



## Upside-down

Chuck Bengtson, MDiv, Circle of Life Chaplain

### From Your Grief Center Library

#### For Adults

*The Year of Magical Thinking* by Joan Didion

*Dream New Dreams: Reimagining My Life after Loss* by Jai Pausch

*H is for Hawk* by Helen McDonald

### Circle of Life in the News

<https://www.facebook.com/nwacircleoflifehospice>

<http://www.nwahomepage.com/community/doing-good/doing-good-circle-of-life-hospice>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdL2fPRfSsg>

When I was growing up, we used to go to Somerset, Wisconsin, where you could rent an inner tube and float down the Apple River. Sometimes my close friends and I would float separately, but most of the time we'd tie our inner tubes together and create a giant flotilla. We always met new people and new friends on the trip down the river. We would talk and laugh about for months to come about our experiences on the river

It was a great way to spend a lazy afternoon...until you reached the end. At the end of the five hour float there was a stretch of rapids which appeared tame, but were deceptively powerful. Unsuspecting first timers would come down the final stretch and be thrashed by these rapids. But even seasoned float trip veterans weren't immune from being tossed helter-skelter down the last fifty yards.

The Apple River is a powerful metaphor of what it means to lose a loved one. Sometimes we're unsuspecting first timers who have no idea what we're in for. For others, this isn't our first time through the rapids, but we still get battered and bruised.

One of the purposes of a memorial service or funeral is to give a respectful nod to the "rapids," the difficulties and trials of losing a loved one. In so doing, we also allow ourselves to lazily soak up the summer sun of the special experiences of love and of life. This is a time to remember that the last 50 yards of difficulty do not overshadow the miles of memories, laughs, joys, and tears.

We did the same thing after our float trips. We would spend some time recalling the rapids on our way back home, but soon that talk would transition to the girl we had met, or how many can targets we hit, or the pranks that had been pulled. By the time we got home, we found we had spent most of our time talking about the 10 mile float rather than the rapids.

Some of us are still trying to manage those last 50 yards of rapids. You've been thrown off your tube and you're banging off the rocky bottom. A lesson we learned after many trips down the river is that the more tubes you tie yourself to, the safer the trip through the rapids would be. Those who tried to go it alone almost certainly would have more difficulty. Get connected with folks who understand. Join a support group or attend grief classes. Be sure to tie yourself to the One who created the river in the first place.

Our hope for us today is that, though we may be bruised and battered, we will not let the last 50 yards of rapids to cancel out the love, joy, laughter, and memories of those wonderful 10 miles. Let us count our blessings and be thankful for the experiences that make our lives full and meaningful. When we're ready, let's begin planning for our next float trip!

### The Grief Center

**8/27/2016**  
Superheroes Need Help Too: A Grief Workshop for Children-Registration required

**10/2/2016**  
Circle of Life Memorial Service – Center for Non-profits

**10/04/2016**  
Six week Grief Class Begins – Registration required

**11/04/2016**  
Hope for the Holidays at Circle of Life

### Education Save the Date

**9/30/16**  
Dr. Robert Neimeyer at the Schmeiding Center

**11/3/2016**  
*Your Life, Your Choice* with Hope Cancer Resources

