

Local

St. Paul

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St. Paul

Author turns experience into help for those in grief

Book spells out tasks to be done after a loved one dies

By Mary Divine
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Kat Reed says her father, Pat, was “completely distraught” when her mother, Judy, 66, died of a heart attack while undergoing treatment for mouth cancer in 2007.

After her mother’s funeral in Galesburg, Ill., Reed stayed to help her father, who suffered from profound hearing loss. “He cried all the time. It was

just awful,” Reed says. “It’s just so difficult dealing with everything. I know my dad couldn’t have done (what needed to be done), even if he knew how. At least once a day, he would look at me and say: ‘How do people do this who have no family or support system?’”

Reed created an Excel spreadsheet to help manage the logistics and paperwork — from bills that needed to be paid to magazine subscrip-

tions that needed to be canceled. “I’m just an organizational freakazoid,” she said.

That spreadsheet was invaluable a year later when her father died of liver failure caused by medications he was taking to prevent seizures, Reed says.

It was so helpful, in fact, that friends and family members encouraged Reed to turn it into a book. Reed, who lives in St. Paul, published “Begin

Here: Helping Survivors Manage” last year.

“You don’t realize how tough it will be until you go through it,” she says. “You can’t think of anything. You’re just on autopilot.”

The book contains practical advice — such as setting the thermostat, removing food from the house, checking the stove and organizing mail into categories: legal, bills and personal. Reed describes “Begin Here” as “part checklist, part appointment calendar, part address book.” It covers every-

thing from whom to notify at the time of death to how to delegate, she says.

“The everyday things we take for granted — and become numb to — when someone close to you dies will astound you,” Reed says. “The world doesn’t stop turning: Mail doesn’t stop coming. Bills don’t stop coming. The phone doesn’t stop ringing. Insurance benefits are not paid automatically. If you don’t do what needs to be done, you will lose money through oversight or by paying a lawyer to do the



Kat Reed, 44, created a spreadsheet to help her father after her mother’s death.

things you easily can.”

Reed suggests, for example, that the decedent’s house be searched carefully for stray human and pet food. “It needs to be removed as soon as possible to avoid pest or mold

BOOK FOR SURVIVORS, 2B >

Burnsville

As K-9 cops retire, city raises cash for new dogs

One police dog retiring this week, the other by the end of the year

By Jessica Fleming
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This week, when Burnsville police officer Shaun Anselment begins his new day shift with the department, his old partner will probably be waiting to hop into the squad car.

But Stryker, Anselment’s police dog, will have to learn to stay put.

Monday is Stryker’s last day as a working dog, and the transition to family pet will probably be a little rocky, Anselment said. But with three children younger than 5 in the house, Anselment’s night shift — a requirement for K-9 handlers — was wearing on his family.

“(Stryker) waits by the door for me,” Anselment said. “It’ll take a few months for him to realize there’s no more police car, and it’ll take awhile for him to get used to staying home and chilling out.”

Stryker, a 7-year-old German shepherd from the Czech Republic, has been with Anselment for five years. Anselment and his wife, Danielle Anselment, say the dog is very protective and their children tackle him and wrestle him — and love him — just like any other dog.

“He’s just part of the family,” Shaun Anselment said.

Dagger, the department’s other K-9 officer, will retire at the end of this year.

Burnsville Police Chief Bob Hawkins said the department is raising money to help pay for the dogs’ replacements. The department has set up a page on the city’s Web site with information about the program and ways to contribute.

It’s the first time Burnsville has attempted to raise money outside the city budget for the dogs, which cost \$6,000 to \$8,000 apiece, Hawkins said. Training for each dog runs an additional \$1,500.

POLICE DOGS, 3B >

>> Rubén Rosario is not writing today. His column will return soon.



What will 2010 bring to Minnesota? We asked our reporters to weigh in with their predictions of what the big stories will be for the coming year.

A WIDE-OPEN RACE FOR GOVERNOR

What: With Gov. Tim Pawlenty stepping down, there are no clear-cut favorites to win the governor’s seat in 2010. Eleven Democrats and seven Republicans are off and running, and more contenders, including former GOP Sen. Norm Coleman, could jump into the race.

Why it’s important: The next governor will have to lead Minnesota through a projected \$5.4 billion budget shortfall and try to get the state’s economy back on track.

What could happen: The DFL and GOP parties will start thinning out their fields of candidates with straw ballots at the Feb. 2 precinct caucuses. Both parties will endorse candidates in April, but the winners are likely to be challenged in an August primary. The governor’s race will dominate the news in the fall.

What you can do: If you want to be a player in selecting the next governor, pick a candidate early and get in on the campaign’s ground floor. If politics turn you off, tune out for the next 10 months.

— Bill Salisbury

PREVIEW 2010

WATCHING PAWLENTY, AT HOME AND AWAY

What: Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty is serving his final year in office after deciding not to seek a third term.

Why it’s important: This is his last chance to establish his legacy, and he also must erase a projected \$1.2 billion budget shortfall. He may make some eye-catching proposals to bolster his stature as a potential 2012 candidate for president.

What could happen: Pawlenty could work with the DFL-controlled Legislature to find a bipartisan budget solution, dismiss the lawmakers and fix the problem himself, or become a lame duck with little clout at the Capitol. He also could spend a lot of time traveling around the country to help Republican candidates — and spreading political IOUs for the 2012 race.

What you can do: Offer the governor ideas for balancing the budget. If you want

him to run for president, contribute to Freedom First, his political action committee.

— Bill Salisbury

SWIMMING IN RED INK

What: The state faces a projected \$1.2 billion deficit in the remaining 18 months of the current biennium.

Why it’s important: Every state service and program will undergo scrutiny to see whether it should be trimmed back or eliminated.

What could happen: Budget cuts could result in layoffs of government employees, higher tuition, pressure on local governments to raise property taxes and longer waits for fewer services. To prevent such cuts, Democrats may try to increase taxes, but Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty will have his veto stamp (it’s not a pen) ready.

What you can do: Suggest budget-balancing ideas to Pawlenty and your legislators.

— Bill Salisbury

MINNESOTA 2010, 4B >

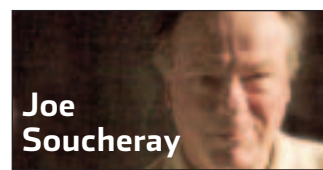
Forget plows: St. Paul needs a fleet of trucks shooting flames

So I was thinking as I was driving down Fairview Avenue the other day. Well, to say I was driving is to be too charitable to what we

know to be driving, where you are in control of the steering wheel and all four wheels are in contact with Earth.

Driving is what they do in California or Florida.

I was railing, or riding the rails. The Christmas snowstorm that turned to sloop left rails of ice. The ice captures



Joe Soucheray

the car, and you are, however momentarily, breathlessly slung or so helplessly free-wheeling that you often are turned completely around and facing the direction whence

you came, only to be slung, or slotted again. It’s no use trying to drive between the rails, because ice is strong and the ice will push you back up onto the rails.

You can’t really blame the plow jockeys. They couldn’t very well compete with rain. By the time they came through many of the residential streets in St. Paul, it was Christmas night. And because the day was just warm enough to make the falling snow a stew of slush, the plows were left to

heave up great waves of the stuff, turning a curb on, say, Lincoln into a frozen beach-head from the North Shore.

So I was thinking.

Why don’t we have blowtorch trucks? Groundskeepers used to thaw out the frozen tundra at Metropolitan Stadium with some kind of flamethrower devices. Remember those things? They looked hauntingly medieval and terrifying, but they got the job done.

If we had a fleet of blowtorch trucks, they could follow the

plows and melt down the rails. It conjures up a vision of brute, almost prehistoric, industrial might, blacksmith-like, but a truck shooting flames is pretty much in keeping with roads that would be criticized in Bulgaria, much less here in the supposedly prosperous United States of America.

It’s probably not that bad of an idea. Somebody would have to work out the physics of the thing. Once, years ago, I poured gasoline onto the hump left by the plow at the end of the driveway. I thought

it was a grand experiment, but the gas, once lit, just wicked itself away and left only a scorched stain on the already ugly ice.

What have we become when a man stands out in the street and ignites gasoline to melt the plow hump? Desperate, is the answer.

A blowtorch, it seems to me, could be more intense, a directed stream of flame to melt the rails. We’ve got to do something about the rails. At

JOE SOUCHERAY, 4B >