

LIGHTENing Bolts  
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PRINTED NEWSLETTER REPLACES EMAIL NEWSLETTER!

Thank you for your ongoing support of LIGHTENing Bolts and FUNsulting, etc.

Because of the many challenges of spam filters and email blocking, we have made a corporate decision (OK, I made the decision) to replace our email newsletter with a good old fashioned printed newsletter. We're very excited about this new creative endeavor.

In order to continue receiving our newsletter in its new and improved format, you will need to provide us with your regular mailing address. Please scroll down to the end of this newsletter and click "Update Profile" to update your information and keep receiving our free newsletter.

We apologize if this creates any inconveniences for you. If you prefer not to receive the printed newsletter, an archive of all newsletters will always be available at our website, [www.FUNsulting.com](http://www.FUNsulting.com).

Ronald P. Culberson, MSW, CSP  
Director of Everything! and Nice Guy  
FUNsulting, etc.

Click here for our archive of previous newsletters [http://www.funsulting.com/newsletter\\_archives.html](http://www.funsulting.com/newsletter_archives.html)

HUMOR ME ñ RONÍS BOOK AND HUMOR COLUMN

To buy your copy of Ronís new book "Is Your Glass Laugh Full? Some Thoughts on Seeing the Humor in Life", visit our website at [www.FUNsulting.com](http://www.FUNsulting.com).

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Ronís monthly column "Humor Me" can be found in the Reston, Herndon and Leesburg Observer Newspapers.

To see the most recent issue of Ronís Column, click here:  
[http://observernews.com/stories/archives/humor/humor\\_100804.shtml](http://observernews.com/stories/archives/humor/humor_100804.shtml)

## HUMOR AT WORK ñ AN INTERVIEW WITH BILL COLBY

In 1983, 25-year-old Nancy Cruzan was involved in a car accident that left her in a persistent vegetative state kept alive by feeding tubes. Her parents spent five years trying to bring her back to consciousness with no success. Finally, after accepting that her condition would not improve, they began a legal battle to have the feeding tubes removed ñ an action they were certain their daughter would have wanted.

Bill Colby was the Cruzan familyís lawyer who took on the case as a public service. He moved the case through the state court system and ultimately to the U.S. Supreme Court where the Cruzans won the right to remove Nancyís feeding tubes. Seven years after her accident, Nancy was allowed to die with dignity. The Cruzan familyís ordeal is chronicled in Bill Colbyís book, *Long Goodbye: The Deaths of Nancy Cruzan*.

Recently, I had the privilege of hearing Bill participate in a panel discussion on end-of-life ethics before an audience at the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organizationís Management Conference. Not only were Billís comments educated and relevant, he peppered his responses with hilarious humor that endeared him to the audience and his panel colleagues.

The following are excerpts from a phone conversation with Bill who graciously agreed to talk with me about his use of humor.

RON (RC): Where you always funny?

BILL (BC): I suppose so. I wasnít the class clown but I always had a sense of humor. Itís always been a part of who I am. I guess I was born with that extra gene.

RC: Were your parents funny?

BC: (Laughs) No, not at all. My dad was a small town bank loan officer and car repossessioner. Not a lot of call for humor in his work.

RC: How did your humor play out?

BC: In my writing to some extent. I did some parody writing when I was younger. For example, in law school, I had a professor who spent a lot of energy protecting an endangered fish called the Snail Darter. I wrote a sonnet called the Snail Darterís Lament and read it in class. I hoped it was funny.

RC: How did you get the Cruzan case?

BC: I had moved from Washington, D.C. to a law firm in Kansas City. I expressed an interest in doing public service and one of the partners told me about this case. He said it would take about 1/2 day of work. Four years later after several trials and a trip to the U.S. Supreme Court, I finished his half day assignment. I was 32 years old at the time and the case changed my life.

RC: What role did humor play in your law career?

BC: Any good trial lawyer uses humor to disarm tension and show the human side of a case. Trial attorneys are performers and also have to be spontaneous. Humor is a part of that and happens all the time in the courtroom.

RC: Can you give an example?

BC: There is a rule for trial attorneys that you never ask a witness a question for which you don't already know the answer and you never ask that question that is the one question too many. A colleague was grilling a witness on the stand when he asked one too many questions and the witness gave a bad answer for his side. The lawyer stopped, laughed and said to the judge, "I guess that's the old one question too far thing." The entire courtroom broke up at his comment. He used humor to show his humanness.

RC: You work with a lot of people who are dealing with end of life issues. How do you use humor with them?

BC: Humor is a wonderful tension breaker for end of life discussions. However, it has to be used delicately and appropriately. Dying people appreciate humor and it confirms that they are still with us. They still want to live and humor is very much a part of life.

RC: Is there a line you don't cross?

BC: Most certainly. I encounter a lot of people telling their own family stories. When they do, it's serious and can be some of the saddest and lowest parts of human drama. That's not funny and I would not make light of it. However as we come out of that seriousness, we can use humor.

RC: Your current career is spent writing and speaking. I assume that humor is a purposeful part of your work?

BC: Absolutely. I use humor in my presentations to break the ice and to try to connect with the audience. I have several places in the program where it's placed purposefully and then I try to use spontaneous humor in

the question and answer part of the program. And I use the example of my own family's effort at creating an advanced directive, which was a comedy of errors ñ maybe if people see that a character as humorless as a lawyer can laugh at himself, then humor's maybe not so bad.

RC: Who do you admire, humor wise?

BC: Rodney Dangerfield, Richard Russo, Ogden Nash, Steven Wright, Gary Larson and many, many more.

RC: How would you capture your style of humor?

BC: My topic is end of life and the law. I want to show people that we're all human and we're all in this together.

Bill Colby is a talented attorney with a passion for end of life care. He is also blessed with a delightfully sharp sense of humor. He is a speaker, author and all around good guy. I am grateful for his taking the time to talk with me.

If you would like to know more about Bill or to order a copy of his book *Long Goodbye*, please visit [www.LongGoodbye.org](http://www.LongGoodbye.org), visit your local bookstore or log onto Amazon.com.

#### HUMOR IN REAL LIFE ñ YOUR BRIEFS ARE SHOWING

Here are excerpts from actual court records taken from the book *Anguished English* by Richard Lederer.

Q: Now, Mrs. Johnson, how was your first marriage terminated?

A: By death.

Q: And by whose death was it terminated?

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Q: Mrs. Smith, you do believe that you are emotionally unstable?

A: I used to be.

Q: How many times have you committed suicide?

A: Four times.

\*\*\*\*\*

Q: At the time you first saw Dr. McCarty, had you ever seen him prior to that time?

\*\*\*\*\*

Q: I understand you're Bernie Davis's mother.

A: Yes.

Q: How long have you known him?

\*\*\*\*\*

Q: Please state the location of your right foot immediately prior to impact.

A: Immediately before the impact, my right foot was located at the immediate end of my right leg.

#### JUST HUMOR ñ LEGAL NEWS

The following are real newspaper headlines from Jay Leno's books  
"Headlines":

"High court to hear marijuana case"

"Legislator wants tougher death penalty"

"Bar to help alcoholic lawyers"

"Police can't stop gambling"

"Juvenile court to try shooting defendant"

#### HUMOR RESOURCES ñ DEATH, LAW AND HUMOR

The following are some resources related to death, law and humor:

"Long Goodbye" by William H. Colby

"Anguished English" by Richard Lederer

"The Undertaking" by Thomas Lynch

"The Courage to Laugh" by Allen Klein

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Ronald P. Culberson, MSW, CSP, Director of Everything! at FUNsulting, etc., is a speaker, humorist and author of "Is Your Glass LAUGH Full?" who works with organizations that want their people to lighten up by using humor as a way to manage stress and become more effective. He is a Certified Speaking Professional (CSP), the highest earned award from the National Speakers Association, and is one of less than 7% of speakers worldwide who have received this designation. He is a humor expert and has provided entertaining and informative programs to over 70,000 people in more than 600 associations, government agencies, non-profit organizations and Fortune 500 companies. To find out more about programs, services and products visit our website at [www.FUNsulting.com](http://www.FUNsulting.com) or call (703) 742-8812.

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