist is as interesting as the deceased, and the fascination comes from learning about their relationship -- JFK on Robert Frost, Fidel Castro on Che Guevara, Ossie Davis on Malcolm X, Bob Hope on Jack Benny, Eric Idle on George Harrison, among others). These are words spoken in a time of tremendous grief, and the eloquence of the speakers is memorable. Each selection is several pages long and followed by a short chronology of the deceased. Also, don't miss the beautiful Robinson Jeffers piece that precedes the Table of Contents. This book is fascinating and inspirational, and will compel you to contemplate your own legacy and relationships. Highest recommendation.

The list of deceased celebrities [64 in number] and those who delivered the eulogies is a collection that boggles the mind! The biographical sketches which follow each eulogy are informative beyond anything one would expect and are superbly organized. Examples of lives remembered and those who delivered the eulogies: Neal Simon [Bob Fosse], Gianni Versace [Madonna], Susan B. Anthony [Rev. Anna Howard Shaw], Che Guevara [Fidel Castro], Helen Keller [Senator Lester Hill], Martin Luther King, Jr. [Benjamin E. Mays], Charles Schulz [Cathy Guisewite], Humphrey Bogart [John Huston], Albert Einstein [Ernst Straus], Chet Atkins [Garrison Keillor], Daryl F. Zanuck [Orson Welles], Robert Frost [President John F. Kennedy], Dr. Seuss [Robert L. Bernstein], Mark Twain [Rev. Henry Van Dyke], President John F. Kennedy [Senator Edward M. Kennedy]. And that is fifteen out of 64!!! You will be equally blown away by the other 49! A final comment--the eulogies are surprisingly brief, avoiding boredom or getting bogged down in verbiage. Read two or three a day or get hooked and read all at one sitting [either is a real option].

I read editorial reviews for learning descriptive writing. I wondered if reading a book of eulogies would be similar. The eulogizer capturing the most poignant parts of a person's life in an eloquent manner. I was not disappointed. There are some eulogies that are better than others, but overall it was insightful and a pleasure to read. Yes, I highlighted several areas that may show up in one of my family's eulogies. I particularly liked the summarized biography at the end of each eulogy. I highly recommend this book for enjoyment, insight and for love of the written word.

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