

Last Words, By Irene Powell

It will hardly come as a surprise to my family and friends that I take advantage of any event to get in the last word. And so it goes today, my last words.

I want to thank each of you who is present here today - at the least it has equaled an interruption of your business or pleasure or leisure, and for some of you it has meant more time to be on the road or in the air. And for all of you, perhaps, it has stirred up sobering thoughts you may not wish to entertain. For all these reasons and more, I appreciate your effort in being here.

I have considered my many years a gift and am grateful for this extended period, as well as opportunities which have been mine during such a long life. Lives have been touched - sometimes briefly, sometimes intensely, sometimes on the surface and sometimes deeply, through age levels, interest groups, work experiences, pleasure, church and school activities. Sometimes the association has been a long time - lives running parallel, others just intercepted. But in every instance the association and relationship has left an impact and I am indebted to you for your influence.

I think it was Benjamin Franklin who said in essence, "When the body fails to give pleasure and is unable to be helpful to others the Lord has a way out which is called death." I have now qualified for the latter and do see this transition as a gift.

However, even late circumstances have permitted unexpected opportunities for pleasures, many beyond my wildest imagination, and certainly more than I expected with a "life in bed" sentence.

I wish I could return to you all the pleasure that has been mine as a result of your kindnesses. I will wish for you what a friend once wished for me:

To Irene, With Love – Irene Burroughs

Would that I could bring to you
Some lovely, fragile thing,
A gift to hold against your heart
To give your spirit wing,

A symphony for songless days,
Or golden book of fame,
Hope to rise above all hope,
Beauty without name.

Grant that I may be to you
Simply this; your friend,
One to share the way with you,
Or the journeys end.

Here we are at my journey's end, or perhaps a different sort of beginning. My friend Irene was not able to walk with me to my end, but oh am I fortunate that you all have shared this way with me. May God bless you and keep you, may the Lord watch between me and thee while we are absent one from the other. Thank you for affirming what has been, now please go and celebrate what is to come. So long, farewell, adieu, auf Wiedersehen.