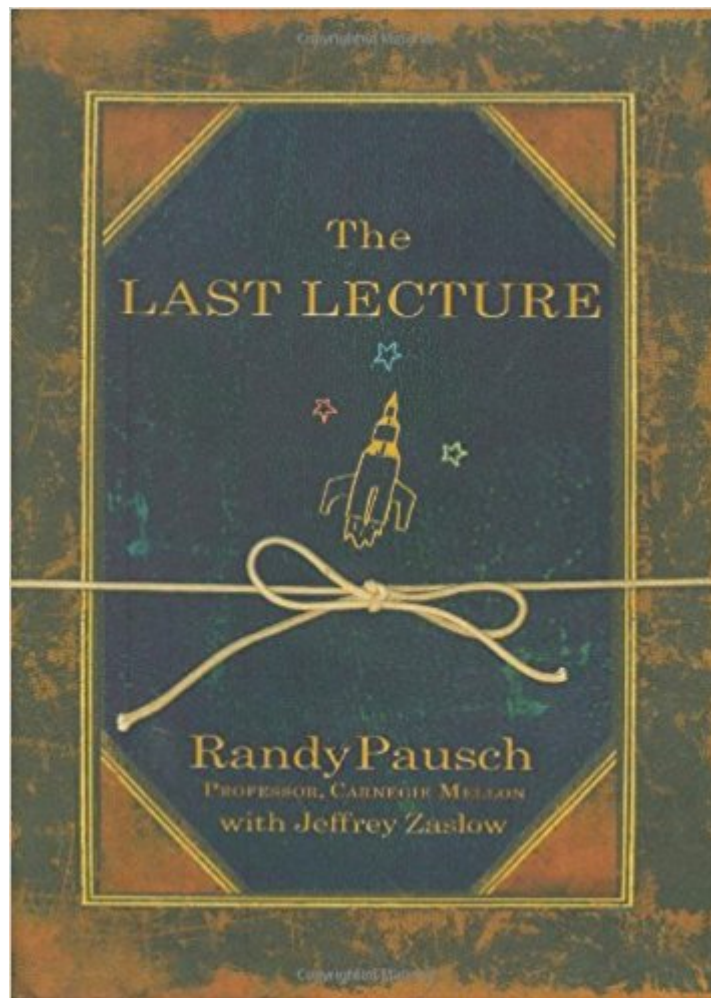


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The Last Lecture



Synopsis

A lot of professors give talks titled "The Last Lecture." Professors are asked to consider their demise and to ruminate on what matters most to them. And while they speak, audiences can't help but mull the same question: What wisdom would we impart to the world if we knew it was our last chance? If we had to vanish tomorrow, what would we want as our legacy? When Randy Pausch, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon, was asked to give such a lecture, he didn't have to imagine it as his last, since he had recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer. But the lecture he gave--"Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams"--wasn't about dying. It was about the importance of overcoming obstacles, of enabling the dreams of others, of seizing every moment (because "time is all you have...and you may find one day that you have less than you think"). It was a summation of everything Randy had come to believe. It was about living. In this book, Randy Pausch has combined the humor, inspiration and intelligence that made his lecture such a phenomenon and given it an indelible form. It is a book that will be shared for generations to come. "We cannot change the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand." --Randy Pausch

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Customer Reviews

"We cannot change the cards we are dealt, just how we play the hand." --Randy Pausch A lot of professors give talks titled "The Last Lecture." Professors are asked to consider their demise and to ruminate on what matters most to them. And while they speak, audiences can't help but mull the same question: What wisdom would we impart to the world if we knew it was our last chance? If we

had to vanish tomorrow, what would we want as our legacy? When Randy Pausch, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon, was asked to give such a lecture, he didn't have to imagine it as his last, since he had recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer. But the lecture he gave--"Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams"--wasn't about dying. It was about the importance of overcoming obstacles, of enabling the dreams of others, of seizing every moment (because "time is all you have...and you may find one day that you have less than you think"). It was a summation of everything Randy had come to believe. It was about living. In this book, Randy Pausch has combined the humor, inspiration and intelligence that made his lecture such a phenomenon and given it an indelible form. It is a book that will be shared for generations to come.

Questions for Randy Pausch

We were shy about barging in on Randy Pausch's valuable time to ask him a few questions about his expansion of his famous Last Lecture into the book by the same name, but he was gracious enough to take a moment to answer. (See Randy to the right with his kids, Dylan, Logan, and Chloe.) As anyone who has watched the lecture or read the book will understand, the really crucial question is the last one, and we weren't surprised to learn that the "secret" to winning giant stuffed animals on the midway, like most anything else, is sheer persistence.

.com: I apologize for asking a question you must get far more often than you'd like, but how are you feeling?

Pausch: The tumors are not yet large enough to affect my health, so all the problems are related to the chemotherapy. I have neuropathy (numbness in fingers and toes), and varying degrees of GI discomfort, mild nausea, and fatigue. Occasionally I have an unusually bad reaction to a chemo infusion (last week, I spiked a 103 fever), but all of this is a small price to pay for walkin' around.

.com: Your lecture at Carnegie Mellon has reached millions of people, but even with the short time you apparently have, you wanted to write a book. What did you want to say in a book that you weren't able to say in the lecture?

Pausch: Well, the lecture was written quickly--in under a week. And it was time-limited. I had a great six-hour lecture I could give, but I suspect it would have been less popular at that length ;-). A book allows me to cover many, many more stories from my life and the attendant lessons I hope my kids can take from them. Also, much of my lecture at Carnegie Mellon focused on the professional side of my life--my students, colleagues and career. The book is a far more personal look at my childhood dreams and all the lessons I've learned. Putting words on paper, I've found, was a better way for me to share all the yearnings I have regarding my wife, children and other loved ones. I knew I couldn't have gone into those subjects on stage without getting emotional.

.com: You talk about the importance--and the possibility!--of following your childhood dreams, and of keeping that childlike sense of wonder. But are there things you didn't learn until you were a grownup that helped you do that?

Pausch: That's a great question.

I think the most important thing I learned as I grew older was that you can't get anywhere without help. That means people have to want to help you, and that begs the question: What kind of person do other people seem to want to help? That strikes me as a pretty good operational answer to the existential question: "What kind of person should you try to be?" .com: One of the things that struck me most about your talk was how many other people you talked about. You made me want to meet them and work with them--and believe me, I wouldn't make much of a computer scientist. Do you think the people you've brought together will be your legacy as well? Pausch: Like any teacher, my students are my biggest professional legacy. I'd like to think that the people I've crossed paths with have learned something from me, and I know I learned a great deal from them, for which I am very grateful. Certainly, I've dedicated a lot of my teaching to helping young folks realize how they need to be able to work with other people--especially other people who are very different from themselves. .com: And last, the most important question: What's the secret for knocking down those milk bottles on the midway? Pausch: Two-part answer: 1) long arms 2) discretionary income / persistence Actually, I was never good at the milk bottles. I'm more of a ring toss and softball-in-milk-can guy, myself. More seriously, though, most people try these games once, don't win immediately, and then give up. I've won *lots* of midway stuffed animals, but I don't ever recall winning one on the very first try. Nor did I expect to. That's why I think midway games are a great metaphor for life.

Made famous by his Last Lecture at Carnegie Mellon and the quick Internet proliferation of the video of the event, Pausch decided that maybe he just wasn't done lecturing. Despite being several months into the last stage of pancreatic cancer, he managed to put together this book. The crux of it is lessons and morals for his young and infant children to learn once he is gone. Despite his sometimes-contradictory life rules, it proves entertaining and at times inspirational. Surprisingly, the audiobook doesn't include the reading of Pausch's actual Last Lecture, which he gave on September 18, 2007, a month after being diagnosed. Erik Singer provides an excellent inflective voice that hints at the reveries of past experiences with family and children while wielding hope and regret for family he will leave behind. The first CD is enhanced with photos. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an alternate Hardcover edition.

Dr. Pausch does a great job at illustrating one of the things we often forget about, the bigger picture. He does it in a way that allows the reader to walk through some of his experiences as well as

enabling you to extrapolate them to your own situations. The fact that a man with a terminal illness was able to collect his thoughts and prepare for a future where he would not be around in a way that will be infinitely beneficial to his children, but also applicable to the rest of the world is a true testament to his passion for teaching. This is a great read that will provide a great frame of reference for anyone who is experiencing troubles as well as those who have achieved extraordinary success. It brings us back to Earth, shows us that what is truly important is often right in front of us and instead of always reaching for more, which we are all inclined to do, we sometimes just need to enjoy what we have with who we are with.

Anyone who reads this probably knows Randy Pausch's plight. He is a professor, father of young children and has generally spent a happy and physically fit life. He now lives with his mortality constantly at his side. At a time when many would be bemoaning their fate, he preaches the joys of life and finding meaning in every moment. He doesn't feel remorse, regret or give us the feeling he considers himself a victim in any way. Instead he talks of the adventure of life itself, taken in the moment and the ways that we can make each of those moments meaningful and productive for ourselves and others. He argues against self-limiting thoughts and inspires those who hear or read his words to move forward through every challenge unafraid and with a sense that whatever the challenge, it amounts to little more than opening and closing a door. This is a story of life's passages, from moment to moment, and finding the courage within to meet each challenge without fear. It is a must for anyone interested in pursuing their own personal evolution.

Get your Kleenex box ready, first. This autobiography (of sorts) isn't all about death and dying or how pancreatic cancer rears its ugly head, once more but it's impossible to overlook the driving force behind the titular event. Randy Pausch would lose his battle to cancer in the summer in 2008. Before he went, he wanted to impart basically every non-computer related thing he ever learned (good and bad) to audience members at this Carnegie Mellon lecture, to his friends and family, and mostly to his 3 young kids. What we get is a person who loved life, saw the best in people and was a kick-ass teacher because he'd learned from his own mistakes. I felt like I knew him after reading the book, which makes it hard to get through the end. He writes with honesty, without schmaltz and isn't afraid of cliché. Because of that, his story has lifelong lessons for all of us.

This is the most amazing piece of writing that I have read in a long time. It is so inspirational. It is a must read for everyone, especially the soon-to-be college graduate. Also, if you are interested in another great read check out: "Prose From A Grandson To A Senior Fellow" by Derek McFadden. It would be a great companion to this book.

I actually had this book as an assignment for one of my college classes. I was surprised to find out it was an excellent read. Randy Pausch is an excellent storyteller and makes it easy for any audience to follow along. This book has a lot of great life advice and helps you to keep your chin up no matter what situations you're going through. The chapters are quick enough to go through one in about 5 minutes so you can easily add a chapter or two to your daily routine.

I really had a great time with this book. I imagined what would I do if I was in Randy's shoes. As I read the book. I took his insight and applied to my life, the more I read. The more I practice. The result is amazingly awesome. A lot of people tell me why I read these books. They don't help anyway. I'd like to say these books are a way to understand the importance of different things. Then we find our own map to achieve important meaning in our life. I first watched Randy's last lecture video 7 years ago. I was touched by it a lot. But that was that. Until recently a friend's loving one was in similar situation as Randy. I was lucky to find the book on bookshelf that had been there forever. In order to feel the compassion to my friend and really wants to be there for her. Surprisingly I learned a lot. Definitely a great treasure for anyone who wants to pack their life with fun and great joy of great memories.

A must read for every one who is a deep thinker about his or her own life. Randy Pausch is giving his 'last lecture' as a gift of all of us to really look into ourselves and to ask ourselves what is really important to do with the rest of our lives. Even if you don't like to read or you seldom read, take the time to read this book. It is not long, but it will be one of the best books you will ever read. Do it! You will gain from it.

This is one of the few books I have read this year that I can strongly recommend. Randy Pausch tells it like it needs to be told. He doesn't hold anything back and I was absolutely moved to tears. Many times in our lives, we know what we should be doing but don't always do it. The things that Randy says in this book are things we should be doing NOW instead of waiting for a terminal diagnosis. The thing about Randy that impressed me the most was that he refused to feel sorry for

himself. What a terrific thing for us all to remember and live by. Many of us may have terribly difficult circumstances in our lives that are hard to live with. If a man with a terminal diagnosis can find happiness and productivity with a prognosis of pancreatic cancer, then we ALL can. If you read no other book this year, please read this one. I can almost guarantee you won't be disappointed.

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