

# The Final Word

*by: York W. Porter, Immortalist Society President*

## **The Last Full Measure of Devotion**

The Immortalist Society annual meeting, held, through the courtesy of the Cryonics Institute at their facility in Clinton Township, was a fairly straightforward one. After a few opening remarks by yours truly, we received the reports of the officers, and the existing slate of officers was elected to serve until January of 2009. The following column reflects some of the general remarks to the membership made by myself with a fair amount of additions and deletions for the sake of space and clarity:

My wife, Lois, works as a registered nurse in Cookeville, Tennessee at a surgeon's office there. Cookeville is a lovely small city with its main attraction being the fact that one of Tennessee's regional universities is located there. About every three weeks, I accompany my wife to Cookeville so we will have a chance to try to spend some measure of time together since she normally leaves home Monday through Friday about six-thirty in the morning and doesn't return until six that night.

One of the other attractions about Cookeville is that they have at least one of most of the brand name chain stores there. Our favorite, like many Americans, is the WalMart Supercenter. On the way there, very close to Labor Day, I noticed that alongside of the road that is the "main shopping drag" in Cookeville, numerous lawn chairs were set up with a number of American flags. Having had a busy day, I continued to drive into the WalMart parking lot thinking to myself that some sort of Labor Day parade must be in progress.

After Lois and I finished our shopping, we headed back out. When we got to the first intersection, a police officer had the road blocked. I remember thinking to myself that the parade must be going to start. To my sadness, what came through the intersection was the funeral procession of a soldier who had been killed in the war in Iraq. Whatever your views on the war itself, this young man had shown, in Abraham Lincoln's immortal words during the Gettysburg address, that "last full measure of devotion". Although I had seen photos of several young men in the region who had lost their lives in the conflict in Iraq, this was the first time the war was brought "up close and personal" to me. It was a sobering and somber moment to say the least.

It got me thinking about the tremendous grief that his family must be going through and, in particular, being a parent myself, of how devastated his mother and father must be over losing their child. It brought me back to a terrible night in my life not so long ago when my only child, Michelle, was riding in a car that was hit, more or less, head on by a drunk driver.

After picking up my wife, she and I began speeding through the night, for the roughly two hour trip to the University of Kentucky Medical Center, hoping and, at times, literally praying that our daughter would survive to come home to us again. Whether through the power of modern medical technology, the power of prayer, or just plain "luck" itself, that is ultimately what happened and Michelle is planning on reentering Western Kentucky University just after January, some six years after that terrible October night in 2001.

Which brings me to cryonics. There is no way that I can adequately express to you what a comfort it was to know that if we were facing the most devastating experience that a parent can go through, that cryonics in general and, in our particular case, the Cryonics Institute, was there as the "ultimate backup system", if you will, to the awful situation we found ourselves in. Tremendous praise is undoubtedly due to Robert Ettinger as well as the numerous men and women who have worked along side of him and those that continue to work every day to make cryonics a better functioning reality, whether it is the folks at CI, Alcor, ACS, Suspended Animation, my fellow officers in IS who tolerate my many quirks and/or any of the other people who have "put their shoulder to the wheel" to continue to push this idea forward.

Which is where you come in. Cryonics is, in a nutshell, about saving lives, plain and simple. We cryonicists debate and argue, sometimes seemingly endlessly, about virtually everything in the field. We argue about which suspension method is superior or whether all suspension methods, given the potential of nanotechnology, will ultimately succeed. We argue about what the right figure is in terms of the costs of this life saving technology. Some of the discussions are fun, some are dismaying as they seem to degenerate from the original point to where people who should know better basically end up just making personal attacks on each other. But underneath all of that, the reality is that there are, for the foreseeable future at least, going to be folks who are in situations like that that my family went through and believe me, when that happens, all the "theoretical" discussions come to a screeching halt in your mind and reality sets in hard and strong.

What I am asking you to do about it is to use this time of the annual meeting and this time as we slowly enter the holiday season, to rededicate yourself to the cause for which we are struggling. You don't have to do "great things", but just search your heart and soul for whatever way, however seemingly small, you can help advance our cause. It may be just talking politely with friends that you may feel are interested in cryonics. It may be writing for our journal or giving a gift subscription to it. It may be making a financial contribution to further cryonics research or overfunding your suspension contract so that your provider will be strengthened by the additional funding.. It may be writing a "letter to the editor" when you see erroneous information about cryonics in any publication. It may be making yourself better informed about cryonics so that you'll be ready with objective facts and thinking in any discussion which may come up instead of the subjective opinions that so many of our opponents seem to have. Whatever the action you think of, please try to start on it now. A family like mine may ultimately be counting on you.

