

Southern[®]

◆ FUNERAL DIRECTOR ◆

MAGAZINE

Family owned and published since 1919

June 2023

www.sfdmagazine.com



Casket & Shipping

Remembering Todd Van Beck by Madison Spann
Casket Merchandising Four Common Issues in the Funeral Showroom By Bucky Stevens
It's a small world International Repatriation of a Deceased By Kahlen Knapik, National Mortuary Shipping
Navigating the Impending Storm in Funeral Service By James Fletcher, Matthews Memorialization
Seven Unexpected Places Cremated Remains Have Turned Up By Jess Farren
The History and Etiquette of Southern Funeral Processions by Chad Morrison
CFSA Establishes Audrey Thacker Women of Excellence Award
CFSA Member Spotlight: Scott Weisenbach, Sich Casket Company, National Sales Director
Sahal Laher Joins Batesville as SVP and Chief Technology & Digital Officer
Jennifer Kaset and Judy Olson Promoted to Vice President, Sales and Business Development
South Carolina Holds Expo and Newly Elected 2023-24 Officers + Photos
Johnson Consulting Group Announces Winners of the 2022 Excellence in Customer Service Awards
ASD Empowers Funeral Homes with Automatic Message Transcriptions

CELEBRATING TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF INNOVATION *with a fresh look from the second generation of Walstons*

Even in high school, **Daniel Walston**, now 30, contemplated his forthcoming career. Bright and highly-creative, he was interested in several diverse subjects – psychology, languages, business, emerging technology – a vast menu of options, many requiring lengthy study to carve out a successful career. Yet after graduating from the University of Georgia in 2019 with a plethora of possibilities, he chose to follow in his dad's footsteps to expand his vision of himself as an asset to the family business. After much self-examination, Daniel realized the potential of running a small business. Certainly, with any family business there were hurdles to overcome with transitional leadership, but Scott and Daniel have come to respect each other's strengths which complement the business goals.

Yet, it has always been about family. From a young age, Daniel assisted his dad, **Scott Walston**, founder of Collegiate Memorials,[™] the first funeral service business to officially license college and university logos/insignia to personalize caskets and cremation urns. Scott's innovative company was met with wide enthusiasm by the funeral industry, but it was an arduous endeavor to pull off, with years of extensive planning and groundwork laid before the first licenses were acquired from the University of Georgia and the Georgia Institute of Technology in 1998-99.

This year, Collegiate Memorials[™] celebrates its 25th Anniversary with Scott Walston's vision fully and successfully realized. His creative company has inspired and opened wide the death care industry and consumers to individualized personal expression upon death. CM has also spawned several other memorialization business models, but remains the largest and most reputable business of its kind in the \$20 billion funeral industry, with official licensing rights granted by 31 major colleges and universities throughout the U.S.

In 2018, having purchased and begun the renovations of a local funeral home, Scott was inspired to offer Daniel an opportunity to manage Collegiate Memorials under his tutelage. Never envisioning himself working in the family business, Daniel recognized a way to contribute to the family company and to begin leaving his imprint on a burgeoning entity in a re-emerging market.

With Daniel Walston now general manager of CM, his father's company continues to grow with a millennial's fresh vision.

Since taking the helm, Daniel has introduced new technology, concepts for greater efficiency and stronger brand imaging. There is much more to come.

"I've learned so much about innovation and entrepreneurship from my dad," said Daniel. "There is always something new to grasp, and I am continually inspired to grow the company brand with new ideas and plans."

Scott at sixty-six has no plans to slow down in business and anticipates with enthusiasm Daniel's continued contribution to the family's plans for expansion.



Scott and Daniel Walston

HONOR your loved one
and TELL THEIR STORY by
celebrating their alma mater
or favorite school



*The Memorial Licensing Co., LLC, is
fully-licensed to display the insignia of most
major United States colleges and universities.*

**Congratulations to UGA for winning
the National Championship title!**

Collegiate Memorials®

Celebrating the Lives of Alumni & University Friends™

478-405-1999

www.collegiatememorials.com

LICENSED COLLEGE-THEMED MEMORIAL PRODUCTS

Southern[®] ◆ FUNERAL DIRECTOR ◆ MAGAZINE

Family owned and published since 1919

FEATURES

- 5 Remembering Todd Van Beck by Madison Spann
- 9 Casket Merchandising Four Common Issues in the Funeral Showroom By Bucky Stevens
- 12 It's a small world International Repatriation of a Deceased By Kahlen Knapik, National Mortuary Shipping
- 31 Navigating the Impending Storm in Funeral Service By James Fletcher, Matthews Memorialization
- 22 Seven Unexpected Places Cremated Remains Have Turned Up By Jess Farren
- 16 The History and Etiquette of Southern Funeral Processions by Chad Morrison

INDUSTRY NEWS

- 20 CFSA Establishes Audrey Thacker Women of Excellence Award
- 19 CFSA Member Spotlight: Scott Weisenbach, Sich Casket Company, National Sales Director
- 14 Sahal Laher Joins Batesville as SVP and Chief Technology & Digital Officer
- 21 Jennifer Kaset and Judy Olson Promoted to Vice President, Sales and Business Development
- 26 South Carolina Holds Expo and Newly Elected 2023-24 Officers + Photos
- 30 Johnson Consulting Group Announces Winners of the 2022 Excellence in Customer Service Awards
- 34 ASD Empowers Funeral Homes with Automatic Message Transcriptions

“A janitor is the only one who cleans up in Wall Street and gets away with it...”
- Anonymous



Southern Funeral Director Magazine[®] Vol. 174 No. 6

The National Funeral Service Journal
with a Southern Accent Since 1919

Celebrating 104 Years of Service to the Industry

Southern Funeral Director Magazine, LLC is a [®] and registered with the United States Patent and Trade Office and assigned serial number 'USPTO 85831455'

Any other claims from third parties to the name "Southern Funeral Director" are without validity and justification. Southern Funeral Director Magazine, LLC., is in good standing and in compliance with the Office of the Secretary State of Georgia, and John W. Yopp is the Publisher and Editor

POSTMASTER:

Notify us of address changes by form 3579 to:

Southern Funeral Director Magazine[®]

P.O. Box 768152
Roswell, GA 30076



John W. Yopp
Publisher/Editor
404-312-6640
johnyopp3@aol.com



Joe Weigel
Associate Editor
joseph.weigel@gmail.com



Kathy A. Guillory
Graphics/Art Director
kathyakopov@gmail.com

FuneralCall On The Go

Simplicity at your fingertips.



"We absolutely love the FuneralCall App. We can access our messages at anytime, and it's so easy to use!"

- Ellen McBrayer
Jones Wynn
Funeral Homes
& Crematory

888-239-0351 | www.funeralcall.com



notes from the editor

by Special Guest Madison Spann

Remembering Todd W. VanBeck – The Funeral Director’s Funeral Director

“Whatever you are, be a good one.”

While this quote is falsely attributed to Abraham Lincoln, I think Mr. Todd Van Beck will excuse this misrepresentation of history for this one instance.

“Whatever you are, be a good one.”

When I think of Mr. Todd, I think this quote sums it up quite well. Todd did not stick to one singular form of study. Whether it was funeral service, history, religion, or a number of other subjects and disciplines, Mr. Todd put his all into every form of his study.

“Whatever you are, be a good one.”

He certainly was that, a good one. A good funeral director. A good leader. A good writer. A good researcher. And, a good friend. Mr. Todd embodied what I wanted to be when I grew up. Before him, I had never met someone who was as passionate about history and religious studies as I was. Before Todd, I was trying to mold myself into a box that fit a professional atmosphere such as a lawyer or a human resources agent. I thought I had to keep my passions at bay and study something more fitting for my adult life. I could not have a library-like office and spend my days reading and writing about not only things I was passionate about but ultimately what I was good at. That all changed when I met Mr. Todd. He was exactly that. His office looked straight out of a movie. It was as if a small library had been stuffed neatly into an office equipped with busts of his favorite U.S. presidents and world leaders like Churchill. His favorite pastime was spending time in the office reading, writing, and researching, even on his off days. So, finally I had met someone who embodied not only what I was passionate about but also someone who made a career doing exactly what I wanted to do.

“Whatever you are, be a good one”

From that moment on, I abandoned those notions of a lawyer or corporate job and thought: If Mr. Todd can do it, so can I. Therefore, meeting Mr. Todd not only provided me with a much-needed friend and buddy but also a mentor figure

with whom I looked up to greatly.

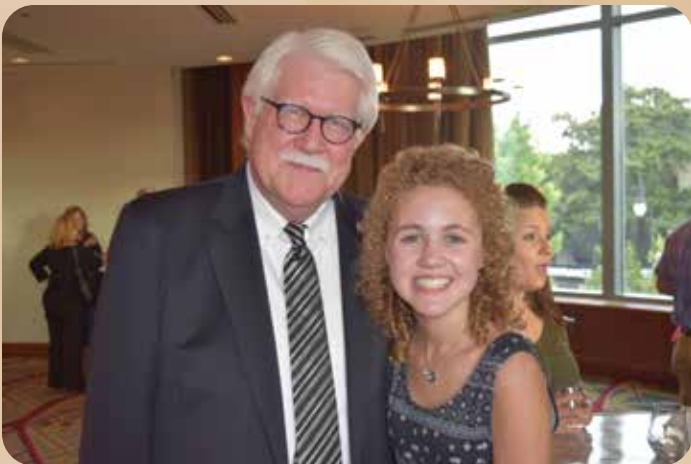
Also, Todd always wanted to be there for the big moments, and, whether he knew it or not, he grew into a grandfather figure that I didn’t even know I needed. He was there when I was picking a college and was delighted when I finally chose Sewanee. Todd was there when I was debating changing my major from history to religious studies, and supported me when I finalized that decision. He was there when I was gowning my sophomore year at Sewanee. Mr. Todd was there to read my religious studies papers as I grappled with the religious history I was studying. He always understood exactly what I was studying and had, almost always, already read the books himself. In the last paper he read for me, he expressed his pride at the success I was having not only in my papers but also in my major. As usual, he threw out some career options, one being a theologian. No matter what I studied, Todd always had options for me.

“Whatever you are, be a good one”

I hope, by now, you can see the application of this quote. Todd supported whatever you wanted to do, as long as you put your best into it. He was not particular about what exactly your best looked like. You could have changed your mind 5 times, as long as you were passionate about it. For Todd, life was about that passion and that drive. Whatever your drive was, Todd would support it, like he supported me with mine. Life needs a lot more Mr. Todds. More people who look at life and see the flaws but also what is salvageable and what is worth saving. People were like that for Todd. Whenever you talked to Todd, you truly never forgot about it. That conversation would stick with you, and, even if you could not see your worth, Todd absolutely did.

“Whatever you are, be a good one.”

So, to conclude, I June or June not be as successful as Mr. Todd. I June not have a cool office surrounded by books and busts of Abraham Lincoln. I June not get to teach religious studies and be as well loved as Mr. Todd. However, in the spirit of Todd, whatever I am, I’ll be a good one.



OPTIONS FOR MEMORIALIZATION

Celebrate Spirituality, Family, Passion, Life with a Treasured Tribute



Create a Treasured Tribute

1. Choose a photo
2. Choose a Wilbert Legacy Print

Scan the QR Code for upcoming
Wilbert **EDU** Sessions! →





Experience the Matthews Aurora™ **DIFFERENCE.**



IF you want to
**develop a business
growth strategy
that works.**

What is the Matthews Aurora™ Difference?

We are dedicated to providing solutions that deliver long-term benefits to help your firm reach its greatest potential. Our Funeral Service Consultants are your partners, deeply invested in helping your firm achieve the results that you expect. With Compass, our proprietary business analysis tool, we can help your firm solidify business strategy, identify growth opportunities, and offer families more choices than before. Contact us today to learn how Compass can help optimize the value of your business for today and tomorrow.

Discover Matthews Aurora™ Funeral Solutions.

Please contact us at 1.800.457.1111 to be connected with your Matthews Aurora
Funeral Service Consultant.

FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Building Futures & Fueling Careers

SCHOOL'S TOUGH ENOUGH. LET US HELP YOU PAY FOR IT.

Academic Scholarships
ranging from **\$2,500-\$5,000**
are available to students
of funeral service,
and military veterans.

Applications accepted
Feb. 1-April 1 and
Sept. 15 - Nov. 1.



**LEARN MORE AND
APPLY ONLINE**



**FUNERAL SERVICE
FOUNDATION**

FuneralServiceFoundation.org

Casket Merchandising

Four Common Issues in the Funeral Showroom

By Bucky Stevens, Thacker Casket Company

Throughout my career in the funeral industry, I have been fortunate to visit hundreds of funeral homes across the Southeast. Whether I'm in Virginia or southern Mississippi, I have enjoyed getting to know funeral directors, learning more about their business, and discussing the changing times in the industry. Consistent among all professionals I have encountered is their unique dedication and compassion for their industry and customers.

Through conversations with these remarkable professionals, I have learned that each funeral home does things differently. Differences could be in call volume, location, cremation rate, or something as small as hearse color (Olympic gold was the best). Nonetheless, throughout my travels, I have seen a few reoccurring issues in funeral home showrooms.

Merchandising

The ability of a funeral home to merchandise its selection room is critical for family satisfaction and profitability. If a family selects a casket out of your showroom, you want them to feel they received value for both the product they are purchasing and the amount they are paying for that product. You want to make this process as seamless and easy as possible.

That is why it is important to offer caskets at different price points and build a visual value progression as the retail price increases. I've walked into selection rooms and seen a 20-gauge casket with desirable colors and swing bar hardware cost less than an 18-gauge ordinary color casket with stationary hardware. It doesn't make sense from a visual value perspective.

Why would the consumer choose to pay more for a less attractive casket with less visual value? In other words, I need to see why I am paying more for a casket! Showrooms should be based on four main premises: Controlled eye appeal, earth-tone colors, upgraded colors, and themes. It is far too common to walk into a showroom and see a higher eye-appeal casket cost less than lower eye-appeal caskets which can be confusing

to a family selecting a casket.

Is There Value in Gauge?

Are you aware that the difference between a 20-gauge casket and an 18-gauge casket is approximately .83 millimeters? .83 millimeters!! The difference in the gauges is roughly the width of a sheet of paper. Is this something that your families see value in, in today's market?

Does gauge actually matter to your families? Do the majority of your families even understand gauge in regard to selecting a casket out of your showroom? Throughout my travels in the Southeast, the answer has predominantly been a resounding "NO!" Families no longer value gauge the way they once did.

Through thousands of conversations, I have concluded that there is often a disconnect between what a family wants in a casket and what the average funeral director values in a casket. In the industry, directors and sales consultants discuss things like gauge, stationary vs. swing bar hardware, or preferences of interior shirring. We often lose sight of the fact that families will only be making funeral arrangements a few times in their lives. Most families want a casket that looks good but doesn't cost them an arm and a leg. Consumers buy caskets based on three things: color, eye appeal, and price, often in that order.

Frequently it will be a casket that a family member connects with based on the deceased's life. I have heard families say things like, "Dad loved navy blue!" or "Mom would be so happy with those crosses in the panel, she loved Church!" Sometimes it helps to almost take yourself out of the industry and think about what family's value, instead of the things we talk about and deal with every day. Base your showroom selections on what the customer wants and with that mindset, watch it flourish!

Does your Showroom Work for Your Business?

Recently I was consulting with a funeral home on how

to increase the profitability of the showroom. Through discussions, I found the directors were having to leave the showroom and choose a casket out of their vendor's catalog. The owner told me that over 50% of families that walked into the showroom couldn't find a casket they connected with and had to buy out of the book.

In reviewing the showroom, the funeral home had twenty spots on their selection room floor. Out of the twenty spots, five were at a stainless steel, copper, or bronze level. That is 25% of his total showroom offerings. In discussing his annual casket sales, he sold just over 100 caskets last year, with two sales coming from those five spots. As a result, those five spots comprised a total of 2% of his annual sales.

Given these results, it was obvious he needed to go to his vendor and change some selections in his showroom to offer more units his families could connect with. He concluded that his current showroom wasn't working for him or his families. Is your showroom working for you?

Consumer Math

During funeral arrangements, one of the most important things for a funeral director to accomplish is to make the process as easy as possible. This family is arguably having one of the worst weeks of their lives as they just lost someone they love. The last thing they want to be doing is selecting a casket.

That is why I strongly encourage funeral homes to end their retail prices with the same last two numbers. This helps the family in comparing retail prices in the selection room. Personally, I recommend my funeral homes end all their retail pricing in 95. In my mind, \$2,995 sounds so much better than \$3,000. I understand the difference is only \$5 but it just sounds much less expensive.

Using this consumer math helps your families be able to compare retail prices by dropping the last two digits of the price. For example, let's say your families are comparing similar caskets. One retails for \$2,795 and the other for \$2,495. It is easier to determine the difference is \$300.

I recently went into a showroom that did not use this philosophy. The first casket we discussed had a retail price of \$2,412. \$2,412? I asked the owner how she

came to that retail price and she said it was based on an across-the-board markup. I see this in many showrooms I visit through my travels. It is a common misstep and an easy one to make.

The prices are based solely on the business of selling caskets rather than an understanding of what the customer needs when he is making a selection. I know this sounds simple, but you can actually make this difficult time easier on your families by ending your retail prices with the same numbers. Trust me, it works!

Over the years it has been easy to lose sight of what's going on in your showroom. It's a common issue and one that can easily be fixed. I have learned that a simple rule of thumb in any business decision is keeping the customer in mind first.

Whether you are determining how many or what type of caskets to include in your showroom or establishing pricing across selections, following a few simple concepts rooted in easing the process for your families, can transform your business!

Bucky Stevens joined the Thacker Caskets sales team in September 2015. Bucky was named the Salesperson of the Year for Thacker Caskets in 2016, 2017, and 2022. Before joining Thacker, Bucky worked in sales in multiple industries including healthcare and industrial chemicals. He also spent time in education as a Business & Marketing Teacher in Richmond, VA, and is a lifelong native Virginian.





*You're Our
#1 Priority*

WE BELIEVE IN THE HUMAN TOUCH. HERE AT THACKER, WE ARE COMMITTED TO FACE-TO-FACE SALES REPRESENTATION AND WILL ALWAYS MAINTAIN OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH YOU.

THACKER
CASKETS

1.800.637.8891
THACKERCASKETS.COM



It's a small world

International Repatriation of a Deceased

By Kahlen Knapik, National Mortuary Shipping

In today's global society, more people travel internationally for business and pleasure and generally return home safely with pictures and stories to share with their families. In addition, many more people are leaving their native homes to seek opportunities in other countries. However, what happens should someone die when he or she is overseas?

As a funeral director, you will be working with families dealing with this tragic event and their first concern will be how to bring their loved one home.

The most common situation you will encounter is when the death occurs in the United States and the family wants to ship the deceased to their home country. When making arrangements to ship a deceased from the United States to another country, there are factors one must consider, and it can become complex and time consuming. There are many regulations that differ from nation to nation as well as region; flight regulations, language and culture barriers, embargoes and a myriad of other possible issues can cause concern.

When shipping a deceased to another country from the United States, the most important thing is communication. This includes communication with the family, the correct consulates, doctors, health departments, various government organizations, overseas funeral homes, translators, and airlines. There can be a lot of moving parts to shipping a deceased internationally.

When speaking with the family it's important for them to understand this can take some time and there are many channels to go through. It is also more costly. The costs for international flights, translations if needed, you and your team's time to acquire the correct paperwork, and even mileage or postage if documents need to be transferred to a consulate or secretary of state. This helps the family understand some of the complexities and build realistic expectations.

Consulates are the keyholders when it comes to shipping a deceased internationally. When shipping a de-

ceased internationally it is important to speak to the consulate office of that country that covers the district where the deceased died. It is important to note that different countries have different requirements and even different consulates for the same country June require different things. These requirements are also known to change without warning; this is why you must speak to the proper consulate each time.

Some examples of the documents a consulate June require include translated documents, apostilles, authentication of documents, letters of non-contagious disease, mortuary letter, embalmers affidavits, permits, Visa's or passports, certified copies, letters of intent from the family, and confirmation from the consignee in the other country for shipping to occur.

Each consulate June also require different shipping containers such as zinc lined units, Ziegler cases, sealer caskets, metal lined units, and so forth. Another thing to remember when working with an international consulate are they are representatives of their country so there June be language barriers, they June have specific modes of communication such as only through email, or specific hours that they will accept calls. These are all things that can add time to the process.

Once you have all the paperwork together and approved, the next hurdle can be the flight. Getting a direct domestic flight is rare in today's world and when shipping internationally you June need to use different carriers, or "interline." It's not uncommon to have to ship a deceased through a few domestic airline hubs to reach an international airport and then interline to the international carrier. It's important when speaking to the airlines to ensure they can transfer the deceased to the other airline or if you will need to hire another funeral home or representative to pick-up the deceased and take to the other airline cargo facility.

Shipping into the United States is not as difficult as shipping out but June also present some unique challenges such as time delays, language barriers, and stan-

dards of care. Time zones and flight schedules June create time delays. Flights do not always run daily and June have many connections through different countries before entering the United States. Scheduling June become tricky because one June need to make multiple transfers between airlines and require additional clearance. Receiving clearance from foreign airlines can add to the time it takes to get a decedent home. If the paperwork is incomplete or inaccurate, customs June prevent the transfer or release of the deceased.

One must also consider who has taken care of the deceased, has the USA consulate in that country been contacted, what paperwork is required, does the family need to be present for identification and do you know what funeral home to call? These are important parts of the process, and the standards of care June be different in each nation and the condition of remains June be different than a funeral director June expect.

The process of international shipping either from or to the United States can be time-consuming with many twists and turns throughout the process. In addition to the regulations and compliances required, funeral directors must also work with families that June have a hard time understanding the circumstances because of cultural and language barriers.

At National Mortuary Shipping, we have a trusted international network of representatives as well as a team that is well-versed in these procedures. Having the knowledge and experience of shipping a decedent to a foreign country or back to the United States takes the burden off the funeral directors, allowing them to focus on what is important: the families.

Kahlen Knapik - Vice President and AIC Funeral Director and Embalmer

Kahlen began his career at National Mortuary Shipping (NMS) in 2001 and has been essential in building and fostering partnerships with funeral industry professionals. As a licensed funeral director and embalmer, Kahlen brings a deep understanding of the industry to the team. He takes pride in the NMS tradition of helping hometown funeral directors



around the world with out-of-town deaths. For more information, contact National Mortuary Shipping at 800-321-0185 or email:info@natlmortuaryshipping.com

About National Mortuary Shipping (NMS)

For more than 40 years, our mission has been to assist hometown funeral directors with out-of-town deaths. We take the stress out of complicated shipping and cremation. With representatives across the globe, NMS is there when and where you need us to assist when death occurs away from home.

LET NMS HANDLE THE DETAILS.

Our shipping specialists work directly with you, the funeral director. Our services reach beyond borders with a worldwide network of representatives. Whenever you call, day or night, a shipping specialist will be there to assist you. Our experienced shipping specialists ensure that every detail is handled, so funeral directors can focus on families' needs.

YOU FOCUS ON THE FAMILIES.

NMS partners with funeral directors as an extension of your business. You can trust our experienced specialists to provide exceptional service, just as families trust you with caring for their loved ones.

LOCAL MARKETING FOR FUNERAL HOMES

Struggling to market your funeral home to the next generation of families? Reference our local marketing tips and find new ways to engage with your community.

COORDINATING OUT-OF-TOWN MORTUARY SERVICES

When death occurs away from home, coordinating an out-of-town cremation and other mortuary services can be more complicated. Our experienced team can help.

CHOOSING A LIVERY SERVICE

When you need a livery service for mortuary transportation, you want a professional, dignified, and caring provider. Access our network of livery providers....

SIMPLIFYING DOMESTIC MORTUARY SHIPPING

National Mortuary Shipping is prepared to handle all of your domestic mortuary shipping needs with experienced, knowledgeable specialists available 24/7.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Sahal Laher Joins Batesville as SVP and Chief Technology & Digital Officer

BATESVILLE, Ind., June 7, 2023 – Batesville Services, LLC, a leading provider of innovative products and services to the death care industry, announced the appointment of Sahal Laher as SVP and Chief Technology and Digital Officer, reporting to Chris Trainor, Chief Executive Officer. In this newly created role, Laher will execute Batesville’s technology strategy, including the expansion of its world-class digital end-to-end platform, and lead the ongoing development of the company’s infrastructure, all with an unwavering focus on data security, system stability, customer experience, and overall excellence.

Laher is a visionary leader with more than 25 years of experience leveraging technology to enhance customer solutions and consumer experiences for a variety of global brands, including Everstory Partners (formerly StoneMor Inc.), Estée Lauder, Brooks Brothers, Capgemini, and Deloitte.

“Funeral service is changing rapidly, and as an industry, we must be nimble and responsive,” said Trainor. “We are investing even more in our people, our processes and leveraging advanced technologies to deliver groundbreaking burial, cremation and technology solutions that can elevate funeral service and help families honor the lives of those they love. Adding Sahal to our team will help us build the digital solutions our customers need to support their businesses.”

Laher has a proven record of building high performance, cross-functional teams and an operational perspective that focuses on taking friction out of the customer experience. His expertise and ability to conceptualize and drive innovation and growth will be a tremendous asset in preparing to serve the next generation of funeral professionals and families.

“Batesville has a remarkable legacy of innovation, with customer-facing digital solutions like Batesville Connect® that have propelled it to the forefront of the industry,” said Laher. “I am very excited to join the company at such a pivotal time and to have the opportunity to partner with such a talented executive team

and work alongside so many dedicated technology experts.”

Laher earned a B.S. in Electrical Engineering and International Studies from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), completed advanced specialization programs in Marketing and Operations Management, Corporate Finance and Financial Accounting, Blockchain, Cryptocurrency, FinTech, and InsurTech at The Wharton School, and attended the Executive Program at Stanford University.

He is a member of the Dean’s Council at WPI and serves on the Board of Directors for Wine to Water, which has helped bring clean drinking water to more than 1.5 million people globally.

The dedicated C-level technology role was added following the company’s acquisition by LongRange Capital in February of 2023. Laher joins a team of accomplished executives, including Dan Harmeyer, SVP and Chief Financial Officer, John Linville, SVP – Supply Chain, Jenn Parvin, SVP and Chief Marketing Officer, John Parlapiano, SVP – Sales, Mari Jo Moody, SVP and Chief Human Resources Officer, and Lyn Mathews, SVP and General Counsel.

Batesville is a recognized leader in the death care industry in North America, offering a comprehensive portfolio of burial and cremation products, memorialization options and innovative technology solutions. For more than 125 years, Batesville has supported licensed funeral professionals in helping families honor the lives of those they love.® A history of manufacturing excellence, product innovation, superior customer service, and reliable delivery helped Batesville become – and remain – a market leader.





Spring Casket Specials

Save \$100,000 or more per year on caskets! *



AC7050043V
Mahogany Veneer
Plush Velvet Interior



AC3004867
18 Gauge
Silver Rose, Velvet Interior



AC3001000
18 Gauge
Primrose



AC4002151
18 Gauge
Pieta, Crepe Interior



AC5050006V
Last Supper, Oak Veneer
Rosetan Velvet Interior

Why pay more?

CALL NOW!

888.998.1888



AC6059001V
Cherry Veneer,
Velvet Interior



AC5050401V
Oak Veneer,
Velvet Interior



AC2004CM
Walnut Color
White Crepe Interior

View more products available at

www.americancasketscompany.com

email: jim@malamas.ca for a complete price list.

Or call NOW for immediate service: **888.998.1888**



*Calculation based on a \$1000 saving per casket for the average funeral home selling 100 caskets per year and is based on full-container load orders. Prices do not include freight to your destination.

The History and Etiquette of Southern Funeral Processions

by Chad Morrison

Funeral processions have played an important role in the cultural practices of many societies throughout history, and the American South is no exception. In fact, the procession has become an important symbol of Southern funeral heritage and traditions.

The history of Southern funeral processions can be traced back to the early days of the South when communities were small and closely knit. At that time, funerals were often held in the home of the deceased, and the body was carried to the church or cemetery by a procession of family members and friends.

As Southern cities grew and evolved, funeral processions began to take on a more elaborate and ceremonial character. By the mid-19th century, the traditional Southern funeral procession had become a highly formalized event, marked by a series of ritualized gestures and expressions of grief.

One of the most distinctive features of Southern funeral processions is the use of mourning bands. These are typically black or purple armbands worn by the members of the procession as a symbol of respect for the deceased. The use of these bands dates back to the Civil War era when they were worn by soldiers in mourning for fallen comrades.

Another important feature of the Southern funeral procession is the use of funeral coaches. Normally ornate, horse-drawn carriages were used to transport the casket from the church to the cemetery. Funeral coaches were popularized in the mid-19th century and became a symbol of Southern refinement and elegance.

In addition to these formal elements, Southern funeral processions are marked by a deep sense of community and tradition. They serve as an opportunity for friends and family to come together to mourn and pay their respects.

Today, Southern funeral processions continue to be an important part of Southern culture and traditions.

While the rituals and symbols associated with them have evolved, their central role in the grieving process remains unchanged.

The Importance of Funeral Processions in Southern Culture

In the South, funerals are often viewed as a time to celebrate the life of the deceased, rather than just mourn their passing. Funeral processions provide an opportunity for family and friends to come together and pay their respects, share memories and stories, and find comfort in the support of their community.

One of the key elements of Southern funeral processions is the use of ceremonial rituals and symbols. For example, the hearse, which is often as stated above, an ornate and highly decorated vehicle, is seen as a symbol of respect for the deceased. The use of mourning bands and other forms of symbolic dress also plays an important role in the procession.

Another important aspect of Southern funeral processions is the use of music. Hymns and spirituals are often sung during the procession, providing a sense of comfort and solace to those who are grieving. Music also serves to unite the community and remind everyone of the shared cultural and religious values that are so important in Southern life.

In addition to providing comfort and support to the bereaved, funeral processions in the South also serve as a way to honor the deceased and their family. By taking part in the procession, mourners not only demonstrate their respect for the deceased but the family as well.

How Funeral Processions Became a Part of Southern Culture

Funeral processions in the South also have roots in African American traditions. During the era of slavery, African American communities were often denied the right to hold proper funeral services for their loved ones. Instead, they developed their own traditions, including funeral processions, to honor the deceased and

show their respect. Over time, these traditions merged with European customs to form the unique funeral processions that are now a hallmark of Southern culture. The importance of community and family in Southern culture also plays a role in the continued popularity of funeral processions. They provide an opportunity for family and friends to come together and show their support for the bereaved, and to honor the memory of the deceased. In many cases, funeral processions also serve as a way to bring together entire communities, uniting them in their grief and offering comfort and support.

Etiquette for Mourners in a Southern Funeral Procession

Participating in a Southern funeral procession is a solemn and important responsibility. As a mourner, it is important to observe certain etiquette and behaviors to show respect for the deceased and their family. Here are some guidelines to follow:

Dress appropriately: As we mentioned earlier, mourners should dress in dark or subdued colors as a sign of respect. It is also important to avoid anything that might be considered inappropriate or flashy, such as

bright colors, bold patterns, or excessive jewelry.

Arrive on time: Funeral processions usually depart from a designated location, such as a church or funeral home. It is important to arrive on time to avoid delaying the procession or causing any disruptions.

Turn off electronic devices: During the procession, it is important to turn off any electronic devices, including cell phones, to maintain a quiet and respectful environment.

Follow the procession: Funeral processions are typically led by a hearse, followed by family members, and then other mourners. It is important to follow the procession in order and maintain a respectful distance from other vehicles.

Be respectful: During the procession, it is important to be respectful and solemn. Avoid honking horns, talking loudly, or engaging in any other behavior that might disrupt the solemnity of the occasion.

Observe traffic laws: Funeral processions are usually given the right-of-way by other drivers, but it is still



FLAWLESS QUALITY.

RIDICULOUS AFFORDABILITY.

Quality, detail and manufacturer support equal to the top US brands at half their price or better.

Every Sich casket comes with \$5 million liability protection.

Benefits your company as well as the families you are serving.

ONLY YOUR ACCOUNTANT CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE.



- We carry a full line of metal, hardwood, and cloth-covered-wood caskets.
- Cremation, oversize and youth lines as well.
- High quality, competitively priced products, with the finest customer service.



CALL TODAY FOR A PRICE & SERVICE COMPARISON / TOLL FREE 1.800.226.1245
PO BOX 5664, COLUMBUS, GA 31906 / servicecasketcompany.com

important to observe traffic laws and signals. Be sure to stop at red lights and stop signs, and avoid passing other vehicles in the procession.

Modern Innovations

While Southern funeral processions have a long and rich history, they have also evolved to reflect modern innovations and changing cultural norms. Here are some examples of modern innovations in Southern funeral processions:

Technology: With the rise of technology, many funeral homes and procession companies now offer online funeral tools, including live streaming of funeral services for mourners who are unable to attend in person. This allows for wider participation in the funeral procession, even for those who are unable to travel.

Alternative modes of transportation: While traditional hearse carriages and black horses are still popular, there are now alternative modes of transportation available for funeral processions. Some companies offer limousines or other luxury vehicles for mourners, while others June use motorcycles or even bicycles for a more eco-friendly procession.

Personalization: Many funeral processions now incorporate personalized touches to reflect the personality and interests of the deceased. For example, mourners June wear clothing or accessories that reflect the deceased's favorite sports team, hobby, or musical genre.

Cultural inclusivity: With the increasing diversity of Southern communities, many funeral processions are now designed to reflect the cultural traditions and customs of the deceased and their family. This June include incorporating music, dance, or other cultural elements into the procession. **Green funerals:** With a growing awareness of environmental concerns, many Southern funeral processions are now designed to be more eco-friendly. This June include the use of biodegradable caskets, alternative modes of transportation, and eco-friendly funeral homes.

These modern innovations reflect the changing cultural landscape of the South, while still honoring the rich traditions

Conclusion

Funeral processions have played an important role in

Southern culture and history for centuries. These processions have evolved to reflect modern innovations and changing cultural norms, but they still hold great significance in Southern communities as a way to honor and remember the dead. From traditional mourning dress and etiquette to new technologies and Eco-friendly practices, funeral processions continue to serve as a way for mourners to come together to support one another and pay tribute to those who have passed away. Despite these changes, the importance of honoring the dead and showing respect to their families remains at the core of Southern funeral processions, making them a deeply meaningful and enduring tradition.

Chad Morrison is an Army veteran living in Ohio. A former cemetery worker at the beginning of his professional writing journey, he's hoping with the written word he can do his small part for the funeral profession that he feels blessed to now be a part of. He's been married for twenty-three years and has two wonderful boys.



Your Solution to Today's Marketing Challenges

Weigel Strategic Marketing is a marketing firm providing strategic communication assistance and branding expertise to a diverse portfolio of funeral service clients.

The company is experienced in all forms of communications, public relations, publicity and marketing material development in print and digital format.

WEIGEL
STRATEGIC MARKETING
weigelstrategicmarketing.webs.com

317.608.8914

INDUSTRY NEWS

CFSA Member Spotlight: Scott Weisenbach, Sich Casket Company, National Sales Director

How did you get started in the funeral industry?

I was born and raised in Batesville, Indiana; therefore, I guess it was inevitable that at some point I would become involved in funeral service.

What is the most rewarding part of your occupation?

I have found that the most satisfying aspect of my career is the professional and personal relationships I have developed with the people in funeral service; especially the individuals that comprise the Sich distributor network.

Is there a specific moment or experience in your career that encapsulates your passion for what you do?

Not one specific moment, but rather every time someone contacts me with a question or requests my assistance. When this happens, I feel humbled and blessed that our relationship is such that they have reached out to me. I see this as trust, confidence, and most of all, the basis of a strong relationship.

Who or what inspires you?

Sich Casket's owner and my boss, Sirius Chan. Sirius began in an industry he knew nothing about although, with research, a vision, and passion, he took a risk and in 2004 sold his first casket. I am blessed that Sirius had another vision in September 2018 to bring me aboard and invest in the continued strength of Sich Casket. Interestingly, Sirius calls me Sich's Wonderbra – since I provide such great support to our distributor network. I am truly honored and inspired that he believes so greatly in my abilities and the value I provide to our distributor partners.

How long have you been a member of CFSA?

I have been a member for three years and I am proud to serve on the Board of Directors for CFSA.

How has being a CFSA member impacted your experience in the funeral supply industry?

Seeing first-hand how competitors put their differences aside on behalf of a much bigger picture, which is



working side by side to make CFSA and our industry much stronger by sharing ideas and business practices that benefit both the people we serve and the families our accounts serve.

Favorite moment with CFSA?

My favorite moment takes place at the CFSA Annual Conference and Trade Show. The event provides me the opportunity to be with many of our distributors and share a meal at the Sich Distributor Dinner – as I consider each Sich distributor a personal friend.

How do you spend your time outside of work? Is there anything in particular that you enjoy doing?

I enjoy sharing time with my wife, Jill, and our four children. I am blessed that my family enjoys my passion for running marathons, hiking in the mountains, and traveling. I believe that you can find something good and unique if you are willing to travel and explore.

What are some important/notable trends that you have noticed in the funeral supply industry?

One of the biggest trends I have seen on the supply side is that funeral home owners now look to their sales representatives to bring value during a sales call. The days of the sales rep showing up and flipping pictures are long gone. Funeral homes are looking for partnerships – not just products – from their suppliers.

INDUSTRY NEWS

CFSA Establishes Audrey Thacker Women of Excellence Award

The Casket & Funeral Supply Association of America (CFSA) has established a new award recognizing outstanding women in funeral service supply, and has named it in honor of Audrey Thacker of Thacker Caskets.

“Mrs. Thacker’s legacy of leadership and sheer determination in taking her company out of crisis in the late 70s due to the untimely passing of her husband and company president, Carl C. Thacker, is a testament to perseverance and sure-footed will to succeed,” said Tim Murphy, chief executive officer of CFSA. “She proved many in the business completely wrong when she was offered advice that a woman couldn’t or shouldn’t be president of a casket manufacturing company.”

Mrs. Thacker’s story is one that the association felt should be shared to inspire all professionals in the supply chain of funeral service to do their best every day and take their businesses to new heights of success.

The Audrey Thacker Women of Excellence Award selection criteria includes membership in CFSA, a minimum of five years in the funeral supply business; and demonstration of exceptional innovation and leadership in her company. The award will be bestowed annually at the CFSA Annual Conference.

About Thacker Caskets

Thacker Caskets was founded in Washington DC in 1939 by Carl C. Thacker. Originally named Old Dominion Casket Company, its name was changed to Thacker Caskets in the 1970s, and today employs over 250 American workers. The family-owned and operated company is headquartered in Monrovia, MD, with the manufacturing plant in Florence, AL.

About CFSA

The Casket & Funeral Supply Association of America was founded in 1913 as the Casket Manufacturers Association of America, and today represents companies providing all types of funeral supply products. The Association is headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana.



A TRUSTED RESOURCE OF FUNERAL & CEMETERY SUPPLIER COMPANIES SINCE 1976

ABOUT US

Since 1976 IMSA has been empowering cemetery and funeral service providers by advocating for unity with various industry associations and ensuring greater access to supplier products and services.

Our organization of companies is committed to supplying quality products and services to the funeral profession while providing the leading best practices and standards in the industry.

As a member of IMSA you'll receive exclusive benefits no other supplier association can provide.

FIND A SUPPLIER OR BECOME A MEMBER AT
www.hello@imsa-online.org

INDUSTRY NEWS

Jennifer Kaset and Judy Olson Promoted to Vice President, Sales and Business Development

Madison, Wis. (June 26, 2023) – National Guardian Life Insurance Company (NGL) is pleased to announce that Jennifer Kaset and Judy Olson have been promoted to Vice President, Sales and Business Development. These promotions will further strengthen strategic partnerships and deepen relationships to enhance sales growth potential in the insurance marketplace.

“Jennifer and Judy have been instrumental in helping NGL continue to grow our sales, drive new opportunities and deepen our relationships with our Marketing Partners. They are knowledgeable and dependable leaders in the insurance industry. I look forward to seeing what they can achieve in their newly expanded roles as they lead their teams,” said Jeremy Ragsdale, Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer.

Kaset has nearly 20 years of experience in the insurance industry. She joined NGL in December 2019 as Regional Vice President, Sales, focusing on developing and nurturing Preneed partnerships with NGL’s marketing organizations, independent agents and agencies. She also oversees partners’ service needs as they strive to achieve their marketing goals.

“My passion for the funeral profession aligns with NGL’s core values of integrity, dependability, collaboration, compassion and growth. These values are always top of mind and demonstrated with each interaction. I’m proud to offer valuable products to the funeral homes we serve and to represent one of the best Preneed providers in the industry,” shares Kaset. “I am grateful to work with amazing colleagues and look forward to being a part of NGL’s future growth in Preneed distribution as we grow our market share and value of new business.”

Olson has more than 15 years of experience in the insurance industry. In her new role, she will continue to work with NGL’s Preneed and AssetGuard Marketing Partners to support their growth and business development opportunities. Olson joined NGL in January 2008 and has served in roles including Regional Vice President, Sales; Assistant Vice President and Director



of Partner Support at NGL, where she led a team dedicated to supporting key business relationships with NGL’s marketing organizations.

“I’m fortunate to be able to combine my background in both marketing and sales with my dedication to building collaborative relationships, providing excellent customer support, and providing all of our partners with resources for business development,” shared Olson. “NGL has been providing families with valuable insurance coverage for over a century. Reliability, quality and stability are attributes partners and policyholders can expect from NGL. We are dedicated to helping families face life’s financial challenges with confidence, dignity and grace.”

About NGL

Established in 1909 National Guardian Life Insurance Company (NGL) is an insurance company headquartered in Madison, Wis. Licensed to do business in 49 states and the District of Columbia, NGL markets preneed and individual life and annuities, as well as group markets products. Information about NGL can be found at www.nglic.com; Facebook: [Facebook: Facebook.com/NGLIC](https://www.facebook.com/NGLIC) and LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-guardian-life-insurance-company>.

National Guardian Life Insurance Company is not affiliated with The Guardian Life Insurance Company of America a/k/a The Guardian or Guardian Life.

Seven Unexpected Places Cremated Remains Have Turned Up

By Jess Farren

If you've worked in the funeral profession for any length of time, chances are you are already well aware that cremation rates have surpassed burial rates. Despite the headline that hint at this being a surprising or unanticipated phenomenon, the fact is funeral professionals have observed this gradual shift for decades. While we know with certainty that more than half of families are choosing cremation for their loved one, the statistics become much murkier when trying to determine how many of those cremated remains are interred or scattered and how many end up on a shelf waiting for their eventual final resting place.

The reasons why cremated remains sometimes turn up in strange places are varied and complicated. For this article we ask that you reserve any judgements surrounding the how and join us in just marveling how incredible and unbelievable these stories are. From floating along the ocean shore to causing a commotion at a department store, here are 7 unexpected places where cremated remains have been discovered.

1. Inside a Floating Bottle

The image of a message in a floating bottle has come to symbolize adventures on the high seas. For some families, this makes it a perfect vessel to send off a loved one who wanted to be free and travel. Over the past decade, at least four different families have intentionally chosen to inurn their loved one's cremated remains in a sealed bottle and send it sailing on the ocean waves. In all of these stories, the bottle contained a few dollar

bills and a message to anyone that finds it. The message will usually include some details about the person who died, a phone number or email to contact the family to share where the bottle ended up, and instructions to send it back out to sea again.

The details are so similar you have to assume these families must have been inspired reading each other stories and decided to do the same thing for their loved one. (Or perhaps, the person told their next of kin, "When I die, do this for me!") It is certainly a unique way some families have chosen to say goodbye that can result in an unexpected surprise for a stranger. We especially love that in every example the person who found the bottle was delighted to have found it and more than happy to oblige the request.

2. On the Shelf of a Second-Hand Store

Picture an urn. Most likely, in your head you are seeing a metal oval-shaped cylinder or a wooden box. This is what most people tend to think of when they imagine a receptacle for cremated remains. However, just about any container can and probably has been used as an urn. This is why keeping ashes permanently in a home can cause problems as it can be difficult to tell the difference between an urn and keepsake. If someone died without telling someone else that they were in possession of an urn, the likelihood of those cremated remains showing up in a donation box increases greatly.

Over the years, we have lost count of the number of stories we have read about cremated remains turning up in Goodwill and other second-hand shops. In some cases, employees will stumble upon them when sorting donations and in others, a customer might accidentally purchase something not realizing it contains cremated remains until they bring it home. That's exactly what happened to Anita Minks who purchased a glass globe from a Goodwill store in Missouri only to discover the cremated remains and photo of a woman inside. Thankfully, this story has a happy ending thanks to the power of social media. Anita's daughter took a photo and shared it online. It turned out that the globe was among items that had been stolen from the family and



they were incredibly happy to have it back in their possession.

“I know they took time out of their day to do the right thing,” shared the woman’s daughter in an article for the Washington Post. “They took another person’s feelings into account, and that’s awesome. You really don’t see that nowadays. I’m so grateful for those people.”

3. Within the Rubble of a Wildfire

While most of this list is filled with examples of someone finding cremated remains unexpectedly, this one is a little different. For families who have lost their home in a wildfire, recovering from such a devastating event can be so difficult. Imagine losing your home and everything you own? Now, imagine that on top of that, also losing the cremated remains of someone you love. Thankfully, with the help of trained dogs and compassionate archeologists, many families have been able to recover the cremated remains of their loved ones amid wildfire destruction.

Canine forensics have long been used to help locate people who are missing and presumed dead but the use

of dogs for cremains recovery is a fairly new practice pioneered by Archeologist Alex DeGeorgey and his team of volunteers at the Alta Heritage Foundation. This organization has provided closure and peace of mind to hundreds of families who have lost their loved one’s urn in a wildfire. While it June seem implausible that a dog could distinguish one type of ashes from another, their abilities have been proven indisputably time and again. Along with the cremated remains, the team will very often find the medallion that came from the crematory so there is no question. They also combine the dog’s detection skills with archeology practices that help the team separate the human cremains from other debris.

4. Inside a Storage Unit

If you’ve ever watched the TV show storage wars, you might already be aware of the fact that repossessed storage units are often auctioned off to the highest bidder. The hope is that what you find inside the storage space will be worth more than what you bid. However, in some case, would-be treasure hunters get more than they bargained for when they inadvertently purchase a storage unit that has previous ties to a funeral home.



Cherokee

Child Caskets

... Your Choice for when it Matters Most
Since 1941



Receive 10% off
when you buy 10 or more
caskets and/or vaults

800-535-8667

www.cherokeechildcaskets.com



It's an unfortunate fact that funeral homes all across the country have issues with unclaimed ashes. Families sometimes for various reasons chose not to ever take possession

of their loved one's remains. As a result of this, through no fault of their own, funeral professionals end up retaining these cremated remains for long lengths of time and, in some sad cases, they end up forgotten in a storage unit. We found examples of this occurring as recently as one month ago and as long ago as 12 years ago so there is really no telling how many other storage units out there might contain cremated remains.

5. At a Wal-Mart

Wal-Mart is known for selling everything, but one item discovered on a shelf earlier this year definitely threw both shoppers and employees for a loop. Amongst the ceramics for sale in the arts and crafts section of a store in McKinney, TX, a shopper found that one of the ceramic containers held cremains and on the back the words 'mom's ashes' were written down. The employees of the Wal-Mart believe that someone must have wanted to buy a new container and set the old one down on the shelf by mistake, although it has not been possible to confirm if this is the case since the owner has not yet been located despite the story receiving national attention. We hope to see a happy end to this story as we find it hard to believe anyone would want a Wal-Mart to be their loved one's final resting place.

6. On Sale at a Public Auction

When a celebrity or renowned figure dies (or comes into financial hardship), it is not uncommon for items belonging to them to be auctioned off to the highest bidder. Over the years, many have scoffed at those willing to spend thousands to buy a celebrity's chewed gum or worn boxer shorts, but perhaps the biggest eyebrow raiser



of all time is the famous auction of Truman Capote's cremated remains in 2016.

The famed writer behind *In Cold Blood* and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* died in 1984 and a portion of his ashes went to his good friend Joanne Carson (wife of former Tonight Show host Johnny Carson). After she died, many of the items she had that belonged to the late writer, including his cremated remains, went to an auction house who sold them to an anonymous collector for \$43,750. Along with his cremated remains, the clothing Capote was wearing at the time of his death was also sold for \$6,400

"I am sure people are going to think this is disrespectful," said Darren Julien, CEO of Julien Auctions in an article for *Vanity Fair*. "But this is a fact: Truman Capote loved the element of shock. He loved publicity. And I'm sure he's looking down laughing, and saying, 'That's something I would have done.' He was a larger-than-life character."

7. Inside a Stolen Car

According to the National Insurance Crime Bureau, more than 700,000 vehicles are stolen every year in the United States. Based on these numbers, it is perhaps not so surprising that just about every year we see a story about cars that are stolen with cremated remains inside of them. In 2016, a man in Detroit who endured a carjacking was later reunited with the cremains of two relatives that had been in the stolen vehicle. Unfortunately, many of these stories do not have such a happy ending. It is hard to imagine someone being so heartless as to steal something irreplaceable like cremated remains and not taking steps to do the right thing to return them. However, there have been some cases where grief-stricken families have been able to appeal to the thief's better nature by putting out a public plea asking for the ashes to be returned.

Jessica (Fowler) Farren is the Public Relations Specialist and Staff Writer at ASD. She has answered the calls of funeral homes nationwide for more than 19 years. Jessica manages ASD's company blog, social media accounts and digital marketing. She has been published in numerous funeral trade magazines and has written articles on a variety of subjects including communication, marketing, business planning, technology & funeral trends. To contact Jessica, call 800-868-9950 or email jess@myASD.com.

FUNERAL PROFESSIONALS

NOT ONLY
ESSENTIAL
BUT ALSO
EXCEPTIONAL

Thank You

ASD

1-800-868-9950



myASD.com

South Carolina FDA's Convention, Summary and Election of 2023-24 Officers & Directors Announced

South Carolina Funreal Directors Association has had a busy year with their 37th Annual Mid-Winter Expo in Columbia, SC as well as their Summer Convention with the election of new Officers and Board Members for 2023-24.

The newly elected officers include President-Barry Watson, Conway succeeding Immediate Past President-Dwayne Josey, Saluda. Also elected include: Vice President-Shannon Dotson, Spartanburg; Treasurer-Lance Wemberly (CFSP), Simpsonville; and Secretary-Steve Winburn (CFSP, CCO). Below is a full listing of the slate of officers:

President: Barry Watson, Watson Funeral Services & Crematory, Conway SC
Vice President: Shannon Dotson, Petty Funeral Hone/Bobo Funeral Chapel, Landrum SC
Treasurer: Lance Wimberly CFSP, Thomas McAfee Funeral Homes, Simpsonville SC
Secretary: Steve Winburn, CFSP, CCO, Brown-Pennington-Atkins, Hartsville SC
Immediate Past President & NFDA State Representative: Dwayne Josey, CFSP, CCO, Ramey Funeral Home, Saluda SC

Piedmont Grp Chair: Patrick Campbell, CFSP, CCO, CPC
The Standard Cremation & Funeral Center, Anderson SC
Piedmont Grp Sec/Treas: Greg Rice
Duckett-Robinson Funeral Home, Central SC

Pee Dee Grp Chair: Randall "Lee" Calcutt, CFSP, CCO
Cain-Calcutt Funeral Home, Florence SC
Pee Dee Grp Sec/Treas: Curry Belk
Belk Funeral Home, Darlington SC

Central-Coastal Grp Chair: Hugh "Bill" Jackson
Thompson Funeral Home Inc, Orangeburg SC
Central- Coastal Grp Sec/Treas: Matt Bedenbaugh, Caughman-Harman Funeral Home, Lexington, SC

The SCFDA Mid-Winter was well attended with exhibitors, funeral director members and guests. The Continuing Education speakers included a great variety of subjects from the funeral profession. This included Joseph H. Brown, III presenting on his \$2.0m facility and his "Elevating the Cremation Experience." Poul Lemasters with his "CYA" approach "Yes, He just said that!" with a strong emphasis on "to help you get comfortable with all the uncomfortable situations that are presented in the workplace."

Ronald C. Scott, Esq., Legal Representative for SCFDA, The Honorable Amy McCulloch, Cathy Kennedy and Jeff Temples led an in-depth panel discussion on "Cremation Authorization." The final CE session was presented by Nancy Weil and covered many facets of being "All Stressed Out and Ready to Blow."



(L-R) Craig Maltz, Fred Jordan, Jim Hardy, Sandra Antablian, Ben Hardy and Irwin Maltz



(L-R) Charles Sanders, Erika Spear, Mark Vaughn and Tom Holland



(L-R) Melvin Thompson, Mark Lanford, Jerry Small and Doug McDougald, III

Save The Date
38th Annual SCFDA Mid-Winter
February 5-7, 2024
Columbia Hilton & Convention Center



(L-R) Dave Snyder, Mike Cyplik, Harry Joachim and Craig Maltz

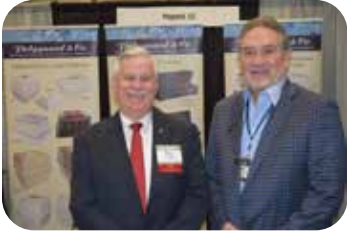


(L-R) Jim Hardy and Poul LeMasters



(L-R) Dennis McEntire, Tyler Gibson and Brian Michael





Amb&Coach Sales

Service Since 1964



Ellis Galyon
615-481-8021



Randy Garner
479-459-3641



Hal Singletary
770-500-0923



McKinley Joyce
615-419-6585



Wayne Day
256-504-4105



Chad Garner
479-461-6259



Doug Roberts
606-350-0268



Darryl Streed
716-485-1133



*Cadillac XT6
Victoria Coach*



1212 Jo Johnston Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee 37203 • 888-336-8421 • ambulanceandcoach.com



New • Pre-Owned • Leasing • In House Financing • Parts

INDUSTRY NEWS

Johnson Consulting Group Announces Winners of the 2022 Excellence in Customer Service Awards

Johnson Consulting Group (JCG) announced the recipients of the JCG 2022 Excellence in Customer Service Awards, powered by J3Tech Solutions (J3Tech).

The Awards were presented to funeral businesses who achieved the highest total value index score from JCG's Performance Tracker X satisfaction surveys mailed to each at-need family they served during 2022.

The total value index is a calculation of the sum of: the overall performance score, the net promoter score and the price paid for goods and service questions. The overall performance score is a calculation of nineteen independent questions that measure results in four areas:

- 1) Initial Contact with the Funeral Home
- 2) The Arranging Director
- 3) Facilities and Vehicles
- 4) Staff and Services Provided

The JCG and J3Tech client funeral homes are divided into three categories based on call volume. The categories are 150 surveys sent (Category 1), 151-300 surveys sent (Category 2), 300 or more surveys sent (Category 3).

On behalf of Johnson Consulting Group, we want to congratulate the following winners:

Category 1 (150 Surveys Sent)

- DeVargas Funeral Home – Taos
- Robertson Mueller Harper Funeral Directors
- Coastal Cremations & Funeral Care – Zephyrhills
- Coastal Cremations – Carolina Shores
- B.C. Bailey Funeral Home
- Pinecrest Funeral Home
- Ascension Funeral Home
- Smith Benton Funeral Home
- Riemann Family Funeral Homes – Biloxi
- Cleveland Funeral Service
- Caldwell Parrish Funeral Homes – Winterset Chapel
- K.E. Pike Funeral Home
- Weigel Funeral Home
- Forest Lawn Funeral Home
- Lucas Funeral Home – Keller

Category 2 (151 - 300 Surveys Sent)

- J. Verne Wood Funeral Home
- West Funeral Home
- Carpenter Funeral Home
- Harrelson Funeral Home
- Wells Funeral Home – Waynesville
- Bucktrout Funeral Home
- Coastal Cremations North Carolina
- Bladen-Gaskins Funeral Home
- Smith & Buckner Funeral Home
- Brown – Butz – Diedring Funeral Service & Crematory
- Rushing Estes Knowles Mortuary
- LaFond-Ardoin Funeral Home
- Simply Cremation
- International Cremation Services, Inc.
- Lucas Funeral Home – Grapevine

Category 3 (more than 300 Surveys Sent)

- Posey Funeral Directors
- Cremation Society of Virginia – Southside Chapel
- Ott & Lee – Brandon
- Menke Funeral & Cremation Center
- Triad Cremation & Funeral Service
- Luyben Dilday Mortuary
- Whitney & Murphy Funeral Home
- Fremont Chapel of the Roses
- Oman Funeral Home & Crematory
- Williamson Memorial Funeral Home
- Lucas Funeral Home – Hurst
- Hansen Mortuary Chapel
- Integrity Funeral Care
- Olson Funeral & Cremation Services, Ltd.
- Ingram Funeral Home

“We have so much pride in how we prioritize the customer experience in our profession here at Johnson Consulting Group,” says Jake Johnson, President and CEO of Johnson Consulting Group. “In a time where the customer experience has never been more important, we are so proud to partner with these firms who deliver top-notice service to their communities.”



Navigating the Impending Storm in Funeral Service

By James Fletcher, Matthews Memorialization

I'll never forget the cold Friday evening when I received a frantic call from my uncle. "There's been a plane crash behind our house. The woods are on fire!" The year was 2012 and at that time, I was not only a full-time funeral director, but our county's chief deputy coroner.


The next two days would be spent combing through the wood line where the single engine Cessna had fractured, creating a debris field going deep into the forest. While the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) was interested in recovering the wreckage to determine what caused the accident, I was there to collect human remains.

As time passed, I all but forgot about this case until the FAA issued their final report. What had caused the aircraft's right wing to strike a tree only fifty feet off the ground? To our surprise, it wasn't the aircraft's fault. The plane was in perfect working condition. The

reason for the accident was the error of the pilot. He knowingly traveled into a dark and inclement situation without an understanding of how to use or read the instruments in the aircraft. He took to the air without a plan.


Prior to the advent of aircraft instruments, pilots were forced to fly by sight and intuition. This is where the phrase "flying by the seat of your pants" originated. Pilots relied on the sensation of their weight shifting in the seat to determine how to control the plane. While that June have been the only option for the Wright brothers and the early pilots of WWI, there's no need to fly that way today.

So, what does this have to do with funeral service? There is no doubt that funeral service is facing turbulent weather. Our industry, like all others, has experienced the pains of a 40-year high in inflation. In January 2023, it cost \$1.16 to buy what \$1.00 bought in



CONTINUING EDUCATION ON-LINE

John A. Gupton College has developed online continuing education courses. These courses have been approved for CEU hours by both Tennessee and Kentucky Boards. The online subjects range from funeral service history, embalming techniques, funeral home management, grief psychology and bereavement counseling. **For information concerning cost and program call 615-327-3927, go to our website at guptoncollege.edu or email admissions@guptoncollege.edu.**



JOHN A. GUPTON
COLLEGE

1616 Church Street | Nashville, TN 37203
615-327-3927 | www.guptoncollege.edu

ON-LINE ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN FUNERAL SERVICE



If you are interested in becoming a licensed funeral professional, John A. Gupton College can help you get there. The Associate Degree in Funeral Service is an accredited program. Our online program is flexible, career-focused and may be completed in 12 or 16 months. Financial Aid is available.

For information concerning cost and program call 615-327-3927, go to our website at guptoncollege.edu or email admissions@guptoncollege.edu.



JOHN A. GUPTON
COLLEGE

1616 Church Street | Nashville, TN 37203
615-327-3927 | www.guptoncollege.edu

January 2020 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023).

From increased payroll, healthcare, fuel, and merchandise costs, funeral homes are not immune to the same financial hits that the rest of America has taken over the past several years. With death rates at all-time highs during the pandemic, the impact of inflation June not have been full felt, but as death rates return to pre-pandemic levels, the reality of higher operating costs will be felt.

The other front that continues to challenge funeral service at the same time is the continued growth of cremation and the decrease in revenue associated with it. According to the Cremation Association of North America (CANA), the cremation rate for the U.S. was 57.5% in 2021 (CANA, 2022). The projected rate for 2025 is 63.6% and for 2030 is 69.8% (NFDA, 2022). Research published from the National Funeral Directors Association and other industry analysts report that families who choose cremation spend roughly 30% of what families who choose full “traditional” services. There is no denying that these factors of high inflation and rising cremation are a challenge to today’s funeral service operator. Today, funeral home owners and managers cannot afford to fly by the seat of their pants. Now more than ever, the owners and managers sitting at the controls need to be prepared. The community and funeral home staff are depending upon their ability to navigate through these storms.

But there is a silver lining to these storm clouds ahead. More tools are available to today’s funeral home owner than ever before. Consider the number of tools that Matthews Aurora™ Funeral Solutions alone brings to the industry:

Compass™ – This analytical tool helps funeral homes determine if their current merchandising plan will hit their financial targets. Does a funeral home have retail pricing mistakes? Are there prohibitive gaps in their product assortment? Are arrangers presenting merchandise as intended? Considering that the casket sale alone often makes up a third of the contract, you can’t afford to not have a plan. When trying to determine where you stand, and how to get where you’re headed, there’s nothing better to use than a Compass.

I’ll Remember You® (IRY) – As already mentioned, the number of families choosing cremation will con-

tinue to grow. While that trend cannot be reversed, we can take reasonable precautions to protect a funeral home’s revenue. IRY helps funeral arrangers educate cremation families about their choices for service and memorial merchandise. IRY often increases cremation contract revenue from \$400 to \$800. That’s an increase of 12% to 21% based off Federated Fiducial’s average cremation contract.

Technology Solutions – Whether it’s Arranger, Family Connections, Advisor, or the Catalog App, when it comes to tools in the bag, Matthews Aurora™ Funeral Solutions has the necessary technology solutions to get the job done. The NFDA had this to say regarding

“Consumers are increasingly shifting to online funeral planning. Approximately 40.0% of NFDA-member funeral homes offer the option to make cremation arrangements online (a significant increase from 25.2% in 2019). In addition, 28.2% plan to offer online cremation arrangement options within the next five years” (NFDA, 2022).

Professional Development – In an ever-changing environment like the death care industry, it’s challenging to keep your staff on the cutting edge. Matthews Aurora™ Funeral Solutions can provide online and in-person staff training in relevant industry topics.

New Memorial Products – As contract revenue decreases because of changes in death care, it’s imperative that new revenue streams capable of bringing value to the families are found. Additionally, they serve at increasing a funeral home’s bottom line. Matthews Aurora™ Funeral Solutions continues to keep a pulse on industry trends and is committed to bringing these new revenue enhancers to funeral homes.

Although storms lie ahead, if you’re prepared, they’re survivable, especially if you have the right tools.

James Fletcher is a Regional Sales Director for Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions and is a former Funeral Director and Chief Deputy Coroner. James resides in Florida and Indiana with his family.





2023 Chrysler Voyager



2023 Chrysler Voyager



2023 Platinum Cadillac Limo



2022 Eagle Cadillac Limo



2017 Eagle Cadillac Limo
10,359 miles



2017 Eagle Cadillac Limo
11,231 miles



2016 Eagle Cadillac Limo
19,010 miles



2015 Eagle Lincoln Limo (2 in stock)
10k miles



2014 Eagle Cadillac Limo
29,578 miles

FROM OUR GARAGE TO YOUR DOOR IN AS LITTLE AS 5 DAYS

Thinking of Selling?

Protect your legacy
with a partner who
cares.

Begin the Conversation at
newbridgegroup.com

404-542-9956 todd@newbridgegroup.com



Todd Reich
Client Relations

INDUSTRY NEWS

ASD Empowers Funeral Homes with Automatic Message Transcriptions

Media, PA — ASD – Answering Service for Directors, the leading provider of compassionate and reliable answering solutions to funeral homes across the nation, is proud to announce the introduction of a groundbreaking feature to enhance client communication. Effective immediately, ASD’s state-of-the-art answering service will include automatic message transcriptions, offering funeral home clients a seamless and efficient way to access and review their messages.

ASD’s new automatic message transcriptions provide a significant advantage to funeral directors by enabling them to search through messages via keywords. Transcriptions will empower funeral directors to swiftly locate specific information related to a particular case by scanning the entire conversation text during the search process. This enhanced searching capability ensures that funeral directors can efficiently access and retrieve relevant details from conversations with ease.

This innovative addition to ASD’s suite of services reaffirms the company’s commitment to delivering exceptional support to funeral professionals, enabling them to focus on providing comfort to grieving families without the burden of managing and deciphering voicemail messages. While call recordings remain a vital tool for funeral directors to determine the emotional state of bereaved callers prior to returning their call, message transcriptions will streamline the process of reviewing messages while providing added clarity and searching abilities.

“ASD is proud to be the first answering service that allowed clients to listen to recordings of their calls. Our new automatic transcriptions will provide funeral homes even more oversight by giving them a complete log of every conversation ASD handles on their behalf,” said ASD Family-Member Owner, Kevin Czachor. “In addition to helping funeral homes monitor their communication, this solution can also save funeral home teams a great deal of time by offering effortless message retrieval.”

In addition to transcribing every incoming call, ASD

will also now be transcribing calls after they are patched to the on-call director, giving the on-call director a full record of their conversations. This will also apply to any calls that are placed using the company’s mobile app. ASD is also currently back processing all previously recorded messages. Before the year’s end, the company expects to have finished processing all recorded messages from the past 10 years.

ASD clients can access their call transcriptions by logging into ASD’s secure website and selecting any message. In the coming months, the company plans to update ASD Mobile for iPhone and Android to make message transcriptions accessible via the app as well.

About ASD

ASD – Answering Service for Directors has created a new class of answering service for the funeral profession. Family owned and operated since 1972, ASD blends state-of-the-art technology with an extensive, 6-month training program focusing on compassionate care. The company’s custom-built communication systems and sophisticated mobile tools were designed solely to meet the needs of funeral professionals. By offering funeral directors unmatched protection for their calls, ASD has redefined the role of an answering service for funeral homes. For more information, visit www.myASD.com or call 1-800-868-9950.



**Automatic
Message
Transcriptions**

POWERED BY **ASD**



Ward's Funeral Supplies

912-309-9295



YOU CAN COUNT ON
DOUG WARD
FOR YOUR FUNERAL
SUPPLY NEEDS.

Your Mortuary Cot Headquarters



Ferno

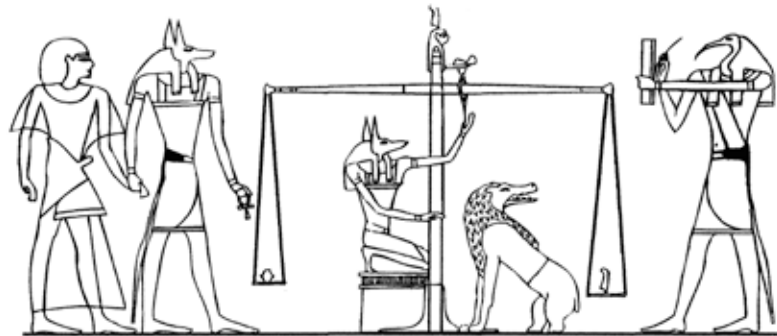


Junkin



MOBI

www.wardstransportservice.com



When you weigh the options

YARBROUGH MORTUARY SERVICES



The right choice
1-877-664-2802
Jackson, TN



REMOVAL, EMBALMING, OVERLAND TRANSPORTATION
Linda Yarbrough, Office Manager
Brandon Yarbrough, Licensed Funeral Director & Embalmer

The Glory

Solid walnut with a solid cherry panel and laser engraved embellishments are combined to create a three-dimensional masterpiece. Full color logo applied.

7 3/4" x 7 3/4" x 9 7/8"
100% American Made



The Glory - Auburn University



The Glory - University of Georgia



The Glory - University of Alabama



The Glory - University of South Carolina



The Glory - Mississippi State



The Glory - Clemson University



The Glory - Oklahoma State University



The Glory - Florida State University



The Glory - Louisiana State University



Collegiate Memorials, LLC, is fully-licensed to display the insignia of most major United States colleges and universities.

Collegiate Memorials®

Celebrating the Lives of Alumni & University Friends™

478-405-1999

| www.collegiatememorials.net

LICENSED COLLEGE THEMED MEMORIAL PRODUCTS

June 2023 Ad Index

| | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| American Casket Company | 15 | www.americancasketscompany.com |
| Ambulance & Coach Sales | 29 | www.ambulanceandcoach.com |
| “ASD” - Answering Service for Directors | 25 | www.myasd.com |
| Cherokee Child Caskets | 23 | www.cherokeechildcaskets.com |
| C&J Financial | 40 | www.cjf.com |
| Collegiate Memorials | 2, 3, 36 | www.collegiatememorials.com |
| Funeral Service Foundation | 8 | www.funeralservicefoundation.org |
| FuneralCall | 4 | www.funeralcall.com |
| IMSA | 20 | www.imsa-online.org |
| John A. Gupton College | 31 | www.guptoncollege.edu |
| Matthews-Aurora Funeral Solutions | 7 | www.matthewsaurora.com |
| NewBridge Group | 33 | www.newbridgegroup.com |
| Service Casket/SICH | 17 | www.sichcasket.com |
| Shields Professional Vehicles | 33, 39 | www.myhearse.com |
| Talk of a Lifetime | 4 | www.talkofalifetime.org |
| Thacker Caskets | 11 | www.thackercaskets.com |
| United Midwest Savings Bank | 38 | www.umwsb.com |
| Ward’s Funeral Supplies | 35 | 912-309-9295 |
| Weigel Strategic Marketing | 18 | www.weigelstrategicmarketing.webs.com |
| Wilbert EDU | 6 | www.wilbert.com/wilbertedu |
| Yarbrough Mortuary | 35 | 877-664-2802 |



United Midwest
Savings Bank

Funeral Home Acquisitions | Funeral Home Debt Consolidations | Funeral Home Renovations

SIMPLIFYING FUNERAL HOME LENDING



Chad Fondriest

614-205-7600

Senior VP - Commercial Lender
cfondriest@umwsb.com

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF YOUR FIRM

United Midwest is a national direct lender that specializes in lending to the funeral home industry. We understand the value of the business and the goodwill associated with a funeral home. We will lend against both fixed assets as well as the business and goodwill.

Call today and learn more.

LOAN PROGRAMS

Goodwill/Business
Real Estate Loans
Funeral Home Acquisitions
Funeral Home Refinancing

LOAN TERMS

Up to 90% Financing
Up to 25 Year Terms
Seller Carry Permitted



877-751-4622
www.umwsb.com
6460 Busch Blvd, Suite 201, Columbus, OH 43229



Since 1969, we've been the trusted transportation partner for family-owned funeral homes

Browse our latest inventory of vehicles ready for you

MASTER DEALER
PLATINUM & MK COACH

AUTHORIZED DEALER
FEDERAL EAGLE COACH COMPANY



NEW

2023 K2 Chevy Traverse



NEW

2023 Cadillac-XT5-Platinum Phoenix R



NEW

2023 MK Lincoln Grand Legacy



2022 K2 Chevy Traverse
1,061 miles



NEW

2022 Platinum Cadillac XT5 Cortege



2017 MK Lincoln Hearse (2 in stock)
28k miles



2011 2011 S&S Cadillac Hearse
60k miles



2010 Eagle Lincoln Hearse
46k miles



NEW

2023 Chrysler Pacifica

FROM OUR LOT TO YOUR DOOR IN AS LITTLE AS 5 DAYS



Scan this code with your smartphone's camera to visit our Youtube channel for new vehicle video tours:



NOTHING IS FASTER OR EASIER THAN QUICK CLAIM™!

Assignment Funding at Your Fingertips



FIRST OF ITS KIND & EASY TO USE WITH ALL-IN-ONE CAPABILITIES

DOWNLOAD OUR REVOLUTIONARY APP

800.785.0003



CJF.com

