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by John Yopp

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Q & A - John A. Gupton Students Speak Out
Ogeechee Tech's Barry Turner Named Business
Leader of the Year

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notes from the editor

Why Education Matters

by John Yopp

No different than the death care profession or any industry, education matters. Education allows each person to gain power and create opportunities. It impacts every aspect of our lives, as it is the means by which we develop as individuals, young and old, and come to understand our community, as well as our world.

Education level is directly linked to income and job security, but also correlates with health, mental well-being, civic management, home ownership, business ownership and more importantly long-term financial stability. Beyond the economic implications, education is an issue of basic human dignity. The ability to gain knowledge, access positive learning opportunities, and apply skills which are the cornerstones of healthy development.

In the current economy, nearly 2/3 of all jobs require a least a two-year college degree of technical training for entry and advancement. Within this reality, adults who were unable to build a strong educational foundation have no way to advance without first moving forward in education. For some, moving forward may be learning English, earning a GED, brushing up on skills, or earning a college degree.

In addition to the personal impact of education, the effects of educational attainment are felt at the family and community level. The strongest indicator of a child's success in school is the education level of the parent. Fortunately, there is renewed energy around improving early childhood and K-12 education, but in order to make significant change we must also ensure opportunities for advancing parents' educational level. With each adult who re-engages in education we, as a community, grow. On every level education matters.

As we move forward in 2017, funeral home owners should take the time to continue to educate their staff on a consistent basis. How else can the young apprentice, fresh out of mortuary school, learn to be a great funeral director if the owner and some of the senior staff do not take the time to show and explain why certain things are done.

Attending conventions and conferences is also a great way for all of us to continue to be educated, especially on what the needs are of our families and how we can continue to better serve them and the community we live in.

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Thinking Thanatology

By: Dr. Jill Karn, J.D. Pierce Mortuary College



Note: This article is adapted from a chapter in the textbook Sociology in Funeral Service, written by Jill Karn, J.D., published by Pierce Mortuary Colleges and Wilbert.

When was the last time you thought about Thanatology? As a discipline of study, thanatology may have last been a part of your vocabulary during your mortuary school studies. However, as a practice, thanatology is something that you as a funeral professional deal with every single day, perhaps not consciously but certainly woven into the fabric of helping families deal with death. While a funeral director generally does not play a role during the dying process, he or she certainly is instrumental in helping families cope with death and through rituals helps them begin the journey of healing. Perhaps going back to some basics and thinking about thanatology will refresh and sharpen your focus on this fundamental objective to help and guide families.

Thanatology Defined

Thanatology, the scientific study of death, includes a wide range of topics that overlap with death itself and the dying process (physical, psychological, and social events that occur during the period leading up to physical death). Thanatologists might look at the psychological aspects of the process of dying, the social components of death, or even how music impacts the dying person. Thanatology is concerned with the notion of death as popularly perceived and especially with the reactions of the dying, from whom it is felt much can be learned about dealing with death's approach.

Thanatology (Greek *thanatos*, "death") traces its roots back to about 1900. After World War II, health professionals recognized a gap between the needs of individuals and available treatment options. In the first half of the 20th century, thanatologists and other

professionals began recognizing that an understanding of death was essential to a complete understanding of life. Death is an unavoidable part of the life cycle for all living things – everyone dies, and everyone experiences grief.

The Five Stages

In 1969, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross conceptualized **five stages in facing one's terminal illness (and death)** in her book *On Death and Dying*: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Although most thanatologists accept the stages, they recognize that these occur neither with predictable regularity nor in any set order. Further, the five stages are but general reactions to many situations involving loss, not necessarily dying. Seldom does a dying person follow a regular, clearly identifiable series of responses. It is common for individuals to jump from stage to stage and back again.

Kubler-Ross's work changed the standard of care for dying people by making society and doctors aware of and more sensitive to the emotional needs of those dying. She later expanded her model to include any form of personal loss, such as the death of a loved one, the loss of a job or income, major rejection, the end of a relationship or divorce, drug addiction, incarceration, the onset of a disease or chronic illness, an infertility diagnosis, and even minor losses.

In her book, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss*, Dr.



SIDEBAR: “The grief process is never the same for any two people. Don’t compare yourself with others in similar situations. Their smiles may not reveal the depth of their sorrow. Be your own timekeeper. Heal in your own way and in your own time.”

—Dr. Earl A. Grollman, *Living with Your Loss*

Kübler-Ross says, “The stages have evolved since their introduction, and they have been very misunderstood over the past three decades. They were never meant to help tuck messy emotions into neat packages. They are responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss. Our grief is as individual as our lives. . . . They are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling. But they are not stops on some linear timeline in grief. Not everyone goes through all of them or goes in a prescribed order.”

Denial

Many times **denial** is the first reaction to an impending death or death, or a reaction when hearing bad news, such as terminal illness. The initial reaction is immediate denial. It helps individuals rationalize overwhelming emotions and survive the loss. Denial is a conscious or unconscious refusal to accept facts, reality, etc., relating to the difficult situation as a survival mechanism the brain has developed. When it appears in a typical manner, it is a lot like a “cushion,” which is there to provide a short pause while we regain our footing in life.

Denial becomes a defense mechanism where individuals cling to a false reality and is perfectly natural. Denial can be a positive coping stage, which ultimately may allow individuals to come to terms with the knowledge

of dying until they are ready to cope with the death. Some become locked in this stage when dealing with a traumatic change. When individuals start asking questions such as “Why?” or “How did this happen?” this is a sign they are moving out of the denial phase and into the healing process.

Anger

The second stage is **anger** and is a natural response to loss. When individuals recognize loss has occurred and denial cannot continue, this may trigger frustration, which is the anger stage. Reality and its pain re-emerge. Feelings of abandonment, rage and resentment, and feelings of unfairness, all are signs of individuals in the anger stage. The intense emotion can be difficult to cope with.

Psychological responses of individuals going through this stage include blaming others or asking, “Why me? This is not fair!” In this stage, individuals may be upset with strangers, themselves, the deceased, others, God, the world, and close family or friends. Anger turned inward is suppressed anger or guilt: “I should have done something.” Identifying, labeling, and feeling anger are parts of the healing process. Doctors and loved ones should not respond to the anger of the dying person with avoidance or returned anger but through support.

Bargaining

Traditionally, the **bargaining** stage for people facing death involves individuals hoping they can avoid the cause of grief or attempt to bargain with God. The bargaining stage keeps individuals focused on the past so they do not have to feel the emotions of the present. Bargains for cures, extra time, less pain, or to spare loved ones, are all signs of the bargaining stage. The bargaining stage can happen before and after the loss occurs.

Psychological responses of individuals going through this stage would be: “*I’ll change if you bring him (or her) back to me*”; or “*I’ll do anything!*” With bargaining, there’s a sense that we just want life back to the way it used to be or to go back in time and change things. This stage usually involves promises that the individual will behave better or make significant life changes that will be made in exchange for the reversal of the loss. Once individuals have accepted that the loved one has passed, bargaining can help focus on the

future as they may pray or believe to “be reunited with them someday.”

Depression

Once it becomes clear that anger is not going to reverse the loss and there is nothing left to bargain, individuals may then sink into the **depression** stage. Here is where they confront helplessness to make any changes and/or the inevitability and reality of the loss. Grieving people may blame themselves for having caused the loss. They may cry, act as if they don’t care about anything, or experience exhaustion. They may experience sleep or eating changes, wish life would pass on by, find it hard to get out of bed, or withdraw from other relationships and activities while they process the loss.

Psychological responses of an individual going through this stage would be: *“I’m so sad, why bother with anything?”*, *“What’s the point?”* and *“Why go on?”* In this state, the individual may refuse visitors, become silent, and spend much of the time mournful. This emotional time is the “aftermath” of the depression stage, also referred to as **preparatory grieving**. It shows the individual has begun to accept the reality of the loss. The depression stage is not a clinical depression but rather bereavement and mourning, and others may want to try to help the individual out of this depression. These emotional expressions must be experienced in order to heal. It is necessary to allow the individual to feel the loss, pain, sadness, and grief. It is necessary to be patient with the individual – there is no set time limit for this stage. The individual needs to experience and feel the emotions of depression in order to heal.

Again, this stage definitely varies according to the person’s situation. The person who is dying can enter this stage well before the people they leave behind, who must pass through their own individual stages of dealing with the grief.

Acceptance

Many times the experience of depression is what ultimately leads to **acceptance**. This is not a stage of being cured from a loss, as the loss is forever part of us. Rather, the acceptance stage is a period of calm and peace where individuals move forward without the loved one. They accept the reality that the loved one is physically gone. Individuals are once again able to plan for their futures and re-engage in daily life. Within

this last stage, they may focus on maintaining life as it was before a loved one died. It is not a period of happiness. Individuals embrace mortality or inevitable future, which comes with the “calm” and is a stable condition of emotions.

Psychological responses of an individual going through this stage would be: *“I can’t fight it; I may as well prepare for it.”* or *“Nothing is impossible; just do it.”* It is often confused with responses such as: *“It is going to be okay.”* Most are never okay about a loss. When individuals resist the acceptance stage, they prolong the natural process of healing. The best thing for those in this stage is to allow grief to happen and give it time.

Current Changes and Discussions in Thanatology

One recent discussion within the fields of both Thanatology and Psychology concerned depression and bereavement. In *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*, what became known as a “bereavement exclusion” was included under Major Depressive Disorder.

Using DSM-IV, clinicians were advised to refrain from diagnosing major depression in individuals within the first two months following the death of a loved one in what has been referred to as the “bereavement exclusion.” By advising clinicians not to diagnose depression in recently bereaved individuals, the DSM-IV bereavement exclusion suggested that grief somehow protected someone from major depression. As part of the ongoing study of major depression, the bereavement exclusion has been removed from DSM. —Major Depressive Disorder and the “Bereavement Exclusion”, *American Psychiatric Association, 2013*

In the current edition of the DSM – the DSM-V – the “bereavement exclusion” has been removed. Many in the field of Thanatology feel this is a positive step in the direction of better, more thorough treatment options for the bereaved and grieving. Thanatologists are currently exploring how best to define “complex” vs. “normal” bereavement.

Another active area within Thanatology is the exploration of technology’s role in the dying process and bereavement experience. Social media

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amplifies traumatic events through its rapid spread of information. In the case of an individual's death, social media profiles become "online graveyards," where mourners leave messages for the deceased and their loved ones. The digital or online elements humans now leave behind are called "dremains."

Conclusion

The field of Thanatology continues to develop as it addresses modern-day challenges encountered within a multitude of subject areas including technology, complicated bereavement, end-of-life decision making, cultural changes, ethical/legal issues and more. Thanatology is a resource for all those who in some way work with death and dying.



Dr. Jill Karn is Chief Operating Officer for Pierce Mortuary Colleges. Dr. Karn oversees the operations and overall strategic direction of all Pierce Mortuary Colleges, including Dallas Institute of Funeral Service, Dallas, TX; Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Service,

Decatur, GA; and Mid-America College of Funeral Service, Jeffersonville IN. With over fifteen years in executive leadership roles, including twelve years in higher education, Karn brings deep perspective and broad organizational capabilities to Pierce Mortuary Colleges.

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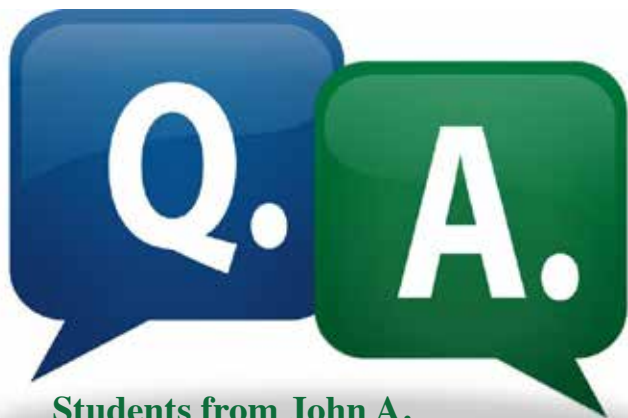
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Students from John A. Gupton College Sound Off

1) Besides the rise in cremation rate, what is the most significant shift you have observed in the death care industry in the last couple of years?

Rachelle Kissinger: I have noticed that more families are deciding to have their visitations and services on the same day.

Samantha Mays: The funeral services themselves are shifting dramatically. They seem to be more of a personal reflection of the decedent's life instead of more traditional ceremonies. We live in a world that is personalized for us as individuals while we're living so why wouldn't our funerals or memorial services be the same way. Another reason this might be the case is because people are not as involved with churches or communities as they once were. There was a strong influence from the church when it came to funeral rites, but it's being replaced by what the family wants. A big contributing factor of why families want a more individualized ceremony is because they are seeing death in a new manner. People are living longer which allows them to have more experiences so why not showcase their life experiences with a celebration of life that is all their own. It isn't just the services that are changing, but different types of final dispositions are gaining more popularity, one of these being green burials. Something that some people are not aware of is that green burials are on the rise and expected to just keep rising for many years to come. I can personally say that I'm looking forward to seeing what effects these shifts have in the funeral industry.

Walter Baird: There has been a big shift in how technology plays a role in funerals. With projector screens and iPads playing slideshows of pictures (eliminating picture boards in the chapel) to the sharing

of obituaries on social media websites. The obituary notices in the paper will soon be obsolete due to the circulation of newspapers not being as convenient as sharing an obituary with hundreds to thousands of people on Facebook. This is a huge change in the way service information is spread.

Jackson Hunter: I was raised in the funeral business. There was a time when the families we served would follow the hearse to the funeral home from the place of death. It didn't matter the time of day or hour of night. The coffee maker perked the first pot of many cups of coffee and the funeral arrangements were made. Visitation would start almost immediately. In most cases lasting for two days with some of the deceased's family members setting up all night with them. Unless I was hired to empty ashtrays it might be days before I saw my father. That has become less of a norm. The majority of our visitations last only a few hours either the night before or on the day of the funeral service. Our families are electing to simplify things and it's not just a local anomaly. I observe it in other funeral home's death notices across the state.

Sam Oakey IV: The biggest change that I have witnessed in funeral service recently is the increasing value that personalization brings to families. For generations funerals were standardized to a large degree, including similar music, scripture readings, sequences of events, dress code, sermons, messages, decorations, etc. Today, however, many people are beginning to think outside the box and tailor services to highlight and celebrate what made their loved one unique. This is also one of the most exciting changes in the industry for me. We've had families bring motorcycles, golf clubs, drum kits, and countless other items into the funeral home for display during visitations and services. I've heard music from Frank Sinatra to Jimmy Buffett to Wiz Khalifa to anything else you can imagine. I've seen friends and family write messages all over the casket with different colored markers. We had a family coordinate camouflage attire for everyone at the funeral since their loved one was an avid hunter. All these types of customization are ways for people to remember and appreciate the life and individuality of the person, as opposed to simply following the prescribed form and order of events that they have seen at funerals in the past.

Dontae Cook: As a young child, I remember more

traditional funerals held at a church that consisted of two day visitations prior to the day of the service. Today, that custom is slowly phasing out. While researching, I read that families are wanting to customize the funeral service around hobbies and other points of interest of their loved ones life . Examples of this particular shift include, having the deceased sitting in a favorite chair or on a motorcycle during the visitation and service. Conversations regarding this shift explain that allowing this to take place during the service is disrespectful and does not honor the deceased while others believe that it is simply a way of celebrating their life. I believe that as I continue to my journey within the death care industry I will witness many shifts. As my fellow generation, often referred to as millennials, ages there will be many request for flexibility and what was once the traditional funeral will be something of the past.

2) Do you believe cremation demand is primarily driven by overall economic pressures of other factors? If so, what others?

Rachelle: I believe that the demand for cremation is in part driven by economic pressures but also in part driven by the many options that people have after the cremation is over. When a person is cremated, the cremated remains are released to the family and they are basically free to do whatever they want with those. For example, the remains could be scattered at the deceased's favorite spot, turned into jewelry to be worn by their loved ones, or placed in an urn to be forever treasured in the possession of their loved one. All of these options allow for the loved ones to keep a little piece of the deceased forever with them. Whether that means vacationing to the place where the remains were scattered to feel their presence or wearing the necklace made of the cremains to feel their presence every time it is worn. I believe that cremation allows families to hold on to their loved ones just a little while longer and that is what drives people toward cremation.

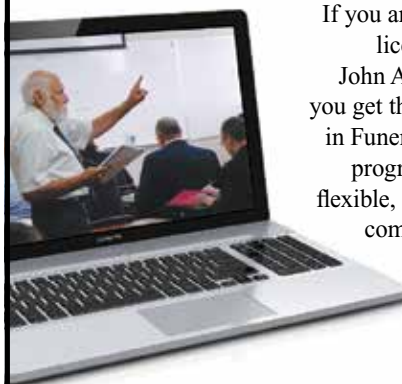
Samantha: I think cost is a driving factor of cremation demand, but I don't feel that it is the only factor. One of the main reasons I feel that demand is on the rise due to it becoming more readily available. In the last fifty years the number of crematories to open up and operate has sky rocketed. This could be due to the higher demand for this service coupled with society's acceptance of this type of disposition. In recent history

the Roman Catholic Church has starting to allow their members to select cremation as a final disposition. People use to believe that the only way to do final disposition was burial, but people are becoming more open minded for other options. With the option of cremation families have the chance to travel and have time to gather before a memorial service.

Walter: Clearly the economy has had quite the impact on how we live today. Even in death, it seems to apply to how we cater for our decision. Nobody wants to leave this burden of high expenses on their loved ones after they are gone. So the shift to cremation and direct burials has become more prevalent. I also believe that people choose cremation because there is more closure when it comes to saying goodbye to their loved one. The spreading of cremains has a very ceremonial feel. And if they choose not to have a specific landmark or stone there is no going back to see them. Which brings about a very finite closure.

Jackson: I had a conversation a few months back with a minister who was conducting a funeral service at our funeral home. He told me he had carried a member of his church to a funeral home to make some pre-arrangements. The church member had a \$10,000.00

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life insurance policy and was looking to plan a basic funeral. They were both shocked when told that amount wouldn't be enough to fund the type of service he had requested. It is my opinion that funeral homes are pricing people into cremation.

Sam: I think the increasing prevalence of cremation is due in part to its affordability compared to burial, but I see other factors playing just as big of a role. I think the younger generations of families that are making arrangements now find less utility in the services and merchandise that accompany a traditional burial. As society becomes ever more global and mobile, we are regularly seeing families whose members reside hundreds or thousands of miles apart. The option of burying a loved one in their local cemetery often does not provide the privilege of conveniently visiting them that it did when families stayed closer to home. The diminishing religious affiliations that we see with many families today also plays a part in the rise of cremation, since churches have historically favored burial for their members. Without the influence of a religious group and its associated funeral customs, families tend to consider their options more freely. Lastly, the ability to keep the ashes of a loved one in the house or scatter them in a meaningful location are opportunities in which many families find more value than they do in burial.

Dontae: I believe that cremation demand has increased due to some economic pressures. In addition, I have witnessed a variety of people that have pressures of everyday life and not wanting to take time to plan a funeral service that will consist of 1-2 hour arrangement conference. In my opinion, convenience is a leading characteristic that today's millennials want. We tend to pick the option to allow us to receive things immediately. Cremation allows the family to have a variety of options. It also moves away from the demand of having a service within a couple days. Being a young adult today, just starting in funeral service, it seems that custom of pausing to plan a service and celebrate a life with a more traditional funeral is slowly phasing. While individuals still want to care for their deceased relative, they are moving away from spending much money or time to have the traditional funeral.

3) How important is it for a Funeral Home to have a strong presence on Social Media outlets?

Rachelle: In today's world, almost everyone is on social media. Social media is a place to socialize and share funny videos or express oneself with a status on his or her Facebook wall. However, I do not believe that there is much importance for a funeral home to be present on social media. As funeral directors we hold the hands of death and the living to help people through a time of grief and despair. A private time that unfortunately everyone will eventually have to experience and I do not think it is necessary for a funeral home to be on social media advertising their facility. Most people are not comfortable with the idea of death; if they were we would have a lot more funeral directors in the world. It is the job of the funeral home to keep this sacred grieving time private and make it as painless as possible; not to post on social media. Social media is a very public thing, and the matters of a funeral home are very private so I do not believe that the two should be intertwined.

Samantha: Social media is a great way for funeral homes to keep in touch with their communities. I know most every funeral home has a Facebook page, but I think that with the younger generations that all forms of social media should be employed. I think that funeral homes should use all types of social media such as Pinterest, Instagram, and Twitter to name a few. Other than just having accounts they should attempt to stay in the newsfeeds as much as they can. Some nontraditional ways that they could keep the funeral home's account in the newsfeed is by posting quotes, biogs, local historical photos, or even just post about local events that are coming up to keep in touch with the communities that they serve. By them posting items regularly other than obituaries the funeral home keeps its identity in the community it serves and will have potential customers more likely to check their social media accounts on a regular basis. This in turn may have people seeing obituaries that they might not have seen otherwise, as well as the funeral homes name recognized by more individuals in the community.

Walter: Whether you use it or not, social media is one of the biggest things going on in human life right now. It is the one thing that connects individuals in the largest range of age, religion, beliefs and interests. To not use it to your advantage as a Funeral Home is a waste. In my opinion, obituary notices should not be sent to the newspaper any more. Grandma and Grandpa will get a text/call from their family within hours of the obituary

being posted comparative to reading it in the paper the next morning. Which allows for more time to plan for the services, perhaps receiving more of the public in the funeral home. This brings about more opportunity for the public to see how you operate. More people creates more business. The more times someone sees the name of your funeral home the more likely they are to call you instead of your competitor. I see more advertisements and promotions on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram in the future without a doubt.

Jackson: Information systems are advancing and just about everyone in America has a smart phone or tablet they continuously stare into all day. Funeral homes willing to maintain an updated presence on social media will be able to provide the public with the information they seek quicker than the pony express that delivers the morning paper.

Sam: Social media is one of the most underused resources in the funeral service industry today. My family's business has always allocated a substantial portion of the budget to advertising with local television, radio, newspaper, magazine, and other media sources. Only in the last several years, however, have we finally begun focusing the necessary attention on promoting ourselves via social media platforms. In an industry that for decades experienced success by maintaining the status quo, it is now evident that many funeral homes are unfortunately reluctant to embrace the business opportunities that technology offers. Social media is one of the biggest opportunities for progressive minded funeral service professionals because it can yield significant returns and is essentially free. Marketing, advertising, branding, community involvement, and employee recruiting are all areas in which funeral homes stand to reap considerable rewards when they begin increasing their social media presence.

Dontae: When comparing the 90's to the 2000's, there has definitely been a rise the social media activity. Many business use social media outlets for marketing and advertisement. I am learning every day that most people want convenience. They enjoy being able to conduct business transactions, shop online, keep up with the latest trends, all while keeping the stride of their everyday life. With that being said, I believe the funeral home will need some form of presence on

social media. As time progresses, people will continue to use social media increasingly. It will be beneficial to the Funeral home to have some knowledge on how to operate and manipulate social media in a respectable form.

4) Post graduation and first day on the job at a funeral home, what are your expectations from the owner to help you learn and understand the funeral business?

Rachelle: Post graduation on my first day at work, I would expect the owner to be hands on and very direct with what he or she wants from me. I would expect the owner to participate in an embalming or a funeral service with me so that he or she may show me how it is done at their facility. I would also expect them to be direct with their answers to any questions I may have. I would not want to have to second-guess any decisions I might have to make because the owner did not give me a direct answer. So with some hands on practice together and clear direct communication I believe the owner would have no problem helping me learn and understand the funeral business.

*Samantha:*As an apprentice I want a mentor that will treat me fairly. I hope I could be able to gain an intimate knowledge of the inner workings of the business. I would want to learn how they come up with their overhead cost and how they come up with their prices. One thing that I feel would be very helpful is to learn how to make every family that I come across feel like they are the only priority in the world. I would also like to learn how their embalmers embalm differently from other embalmers. Every embalmer uses the same principle, but everyone has a different technique and their technique was shaped by the different embalmers that they have worked for and alongside. So I would want an embalmer I could learn from and grow my craft with.

Walter: School does a very good job of preparing you to enter the industry. But nothing they can teach us in the classroom is real "on the job" experience which I think is just as important. The day-to day process of how each Funeral Home operates is something that I assume I will pick up quickly having worked at my family's business. But my expectations of my first day on the job will be what are the differences between how I am accustomed of doing things and how you would

like things to be done. If I am representing you, I want a good grasp on who you are as a professional and an individual.

Jackson: As I mentioned before I grew up in the funeral business. I tell people I'm going to school and paying to learn what my dad has been trying for years to teach me for free. Upon graduation I look forward to continuing my apprenticeship under him and hopefully absorb as much of his wisdom I can.

Sam: Upon graduating and entering my profession, I expect my colleagues with years of experience to serve as reliable sources of advice and guidance. As with any occupation, there is only so much for which school can prepare you and teach you. Every family, decedent, and service is different, so it would be impossible to learn everything in school that you will need to perform your job with excellence. The confluence of emotions that so heavily influences operations in this business is a big thing that I believe necessitates counsel from older and more experienced colleagues. You aren't taught in school the words or actions that will help grieving families. You aren't taught how to effectively conduct an arrangement conference with a family that is divided and fighting. Highly sensitive and variable situations such as these are where I expect to receive ongoing training and advice, and where I look forward to learning from the performance of others.

Dontae: Concluding graduation, I hold the expectation of my funeral director to help me merge the gap. I expect him or her to assist me in my transition from to student to professional and to successfully apply my learned knowledge to every day operations. Many times, experienced funeral directors are accustomed to knowing when and how to operate funerals and sometimes forget to take time to properly train the new additions to their staff. When you are clear on what your duties are and how your superior prefers you to complete them, you become a true asset to the family because you can execute successfully almost every time, without blemish.

5) Do you plan to own your own funeral home in the future?

Rachelle: The only plans I have for my future is to be the best funeral director I can be to help people the very best I can, but if the opportunity to own a funeral

home presented itself I would not turn it down.

Samantha: There is only one answer to that and that is yes. Being a first generation Funeral Director/ Embalmer might make it harder for me to get my foot in the door somewhere that I would be allowed the opportunity to buy or start my own funeral home. I will not allow this difficulty or offset to dissuade my dream of one day owning and operating my own funeral home.

Walter: Honestly, this may come off as egotistical to some, but I did not choose this profession to just work for somebody till retirement. This industry is at a crossroads right now. It is sink or swim for some. I hope to have ownership someday in the near future because I have a vision on how I can make sure I will swim. By surrounding myself with good people, in a great community; The right tools and strong ethics will produce a viable structure to running a business that I can be proud of and that the families trust.

Jackson: The answer is yes. It will be an honor to serve my community as the next owner of my family's funeral business. It is the course that I have been on my whole life. Even though I attempted to stray from that path a few times, I believe today that we all end up where we are suppose to be. I was always destined to be a funeral director.

Sam: I do look forward to owning a funeral home one day. I actually have a small number of shares in my family's business that my dad gave me a few years back. Whether I will manage the business in this century is a separate matter though, since my dad has said more than once that he never wants to retire!

Dontae: At the beginning of my journey in Funeral Service, I was set on owning a Funeral Home. At this point I feel undecided. Just as I have a passion for funeral service, the same passion lies within for educating. I have a desire for educating future professionals on ways to be successful in a career that I love so much. Many times, I ponder on the idea of becoming a President of a mortuary college and using the experiences that I will encounter to educate others. I have always wanted to make a difference and leave a lasting impression on those that I encounter and I feel that teaching will afford me that opportunity. It allows me to not only reach students, but it could possibly impact families that my fellow students will serve.

THE STAGE IS SET

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Ogeechee Tech's Barry Turner Named Business Leader of the Year

Vice president for college advancement at Ogeechee Technical College, partner with his wife in a local bakery-restaurant and still active in his original field, funeral services, Barry Turner also chairs the Statesboro Convention and Visitors Bureau board.

Thursday, the Statesboro-Bulloch Chamber of Commerce named him 2016 Business Leader of the Year.

Seated at a luncheon table in the Nessmith-Lane Conference Center ballroom, Turner had surprise on his face as the 2015 honoree, Doug Lambert, recited a description that could apply to only one person.

"I don't think I could be any more surprised than I am with this," Turner said when presented the award. "I'm usually the one who writes speeches for other people, and I don't usually have to make them myself."

Then he went on to say that he does the things he does because he loves the community and enjoys working with its organizations.

At Thursday's sold-out, 288-seat luncheon, the Statesboro-Bulloch Chamber also saluted Statesboro Cardiology, the practice led by Dr. Stanley Shin, as Small Business of the Year. The chamber's Committee of the Year plaques went to members of the Health Industry Committee. The luncheon also served as the 95th annual meeting of the chamber, which now has more than 700 members, most of them businesses with a number of employees.

Community service

In requesting Business Leader of the Year nominations from members, the chamber asked for nominees who show a commitment to the community and contribute to the advancement of business or Bulloch County's economy.

"I grew up with a family that was very active in trying to support their community, and I just had that sort of model to follow," Turner said. His parents, Preston and Rachel Turner of Nevils, previously owned J.B. Anderson Peanut and Grain Co., a long-established family business. A graduate of Southeast Bulloch



High School and of Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Service, Barry Turner worked 23 years at the funeral home that became Hodges-Turner Funeral Home when he purchased an interest in it.

After selling his part in the home in 1993, he continued to work there until 2000, the year he joined Ogeechee Tech as founding instructor of its funeral service education program.

Then former OTC President Dr. Dawn Cartee named Turner public relations and marketing director. Vice president for college advancement, his current role, combines community relations and OTC Foundation responsibilities. While on staff at OTC, Turner has attained a bachelor's degree in business administration from American Intercontinental University and a master's in organizational management from Ashford University.

He and his wife, Marilyn, own Sugar Magnolia Bakery & Café downtown. The Turners have a son, Brooks Turner; a daughter, Whitney Lavoie; and are grandparents to Ansley and Collier.

After 16 years with the technical college, Turner remains a licensed funeral director and continues to help at Joiner-Anderson Funeral Home. Besides the CVB board, which he currently chairs, he has been president or chair of the boards of the Downtown Statesboro Development Authority and the Averitt Center for the Arts. He has been president of the Kiwanis Club of

Statesboro and has served on boards of the United Way of Bulloch County and of the Chamber of Commerce.

Turner is a past recipient of a Deen Day Smith Service to Mankind Award.

He has done volunteer work with the Main Street Farmers' Market, Celebration South Music Festival, Georgia Special Olympics fall games and the American Diabetes Association, "just to name a few," Lambert said. In his remarks, he quoted two of Turner's OTC colleagues.

"There is no person in this room who cares more about Statesboro and Bulloch County, its business and educational communities, and most importantly its people than Barry Turner," said Statesboro Mayor Jan Moore, now also an OTC vice president. "We are a better place because of Barry."

"Barry's dedication to Statesboro and Bulloch County is second to none," said OTC President Lori Durden.

Statesboro Cardiology

Chamber Treasurer Elaine Norton presented the Small Business of the Year award, noting that it went to a medical practice that was the first in its specialty in Bulloch County. Dr. Stanley Shin, a cardiologist who attained his doctorate at the University of Maryland's medical school, came to Statesboro to found the practice 19 years ago.

Now, Statesboro Cardiology has grown to have five practitioners and 25 employees, Norton said. The practice's new, larger building on Grady Johnson Road is nearing completion.

Toward 2017

Chamber President Phyllis Thompson spoke, recounting how Statesboro in April became one of eight national finalists in the America's Best Communities competition.

Judges will review progress on the Blue Mile plan for the revitalization of South Main Street in April 2017, when Statesboro could win a prize of up to \$3 million to continue the work.

Thompson also thanked Chamber program and membership managers Piper McAfee and Roxanne Kibler for their work through the year. Thompson,

Kibler and McAfee are the Chamber's paid staff. The chairpersons are elected volunteers representing member businesses.

Outgoing Chamber of Commerce Chair Mark Anderson, part owner of Joiner-Anderson Funeral Home, passed the gavel to incoming Chair Per Holtze, chief operating officer of Georgia Living at Home.

Holtze had the crowd laughing and applauding with his remarks in appreciation of Anderson, an extended cascade of puns on his work as a funeral director.

"Mark had been dying to be the chamber chairman. ... He's no working stiff. ... He still finds time to dig into the chamber activities and bury himself in his efforts....," Holtze said. "But the point is, everybody, Mark can be counted on, because he is the last man to let you down."

Herald reporter Al Hackle may be reached at (912) 489-9458.

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Media Publicity

Sometimes Good, Sometimes Bad, Sometimes Ugly – the Issue of Avoidable Criticism (Part II of II)

By: Todd Van Beck, Director of Continuing
Education, John A. Gupton College, Nashville, TN

INATE ANY FACTORS THAT LEAVES THE DOOR OPEN TO CRITICISM

Can it possibly be that the odd, strange folks at Burr Oaks Cemetery never thought they would be found out? It appears they lived in fantasyland, but you and I don't live in that dimension.

Take some time out today. Instead of waiting for the phone to ring you into action, use free time to review, in your mind or on paper, all your professional practices: your handling of the first call, the arrangement interview, the embalming and other handling of the body, the performance of the service itself, your FTC related documents, your facilities themselves, your motor equipment, your staff – both part time and full-time – your accounting and billing procedures, your collection procedures, and your after care follow up. Spend some time taking yourself through a single funeral call from start to finish. Be critical. In the acquisition of, handling of, and collecting for your funeral calls, is there any aspect that might leave you and your funeral operation open to criticism?

Try to adopt the jaundiced eye of the media reporter looking for a juicy headline and fame-producing byline. Are there a couple of little things you'd just as soon the public didn't know about? If so, fix 'em.

I once walked into a funeral home to visit a former student of mine. I told the receptionist that I was an inspector from the State Board and I needed to see this chap immediately – she turned pale. The look on my buddy's face when he came around the corner was priceless and when he saw who it was he burst out laughing. Then he said to me "I ran around for a moment looking at what everybody was doing before I came out so see you." Telling huh? The point of this kind of scrutiny is to eliminate any factor that opens the door to criticism. To start your thinking, we'll discuss

five specific areas of your funeral home that you might want to review. As always it is up to each individual to apply these principles to all the other areas of concern.

1) Sensible, accurate, honest pricing

Surveys of the public's reaction to the services and prices provided by funeral homes have consistently shown that the public is, for the most part, pleased and satisfied with the services we provide. If there is dissatisfaction it usually has to do with prices that are regarded as too high, but mostly family complaints come because of rude inconsiderate people on the staff or management. If you persist in using the old methods of pricing, chances are pretty darned good that you'll have some inconsistencies: If the relationship between various services and their quoted prices will fail to stand up to scrutiny, you will have immediately opened the door to criticism.

2) Detailed, defensible, cautious handling of cremation and body donation cases

If you are not scrupulous in your record-keeping and your handling of bodies before, during and following cremation, you will have opened the door to criticism. Today so many funeral homes have crematories and so many crematories have funeral service offerings that the days of saying "that has nothing to do with me we are a funeral home, not a crematory or cemetery" are truly over. Everything concerning death care in your community has to do with you. It is most often times the funeral director who first received the body and welcomed the family's trust that said implicitly you would handle that body with care and dignity. It is usually the funeral director who accepts the responsibility to care for those remains, and the failure to familiarize oneself with the practices and policies of the crematory you use is a sin of omission that can have staggering consequences – remember the Tri-State Crematory debacle. A funeral home's failure

to highly document and handle cremation calls with the same dignity that an earth burial call requires can and does open the door to criticism – of course these days I guess only somebody who has escaped from a madhouse would risk such behaviors, for today when there is a glaring mistake families can and do lash out at the funeral director, regardless who was in reality careless. I have personally found it rare that families are discriminating enough to blame the appropriate culprit. How many times has the funeral director been the target of scolding when the florists have sent over dead flowers to the funeral home?

3) Rental caskets

The funeral profession has come light years in our acceptance of and the utilization of rental caskets – however while the rental casket concept is not new to us, I want to suggest that even today it is new to families we serve. In a past article I covered rental caskets, so no need to rehash the details of a rental program, however our record-keeping, refurbishing, explanations, and pricing of all rental caskets to the public should be above reproach. To be remiss in any area concerning rental caskets is to open the door to criticism – this is particularly magnified when we are sensitive to the idea that a rental casket is a new idea to Archie Bunker.

4) Cash Advances

What is the major single greatest bone stuck in the throats of our critics? The price paid for a funeral. So why would we add cash advances to that number and risk confusing the consumer and appear to be raising the cost of the funeral? This article will not harangue about cash advances and how they cannot help but appear to be inflating the funeral home bill, but they still account for a lot of money which most often does not reflect an honest appraisal of the exclusive funeral home charges.

5) Pre-need

The matter of pre-need is still an issue which creates controversy in our profession. It is imperative that every provider of pre-need services funded or not, be reviewed and assurances are made to yourself that within the confines of your own funeral home you and your pre-need program are above criticism.

Over the years of my career I have seen three major weaknesses in certain pre-need programs that when they

exploded made a boom which resonated throughout our profession and yes in a few cases concluded with a few prison terms. Here they are:

1. Selection of an inappropriate pre-need vehicle. In other words too many chefs in the pot for commissions too complicated a benefit structure for the consumer end up being too confusing to the family and that can easily result in criticisms.

2. Over-zealously promoting the sale of pre-need contracts. In other words selling anything to anybody in anyway. The stories and incidences of the results of such high risk pre-need programs are well known and need not be rehashed here. Documentation of these totally avoidable debacles is easily discovered in the files of many State Attorney General Offices.

3. Failing to adequately service those contracts when they come due. “Oh by the way sir we really need to,” ten years after the original pre-need agreement was made is usually devastating concerning criticism. Over the years it has been clear that if any adjunct to funeral service exists which might give rise to unwanted media attention and hence an explosion of derogatory publicity it is pre-need: extravagant and unrealistic sales promises, sales contests which pit counselors



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against each other, individual and master trust accounts and insurance policies that don't earn interest equal to inflation, shoddy record-keeping, fiddling with trust funds, misunderstandings, guarantees that cannot be met, making it up as you go attitude, contracts that can't be transferred, defunct companies, improper use of pre-need funds and closed funeral homes.

This list is not a criticism per se, nor is it designed to scare, but it is simply a reflection of my observations and experience as to the risks of being criticized in the area of pre-need. This list of possibilities is indeed long and should be worrisome.

It might well be the better part of wisdom to have someone on the staff review all the pre-need contracts which are presently held and make certain that they meet the highest standards of honesty, and that if there are weaknesses are areas of concern attention be given to correct these issues immediately, even to the point of contacting the family and reforming and safely updating the original agreement for even in the best of pre-need programs time changes things. Pre-need contracts that are beyond reproach truly are an evolution and a work in progress. Keeping the pre-need file cabinet closed for years and waiting for the death to occur leaves the firm open to criticism.

TELL THE TRUTH THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR OPERATION

I have observed over the years that funeral service and cemetery work possesses an identifiable tendency to candy coat issues. Candy coating is understandable in dealing with highly sensitive issues which our profession confronts, but candy coating with the media can be disastrous.

Funeral directors tend to be generous people – it is simply the truth. This generosity, which has been a hallmark of our great profession, needs to be told and told straight away to any media representative. Here are some examples which every firm might want to give attention to:

- Give serious determined attention to just what it costs you to handle a single full service funeral, an immediate cremation, immediate burial, and any and all other service offerings. Know, to the penny that your expenses are X amount of dollars. This figure might well seem high to Mr. Jones who has not worked

with your firm ever, or who had not had the occasion to work with you for many years. Trust this: if Mr. Jones believes your prices to be a little high, you may be sure that Reporter Scoop ActionCam will find them to be exorbitant. Share this information with your staff, and never apologize for your charges. Your best asset is firm accurate numbers and information.

- Share information concerning your generosity – do not be a shrinking violet. It is the truth without bragging. Here are some ideas:

1. Determine just how many calls you handled last year on which you actually lost money out of your own pocket.
2. Determine how many infant's and children's services you handled, and how much money was lost on those calls.
3. Determine the number of welfare families you served last year, and the amount of money you lost on those calls.
4. Finally, and this might be controversial, determine your daily overhead expense, which is your total annual gross overhead costs divided by the 365 days of the year. That is the amount of money you spend each and every day that the funeral home is opened, whether the funeral home phone rings or not to put you into action.

This is truthful information which has power behind the information. I believe that you and your staff should have this kind of information so you can confidently and competently work with people who challenge you, fire absurd points at you, lie straight out to you, and think that because in the past we have candy coated things that we will continue to do so in the future. This information is powerful in dealing with families who question our honesty, trust, and openness – and this group seems unfortunately to be growing in numbers.

• THE ONGOING CHALLENGE OF EDUCATING THE CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY

When the FTC Rule was promulgated in 1984 I thought it was a Communist Plot to dismantle the Federal Government. I was mad as hell and felt violated that "Jessica" had finally gotten what she wanted in her misdirected little head, and of course as usually Todd was wrong. The FTC, without actually knowing it, handed the funeral profession the perfect tool to allow us to educate our clients, staff, and every

member of the community as to the blunt realities of funeral economics. It is called the General Price List. I have discovered no document ever invented for our profession does as good and quick a job fulfilling the mission that everyone who enters into funeral arrangements learns the truth about our costs of providing services, facilities, staff and equipment than the GPL. Yes the General Price List is in reality organized boredom, but used properly it works.

• THE WORTHY POOR

I suspect the new modern funeral professional will roll their eyes at this term which I was corrected the other day is now referred to as “financially disadvantaged families.” OK I will cry uncle, but for years they were referred to as the worthy poor. I believe that in our communicating the truth about our profession that we not shrink away or candy coat our stellar history of serving the worthy poor. Simply stated many, hundreds, nay thousands of funerals are basically given away each year simply due to the generous nature of the typical great American funeral director.

I have often said that all great people I have encountered

have been humble people, and it is true that modesty is indeed a most becoming quality, BUT IT IS NOT MORE BECOMING THAN THE TRUTH.

• OLD-FASHIONED VISIBILITY – HARDLY ANYTHING BEATS IT

One of the best ways and most economical ways to tell the truth about funeral service and to improve positive media publicity is just good old fashioned visibility in the community. I believe individual funeral directors, because they are a focus of trust in a community which may well have a jaded and shaky trust level with the entire overall profession at large, it is very important for us as individuals to be a visible, active, participating member of our local communities.

I still believe that a funeral director who takes the time out to attend let's say and annual spaghetti dinner at St. Clements Church, or show up at the Annual Oyster Stew Dinner at the Volunteer Fire Department has more effect, more lasting impressions, more good will building, more positive public relations results, than all the web sites, bill boards, radio or television publicity could ever possibly accomplish.



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In addition to this visibility is the courage for the funeral director to toot his or her own horn. In one calendar year I am amazed at the community, the benevolent, the charitable and the worthwhile activities that most every funeral home engages in. Everything from sponsoring the little league team, to the staff holiday activities, to the firm's adoption of a mile of highway outside of town, the after-care program and leadership and support of grief counseling efforts, Toys for Tots, volunteering at the homeless kitchen, sponsoring drunk driving prevention programs in the schools, or just helping our the Girl Scouts of America; We ought to toot our own horn.

I worked for a funeral director who many years before I was born volunteered with time and money to help a struggling priest in Omaha put together a monumental dream which was based on the nutty idea that there was no such thing as a bad boy. My boss toiled, sweated, worked, raised money, and gave of himself to helping this eccentric priest and his seemingly impossible dream of giving homeless boys, orphaned boy, reform-school boys a new start, a fresh chance, and a square meal. The priest was Msgr. Edward J. Flanagan, his nutty dream was creating Boys Town, Nebraska, and my boss Mr. Heafey who helped out so much in the early days of Boys Town ended his days in the firm knowledge that he had contributed to his community – I believe this is what professional immortality truly is.

I mentioned before that modesty is a most becoming attribute, but we ought not to miss the opportunity to use the media in our communities to get some well-deserved good publicity. I can assure you Mr. Heafey was NOT a shrinking violet when he was able to tell the story of Father Flanagan and the early days in getting Boys Town off the drawing board. He was modest, but not to the point that he did not let the world know the truth of what had been accomplished.

THE COUNTERATTACK

I have always had a terribly big mouth about proclaiming to anybody who will listen to me what a wonderful profession funeral service and cemetery work truly is. I relish debate with the anti-funeral people and feel absolutely no sympathy for them when I get the opportunity to beat them up intellectually. I bristle at people who talk poorly about my beloved profession, I have been known to get loud and obnoxious when individuals within our own ranks start putting

funeral service down, and I know that I have missed opportunities to speak and work that would have possibly come my way because I am thought of by not just a few as being reactionary, not political enough, possessing no diplomacy, being way too aggressive – basically being a loud mouth and a nut. I agree with all those charges and make no apologies. The reason that I agree with the charges is simply because they are true. So now I would like to make another outrageous statement: I personally believe we have put up with a lot of things over the years that we should not have had to put up with. We have just been too nice.

I have concluded years ago that in reality we are in a type of ongoing warfare with the media and the anti-funeral movement. To be sure I have seen the conciliatory approach with the media taken, and the report of the results is promoted to the entire profession that the media story coming out will be a break through concerning positive media relations and that a positive outcome for funeral service overall is certainly going to be printed in the next issue.

Regardless of the hopeful positive attitude the history of such efforts is that rarely have the results been positive, too many times the results have been yet another smear, attack, witch hunt on funeral service, yet another round of bad and ugly publicity for you and me. In the aftermath these same people who prophesized that “finally this time things would be different with the media” all scramble to issue the same press releases which all say that same thing – which is yet another explanation and apology.

The true power, the true resources, the bed rock of funeral service lies in the hallways of the small mom and pop funeral homes across this country. Yes the big boys garnish the headlines, the government boys are sure to create a stir which makes the front page, but still, when all is said and done the power, strength, foundation, and heritage of this great profession lies genuinely in the hands of the local funeral director.

Never mind that the slams and barbs of the media are often directed at cemeteries and/or crematories. The unsavory misdeeds in those allied fields reflect badly on the entire funeral profession. I believe firmly in the conclusions of the Wirthlin Study that Mrs. Smith in Tiny Rock, Iowa does not draw a clear line any more of the distinction between cemeteries and

crematories on the one hand and funeral homes on the other. In addition the large number of funeral homes as compared to the much smaller numbers of profitable cemeteries and crematories simply translates into the media having much more of an opportunity to turn their attention to funeral service – simply because there are so many more of funeral homes than cemeteries and/or crematories.

• WALK TO THE BEAT OF YOUR OWN DRUMMER

I am so impressed with all the improvements that have been made over the past quarter of a century by our suppliers and vendors to create products and promotions which help us tell our story and serve our communities better. Who can argue with that? We all need to say many a thank you to those brothers and sisters who have the vision to make and show us new ideas and products.

However from Archie and Edith Bunker's position, the local folk's position, I wonder many times if they are even aware that funeral home A has say magnetic boards and funeral home B does not or that they even know precisely what a magnetic board is, or what it is used for. Certainly I think they would expect both funeral homes to have the regular more familiar stuff like caskets, vaults, embalming, chapels, chairs, etc. The point here is that with the homogenization of funeral service where most funeral homes today serve a plethora of clients from all walks, creed, races, religions, and nationalities in life the question can easily be asked – what makes my funeral home unique, different, what am I offering that the other places aren't and how do I make sure Archie and Edith know that I am different?

I endorse the life philosophy of walking to the beat of your own drummer. Certainly this is high risk behavior and somebody will certainly not like that independent position, they would rather have you and me simply fall in line with the rank and file, but I have experienced firsthand that this liberating view of setting your own beat is basically where all the action and growth is today in funeral service and cemetery work. For instance I know a funeral home right at the time of this writing that is sponsoring free photographs with the kiddy's of the community sitting on Santa's lap, and the photo's are being taken right in the funeral home! Now that is a beat to tap your foot to.

The community is right now taking full advantage of this program for the second year. What would you rather do if you had children, pay Wal Mart \$39.95 for a set of Santa photo's or get a nice set for free from the local funeral home? One parent told my funeral director friend that now she had \$40.00 more dollars to purchase some additional Christmas gifts, and that she hated Wal Mart. No lay person in the community thought this program strange or odd, and the funeral director made sure that the room where the photos were being taken was off the main avenue of the funeral home. Everybody seemed happy except of course Wal Mart, who's expressed grief, seemed not to cause anybody any real concern, and of course the other funeral director in town was really upset and last year turned my friend into the State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers for soliciting funeral business. We don't know if he will try this stunt again this year – he lost last year.

• STEP UP TO THE PLATE AND START PUBLIC SPEAKING

While most people would just as soon have a root canal job as to give a public address the truth is that public speaking is an extremely effective skill that everybody in funeral service can learn. In a past series of articles in this magazine I covered the subject of public speaking.

What is wonderful about a funeral director making a public presentation is that in reality the actual talk is often times short and sweet, whereas the question and answer period can easily last for hours. Every funeral director I know are experts at answering questions, they do it all day and all night long.

People find funeral directors very interesting, so I would get out there in the public, put yourself right in the middle of the social activities of your community and answer their questions, and have a good time doing so.

• POOL DOLLARS FOR A NATIONAL AD CAMPAIGN WHICH BLITZES THE ENTIRE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ENDLESSLY

The pooling of dollars, talents, and minds of all the local, state and national organization which represent funeral service is without question one of the greatest untapped resources this great profession has at its disposal. The pooling of money, talents, and brain power can be effectively used to counterattack

derogatory publicity, but this idea will take tolerance, leadership and cooperation from all fronts.

• SENSIBLE REGULATIONS HELP DETOUR NEGATIVE MEDIA PUBLICITY

There was a time when some states basically had no regulations concerning funeral service or cemetery work, save for the licensing structure for the funeral side exclusively. I can remember that a friend of mine forty years ago had all the state regulations for the funeral profession listed on a single spreadsheet. Wow times have certainly changed! In fact it has been years since I have seen a spreadsheet with every state regulation listed. The spreadsheet would be a block long these days. Not only have regulations, local, state and federal proliferated but they are being refined and changed almost daily, and concerning the media that is not all bad.

Here is a hopeful idea: perhaps if we keep working at this task, our own state and local regulations will weed out the minuscule number of bad people within our own ranks. I am ever hopeful. We do know this however: If funeral directors do not try to regulate their own members, the sloppy, dangerous, or illegal actions of those few bad people will certainly continue to draw undesirable media attention. The bad apple leaves us all open to criticism – this can be avoided with action.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I have suggested that we take preventive steps to avert bad or ugly publicity. I have even suggested that we counterattack with the power of truthful information, the power of our experiential expertise, and the power of our knowledge. No one knows more about death issues in the community than does the local funeral director – no one. We will end this article with a case study. I remember when I was operating a mortuary college in Upstate New York, another lifetime ago; I discovered that a self appointed funeral consumer advocate was holding a community information meeting in the basement of a church in a town just over the border in Vermont. Needless to say no funeral directors received an invitation. Being the loud and obnoxious funeral bully that I am I decided to crash this seminar without being invited. Probably not the gentlemanly thing to do, but then I do not consider myself a gentleman. So off I went to Vermont.

I arrived at the appointed hour. I introduced myself

and announced that I was a mortuary educator; the funeral consumer advocate turned green. I, to this day, believe this young lady had a good heart, and I also believe that someplace in her experience in life she encountered one of the bad people in funeral service and this unfortunate encounter stimulated her to start her reformation quest and crusade. I mean folks no one wakes up from a nice sleep and sits on the side of their bed and proclaims “I am going forth today to reform the undertaking racket, I am on a crusade.” No one does this – something always has happened to such people to inspire such activity. Off she went like a rocket. She had memorized Jessica Mitford line by line and she just blasted away at the undertakers.

The audience was composed of really nice people. Good people who wanted information, who wanted guidance, who wanted to make good, sensible, wise decisions concerning end of life issues.

In the middle of the seminar this young lady speaking said that in Vermont you could bury somebody in your own back yard, it was kind of a Green Burial in 1986. Somebody raised their hands and asked if that was legal in Vermont. The speaker stumbled on that one so I jumped in and admitted that I did not know if it was legal or not, but I did know that a death certificate needed to be filed, which anybody could do and was not terribly difficult, but then I mentioned that just possibly the County Sheriff might be a tad interested in why somebody would want to bury a dead body in their own back yard, and then I brought up the issue of the worth of the property when it was later to be sold and what would the real estate agent say to potential buyers when the property needed to be sold?

“Oh, by the way sir this is a great deal, there is a two car garage, three bedrooms, a new kitchen and a spacious back yard for your children to play resplendent with the corpse of the former owner buried right next to that beautiful evergreen tree.” Within a New York second I was running the seminar simply because I had more credible information, I was bringing up topics and issues that the young lady speaking was clueless about – she was in reality a neophyte, a babe in the woods, trying to do right, but was missing the mark by a long way. I ended up running the seminar simply because while I was not a legal expert on Vermont law, I sure was experienced as a funeral professional and was able to raise issues that nobody else, let alone the speaker

would have brought up or even considered. I am glad I crashed the seminar.

Even the funeral consumer advocate became silent and listened and learned some valuable inside information about the realities of death care, funerals and the value of saying good-bye. We need to tell our story.

I have offered some specific suggestions including educating ourselves, our staff's, our clients, our communities; getting out and speaking in public, and muster the courage for the possibly necessary counterattack. Possibly these are good ideas, but when all is said and done I believe taking this subject one step further simply revolves around the ancient concept of telling the truth. Telling the true facts about our profession and sharing this indispensable information with the public at large through media publicity.

Simply telling the blunt truth about funeral service, by avoiding any candy coating will arm you with the foundational tools needed to ward off or counter derogatory publicity.

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The Changing Face of Mortuary Science: Female Students

By Cody L. Lopasky M.A. Associate
Dean of Academics at Commonwealth
Institute of Funeral Service

Popular culture, in all of its forms, has long presented the image of the old male funeral director or undertaker. He is sullen, stiff, and sometimes corpse-like himself; not to mention the greedy, pushy aspect. Hollywood and the small screen seem to have an almost morbid love affair with portraying our industry's professionals in a negative light. Perhaps some half-truths were involved, perhaps they imagined us this way, or perhaps the eerie male undertaker simply plays better on the screen. No matter the reasons, one specific type of funeral director is almost exclusively never seen nor portrayed: a woman.

Since over half of the population is female, it does not boggle the mind that numerous professions (that were once male-dominated) are seeing a rise in female workers. Some industries took longer than others, but females have now broken the metaphorical barriers to many of the careers once thought of as a man's job. Glass ceiling barriers, however, are a topic for a separate article entirely. This trend of more females in the workplace is also evident in the funeral service professions.

Traditionally, funeral homes and mortuaries were family firms operated by successive generations. The man of the family ran the business and then handed it over or to his son, brother, nephew, etc. The wife and/or daughter of the funeral home owner would most certainly be active but most often in a supporting role. Playing the organ, providing vocals, writing obituaries, and other small clerical jobs were the traditional roles of women at a funeral home. In general, World War II is the historical event that is credited with reshaping the American workplace. The circumstances on



the home front created a need for labor that forever changed the sociological paradigm of the single income household. For this shift to noticeably affect the funeral business though, the industry itself needed a triggering event that was somewhat different from a world conflict. This catalyst came about in the latter half of the twentieth century with the introduction and growth of public funeral service corporations. These companies and other social trends began to remove the family influence in funerary careers. All of these factors contributed to a funeral industry that was ripe for change. Like other trades, the previously male-dominated funeral profession slowly increased its female workers; especially those without a family tie to the business.

Women, like men, must have the necessary education and training before jumping into any real-world career field. So, with an increase in women in the workforce comes an increase in the percentage of female college students. This trend has been noticed in higher education for some time. By 2013, national statistics showed that females comprised a majority, 57%, of students enrolled in a post-secondary educational institution. Additionally, the number of females in postgraduate programs has exceeded that of males since 1988. For the funeral service, state boards and governing agencies differ somewhat as to the specified rules that dictate the type and length of education required for licensure. However, education is generally required across the board.

Today's mortuary science and funeral service education programs offer a host of courses and different levels of awards; e.g. baccalaureate, associate, etc. This system has remained relatively unchanged for some time. It is the student body

population that has been transformed. Decades ago, it was not uncommon to have a 100% male class of mortuary students or one that was dotted by only a handful of females. For example, the class of 1938 from the Landig College of Mortuary Science had two female graduates and one female faculty member. Since that time, the graduating class photos have become increasingly lopsided across the country. In fact, the National Funeral Directors Association states that the mortuary science students in the United States are over 60% female in composition. As recently as 1995, only 35% of mortuary science students were female. Today, some funeral service programs and departments have a female enrollment as high as 66-75%. It is noteworthy that, as with gender changes in post-secondary education and the workplace, funeral service education has been just behind the curve. This fact may be attributable to the “traditionalist” nature of the funeral business which resisted change for so long – think of how the rise in cremation was originally received. One way or another though, change has certainly arrived, and classroom demographics have definitely been altered.

What do these gender-based demographic changes mean for funeral service education? What are the implications for the educational setting and the workplace? While some effects may not be felt or understood for some time, others are more readily perceived. For the educational side, mainstream research has long shown that females tend to score better in the areas of grammar and writing while the opposite is true for mathematics. These facts are beneficial, but the more specialized courses within a funeral service education program require more generalized insights concerning gender and learning. For instance, it has been shown that women tend to learn better through the application of information than simple rote memorization. Females also work better in collaborative educational efforts than men. This may be due to male competitiveness, but women are not immune from competition. These attributes must be understood by educators. Everyone learns in a different way, and comprehending these differences, specifically those between genders, is now paramount in funeral service education. Teaching styles and learning styles must coincide for a successful mastering of material and curricula.



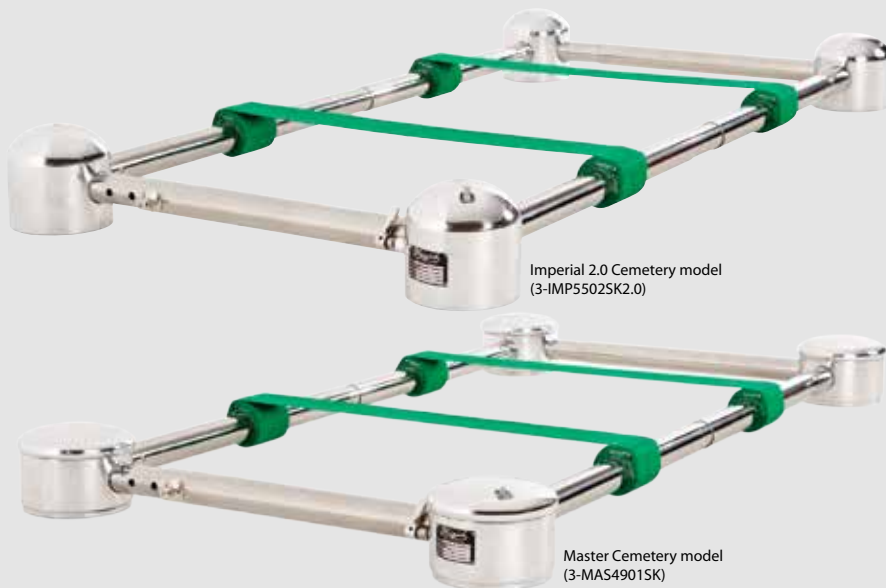
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With regard to the workplace, the influx of women can have positive impacts on both staff and clientele. Anecdotally, women are considered to be better nurturers and more capable of empathy. Empirically, studies have confirmed that females are more empathic than males, and research has shown that females normally score better than males on certain standardized emotion-related measures. As funeral home employees, this means that women can interact with coworkers in ways at which men do not excel. With clients, females can use their ability for empathy to console grieving families and help them through the emotional trauma of a loss. The aforementioned female penchant for group-work is a skill that undoubtedly has useful applications when it comes to planning and conducting funeral/memorial services. Every funeral service professional knows that, in addition to the funeral director in charge, there is whole host of people that make every service possible. From first-call to disposition, there are likely several people involved; working in unison.

Our modern funeral profession is rife with change. Noticeably, the growing number of women are a large part of that change. Having a greater female presence means a difference in both classrooms and in the workplace. The demographic changes sweeping the funeral business have in large part already existed in other industries, but we are catching up exponentially. Perhaps the media will take notice and portray our practitioners in a different light. Female funeral directors will certainly grow tired of being cast as creepy old men. More women in the business may finally bring the days of the stereotypical, Hollywood undertaker to end.

About Commonwealth Institute

Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service in Houston, Texas, is devoted to raising the standards of the funeral service profession by preparing students as funeral directors and embalmers. The Institute offers two programs – an Associate of Applied Science Degree and a Certificate in Funeral Directing. We have been providing education for funeral service professionals – as funeral directors, embalmers or both – since 1936. The funeral services profession is our sole mission.

The Associate of Applied Science Degree

The Associate of Applied Science Degree in Funeral Service (AAS) teaches students the skills and abilities

essential for employment as an embalmer and funeral director. Graduates of this program may find entry-level employment as an apprentice/intern/provisional licensee with funeral homes, embalming services, cemeteries, pre-need sales and affiliate funeral service merchandise and embalming chemical companies.

Certificate in Funeral Directing

Is designed to teach students the skills and abilities essential for employment as a funeral director in the state of Texas only. This academic program is designed to meet specific state or professional needs. It is not accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education. Students graduating from this program are not eligible to take the National Board examination or any state board examination for which graduation from an ABFSE accredited program is required. Graduates of this program may find entry-level employment as an apprentice/intern/provisional licensee with funeral homes, cemeteries, pre-need sales, and affiliated funeral service merchandise companies. In addition, the Institute offers an Online Certificate in Funeral Directing, via web-based instruction.

Cody L. Lopasky, M.A. is the Associate Dean of Academics for Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service and is also a mortuary science instructor. He is a licensed funeral director and embalmer in the State of



Texas as well as a certified crematory operator. Starting in high school, Cody worked in the funeral industry in differing capacities for several years before joining the education side of funeral service.



Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science Announces Deans List

Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science (PIMS) is pleased to recognize the following students who have been placed on the Dean's List for the fall trimester ending January 20, 2017. This academic honor goes to those full-time students who have achieved a grade point average of 3.50 or better in this trimester of studies.

From the Associate in Specialized Business Degree class:

Daniel Groff of Lancaster, PA and Jordan Lenick of Hanover, PA.

From Class #154:

Lance Carrier of Brookville, PA and Maria Koontz of

Elizabethville, PA.

From Class #155: Amanda Burgess of Carnegie, PA; Sarah Barczak of Venetia, PA; Chelsea Cush of Pittsburgh, PA; Juliana Fortunato of Pittsburgh, PA; Jessica Guina of Pittsburgh, PA; Londyn Hutson of Harrington, DE; Adrienne Kloecker of Erie, PA; Emily Nelson of Monaca, PA; Bradley Noecker of Pittsburgh, PA; Cierra Personius of Somerset, PA; Taylor Rice of Pittsburgh, PA and Holly Stavarski of Pittsburgh, PA.

Congratulations to PIMS honor students on their academic achievement.

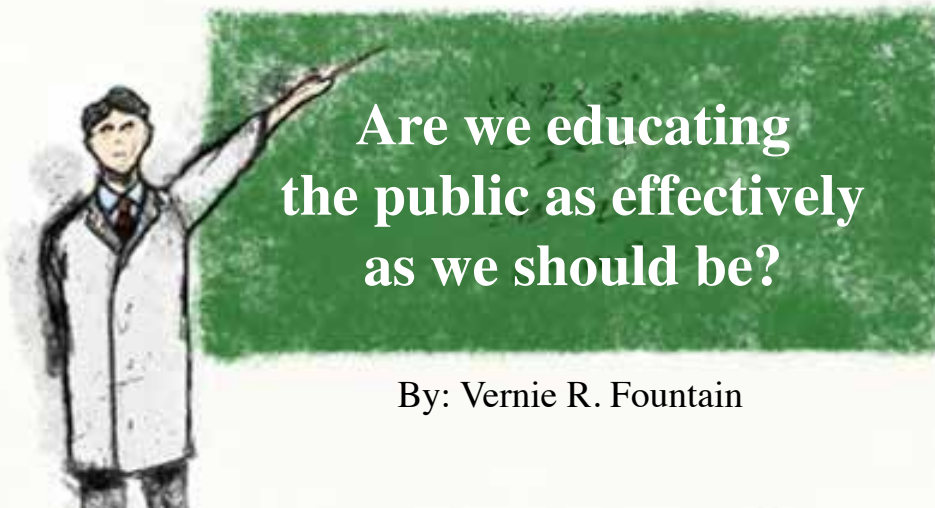
Remembering Wayne H. Justice....Former Partner With Ambulance & Coach Sales, Nashville, TN

Wayne H. Justice, age 78 of Hendersonville passed away January 7, 2017 at his home. Wayne was born on October 27, 1938 in Nashville to the late JD and Roberta Justice. A lifelong Nashville area resident, Wayne grew up in East Nashville and attended Isaac Litton High School; he owned Exxon Service Stations at both Woodland Street and Charlotte Pike for many years. After the service station business, he went to work at Ambulance and Coach Sales in 1986 and was part owner for 25 years, supplying funeral directors all over the southeast with hearses and limousines; he was a member of the Tennessee and Mississippi Funeral Supply and Sales Club.

He enjoyed boating and being on the water as much as anything. He was a longtime member of College Heights Baptist Church, later joining and attending Impact Fellowship in Gallatin; he was a 50 year member of the Centre Star Lodge #409, member of the Scottish Rite and Al Menah Shrine Temple where was a Jester and on the Al Menah Horse Patrol. Wayne was a loving husband, father, grandfather and friend to everyone who knew him. He will certainly be remembered for his honorable character and for always being there when you needed him. Wayne is survived by his wife, Martha Justice; children, Andra Justice, Mike Justice (Katie) and Stephanie Vaughn; grandchildren, Hailey and Macey Justice, Megan Shearin, Bryson Anderson,

and Tim & Andrew Vaughn; brother, Larry Justice (Linda) and nieces and nephews. A Life Celebration Service honoring Wayne was held on Wednesday, January 11th at 2:00 P.M. from the Chapel of Hendersonville Funeral Home with Steve Hurst officiating. Entombment followed in Hendersonville Memory Gardens Mausoleum with Kevin Justice, Danny Justice, Tom Mosier, Ellis Galyon, Carl Nixon and Larry Peyton serving as pallbearers. In Lieu of Flowers, memorial donations may be made to St. Jude Children's Hospital or the Nashville Rescue Mission. Arrangements Entrusted To: Hendersonville Memory Gardens and Funeral Home (615)824-3855 www.hendersonvillefh.com





Are we educating the public as effectively as we should be?

By: Vernie R. Fountain

The funeral service industry offers a variety of outstanding products and services. From innovation in technology that brings loved ones together for virtual services to earth-friendly methods of burial, the means by which we honor our deceased are evolving. In the midst of change, funeral service has its challenges and a change of mindset is necessary to meet the demands of consumers. It seems that more and more, whether due to emotional, physical or financial concerns, people are becoming more focused on cremation. For the record, I am not anti-cremation. Not by a long shot. It's direct cremation with no viewing of the body that bothers me.

Read on, and I will tell you why.

For several years I've had a growing concern that funeral service is out of focus regarding our professional existence. When a loved one dies, families come to us for guidance. We are not here to sell, we are not here to rush the process; we are here to listen, to counsel, and to educate families as to their options for a final goodbye. There are no do-overs. In my opinion, the opportunity to view the deceased in an identifiable state, surrounded by friends, loved ones, mementos and memorabilia is an option that should never, ever be left out of the conversation.

Step back for a second and ponder this question: Does the family really need your funeral home? I extend a challenge to the readers of this article. Sit down with the staff at your facility and make a list of every service you provide for families. List them all, from the smallest to the greatest. Once the list is finished, ask yourself this question: Which of these many services provided

by my funeral home could a family do for itself? Could a friend or a third party agent complete these tasks for a family without retaining my funeral home? From here, go down the list and draw a line through each service that families can do without you. When you have completed this task you will most likely find that, unless state law allows otherwise, the only two services you provide that no one else can are embalming and reconstructive surgery with the goal of viewing. In my opinion, these services are the foundation of our expertise and we should focus on how we can do them better. We need to more effectively train our funeral arrangers and pre-need counselors to convey the values of viewing to loved ones because they are about to see the body, and say goodbye, for the very last time. We are the death care expert in our communities, and make no mistake, this is an enormous responsibility. The family is totally dependent upon our skill and expertise once the heart and breathing stops, and soul has left its body. Doctors, attorneys, EMTs, firemen and police can't do what we do. No one but a caring, trained, licensed funeral professional can step in and take it from there. For that matter, few want to. But we do. Our compassion is the reason we walk toward the dead rather than run the other direction. It's the force that led us to the funeral profession in the first place.

We aren't nearly as focused as we should be on educating the public about death, dying and funeral options before the need arises. On a near daily basis I talk to people who say, "I just want to be cremated." When I query them further, I learn that many of these people don't look at cremation as a method of final disposition of the body; instead it's replacement for a funeral ceremony. We need to make sure that we

educate the public that cremation is certainly an option, but that it is only a form of final disposition. I believe as professionals we need to help families consider the interval between death and final disposition – the time of grief, remembrance and adjustment to the idea that life is about to move forward with an empty space.

With this in mind, I extend another challenge: Do a random Internet search for funeral home websites. Pretend you are a consumer, your child has died, and that you're searching for funeral options. How many websites mention the value of visitation and viewing prior to final disposition? I think you'll find that most funeral home sites offer far more information about direct cremation than about navigating through grief, comfort and closure. It is my opinion that educating the public about all aspects of funeral service is a wise investment in our future.

Let's think for a moment about the concept of viewing and identification. For example, once forensic tests confirmed that the sons of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein were dead, allied forces shared photos with Iraqi people for proof. The public demanded it, because seeing is believing. It is not unusual for world leaders to lie in state so that the public can view, pay respects in person, and find visual closure. Viewing matters.

Consider improving your website with more educational material about the values of viewing. At a recent seminar, a student told me that since his funeral home began offering visitations at no charge it has seen an increase in clients choosing embalming prior to cremation. It is also my opinion that funeral homes should offer longer visitation periods. Some visitations happen in a very short window of opportunity, denying friends and loved ones the chance to view and say goodbye. The family does not need to be present the entire time, so why the rush? With funeral staff on hand, longer visitation hours will, at the very least, offer closer to friends who can't make the service, and let them leave a message for family in the guest book – a book that funeral homes are quick to sell, but not as quick to fill.

At my recent 2016 FNA International Conference I offered a presentation entitled "When I Die". I discussed the things that I want and don't want when I die. First and foremost, I do not want my family to allow a funeral home to rush them to final disposition.

I've never understood the concept that if you die on Monday we need to bury you by Wednesday. I want my wife and daughters to have a visitation for as long as they feel necessary. I want to allow them time to grieve and mourn and begin the transition of their life without me. I do not subscribe to the notion that the quicker we get the body buried or cremated, the quicker we heal our grief.

I believe funeral service professionals should promote educational programs locally and across the U.S. to help the public understand the ins and outs of embalming, cremation, viewing, visitation and the process of navigating options following the death of a loved one. Currently there are people who are not friends of funeral service who are happy to speak in public forums about our profession, often providing inaccurate information. It is incumbent upon us to be forthright with the communities we serve. I challenge every national and state funeral service association across the country to create a speakers bureau and begin to support and promote public education. Presentations can be held at funeral homes, colleges or libraries and can be offered free to the public. As an incentive for the public to attend these presentations we should clearly advertise that the names of attendees will not be taken upon entry and the presentations are for accurate information only and not a sales' pitch. It is better that we stand up and educate with accurate information than allow the public to be misinformed and misguided by others.

We entered this professional because we are compassionate. We are professional. We are dedicated. We should be proud of what we do, and share our knowledge with the people we serve. Our families and our communities, and our attitude toward death as a society, depend on it.

*Vernie R. Fountain, Founder,
Embalmer, Post Mortem
Reconstructive Specialist,
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Vineyard Capital Partners, LLC Announces Promotion of Star Smith to Financing Originator

Atlanta, GA – Vineyard Capital Partners, LLC, one of the nation's most active financiers to the funeral industry, today announced the promotion of Star Smith to lead Financing Originator.

Ms. Smith joined Vineyard Capital in August, 2015 to lead the closing process of financing funeral home purchases. Since that time she has taken on larger roles assisting funeral home location owners and borrowers with various other legal and real estate challenges. She now leads communication with new prospective funeral home buyers and assists with the flow of information needed to underwrite financing offerings.

Jeff Boutwell, President of Vineyard Capital Partners, LLC, added "We've recognized a tremendous need for funding funeral home acquisitions and so we've continued to grow our team through internal promotions and adding new talented people to join us to make sure our clients are well served. Star is tremendously talented as she constantly finds creative methods of getting through tough challenges that arise." "I've been in banking most of my career, but serving a niche industry like funeral service has been extremely interesting and rewarding for me. I have loved working with all of Vineyard's clients and look forward to continuing to expand my relationships in the industry

to fill the financing needs of funeral home buyers across the country", added Ms. Smith. "I'm excited about the opportunity to meet new owners and buyers of funeral homes and to explain to them how we can help." Prior to joining Vineyard, Ms. Smith spent 12 years with BB&T Bank where she assisted with commercial loan origination and closings. When she's not assisting loan originations she's an avid wine sommelier and yoga enthusiast.



About Vineyard Capital Partners, LLC

Vineyard was founded in 2002 to provide funding of business acquisitions and expansions. The company is currently one of the most active financiers to the funeral industry – having funded the purchase of more than 50 funeral homes in the past few years. Vineyard also assists owners with budget development, strategic planning, and cash flow management. For information on funeral home funding contact Star at 404-249-9582, Star@vineyardcp.com, www.vineyardcp.com

Cannon Funeral Home, Fountain Inn, SC, Purchased by Original Family

Fountain Inn, South Carolina – Cannon Memorial Park and Funeral Home was purchased on October 3, 2016, by Al Cannon and Andy Byrd. The original Cannon Funeral Home was founded in 1890 by Al Cannon's great grand father, and had subsequently been sold to Stewart Enterprises. Greg Rollings of Rollings Funeral Service, Inc, became the new owner of the business in 2015 when he purchased a group of funeral homes being divested by Stewart Enterprises. At that time Al Cannon approached Greg and asked if he would be willing to sell the business back to the Cannon family, its original founders. Greg, being a family owned business himself, understood the emotional ties to businesses and agreed to work with the family to repurchase the business.

NewBridge Group worked with Buyer and Seller to structure a fair transaction and Vineyard Capital Partners, LLC (vineyardcp.com) provided funding for the purchase. Al Cannon and Andy Byrd, who already own the Heritage Funeral Home in Fountain Inn, will now continue to serve Fountain Inn and the surrounding communities through the Cannon Funeral Home and Memorial Park cemetery.

For more information on funeral home valuation or selling a funeral home please contact Jeff Boutwell with the NewBridge Group at (404) 249-9582.

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John A. Gupton College Alumni Reunion Holds Nashville Meeting and Celebrates 70 Years

The annual John A. Gupton College Alumni Reunion was held in Nashville, Tennessee, and celebrated 70 years of educational service to the death care profession. The Reunion weekend featured an opening reception of all alumni and guests to meet and mingle and reminisce of school days past, and honored the distinguished class of 1966 celebrating 50 years! Founded in 1946 by John A. Gupton and Bernadean Gupton, the co-educational, nonsegregated proprietary school in Nashville, Tennessee, began offering a program of study leading to a diploma in the field of Mortuary Science. John A. Gupton College was incorporated as a nonprofit organization in 1965. Originally located at 2507 West End Avenue, the college is now housed in a new, modern, fully equipped facility located at 1616 Church Street.

The annual business meeting followed the next morning at the college and included a memorial service, financial report, 25 and 50 year pins, and a “State of the College Report” by President Steve Spann. Steve was proud to report on the proactive progress of the college as well as the continued financial support from the alumni and the growth of their ever increasing endowment fund. The business meeting concluded with the election of the 2016-2017 officers which included, Ronnie Gandy, President (class of '86) succeeding Jeff Duffer, Immediate Past President (class of '86). Other officers elected: Andi Tibbs Poiner, 1st Vice President (class of '99); Delbrita Greene, 2nd Vice President, (class of 2013); Tim Bond, Secretary, (class of 1989) and Bill Hudson, Treasurer, (class of 1991).



Enjoying the opening reception hosted by Wilbert Vault Company (L-R) Meryl Spann, Madison Spann, Gail Pike, Linda Yarbrough and Danny Hurt



Never too young to be a part of John A. Gupton with (L-R) baby Anna Jayne Nash, Ashlee Nash, Randy Nash and Ellis Galyon



President Steve Spann recognizing Gupton College Registrar, Lisa Moffitt, with “25 Years of Service Award” for her dedication and commitment to the faculty and students to the school



Honoring the Class of 1966 and celebrating 50 Years as members of the Alumni (L-R) Don Kennedy, Frank Mullis, Ronnie Patton, Ronald Mays, Winston Brown, Richard Headrick, Earl Smith, Jacky Carver and James Boyd



2016-2017 Elected Alumni Officers during business meeting (L-R) Steve Duffer, Immediate Past President; Ronnie Gandy, President; Tim Bond, Secretary and Steve Spann, John A. Gupton College President. Not pictured: Andi Tibbs Poiner, 1st Vice President; Delbrita Greene, 2nd Vice President and Bill Hudson, Treasurer



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John A. Gupton College Alumni Reunion Photos



ASD Celebrates 10 Years of FuneralSync™ Integration

Media, PA—On Tuesday, January 10th, ASD – Answering Service for Directors’ FuneralSync™ integration feature will reach a significant milestone. The feature, which allows funeral directors to automatically sync their software and websites to ASD’s systems, was first introduced to the funeral profession a decade ago. The first version of the tool was a somewhat manual process that allowed for transfer of some very basic information. Over time, this feature, now known as FuneralSync™, has evolved to become the most flexible integration tool available to directors.

Funeral professionals spend hours every week entering data into their funeral management systems and posting information on their websites. FuneralSync™ was created by ASD to help their clients reclaim the time once spent on these redundant tasks. The feature allows funeral homes to automatically transfer funeral service information from their funeral home’s website to ASD. Directors can also use FuneralSync™ to pull First Call information, including call recordings, from ASD directly into the funeral home’s management program.

Today, thousands of funeral homes nationwide utilize FuneralSync™ to save time, reduce data entry errors and operate more efficiently. In 2016, more than a quarter of a million obituaries were automatically transferred over to ASD through FuneralSync™. Each obit represents time ASD has given back to their clients. Rather than having to log into various databases and copy/paste information into multiple fields, the data is automatically synced without any effort. When considering the fact that each obit could take up to 5 minutes to enter, ASD’s FuneralSync™ feature saved funeral professionals 20,000 hours of redundant work in 2016 alone, not to mention the headaches saved by eliminating the chance for errors.

One of ASD’s biggest goals when developing FuneralSync™ was to partner with as many of the funeral profession’s leading software and website companies as possible. The company’s owners understood that their clients used many different providers and did not wish to set any limits on this timesaving technology. In 2013, ASD released an



enhanced version of FuneralSync™ that more easily allowed companies to integrate. This gave ASD clients the freedom to utilize our advanced solution without having to switch providers. The updated version also offers increased flexibility. For example, clients can edit their funeral home’s website obituaries from within the ASD Mobile app and myASD.com website portal.

Below is a list of the different software and website companies that have used the FuneralSync™ API to integrate with ASD.

funeralOne
Batesville
CFS - Consolidated Funeral Services
SRS Computing
FrontRunner Professional
FuneralTech
Continental Computers
Gemini Graphics
Frazer Consultants
FuneralNet
Tributes.com
Ionic Services
MKJ Marketing

“FuneralSync™ gives ASD’s 20,000+ funeral professional users the freedom to integrate with any funeral software or website company,” says ASD Vice President and Family-Member Owner, Kevin Czachor. “This feature is a winner for all involved, allowing directors to spend more time with families and less time entering data while increasing accuracy.”

For more information, visit www.myASD.com.

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Dr. Jacqueline Taylor – Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science - Keynote Commencement Speaker



Dr. Jacquelyn Taylor, Boston, MA. accepted the Keynote Speaker invitation, and delivered the December 17th Commencement Address to graduates. Taylor is an internationally recognized funeral service educator. She

has held various posts in funeral service education for over 25 years as a professor, administrator, and organizational leader. She is an accomplished expert witness and a frequent media spokesperson, having been featured on stations such as A&E, CNN, The Discovery Channel, The History Channel, and The Learning Channel.

Dr. Taylor currently serves as Special Projects Coordinator and independent consultant for The Dodge Chemical Co., a company which has been a constant and committed supporter of student learning. Taylor's inspiring message "Your Place in History" was delivered to the following Cincinnati College of

Mortuary Science graduates, who today accepted The Commission of the Funeral Service Practitioner:

Dana Marie Dixon, Fairborn, Ohio
Clara Anne Fox-Ruddell, New Carlisle, Ohio
Annissa Green, Toledo, Ohio - Summa Cum Laude
Shawn Griggs, South Amherst, Ohio
Devan Kennedy, Fredericktown, Ohio - Summa Cum Laude
Beth Marie Markland, Rising Sun, Indiana - Summa Cum Laude
Timothy Vance Moquin, Athens, Ohio - Summa Cum Laude
Nicholas Nester, Attica, Ohio
Curtis Parish, Whitehall, Ohio - Magna Cum Laude
Chad Pemberton, Ironton, Ohio - Summa Cum Laude
J.D. River, Circleville, Ohio
Jessica Roberts, Wooster, Ohio
Laura Shadoan, Amelia, Ohio - Summa Cum Laude

Congratulations are extended for your outstanding accomplishment, having earned the distinct privilege to reverently serve in this, your chosen profession.



Faculty John Vinnedge, Melissa Kloss, Wanda Lee, and Class President Nick Nester



Dr. Blanche Kabengele, Teresa Dutko, John Vinnedge, Dr. Jacquelyn Taylor

Students Succeed in Community Service Beyond the Profession

CCMS students consistently engage in acts of kindness through community outreach, and they have again made a difference! Fall 2016-2017 Class President Josh Woodruff, along with Class Officers Taylor Stoner, Holly Racheter, Christina Kendall, and Brittany Webb successfully implemented a project concept "Cold Hands Warm Hearts" to benefit those less fortunate. The goal was to collect 50 new (and like new) hats, scarves, gloves, and socks to provide comfort and warmth to Cincinnati's homeless through donation to the Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition.

As part of the concept, students created flyers for distribution on campus, area churches, and local employers. They also utilized social media to share their message and created a holiday giving tree in the college's lobby as a central drop off location. In just four weeks students well exceeded their goal, collecting 336 items for donation!

It is easy to become enveloped in the daily grind of our hectic schedules – at times forgetting about those less fortunate – those who are vulnerable to Ohio's seasonal freezing temperatures. So many people stepped up and the Class Officers extend their appreciation to everyone who participated, including those having donated anonymously. The success of any community outreach is a collaborative one which lies in the generosity of all those willing to give.

The CCMS administration remains continuously proud of our student body in their outreach and service of community. Good character is NOT something we teach – it just is! Donations were delivered to Tuesday, January 17th and will be distributed through the shelter.



Licensed Funeral Director/Embalmer Needed

We are currently looking for a licensed funeral director/embalmer. We are a progressive family owned and operated funeral home & crematory north of Charlotte. We have been providing excellent service to our community for over 100 years. Applicant must possess a willingness to work with client families to personalize services that meets or exceeds expectations.

We are currently seeking a North Carolina licensed Funeral Director/Embalmer at our independently family owned funeral home & crematory. Our funeral home has been in operation for over 100 years providing highly professional services to the community we serve. Our funeral home over the years has set the standard for the quality of service that is expected in the areas. We are seeking an individual who truly cares about the client families we serve during their time of need. Our funeral directors are required to arrange and coordinate services, assist with transfer of human remains, and provide some clerical services among other tasks.

We offer competitive wages and benefits. If you are interested please send your resume to kmc@vnet.net.

Requirements:

- Must have current NC state funeral licensure or the ability to retain one within 30 days of employment
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- Ability to manage a caseload while creating an exceptional customer experience
- Attention to details
- Some computer skills is a plus.

About WTS

As a junior in high school I found my calling into the funeral profession. After graduating from Mortuary College and spending 23 years in the monument business, in 2013 I opened Ward's Transport Services, a business that specializes in the removal and transportation of your deceased clients. Our services include removals from hospitals, nursing homes, residences, crime labs, airports, funeral homes and embalming services.

Along with reliable transportation, we also have one million dollar liability insurance coverage. No matter where you send our trained personnel you will find they are always suitably attired and conduct themselves with respect, dignity and professionalism.

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MOTHER'S DAY SCRAMBLE

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Jamie Meredith

Simple Strategies to Increase YOUR Bottom Line

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Taking Control of Your Accounts Receivables

FFDA

David Snyder

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“ At FPG, we work hard every day to position you, our partner firms, for success in your individual market. To further foster growth, I am pleased to announce our new V.P. of Business Development, Erin Whitaker. Erin is a third-generation funeral director, and like me, she's spent years on the front lines of funeral service at her family's firm. Erin is brilliant – with a background in chemical engineering and an MBA. But more importantly, she's one of us, so she can understand your needs and goals.

Justin Baxley
Justin Baxley,
Senior Vice President of Business Development

Erin Whitaker,
Vice President of
Business Development



Foundation Partners Group
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