

Note from Jane - On This Tribute to Her Father for his 93rd Birthday

I ended up deviating from the assignment in writing not an editorial obit but a family pre-obit about my dad, for several reasons: (1) He's the person I've been most tuned into lately (helping him through a major health crisis), with the most material to draw on, a boost considering the short deadline. (2) I'll need to write an obituary for him sooner rather than later, so a pre-obit is a step toward getting that done. (3) Today's deadline is his 93rd birthday! That clinched my decision to write about him, but meant reshaping the usual "paid family" obit format to more of a celebration-of-life tribute with careful use of conditional and past perfect tenses for a subject who's still living and would be reading it. Though he might recognize it as a pre-obit, it seemed a chance to share my love and appreciation, and get his feedback and any corrections so that when the time comes I can tweak it into an accurate obituary I know he's happy with.

So, I may have flunked the assignment, but I'm relieved I passed the test of pleasing the subject--my dad loved what I wrote, taking it as I'd hoped, as a birthday tribute, a true story of his life. I did my best to weave in all the things he's told me that have been most important to him, in his own words as much as possible--the kind of story he might have written for himself.

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