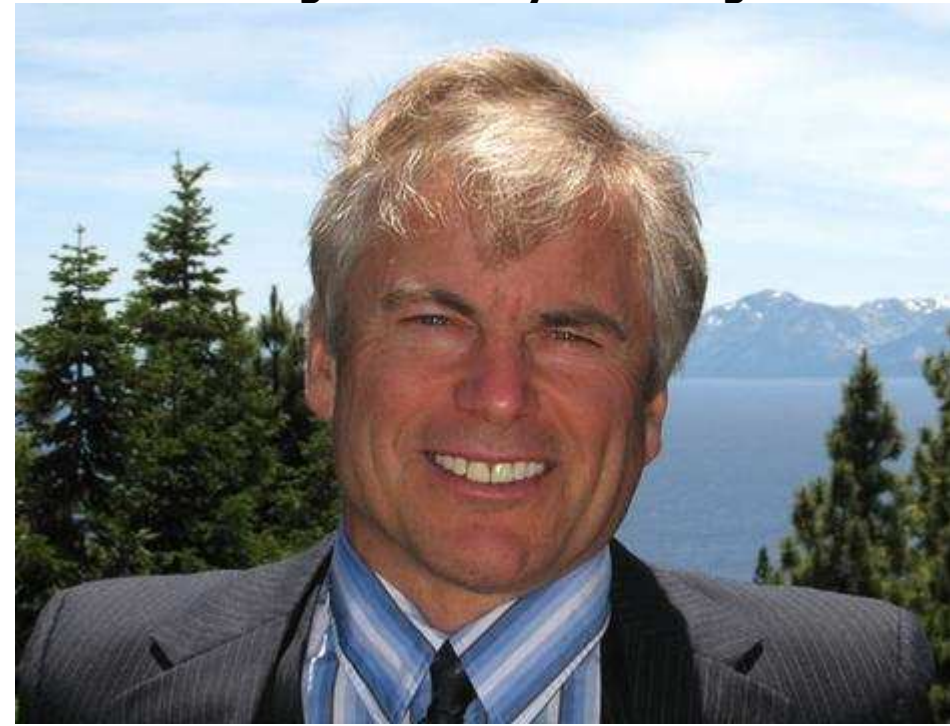


## Online message from beyond the grave



Collin Harris, co-founder of YouDeparted.com, wants to help your survivors rest in peace.

Asher Moses  
September 25, 2007 - 12:11PM

A new web service promises to revolutionise estate planning by offering users the chance to communicate with their loved ones from beyond the grave.

YouDeparted.com, a personal organiser with a spooky twist, lets users store even the most granular day-to-day mechanics of their life in an online safety deposit box, to be delivered to designated friends and family in the event of their death.

The details could include everything from online account passwords to bills that need to be paid and instructions on how to access a personal safe. Posthumous video, text and picture messages can also be left in case there is no time to say goodbye.

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Collin Harris, from Nevada, who founded the site with his son Nick in June, said in an interview he had even heard of users storing special requests for music at their funerals, pet feeding instructions and the outfit they would like to be buried in.

He said the idea came to him after his father passed away in 2000 without leaving any details behind, such as where to find the key to his desk draw.

"He always said he wanted to be buried in one of the states here [in the US] but he never told us which one or where, so his ashes are still in my mother's house by the fireplace and she doesn't know what to do with them," Mr Harris said.

But it was only the more recent unexpected death of a friend of a friend that jolted Mr Harris into formulating a business plan.

"He didn't leave many instructions for anybody. Nobody knew what he wanted or where things were, so for the family it wasn't easy," Mr Harris said.

For a minimum yearly fee of \$US9.95, anyone with a computer and internet connection can set up an account on YouDePARTed.com, which recently surpassed 10,000 members. More expensive plans costing \$US29.95 and \$US79.95 a year give users extra capacity to store more text entries, video and images.

The theory is that any of the people you nominate to have access to your details once you pass away would send a notice of your death to YouDePARTed.com, which would then email you a confirmation message.

If neither you nor any of the other beneficiaries raises an objection within five days, the site classifies you as being dead and forwards your account details to designated friends and family.

Mr Harris said his service was far more effective than a standard will because it could be easily updated and safeguarded from theft or damage, since all of the details are stored on a remote server.

In fact, many subscribers were using the site to store electronic copies of their wills, in addition to other estate planning details.

Of course, the distinct downside to storing all of this sensitive data online is the possibility of the servers being hacked into and user data stolen.

But Mr Harris said the site used the same data encryption technology as US government security organisations such as the National Security Agency, and each user's details were protected by a unique key.

"Every single person has a different key so we can't see it, and even if a person got hold of the physical box of our server, they'd have the terrible task of trying to figure out thousands of keys," he said.

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