



## Life – and Death Proposition

Where do we go when we die?

We go back to where we came from

And where was that?

I don't know, I can't remember

*Virginia Woolf, "The Hours"*

I don't remember much of this life, and like Virginia Woolf, nothing of the herebefore. How then, could I expect to know of the hereafter? I know at least that we all exist at and of the moment and that we make up those moments as we go along. I became a grandfather for the first time a few months ago and proud son Jeff asked for some fatherly advice as to how to go about raising his baby daughter Caroline. "We all do it in our own way, Jeff, you'll make it up as you go along," I said. Parenting, and life itself, is one giant experiment. From those first infant steps, to adolescent peer testing, flying from and departing the parental nest, gene replication and family building of our own, maturity and acquiescence, aging, decay and inevitable death – we experiment as best we can and make it up as we go along.

That death part though, oh where do we go after we have done all the making? There was another Jeff in our family, beloved brother-in-law Jeff Stubban who was as kind a man as there ever could be. Dying within three months of an initial diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, our family sobbed uncontrollably at his bedside as his breath, his spirit, his soul, departed almost on cue while a priest recited the rosary. Where had he gone, where is he now, what will become of him and all of us? Like many grieving families we look for signs of him and in turn for clues to our own destination. A lucky penny in the street, a random mention of his beloved New Orleans, an exterior resemblance of his shiny bald head in a mingling crowd. Where are you, Jeff? Tell us you are safe so that we might meet again.

Having now matured to trust reason more than faith I offer not so much a resolution, but an alternative to the unanswerable question of Virginia Woolf and the departed souls of Jeff Stubban and billions of others. If we don't