

## THE DASH

At Christmas time it is not unusual to get one of those cards in which the person has included a 'news' letter telling you everything that has happened to them or their family during the past year. The end of the year is a good time to reflect on how you lived your life in the past 12 months. Another good time to reflect on your life is when attending a funeral. A funeral reminds us of our mortality. As you listen to the many comments made about the deceased person's life, you often think of your own. When walking through a cemetery, you may encounter many gravestone inscriptions like, 'R.I.P' or 'Beloved Wife', 'Beloved Husband' or 'Beloved Child'. People don't put much on gravestones like they used to; certainly none as interesting as the one in the following story.

A man was walking through a cemetery when he saw the following inscription; 'Pause stranger and cast an eye. As you are now so once was I. As I am now so you will be. Prepare yourself to follow me.' The man thought for a moment, then he took out a paper and pencil and attached the following note to the tombstone; 'To follow you I'm not content until I know which way you went.'

On every grave marker there is a complete history of ones life. It is encrypted in that little dash between the year one is born and the year one dies. If we could read it, what a story it would tell. Consider the following poem by Linda Ellis simply called, 'The Dash.'

"I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to  
The dates on her tombstone from the beginning to the end.  
He noted that first came her date of birth, and spoke the following date with  
Tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.  
For that dash represents all the time that she spent alive on earth.  
And now only those who loved her know what that little line is worth.  
For it matters not how much we own; the car, the house, the cash,  
What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.  
So think about this long and hard. Are there things you'd like to change?  
For you never know how much time is left, that can still be rearranged.  
If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real  
And always try to understand the way other people feel.  
And be less quick to anger and show appreciation more  
And love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.  
If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile  
Remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.  
So when your eulogy is being read with your life's action to rehash  
Would you be proud of the things they say about how you spent your dash?"

**HOW ARE YOU SPENDING YOUR DASH?**