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## **Death and Taxes**

**by Gary D. Barnett**

A friend of mine recently passed away at his home. This, in and of itself, is not surprising, as he was 80 years old and had cancer, but this story is about what happened before and up until his death.

My friend worked very hard for many years, had a successful career, and then retired. He and his wife moved to our neck of the woods to be near their daughters and grandchildren. He had not only been successful at his job, but studied relentlessly and did all his own investing. This became like a second vocation but certainly was his avocation. He not only enjoyed building his portfolio of stocks and bonds, but was good at it and continued to build wealth.

Everything went along fine until he found out he had cancer. He knew he was going to die, and wanted desperately to do so, as he could not bear the thought of not being able to live his life fully and without constant pain. Once he could no longer follow the market, his only pastime, he became very bitter and hated life. He continually told his family that he wanted to die, and die soon.

Only one thing stood in his way; the IRS. Once he found out that the amount of his estate that he could pass on without “death taxes” would be raised on January 1, 2006, to \$2 million per person, he became scared to die too soon. He was more scared of the IRS than of death.

You must understand that the last few weeks of his life were filled with unrelenting pain. He was given high doses of morphine and was on a drip 24 hours a day. He did not eat a single bite of anything for more than a week before he died.

He was not conscious for more than just a few minutes a day and woke only to ask his wife one question: “What day is it?” She would answer and he would again lose consciousness.

This went on for days on end until one particular Sunday morning. He awoke and again asked the question, “What day is it?” only this time his lovely wife told him it was January 1, 2006, the new year. She then told him he could now go to sleep and not worry. He did, and never woke up again.

This is a sad commentary on this man's fear of his own government; even while suffering deadly cancer and in great pain, he forced himself by his own will to live just long enough to protect a little more of what he had earned for his family. He wanted to keep it from being stolen by the federal government. Well, he made it, and may he now rest in peace.

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**This article was originally published in the May 2005 edition of *Freedom Daily*.**