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MAGAZINE

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Education in Funeral Service

Mortuary Law and Price - New Perspectives on an Ever
-Changing Field by Tom Leetz
Jefferson State College Student Essays: by Baraka Truss
and Brandi Gaddis
John A. Gupton College Student Essays: by Daniela McLennan
and Brittney Easley
COVID and the Mortuary School by Michael Burns
Mortuary College Listings
A Lesson on Adding Marketing to Your Communications
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U.S. Deaths Top 3 Million in 2020 - Most Ever Counted
Working Best With an Outside Agency to Create Your Firm's
Website by Wendy Harris
How to Handle Negative Google Funeral Reviews
by Welton Hong
Infant Embalming Procedures (Part II of III part series)
by Todd Van Beck
Deanna Wilkinson Appointed IMSA Board Trustee

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“We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called opportunity and its first chapter is New Year’s Day.”



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notes from the editor

Education... Or the Lack Thereof

by John Yopp

Has “Education” in funeral service lost its’ sense of urgency and importance for the future of the Death Care Industry? The lack of urgency and importance is not derived from the mortuary schools themselves, but possibly in the work place of the funeral home, crematoriums and cemeteries.

There are mixed opinions on the options of curriculum that the mortuary colleges provide or should provide, as some believe that there is not near enough business, finance or other business related courses to better prepare the student for the next level in the job world. Contrarily, the mortuary colleges have always done an excellent job with the curriculum including the quality of the classes and instructors in preparing the students for embalming techniques, restorative art and other anatomy details.

However, embalming, casketing and displaying the deceased is only part of the service that a funeral home provides. How can the schools teach profitability management, merchandising, marketing and advertising, facility maintenance, cost of labor and benefits, vehicle and rolling stock needs and upkeep, proper bookkeeping and reporting, quarterly taxes, etc....., within their core curriculum and still teach the necessary techniques for embalming and other body preparations?

If the business side of the Death Care Industry is barely touched on during class time and apprenticeship, where in their near future can they expect to begin the learning process on the business side of the funeral home operation?

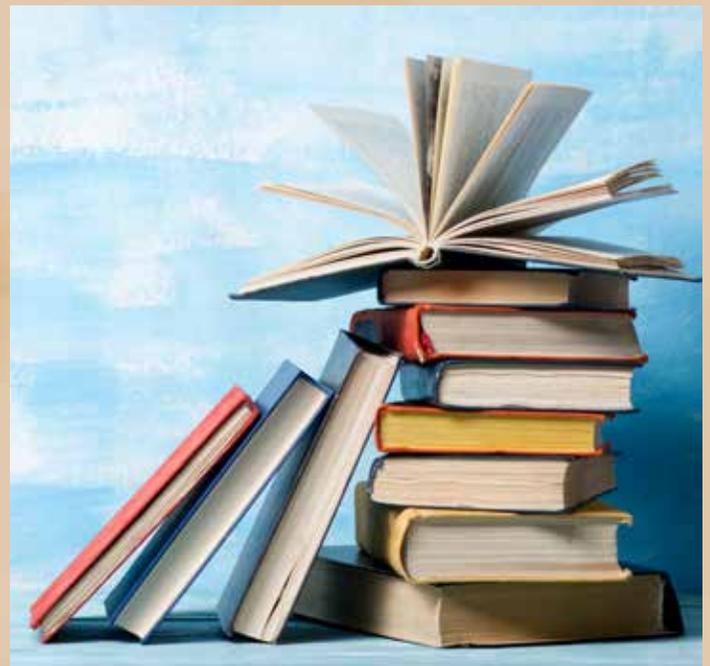
An area that NFDA has been effective in doing is their “Meet the Mentors” program. This allows those new to the employment world of the industry to meet and learn first hand other aspects of the business from a personal standpoint. Unfortunately, this program is only offered over a couple of days, so the individual has to take that knowledge back to his or her workplace and no follow

up program is provided.

What an owner and/or manager of each business needs to carve out time is to “mentor” these young and rising stars on how a successful business is operated. From the days of washing cars, to running death certificates to making 2:00am removals, somewhere in these responsibilities needs to be the understanding of successful merchandising, cremation options to families, budgeting, etc...

This training and mentoring helps round out the expertise of each and every employee, young and old, which ultimately gives the families of the community the highest quality of service and understanding for the care of their loved one, that they richly deserve.

The industry owners and managers needs to be more conscious and diligent in providing better training and take the time for each and every employee to understand ALL aspects of running a successful operation, so “teamwork” and quality of service and profitability is a universal word for all concern.



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Mortuary Law & Practice: New Perspectives on an Ever-Changing Field

By Tom Leetz

Mortuary Law is typically a core course in a mortuary college curriculum for an associate's or bachelor's degree. At all three Pierce Mortuary Colleges, for example, Funeral Service Law as well as Business Law are required core courses for both an Associate in Applied Science degree and a Bachelor of Science in Funeral Service Management. As mortuary law is ever-evolving in response to ever-evolving funeral service trends and issues, I recently wrote and published a contemporary textbook entitled *Mortuary Law & Practice* which is being used in Pierce Colleges' curriculum. Intended for mortuary students, law students, and as a guide to the law for practicing attorneys, this edition offers an insightful look into aspects of mortuary business that even non-students and non-attorneys will find intriguing.

We live in a litigious society. Those who endeavor to practice in the funeral industry are not exempt from the effects of lawsuit due to their alleged errors or omissions. Whether you are an employee or the owner of a funeral home it has become more a matter of when, and not if, you will be a party to a lawsuit. Furthermore, it's a rather simple basis upon which a plaintiff can compel you to be "at issue." He merely needs to state "fair notice of the claims and grounds they rest upon, and relief sought". This does not mean that the case will survive discovery or even summary judgment. But within this age of social media and instant communication, reputations hang in the balance,

and perhaps irreparable damage and expense.

The very nature of funeral service is that it is emotionally charged. Judges may be specifically generous toward grieving plaintiffs favoring the deep pockets of the defendant whom should know or should have known. Therefore, it's never been more important for the funeral practitioner to be well versed in the machinations of the law. There also seems to be a sociological trend demanding remedies at law for

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an ever-increasing number of recognized causations of harm. Consequently, even the simplest of unintended actions can lead to expensive and embarrassing consequences and at the very least the loss of a career or a business.

The definition of funeral service is constantly changing. Those wishing to remain career bound will need to be at the top of their game. The tools to survival will be continued education and experience. This will mean practicing within the boundaries of the law, a constant eye on compliance, and anticipating each move like a game of chess.

Mortuary students and practicing funeral professionals are well-advised to understand the set of rules and prescribed remedies for conduct within the performance of mortuary business. Mortuary Law & Practice examines these rules and remedies, encompassing the sum of torts, contracts, administrative, civil, common, and criminal laws but specifically pertaining to and applying within the realm of funeral business.

While funeral law operates within a recognized classification similar to other boutique categories such as equestrian, trucking and nursing homes, due to each category's unique features of operation the law and its application are then adapted to match its specific distinctions.

The very essence of mortuary law lay within the common law. Although now promulgated within sophisticated codifications of State and Federal enactments we are compelled to practice via Occupational Safety Health Association (OSHA), Federal Trade Commission (FTC), Building Codes, and various other administrative occupational rules and standards. However, the definition of a corpse, deciding who has authority for disposition, and responsibility for payment of a funeral can be traced back to the roots of Western civilization.

For every funeral service practitioner even the most routine of working days will touch and concern a myriad of laws. These laws and rules will form the basis of your decisions and become the foundation for your successful operation. Without such rules our industry might not be safe for the public, consistent in operation, or even manage to survive in an orderly manner.

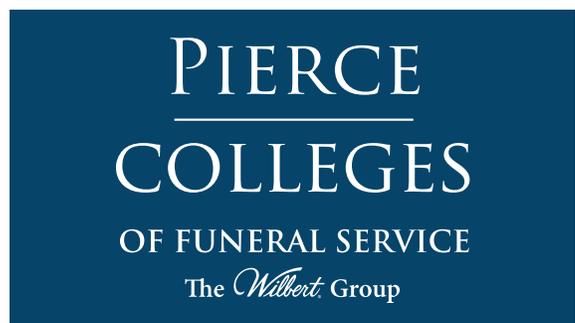
The purpose of Mortuary Law & Practice is manifold, as should be the purpose of studying mortuary law. It endeavors to offer a clear picture of where this concept of mortuary business started, and how the very nature of disposing of the dead demanded temperance and regulation. It specifies the duties and obligations with which a funeral service practitioner is imbued. It clearly articulates and emphasizes that this industry is undergoing constant change. As we change philosophically, the industry will change; therefore, the laws and rules will change accordingly.

Mortuary Law & Practice is not meant to be a treatise but rather to challenge the student of mortuary law and to think outside the book, offering real time application to their own careers. The most successful and satisfied funeral practitioners will be those who can successfully apply their knowledge and avoid the distress that comes with wondering how a judge or jury may find on their behalf.

Tom Leetz is owner of O'Connor-Leetz Funeral Home in Elgin, Illinois, and is also a practicing attorney. You can contact Tom at tleetz@oconnor-leetz.com on any questions pertaining to this article, the textbook, or funeral or mortuary law in general.



“Mortuary Law & Practice” by Tom Leetz is printed and distributed by Pierce Companies and for use by Pierce Mortuary Colleges. The book is beautifully illustrated and contains self-tests to challenge the reader's knowledge. If interested in purchasing a copy, please contact Pierce Companies (800) 527-6419.



Jefferson State Community College Student Essays



Baraka J. Truss is a student at Jefferson State Community college enrolled in the full degree Funeral Service Education program. She is currently serving her apprenticeship at Royal Funeral Home,

Inc. located in Huntsville, Alabama under the supervision of Mrs. Karen Jones Smith.

“The challenges I foresee in serving families in the future”

There is a myriad of challenges that face the funeral service business that was not under consideration a few years ago. As a result of the worldwide pandemic, funeral directors are forced to adjust and adapt to how he or she will service families in their time of mourning. Living in these unprecedented times have augmented the grief of bereaved families and mode of operation for funeral directors because of the challenges they face. How families interact with the funeral home providing the services is certainly a challenging aspect. Other challenges are how families intermingle with each other and how funeral directors process their own emotions. Funeral directors will have to create non-traditional ways of communicating with families to obtain the necessary information to provide quality service while remaining in compliance with public health safety regulations. Technology has carried a perception of not being very personable because of the lack of intimate connectivity. However, technology is the safest mechanism to effectively communicate and remain safe simultaneously. When grief strikes, families need human interaction more than ever. Zoom and Skype are just a few innovative interface tools that are currently being utilized to provide access for the arrangement conference to take place. The digital signing of contracts and other official documents remove us further from that personable experience we are accustomed to having when servicing families.

Another challenge is how families interact with each other. Funerals allow for the closure that is needed to process the death of a loved one. During this most difficult moment in their lives, families desire to cling to each other to comfort and console one another. Physical affection such as hugging, hand holding and sharing a repast meal has been reduced because of CDC restrictions. Mask-wearing, social distancing, limited number of attendees at a chapel service as well as only allowing graveside services to take place, creates a sense of stress and anxiety that many believe can only be overcome by the comfort of family. Funeral directors are challenged to keep families feeling some sense of togetherness with the services that are rendered. Another challenge potentially facing the funeral service industry is more personal than business. Funeral directors are human beings as well. He or she has feelings and emotions and other life stressors that may affect the funeral service business. There are many studies that discuss the mental, physical, and social issues that funeral directors face. How to overcome these issues remains to be discovered. Blogger Jeff Staab noted that funeral directors tend to have high emotional pain tolerance to death. He also stated that they immerse themselves into the family's situations and their constant exposure to death are things that cause funeral directors to lack care for themselves. It has been witnessed that funeral directors can become agitated, moody and at times just rude. Not because they practice this type of behavior as a regular way of doing business, but they too have personal life events that they must miss due to being fully available to the families they serve. Although there are many other challenges that could be noted, the uncertainties of life remain a mystery. Those mysteries carry over into the funeral service business and funeral directors must be prepared come what may. The first line in the poem noted by Father Stedman titled, The Four Last Things, expresses it best; Life is short, and death is sure, the hour of death remains obscure. Despite these challenges, the individuals in the communities where funeral directors serve can take their last breath with assurance knowing that someone will be there to lay them to rest.



My name is Brandi Gaddis and I am twenty-one years old. I have been married to my husband Lucas for about two years. We do not have children, but we do have a miniature pinture dog named Lily that loves to wear sweaters and four squishy pet frogs

that I love dearly. Lucas and I are both in college working towards our goals. I am in my first semester at Jefferson State Community College studying funeral service education and serving my apprenticeship at Radney Funeral Home in Alexander City, Alabama. My passion and goal is to be a successful funeral director and make a positive impact on everyone around me. I have a huge personality as I am very loving and cheery towards everyone I meet. I know I am capable of doing anything I set my mind to.

“What led me to choose funeral service as a career”

Funeral service has been an occupation I have been drawn to since elementary school. There are many people in this field that have family or friends that have worked in funeral service, however, I have not had either as an influence. I remember attending my great grandmother’s funeral in the third grade and being in awe of the funeral home. I was infatuated with the fancy viewing rooms with numerous couches and chairs, the pink and blue ceiling lights caught my attention, and I will never forget the nicely dressed staff who carried themselves with great professionalism. I remember seeing my great grandmother in her casket under the colored lights. I touched her face and was shocked by how different she felt after being embalmed. Children are notorious for being inquisitive, and after that experience I had a million questions about embalming and funerals. My parents were elusive to my questions as death and disposition can be a difficult topic for children to grasp. Years went by and I revisited my passion to learn more about funeral service in college after a disheartening experience in nursing school. Although I was excelling in nursing school, I quickly realized that my passions were elsewhere.

Jefferson State Community College

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I discontinued my nursing program and began taking more general education classes to give myself time to look into funeral service. I researched funeral director and embalmer occupations in my free time. I read articles, watched videos, and scouted out my local funeral homes to find a funeral director to talk to. I managed to speak to a local funeral director over the phone about his job. I was so excited as I asked him question after question; I felt as though I were speaking with a famous celebrity. When I expressed my interest in the field and asked for guidance, I was heartbroken by the response I received. Although I knew where the conversation was going, I listened to his perspective and concerns because he is still to this day a very successful funeral director. Discouraged, I thanked him for his time and replayed the conversation in my head again and again. Even though I felt hopeless, I knew that this is what I am meant to do in life, so I refused to give up. I called Jefferson State Community College and spoke with Dr. Jzyk Ennis about the funeral service education program. With my hope rekindled, I called a few more local funeral homes and was accepted into an apprenticeship program under Mr. Randy Anderson at Radney Funeral Home in Alexander City, Alabama. I am proud of myself for not giving up, and I am so thankful to everyone that has been supportive to me

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institutions, higher education can be out of reach for many families. Jefferson State prides itself on providing accessible, economical education of the highest caliber. I myself am a graduate of Jefferson State. I experienced firsthand how a quality, affordable educational opportunity prepares students to transfer to a four-year institution or enter the workforce.

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*Keith A. Brown, President
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John A. Gupton College Student Essays



Daniela McLellan recently relocated to Nashville, TN from Bridgton, ME. She is currently enjoying getting to know her new city with her husband and biggest supporter, Ryan, their two dogs Gus and Vada, and two

cats Eleanor and Monty. Not during a pandemic you can find her at a live concert or scouting out a new antique store. Her interests include True Crime podcasts, taxidermy, Dolly Parton, and collecting the local hot sauces from everywhere she visits. She wants to make a difference in the Mortuary Science field and make John A. Gupton proud in the community she ends up serving.

I opened my acceptance letter to John A. Gupton College in the airport, waiting for a flight to Nashville on March 12, 2020. I began the process of applying to schools in November of 2019, before I knew what Covid-19 was. My husband and I were flying down to Nashville for a long weekend to look at the area where my possible new school would be. I opened the letter and cried tears of joy; my dream was beginning to unfold before me. As the months progressed, and with much uncertainty about what my first semester would look like in fall 2020, we packed the U-Haul and made the 2-day drive down to Tennessee from Maine. I knew that the school had been virtual since late March and that the school hoped to be back on campus by the time the fall semester began. My path to Mortuary School was paved by a love of studying other cultures and a desire to learn about their death practices. I had earned a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology in 2011 but was unsure what I wanted to use the degree for. It wasn't until I worked at a veterinary office that I truly realized what I needed to do. I worked with grieving pet owners as a Euthanasia Liaison and helped clients make choices

ranging from the cost of cremation options, how to sign the proper paperwork and



authorization forms, to guidelines for bringing a pet at home. As more and more clients began to request my assistance with these questions and thanked me for helping them through this difficult process when I returned their beloved pet's ashes, I realized I could use my knowledge of traditions, rites, and rituals to combine it with my desire to help families and turn it into my future.

As Mortuary Science students, we must honor the traditions of the Funeral Directors who came before us, but we must also embrace the ever-evolving trends of our chosen profession. This is becoming increasingly difficult, as our class started Mortuary School in the midst of a global pandemic. We are being taught and shown what it means to be a great Funeral Director and have incredible role models with different backgrounds and experiences in the world of Mortuary Science. One of the most important attributes I have taken away from my first semester is that we must form a connection with the families we serve in our community. Being known in your town or city can make all the difference when a family is looking for someone to help them. Attending events such as local basketball games, football games, concerts, community events, and church services are essential in forging those connections. This is also usually



accomplished with handshakes, hugs, or even the occasional high-five; these connections are also formed through smiles during the good times, and the signs of grief, compassion, and support during trying times. Unfortunately, many of these have been rendered impossible during the Covid-19 pandemic. We want to remain safe and, therefore, are now learning to smile with our eyes so it can come through while wearing a mask or working to learn to convey sorrow through a head tilt or our voices alone.

I realized, upon reflecting on my first semester, that though my Clinical rotations were interrupted by Covid-19, I am incredibly lucky to have this experience. How many people can say they attended mortuary school during a pandemic and saw it as an opportunity to come out stronger? I know, without a doubt, that I want to dedicate my life to the service of families and my community. This was greatly supported by my instructor, Mr. Todd Van Beck, a true leader in the field of Mortuary Science, who shows his passion and calling as a Funeral Director in each class I attend. He has shown me what it looks like to love what you do, every single day, and to want to share it with the world. He is not the first person to give me this gift, as I am currently mourning the loss of my mentor, Dr. David Starbuck, who not only helped me realize my passion for Anthropology and the study of death practices, but also supported my current career path. He recently passed away and I have struggled to grieve this loss, knowing I cannot travel to attend his memorial service and properly say goodbye. Sometimes, all it takes is being in the right seat, in the right classroom, to realize the path you are meant to follow, and I am incredibly grateful for their guidance. I know that my experience is not entirely unique, as I share each semester with my fellow classmates, peers, and instructors. I do feel, however, that each of us gets something different from our time at John A. Gupton College. Though I do not yet know what a “typical semester” resembles, I can imagine some of the things this pandemic has taken from me. One of the biggest being the opportunity to interact directly with my classmates. Group work, lab work, and clinicals have been impacted greatly by the pandemic, making it difficult to establish bonds, trust, and collegiality with my classmates. I look forward to the remainder of my studies at Gupton, and to see what each semester will look like as we change and grow as students and future Funeral Directors.

As I think back to my roots and early studies as an Anthropologist, I can't help but wonder what this pandemic will look like to future students. The evolution of the traditional funeral looks very different today to both the Funeral Director, the Embalmer, the families of the deceased, and the mourners who want to come to say goodbye to a loved one or a dear friend. The traditional funeral, pre-Covid19, would likely include the embalming of the deceased, a public viewing with open invitation for visitation, and then a private or sometimes public graveside burial in a cemetery. There has, however, been a noticeable shift in what has become the “new normal”. Funeral Homes are facing daily challenges to evolve quickly and discover new ways to serve their communities and families the best they can. This has been shown in the increase in “Drive-Through” services, small intimate services with immediate family with no more than 10 people until a larger gathering can be planned in the future, and virtual services on platforms such as Zoom or Facebook Live, so that family members, friends, and loved ones can do their best to say goodbye and feel a part of the ceremony.

The Funeral Industry is a resilient one, and Funeral Directors are adapting and evolving with the needs of the families they serve by increasing the number of arrangements over the phone that would usually be handled in their building. They are using programs such as DocuSign to ask families to complete documents and authorization forms digitally. Some Funeral Homes are even doing light remodeling to remove rows chairs to increase safety and be able to enforce the 6-Foot Rule. This increase in need for services presents its own challenges in scheduling, due to increased need for sanitation with limited space and resources. Families are responding to the challenges by scheduling out their memorial service months away, in the hopes that they will be able to gather as they once could, or even scheduling multiple services months apart to say goodbye in their own way.

Though I am still new to the Mortuary Science field and industry, I greatly look forward to my graduation in 2022, and for a chance to return to a time of more traditional funeral services. I am sure some of the innovations that have come from this time, including virtual and drive-through services, may remain. My hope, however, is that we come out of this pandemic with a new sense of the families we serve, and their

need to take time to grieve their loved ones. We will likely see an increase in the days of visitation and will be asked to schedule more elaborate celebrations of life. Once we are able to gather in more traditional ways, we will likely have stronger desires to view, touch, and mourn our departed. It is my sincere hope that having experienced mortuary school during this time will bring new tools, skills, and a deeper understanding of grief to my role in this chosen field.



My name is Brittney Easley and I'm a good ol' country girl from the small town of Union City, TN, where everybody knows everybody and everybody is family. I moved to Nashville, TN in 2003, to attend Tennessee State University. Of course, when I attended TSU, I had not yet discovered my

passion for mortuary science. While at Tennessee State University, I obtained a Bachelor's in Science as well as a minor in Psychology and Sociology. My goal was to attend Vanderbilt School of Law and become the next Michelle Obama but somewhere along the way, I lost my desire to become an attorney and began to search for fulfillment in other areas. Since graduating, I've had the pleasure and rewarding experience of working with children, in foster care, who have been dealt a variety of trials, troubles and traumas in life. Children who at times feel that they have no one to turn too and no one who would ever love them. I have assisted with adding hope back into the lives of children without hope and homes to those who were homeless. My friends laugh at me and tell me that I could never be rich because I'd give all my fortunes away to those who are less fortunate. I must say that they are probably right. At the end of the day, when I lay down to sleep each night, if I haven't helped at least one person that day, I have not lived my day to the fullest. I believe that the world would be a better place if everyone reached back, daily, and offered a helping hand to someone else.

Two of the Best Kept Secrets

Societal expectations and beliefs sometimes shape our views of what is acceptable as an occupation for males and females. As our world and views continue to progress, occupational boundaries are constantly being broken down and many industries are becoming less gender segregated when compared to previous generations. With advancements being made daily, we'd be foolish to believe that the funeral services business would not be included in the uprising of women in male-dominated industries.

Due to discrimination and other forms of bias, male-dominated industries are still very challenging for women to easily access despite the previously mentioned advancements. Even well-intended mentors continue to direct women to secretarial and "front of the house roles" in the funeral industry, instead of encouraging them to take on the more hands-on roles of embalming and crematory operation. Prior to the recent exposures that have opened my eyes to a whole new dimension, I believed that women who had the courage to enroll in funeral service programs, only enrolled with the intention of obtaining a funeral director certificate, instead of becoming a licensed embalmer. I believed that they handled the "behind the scenes tasks" and were never included in other pieces of the business.

Growing up, I did not see women embalmers or funeral directors, nor did I hear of the profession being spoken of by women. When I attended funerals, I would see the women ensuring that the families were comfortable in their seats and had everything they needed during the service. That's right, the women were almost always ushers! I've always admired those who worked in funeral services and have always desired to be a part of it. I finally decided that I was ready to pursue my passion and I began researching to get an idea of the requirements and necessary steps to obtain my goal. That is when I stumbled across John A. Gupton College. I was pleasantly surprised to find that the pathway to my dream occupation was within my grasp and actually attainable.

I am currently in my second semester of my first year at John A. Gupton College in Nashville, TN. Historical data for the school shows that enrollment is usually male dominated. Because of this, I had prepared

myself to be in classes where males were the majority. I had conditioned my mind to be ready to compete for my place in the crowd amongst my male counterparts. Upon attending my classes, unexpectedly, my experience was the exact opposite. During my first semester (Fall 2020), there were 175 students enrolled at Gupton College. Surprisingly, 100 of those students were women. As I reviewed more data related to the demographics at Gupton, I learned that in the 2018-2019 school year, there were a total of 168 enrolled students in which 79 were males and 89 were females (male-female ratio is 47:53). The enrollment of women has gradually surpassed the enrollment of men over the past few years.

As I continue my studies at Gupton, I am constantly being introduced to women that have pursued and accomplished exactly what I am currently seeking. I am inspired by these women that have obtained their funeral director licenses and are now either owners of funeral service businesses in which they are also the embalmer, or have been able to gain employment as an embalmer in the industry.

One of these successful women was gracious enough to sit down with me to discuss obstacles that she has endured during her time in the funeral services business. Delbrita Greene is a 2013 Gupton graduate and owner of Premier Funeral & Cremation Services in Nashville, TN. She is a first generation funeral director and embalmer. Delbrita also had to overcome some of the stigmas associated with being a woman in an industry that is almost always predominantly male saturated. She expressed discovering her passion for mortuary science when she was in the 10th grade. She shared that passion with her parents who thought it was a “strange profession” and encouraged her to pursue a degree at a “traditional university”. She compromised with her parents and believed that if she still had the desire to work in mortuary science once she graduated, she then could look into a professional school for funeral services. She went on to Tennessee State University which was the starting point of her career in the medical field as a respiratory therapist. After working a few years as a respiratory therapist, she still had the “what if” thought in her mind as it related to funeral services. She couldn’t fathom living without having explored her interest in mortuary science. She realized that her desire to work in the funeral services industry was as strong as ever, so she decided to step

out on faith and pursue her dream.

After graduating from Gupton College, Delbrita worked at local funeral homes, both family owned and corporate, before she began her own business in 2018. She says that she has encountered a few different types of discrimination from both previous co-workers and clients. Some male coworkers would try to make things hard for her and make sly comments about her strength and ability to complete some of the more cumbersome tasks. Some clients would request a different funeral director because they were not comfortable with an African-American female rendering services for their families. She states that the biggest hurdle that she’s encountered is misogyny manifested in patriarchy. “I’ve seen subpar directors be promoted instead of those who are qualified for the position and have the experience to support it. I’d know how to logistically plan for the day, but I’d still be overlooked and lose out to a mediocre male counterpart.” She states that she encourages women to not be discouraged by these hurdles that are likely to present themselves as they pursue jobs in the funeral industry. “Don’t let men, women or the workplace discourage you! You can get burned out easily, but don’t let anyone intimidate you. Women are more compassionate and detail oriented when it comes to grief, so use your instincts. You won’t always be the best. There will always be someone that is better than you, don’t be intimidated by that, be motivated by it.”

Although the challenges have been tough at times and it would be ideal if funeral directors could get the recognition of being essential staff and first responders that they deserve, Delbrita says that she has no regrets and that she would not change any of it. “I love serving families and I know that I have to get it right. It is so rewarding when I know that I have exceeded all of their expectations.”

In speaking with Delbrita, I was provided with an abundance of insight surrounding some of the challenges to be expected as a woman pursuing a career in mortuary science as well as some of the “rule of thumbs” that has led her to be the successful funeral director and embalmer she is today. I understand that there will be instances where my knowledge, skill and expertise are welcomed but my gender may not be. Through it all, women are encouraged to persevere even when it seems easier to give up.

Mortuary Colleges

ALABAMA

JEFFERSON STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION PROGRAM, (205) 856-7841

ARIZONA

CHANDLER-GILBERT COMMUNITY COLLEGE - Mortuary Science Program (Mesa), (480) 988-8501

ARKANSAS

ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY - MOUNTAIN HOME FUNERAL SERVICE PROGRAM, (870) 508-6157

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT HOPE FUNERAL SCIENCE PROGRAM, (870) 722-8523

CALIFORNIA

AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION, (916) 484-8145

CYPRESS COLLEGE - MORTUARY SCIENCE DEPARTMENT, (714) 484-7278

COLORADO

ARAPAHOE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAM, (303) 797-5716

CONNECTICUT

LINCOLN COLLEGE OF NEW ENGLAND - MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAM, (860) 628-4751

FLORIDA

FLORIDA STATE COLLEGE AT JACKSONVILLE - FUNERAL SERVICE PROGRAM, (904) 766-6622

MIAMI-DADE COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION PROGRAM, (305) 237-1244

ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICES PROGRAM, (727) 341-3781

GEORGIA

GUPTON-JONES COLLEGE OF FUNERAL SERVICE, (770) 593-2257

OGEECHEE TECHNICAL COLLEGE - DEPARTMENT OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION, (800) 646-1316 or (912) 681-5500

ILLINOIS

CARL SANDBURG COLLEGE - MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAM, (309) 345-8501

MALCOLM X COLLEGE - MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAM, (312) 850-7214

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY MORTUARY SCIENCE AND FUNERAL SERVICE, (618) 453-5698

WORSHAM COLLEGE OF MORTUARY SCIENCE, (847) 808-8444

INDIANA

IVY TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE - CENTRAL INDIANA MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAM, (317) 921-4325

IVY TECH COMMUNITY COLLEGE - NORTHWEST MORTUARY SCIENCE, (219) 392-3600 FAX: (219) 392-3609

MID-AMERICA COLLEGE OF FUNERAL SERVICE, (812) 288-8878

VINCENNES UNIVERSITY - FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION PROGRAM, (812) 888-5469

IOWA

DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE - MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAM, (515) 964-6244

KANSAS

KANSAS CITY KANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE - MORTUARY SCIENCE DEPARTMENT, (913) 288-7607

LOUISIANA

DELGADO COMMUNITY COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION, (504) 671-6245

MARYLAND

COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF BALTIMORE COUNTY - CATONSVILLE MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAM, (443) 840-4924

MASSACHUSETTS

FINE MORTUARY COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE, (781) 762-1211

CAPE COD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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MICHIGAN

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY - MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAM, (313) 577-2050

MINNESOTA

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA - PROGRAM OF MORTUARY SCIENCE, (612) 624-6464

MISSISSIPPI

EAST MISSISSIPPI COMMUNITY COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE TECHNOLOGY, (662) 476-5101

HOLMES COMMUNITY COLLEGE - MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAM, (601) 605-3327

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MISSOURI

ST. LOUIS COMMUNITY COLLEGE AT FOREST PARK - FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION, (314) 644-9327

NEW JERSEY

EASTWICK COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE PROGRAM, (201) 494-5062

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NORTH CAROLINA

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OHIO

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PITTSBURGH INSTITUTE OF MORTUARY SCIENCE, (412) 362-8500

SOUTH CAROLINA

PIEDMONT TECHNICAL COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION, (864) 941-8774

TENNESSEE

JOHN A. GUPTON COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE PROGRAMS, (615) 327-3927

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AMARILLO COLLEGE - MORTUARY SCIENCE, (806) 354-6035

COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL SERVICE, (281) 873-0262

DALLAS INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL SERVICE 3909, (214) 388-5466

NORTHEAST TEXAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION, (903) 434-8314

SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE - MORTUARY SCIENCE DEPARTMENT, (210) 486-1137

UTAH

SALT LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE - MORTUARY SCIENCE PROGRAM, (801) 957-6205

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JOHN TYLER COMMUNITY COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICES PROGRAM, (804) 706-5066

TIDEWATER COMMUNITY COLLEGE - FUNERAL SERVICE PROGRAM, (757) 822-7074

WASHINGTON

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University of District of Columbia Community College, (202) 274-5858

A Lesson on Adding Marketing To Your Communicatoins

By Joe Weigel

According to the American Marketing Association, marketing is defined as the activities and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers and society at large. Said another way, anything a family sees related to your products or services is sending a marketing message.

There's a common misconception among many small business owners, including funeral home owners that only certain items fall under the realm of marketing and for that matter marketing communications. The General Price List is a great example.

"We don't have to worry about the wording in this," funeral directors will say. "It's just our GPL, not a marketing piece." That's a foolish comment I've heard far too often during my career in funeral service.

"We don't need to be concerned about making the design attractive or to put a sales slant on the language," they go on to say. "This is just to get all the details together so we can squeeze it on as few pages as possible and meet our FTC obligations. We have other materials where we do the marketing stuff and tell our story."

The simple fact is that anything that represents you before a family is a marketing piece. You may not have developed it to serve that purpose. Further, you may not expect that someone who sees it will react to it as though it's an attempt to market your funeral home, but in reality, that's exactly what happens.

Once something like the GPL is given out, you lose control of where it goes. You have no idea of who in your family's sphere of influence may actually see it and read it. Yes, you may have developed your GPL to be FTC-compliant, but what happens when the family shows it to a friend? Or when it's found by a relative lying around the house when they return home after the service? How well does it create the all-important first impression?

So if it's a poorly designed, badly written document,

your funeral home is going to appear to be disorganized and less than professional. If it's nothing more than a dry recitation of the facts crammed onto one side of a piece of paper, your wonderful and remarkable company will be seen as dull and uninspired. Worst yet, it only lists a price and a few words – not a full description of the product or service and its purpose or benefit.

Where is it written that a GPL must be limited to one page, printed in black and white, and in a type font small enough so that it fits on one page? "But I make sure to print it on a nice sheet of paper" you remark. That line of reasoning is akin to putting lipstick on a pig.

Now that I think about it, maybe that's why funeral directors are so reluctant to give out their GPLs. Perhaps it has nothing to do with trying to "conceal" their pricing, but rather embarrassment for the quality of the printed piece.

Think about your favorite restaurant for a moment. How would your first impression have been impacted if the menu you received was photocopied on one sheet of paper with just the meal listed and the price – nothing about the entrée, such as how it is cooked, what sides are included, etc.? The same line of logic goes for your funeral home and your GPL.

Why not consider using your General Price List as a way to market your funeral home and the services you offer. Make use of visuals and photos to enhance the design. Take the design beyond one, two, or three pages. Tell a story about the products and services you offer

Families don't buy from companies. Families buy from people at companies. And if you want people to have confidence in your funeral home, you need to connect with them at a human level.

That's where the kind of language that some people ridicule as "marketingese" or "flowery" or "hype" can

help you. Well-designed and well-written documents are created to communicate at a one-to-one level. They're written to draw readers -- all readers -- in and guide them to the information they seek. They contain all the necessary facts and details, but they provide them conversationally and clearly.

Just as important, they're created to mirror the public image your company has worked so hard to earn in your noisy, highly competitive marketplace. Every contact a family has with your funeral home -- whether it's reading a social media post, viewing your website, or reading your GPL -- should carry the same voice and attitude.

Great companies achieve that consistency. Next time you visit Panera Bread, pay close attention to all the written material around you, from posters to the menu board to the packaging. The voice and the vibe are the same, and they scream Panera. Next time you stay at a Hampton Inn, pay attention to how everything from the flyers at the front counter to the posters in the elevators to the signage in the lounge reminds you which hotel you are staying at. You'll know for certain that you're not at Holiday Inn Express or Courtyard by Marriott.

Those companies recognize that every contact is actually a chance to strengthen their brands, so they take advantage of every opportunity to market their company's products and services. Start with your GPL. Then look around your funeral home for other opportunities. Adding some "marketing" to all your communications may not make your company a household name, but it can help you grow your funeral home more effectively.

Joe Weigel is the owner of Weigel Strategic Marketing, a communications firm delivering expertise and results across three interrelated marketing disciplines: strategy, branding, and communications. For more information, he can be reached at 317-608-8914 or joseph.weigel@gmail.com.

Weigel Strategic Marketing is a full-service marketing firm focused on helping businesses in funeral service succeed. From funeral service suppliers to cemeteries and funeral homes, Weigel Strategic Marketing operates as a marketing and communications resource that specializes in helping death care companies with their marketing challenges.

We know the ins and outs of traditional marketing, like print advertising and brochures. We also know a thing or two about digital marketing and developed a robust expertise in Online Reputation Management. Since we are small, we're nimble enough to help start-up companies and individual funeral homes. And since we've been doing this for more than twenty years, we also can help established funeral service companies with their marketing challenges.



Check out our website and be sure to visit our blog for the latest in marketing trends.

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

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US deaths in 2020 top 3 million, by far most ever counted



NEW YORK (AP) — This is the deadliest year in U.S. history, with deaths expected to top 3 million for the first time — due mainly to the coronavirus pandemic. Final mortality data for this year will not be available for months. But preliminary numbers suggest that the United States is on track to see more than 3.2 million deaths this year, or at least 400,000 more than in 2019. U.S. deaths increase most years, so some annual rise in fatalities is expected. But the 2020 numbers amount to a jump of about 15%, and could go higher once all the deaths from this month are counted.

That would mark the largest single-year percentage leap since 1918, when tens of thousands of U.S. soldiers died in World War I and hundreds of thousands of Americans died in a flu pandemic. Deaths rose 46% that year, compared with 1917.

COVID-19 has killed more than 318,000 Americans and counting. Before it came along, there was reason to be hopeful about U.S. death trends.

The nation's overall mortality rate fell a bit in 2019, due to reductions in heart disease and cancer deaths. And life expectancy inched up — by several weeks — for the second straight year, according to death certificate data released Tuesday by the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention. But life expectancy for 2020 could end up dropping as much as three full years, said Robert Anderson of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC counted 2,854,838 U.S. deaths last year, or nearly 16,000 more than 2018. That's fairly good news: Deaths usually rise by about 20,000 to 50,000 each year, mainly due to the nation's aging, and growing, population.

Indeed, the age-adjusted death rate dropped about 1% in 2019, and life expectancy rose by about six weeks to 78.8 years, the CDC reported.

“It was actually a pretty good year for mortality, as things go,” said Anderson, who oversees CDC death statistics.

The U.S. coronavirus epidemic has been a big driver of deaths this year, both directly and indirectly.

The virus was first identified in China last year, and the first U.S. cases were reported this year. But it has become the third leading cause of death, behind only heart disease and cancer. For certain periods this year, COVID-19 was the No. 1 killer.

But some other types of deaths also have increased.

A burst of pneumonia cases early this year may have been COVID-19 deaths that simply weren't recognized as such early in the epidemic. But there also have been an unexpected number of deaths from certain types of heart and circulatory diseases, diabetes and dementia, Anderson said.

Many of those, too, may be related to COVID. The virus could have weakened patients already struggling

with those conditions, or could have diminished the care they were getting, he said.

Early in the epidemic, some were optimistic that car crash deaths would drop as people stopped commuting or driving to social events. Data on that is not yet in, but anecdotal reports suggest there was no such decline.

Suicide deaths dropped in 2019 compared with 2018, but early information suggests they have not continued to drop this year, Anderson and others said.

Drug overdose deaths, meanwhile, got much worse. Before the coronavirus even arrived, the U.S. was in the midst of the deadliest drug overdose epidemic in its history.

Data for all of 2020 is not yet available. But last week the CDC reported more than 81,000 drug overdose deaths in the 12 months ending in May, making it the highest number ever recorded in a one-year period.

Experts think the pandemic's disruption to in-person

treatment and recovery services may have been a factor. People also are more likely to be taking drugs alone — without the benefit of a friend or family member who can call 911 or administer overdose-reversing medication.

But perhaps a bigger factor are the drugs themselves: COVID-19 caused supply problems for dealers, so they are increasingly mixing cheap and deadly fentanyl into heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine, experts said. "I don't suspect there are a bunch of new people who suddenly started using drugs because of COVID. If anything, I think the supply of people who are already using drugs is more contaminated," said Shannon Monnat, a Syracuse University researcher who studies drug overdose trends.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

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COVID and the Mortuary School

By Michael S. Burns, Dean of Faculty and Students

It has been quite a year at the Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science!! COVID gave us a few challenges that we were not sure we could overcome. However, with a little extra work and a whole lot of cooperation by the faculty and students, we are proud to say all our students graduated on time in 2020.

Our extensive online program didn't feel the punch that hard since they are already in their own homes while attending classes, but the campus students had a lot to do in a little bit of time. Essentially, they became Alternative Delivery students. Not quite all online, but not quite all on campus either. We were able to build a program for them to continue their studies on a temporary basis. We were pulled in many directions by the Department of Education, the state, and the country health department. But it worked out in the end, as it always does with PIMS.

PIMS OnLine, in its 21st year, offers three cohort starts a year, Spring, Summer, and Fall. The program is made up of 8-week courses that are taken two (or three) at a time. The standard program lasts two years and the student (depending on their state regulations) is then ready to become an apprentice or a funeral director. The student does get to come to Pittsburgh for three days to experience their Restorative Art lab. If you have been following us on Facebook, Instagram, or YouTube you know we have the most modern up to date lab experience of all mortuary schools and it's getting better every day. We are about to make an announcement very soon about another enhancement to the RA lab. So stay tuned.

Since COVID hit we have been experiencing a spike in applications to our online program while still



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- Easy access to financial aid and other institutional grants

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completely filling our campus classrooms. We think prospective students are realizing how essential funeral directors are and have a great interest in a career that never goes away. This year, in fact, due to the overwhelming number of applications, we are opening our online program to TWO new starts in Spring of 2021. That is twice as many students as any other Spring start. PIMS must be doing something right to get that kind of response.

Hopefully the COVID pandemic will begin to subside with the vaccine now being distributed and we can get back to our normal lives, but know that at PIMS, we never missed a step.

PIMS Adding Extra Student Cohort to Meet Demand

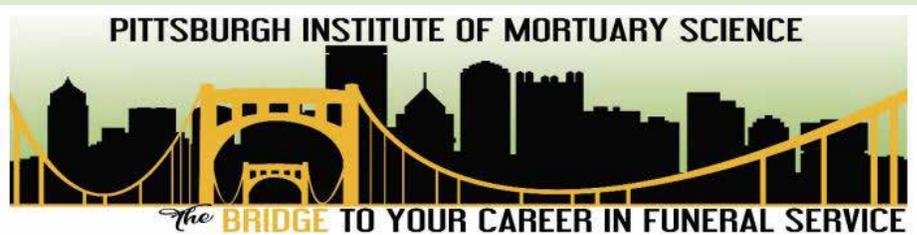
Due to the overwhelming response to our January, 2021 Distance Education start, PIMS is excited to announce that we will be offering a second online cohort. Classes are filling quickly – Enroll Today!

PIMS Announces no tuition increase for the 2020-2021 Academic year

The Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science is pleased to announce that it will not be increasing tuition for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Dr. Barry Lease, Program Director and board member communicated that the PIMS Board of Directors, at their most recent meeting, declared that due to the COVID-19 issues we have all faced this year, and the unexpected financial burden it has placed on many current and future students, a per credit tuition increase was not in the best interest of their mortuary education.

PIMS prides itself on providing the best opportunity possible to educate their students; this is just another way to make it happen.



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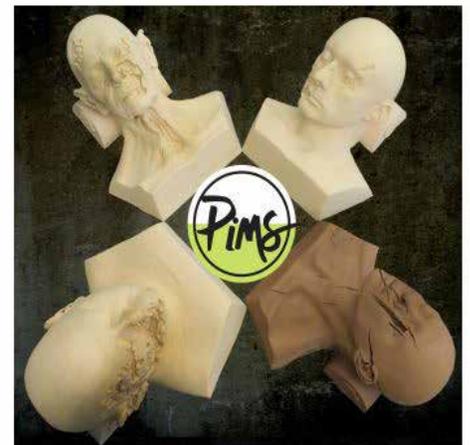
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How to Best Work With An Outside Agency (Resource) to Create Your Firm's Website

By Wendy Harris

You have decided it is time to build or update your website. Awesome! No time like the present, right? You also realize that you don't have the time/patience/skill set to learn how to build it yourself. You have a business to run and employees to manage. Before you set out on the next step of finding and hiring a website designer, you have some work to do. I am sorry to say that. It would be so much easier for all parties to just send the payment and have it done. It is their job after all, right? Not exactly. It is their job to pull your assets together and put them online in a way that is functional and also makes your business shine. However, they will need your assistance on several fronts during this venture. The following are some key areas that will need your attention before your website is built.

1) Have your content (text)

Don't expect the website designer to explain your business to your prospects. No one knows your business as well as you do. You are in your business every day and likely have been for some time. What are your client's pain points? What problems do you solve for them? What is your process for doing that? You will want to answer these questions and also create an FAQ if you don't already have one.

Also, content for the web is a bit different from content you may be used to creating. Your writing should be less verbose because people are not as interested in your business as you are. They are impatient, they are mobile. They are not going to read it verbatim. Give them the highlight reel. If they are interested, they can always drill down for more information.

Don't forget the About us and Bio pages. Often the most commonly read pages! People want to know who they are doing business with- the old adage "like you, know you, trust you" still stands even if we are online.

Please see the "keywords" section for additional information here.

2) Site Map

A site map looks and feels like a family tree. It shows

which pages are sub-pages, or children of the main pages and outlines how your website will be structured. Either you and/or your website company in partnership should create a site map before building your website. This will determine the hierarchy of information and also the scope of the project. For example, you may have anticipated a simple 5-page website but then realized that you actually need to purchase a 20-page website build due to forms and essential additional information. The essential pages are: Home, Services and sub-pages, About, FAQ, Contact.

3) Examples

Find websites that reflect both your likes and dislikes-graphically and logically. This will help your designer and you to create something you like. Do you like a traditional look, or a modern look, perhaps a bit more flair, and fun animations, or a different sort of personality altogether? It may help to determine your preferred fonts (sans serif for a modern clean look or a more traditional font) and colors. Font pairings are important, there are many guides on fonts that go well together. Stick to 2 fonts at most. 1 is fine as long as it offers different styles (bold, thin, italic, etc.). Too many are overwhelming.

Perhaps you like the information flow of one, the design of another, and the feel of another. The more the merrier; This information provides more definition for your designer.

4) Colors.

You should decide on a color palette. This ensures that the colors will complement each other. You should also have a separate color that complements the color scheme but stands out. This color should be reserved for buttons and other links. This should be left up to a professional palette maker such as colors.co. Start with a color you like, and the palette will be automatically created. Likely your designer will do this for you, but you should agree on the palette before starting.

5) Competitors website URLs.

Share your competitor's websites with your designer.

This will help them to understand your business and keywords. They will be sure to keep you competitive and on par with the industry in your area.

6) Keywords.

Do a keyword analysis at kwfinder.com. You can also search keywords your competitors are using. This is vital to ensuring that your website comes up in searches for your product and or service.

7) Set up your local business with Google.

This is a big one. It is FREE. You need to have a physical business address that will be verified by Google. After you set up your free Google account you will need to go to google.com/business. Once done, your website will come up in a local search almost as predominantly as a paid ad- for free!

8) Assemble your testimonials.

Have all of your testimonials or happy client quotes in one Word or txt file. Do not make your website designer search for them or cobble emails together. Also, decide if you are going to use actual client names and or pictures. You will need your clients' permission of course. If you have great Yelp reviews your designer can add code to have them automatically feed onto your site. But, be careful of this because if you get an unhappy review, they tend to stay at the top and will be there on your website for all to view.

9) Monthly hosting and maintenance.

Will you have the designer host your site or do you want to host it? If you are going to host it, will you pay for a hosting company, or have your IT person put it on a local server? Maintenance is also a concern. Don't confuse hosting (running the website and holding the files in a safe place) with maintenance. Maintenance involves updating the platform and plugins. There is often a flat fee for this as well as a fixed price per hour if assistance is needed. Updates are not always smooth. You do not want to avoid this though, or your site could become outdated, susceptible to hackers, and/or simply cease to function.

10) Platform

Which platform will you use? Will the platform also be the host (Wix)? If you choose this latter option, know that this is a long term relationship because if you cease to use the platform that is your host, your website will cease to exist, and you will not be able to

simply upload it somewhere else. If you will be using WordPress, you will be able to own your website and move it anywhere. Perhaps you have an IT person who will build it using traditional HTML language. It may not be as sexy, but it will work well and dependably with less updating required. Every platform has its pros and cons. Agree upon this before you begin.

11) Review design sample.

View a "wireframe" and/or example page review before full viewing, before the site is built. You should view an example page or a brand guide page that will show you the colors and the fonts used together online. This can be done on the actual site, on a server like Flywheel, or a Photoshop file from your designer. You should approve this page before having them build the entire site. This will save everyone time and frustration.

12) Contact info- email account.

This is an easy one! Ensure you have the correct email for the contact form (Contact us page). Use a professional email address. This will be automatically forwarded to your email. It can be changed at any time. Test the contact page yourself and ensure you get the emails as you should. There should be some sort of "Captcha" included to reduce the amount of spam email you receive.

13) Images.

These should be ideally of your firm, don't expect the design firm to come to you to take them. There are many sites from which to get stock photos and some of those will be fine (pixabay.com, unsplash.com, 123rf.com). You will want to add the authenticity of your business by showing pictures of your facility, staff, and grounds.

14) Price and expectations.

Ensure that pricing is known and agreed upon. A contract is a must. Ensure that your expectations are realistic. If you are spending \$1,000 for your website, you cannot expect it to look and feel like apple's corporate site. If you need e-commerce expect to pay a lot more. The more pages you have, the higher the cost.

15) Videos.

Will you have videos on your site? If so, create them before hiring a web designer. Ensure that they are on a YouTube site that you have branded with your logo contact information. Send the designer explicit

instructions with links to each video. Tell them where you want the video (s) and what you want the videos to accomplish.

16) Content before the build.

This is a tough one as many feel they can just start building right away. Most designers have a hard and fast rule; Do not start building until you have all of the assets period. This is because they know that it otherwise can be a project that is dragged out and will require excessive amounts of time to get back into sections and areas that should have been completed as new assets are added. It is time consuming, inefficient, and frustrating for the designer building the site. This is an essential rule to ensure an efficient project. It is a common problem that people will let it drag on indefinitely. Your business management may pull you in another direction taking your focus off of your website. Therefore, most experienced designers will include payment due in full within 3 months of starting the project. The designer is most likely not the one holding up the project as they want to get paid and continue to market to other prospects.

Behind every good website is careful planning and collaboration. It will be a much more rewarding experience if you go into it fully prepared. You wouldn't go on a tropical vacation without bringing your swimsuit. Don't let this information overwhelm you.

It is intended to assist in managing your expectations and ensure that you get what your business needs and deserves. If you are unable to prepare your website content properly, it is okay to have a simple 2-3 page brochure website so that prospects can find your business and contact you. Then, as time allows, you can transition into a more robust website.

It is essential in 2021 and especially during a pandemic where people are hesitant to go to your place of business, that you have an effective online presence.

Windy Harris brings over 20 years' experience in the death care industry. She has worked at Curtis-Mitchell Associates marketing for funeral homes and cemeteries. She worked as Marketing Director for a preneed fund management company



for 15+ years overseeing the budget, designing all collateral, managing convention logistics, website design, advertising, direct mail marketing, promo materials, print collateral and copyediting articles. She is the owner of DeathCareWebsites.com and uses her industry knowledge to design websites for death care clients such as funeral homes, cemeteries, monument companies and associations.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Tukios Expands its Funeral Home Software Offerings by Acquiring Aftercare.com

Aftercare.com has joined the team at Tukios, the leading provider of tribute video software. Both companies have a very simple value proposition for funeral homes and will continue to lead in their respective categories.

Tukios Aftercare offers a simple follow-up program where the family receives a series of greeting cards and a survey to keep the funeral home top-of-mind. They also have an automated texting solution that does the follow-up for the funeral director, creating engaging conversations and driving customer reviews.

Curtis Funk, the founder and CEO of Tukios, believes that this is an excellent step forward for both companies.

"We are very excited to work with Ellery Bowker and the team at Aftercare," Funk said. "We have a very similar vision of creating software that does the work for the funeral director and we are looking forward to making the lives of our clients easier in more ways."



INDUSTRY NEWS

The Foresight Companies Announces Chris Cruger as Chief Executive Officer

PHOENIX – The Foresight Companies has announced that it has appointed Chris Cruger as its new chief executive officer which he will hold alongside the role of managing partner. His colleague and close friend, Dan Isard, former managing partner, will continue as the founder of the company.

“We are very honored to announce that we continue to fulfill our long-term plan to be able to provide the highest level of service to our clients and for the next generation by having Chris transition to managing partner effective Jan. 1, 2021,” Dan Isard recently announced. “There is no one in this profession with the experience, drive and ethics that Chris has. Chris continues to successfully improve our operational and transactional services. Since joining Foresight, he has demonstrated his passion and ability to help our clients and implemented some key initiatives to further expand the company,” Isard added.

“I am humbled to have the opportunity to lead the way for The Foresight Companies along with Dan and Doug,” Cruger said. “Foresight’s continued growth speaks volumes about the constant needs of our industry. The resources that we bring to each client is second to none in the industry. I look forward to continuing to provide the highest level of service to our clients and the industry in general. 2020 has been one of the most challenging times of a generation and I could not be prouder of every member of the Foresight team. The strength and resilience they have shown in supporting our clients and the profession has been second to none.”

With Cruger assuming the role of providing guidance and support to the Foresight team to allow for best-in-class business solutions to our clients, it will allow for Isard to be able to focus his efforts on both existing and future client relationships.

“Just as our clients have had to change the way they operate due to the pandemic and other changes in the profession, we as a firm need to as well. This succession plan allows me to focus more on the expansion of our

client base for the future”, Isard said.

Doug Gober stated, “As we further expand the reach of The Foresight Companies’ offer, we have a person with the perfect set of skills to accomplish our growth

objectives. Chris has adopted a structured body of knowledge and linked it with experience to help us be successful.”

The growth of the Foresight offerings has been significant, Cruger said. “Our expanded offerings in accounting and organic expansion support have been well accepted by the market. With our addition of several new team members, we have been able to engage with our clients and the profession with a new standard of service that is unmatched today,” he added. “We have a team of 20 incredibly talented people helping our clients with their business operations, accounting, and transactions. With Dan and Doug focusing on our client acquisition we will be growing our staff even more.”

Cruger has spent more than 25 years working in and around the funeral industry. Prior to his joining Foresight, Cruger provided independent consulting to companies in the funeral and cemetery professions worldwide. Chris started in this business at Service Corporation International where he eventually became vice president of business development, overseeing corporate development, real estate, construction and areas of operations. He can be reached at 602-274-6464 or chriscruger@theforesightcompanies.com.



How to Handle Negative Google Funeral Reviews

By Welton Hong

RING RING
MARKETING

It's never easy for any business owner when their firm gets a negative Google review—and for funeral homes, it can be especially affecting. It's hard not to take the criticism personally, and a negative review can be far more debilitating to a funeral home's reputation than it is in other industries.

But that's no reason to ignore reviews themselves, as much as that might seem easier. Google reviews, and reviews in general, are powerful online marketing tools.

Almost all people (97 percent) read reviews for local businesses before making a decision about goods and services. And they use those reviews as fodder for purchasing decisions; 90 percent say positive reviews impact buying decisions, and more than 85 percent say negative reviews do too.

With so much riding on reviews, keeping an eye on them and managing them is synonymous with managing your online reputation. It's a good idea to take an interactive, proactive approach to reviews on all the major sites, but if you only have bandwidth to tackle one on a regular basis, Google is your best bet.

Google reviews are tied to search engine results, and your funeral home's Google star rating is often prominently placed in map and Google My Business results.

Given how much first impressions matter, you certainly don't want a poor Google star rating weighing you down. At the same time, even funeral homes with stellar customer service reputations and a bevy of qualified, experienced staff members won't please everyone all of the time.

Less-than-stellar reviews happen occasionally for legitimate reasons, and they happen more often for illegitimate ones. Here's what you need to know to deal with both:

Dealing with Legitimate Negative Reviews

For this purpose, legitimate negative reviews are defined as any low-star review coming from a person to whom you actually provided service. You might (or might not) feel the content in the review itself is warranted, but it's not a *fake* review in that it didn't come from a bot, a competitor, or an actual client or family.

Here are some best-practice steps for turning a negative review into a positive word-of-mouth marketing situation:

1. Start by reaching out privately to the individual to resolve the issue. Sometimes, negative reviews are a result of misunderstandings, and taking the step to make things right can shift the wind in your favor. Once you resolve the situation and the individual seems satisfied with the outcome, consider asking if they will update the review. When potential clientele see this activity on review sites, they know that you're a firm of caring, professional people who want to do a good job for those they serve.
2. Next, leave a public message letting the reviewer (and others) know that you have reached out. This way, if the person never responds or a resolution isn't reached, other people see that you are responding to situations and care.
3. If all else fails, leave a response to the review with your side of the story. Always take a respectful, tactful tone, but let others know the truth about what services you provided or how the situation occurred, especially if it was not your or your employee's fault.

Responding to reviews makes your funeral home appear more human in an industry that thrives on human contact and care. But do remember that sympathies may automatically lean to the clientele when others consider a funeral services review, so be kind and thoughtful in how you respond.

Dealing with Fake Reviews

While it certainly hurts to see that someone wasn't happy with your services, it can be even more frustrating to face fake reviews.

And they're more common than you might think: About 75 percent of people have seen one or more fake review online in the past year, and that only accounts for fake reviews that could be identified as such.

Why would anyone leave fake reviews? They can be attacks from competitors willing to engage in black-hat marketing tactics, internet trolls who simply don't have better things to do, or someone who has a grudge against your firm. But you don't have to sit passively and take these attacks. Here's how to fight back:

1. First, conduct some due diligence. Make sure this actually **is** a fake review. Remember, just because you don't like it doesn't necessarily make it fake.
2. If it **is** fake, leave a response to the review noting that you don't have a record of serving this person or asking the reviewer to contact you so you can respond to the situation. Obviously, you're not waiting on a fake reviewer to reach out, but taking the high road in a public forum lets others see that you're professional and care about providing quality service.

3. Flag the review and report it as fake. You can do this via your Google My Business dashboard.
4. Ask other people to flag the review too. Google doesn't even look at the review until five or more people have flagged it, so ask your employees or trusted family members to log into their own Google accounts for this purpose. It only takes a minute to flag a false review.

Flagging the review doesn't automatically mean it will be removed. Google looks at the review and decides whether to remove it. But following the steps above and ensuring you've done everything you can to publicly show you're handling things on your end can help impact Google's decision.

Moving on From Negative Reviews

Not every negative review becomes a positive opportunity, and not every fake review goes away. And that's okay, because your star level on Google doesn't need to be perfect to inspire trust and confidence in individuals and families looking for death care services.

Instead of dwelling on the negative review that can't be changed, do what you can to foster good reviews to tip the scales in your favor. Tactfully encourage families who were satisfied with your services to leave reviews.

When it comes to being found online or fostering trust in consumers, having a lot of reviews that are mostly (but not necessarily all) positive is a more powerful position than having just a few reviews, even if they're all perfect.



Welton Hong

Founder of Ring Ring Marketing®

Welton is a leading expert in helping funeral homes convert leads from online directly to the phone line. He's the author of the book *Making Your Phone Ring with Internet Marketing for Funeral Homes*. Learn more at FuneralHomeProfits.com.



Infant Embalming Procedures - A Continuing Education Program Presented by John A. Gupton College

Part II of III part series

By Todd W. Van Beck

ABDOMINAL AORTA - 1

The selection of the abdominal aorta in infant embalming has been used widely by many embalmers over the years. The technique is simple and can be used with good results in the un-autopsied infant.

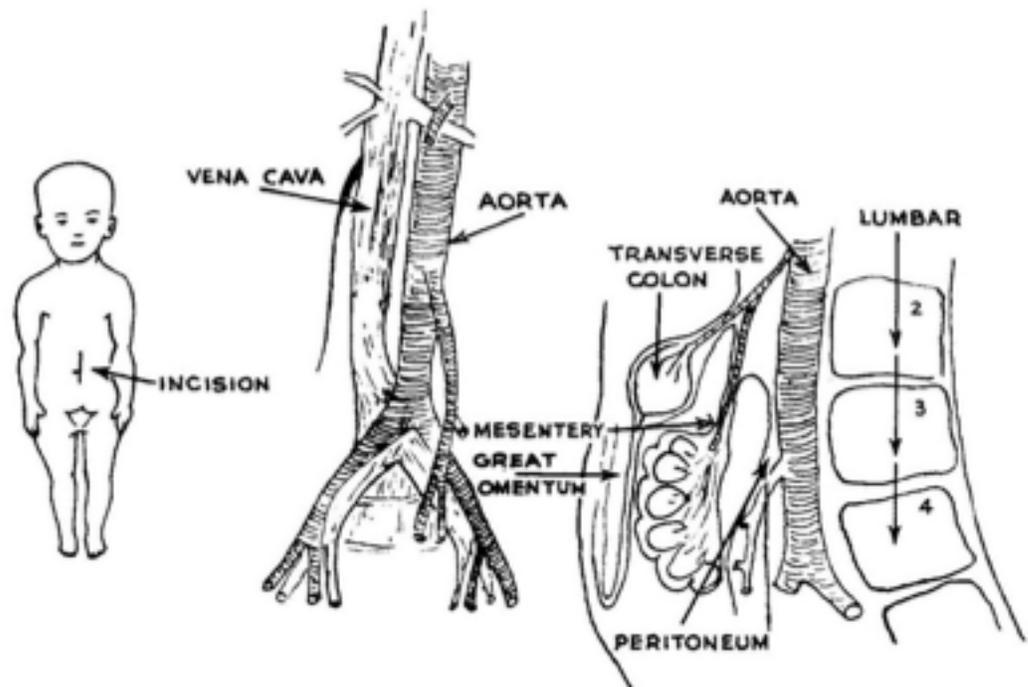
The arterial embalming begins by making a four to five inch incision along the midline of the abdomen from the umbilicus and slightly to the right of the midline in the region of the umbilicus. The reason for keeping the incision as low as possible and slightly right of the midline is to avoid the enlarged infant liver, which almost completely fills the superior part of the abdominal cavity. After the incision has been made through the abdominal wall into the peritoneal cavity the intestines are gently eased out (not cut out) of the abdominal cavity using a pair of packing forceps. This is a procedure which requires the easy, gentle touch. If the intestines are ruptured the result is the spillage of fecal material in the cavity – which creates an extremely bothersome and offensive situation for the embalmer to work.

Next the spinal column mesentery must be dissected open to expose the abdominal aorta and the inferior vena cava. Ligate the abdominal aorta and sever the inferior vena cava. Drainage from this vein then will flood into the peritoneal cavity and can be aspirated out. The abdominal aorta is opened an inch or two above the point where it bifurcates to form the common iliac arteries. Make an incision into the abdominal aorta and insert a medium sized cannula into

the vessel in the direction of the head. The lower extremities are injected by reversing the cannula after the upward injection is completed.

The arterial fluid should be of the embalmer's preference. The arterial fluid should be injected toward the lower extremities. Low pressure and flow with pulsation is an excellent method of injection. As soon as the discolorations of livor and rigor mortis have cleared and the fluid dyes have become evident, injection should be stopped, unless pathological or postmortem conditions warrant additional fluid injection.

The blood/drainage material in the abdominal cavity now can be sponged out or aspirated with a nasal aspirator. Next, the cannula is reversed and directed toward the head. Again using low pressure and flow with pulsation is recommended. Areas where rigor mortis and/or livor mortis is present can be gently massaged with massage cream during the injection. As soon as the discolorations have cleared and the dye becomes evident, stop the injection. Otherwise, unnecessary and certainly unwanted distension and wrinkling of the tissues can result. After arterial injection is completed,





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remove the cannula and ligate the abdominal aorta. Again, the blood/drainage material in the abdominal cavity is to be aspirated out. Next the embalmer will note that the intestines, which had been moved to the outside of the abdominal cavity during the injection procedure, have become swollen. This however serves to preserve the viscera. The intestines now can be clipped and placed back into the abdominal cavity. The incision now is tightly sutured with a small baseball stitch. Next the cavities can be aspirated by the use of an infant trocar. Injection of a cavity fluid should follow this aspiration. The viscera can also be treated prior to sealing the incision by packing the thoracic and abdominal cavities with a hardening compound or embalming powder. The incision can then be sealed and sutured closed.

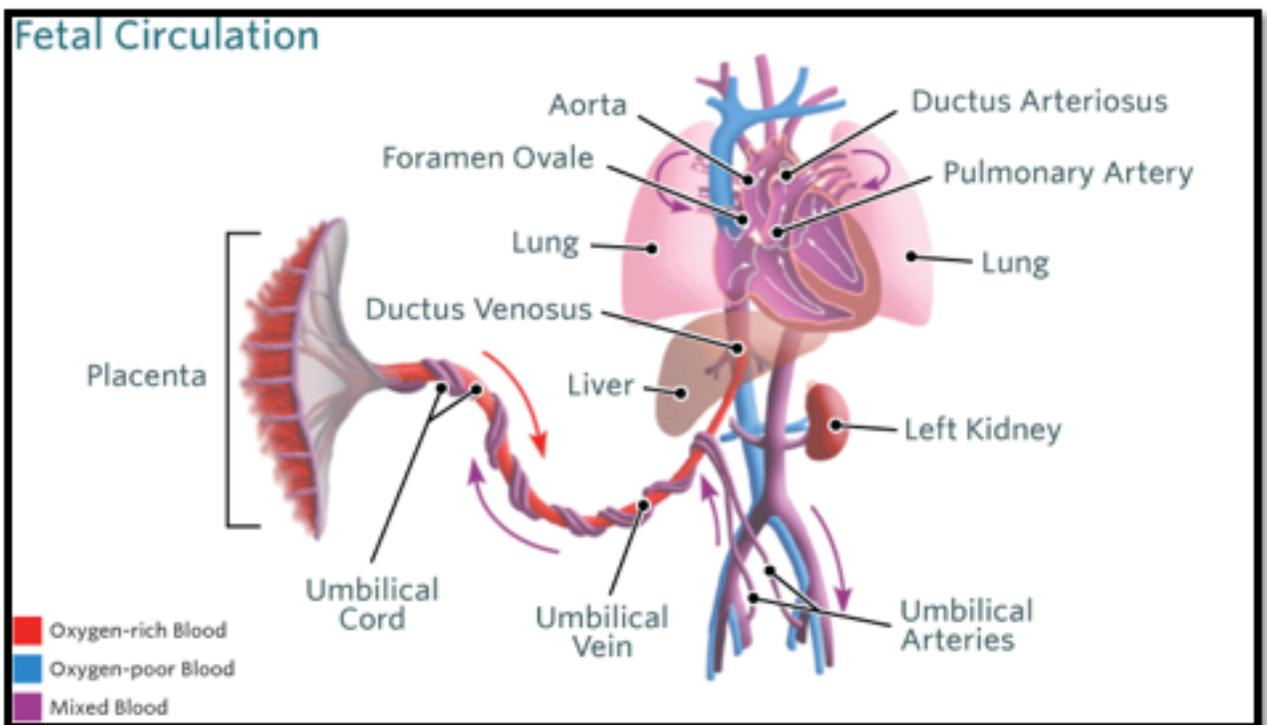
UMBILICAL VEIN - 2

This embalming procedure is rare, has limitations, and is basically used only where the infant fits a fairly strict criteria in the pre-embalming analysis. Basically the embalming criteria in these cases are this: injection through the umbilical arteries or vein is advocated for the embalming of neo-natal infants or those infants dying within a few hours after birth. The main reason for this is that the foramen ovale closes fairly rapidly after birth.

The umbilical vein is injected instead of the umbilical artery because it is larger and carries oxygenated blood to the infant's circulatory system for the placenta during the gestation period. The major challenge with this method is the passage through the valves of the heart to arrive into

the arterial system so injection of the umbilical vein is not recommended for infants more than two days old. As mentioned before the foramen ovale closes quickly after birth. If the injection process takes place before the foramen ovale closes, the injection can follow two anatomical courses. First one branch of the umbilical vein goes directly into the liver and the second branch goes directly into the inferior vena cave. At this point the second branch meets the portion that went through the liver and follows the inferior vena cava to the right atrium of the heart. From this point the fluid flows into the right atrium of the heart and thus supplies the upper extremities. Once the embalming chemical leaves the head and the upper extremities, it enters the superior vena cava and continues into the right atrium and on to the right ventricle finally entering the pulmonary artery. At this point fetal circulation is different than adult circulation in that a temporary branch of the pulmonary artery is present – the ductus arteriosus. The ductus arteriosus connects directly with the aorta thus almost all the embalming chemical will pass directly into the aorta. The embalming chemical that is moving down the ductus arteriosus meets the fluid from the left ventricle and thus reaches the lower extremities. When the embalming chemical returns to the heart it follows the common iliac arteries to the hypogastric arteries and these in turn follow the umbilical artery thus completing fetal circulation.

The embalming technique and procedure consists of



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placing a small radial tube, infant injection tube or blunt hypodermic needle into the umbilical vein. Injection of the arterial embalming chemical can be achieved by; the embalming injecting machine, gravity bottle, and/or hypodermic syringe.

Many years ago I watched a veteran trade embalmer inject an infant using the gravity bottle. This man was a master embalmer and always used the gravity bottle on infants. Of course the bottle was hardly raised in elevation at all and he controlled the rate of flow by squeezing the injection hose with his fingers. He made a solution of pre injection and a mild arterial chemical using absolutely no water. He would release a small amount of embalming chemical and then shut off the flow. He did this repeatedly until he obtained the desired results. He told me that the gravity bottle was the most gentle and natural method of injecting the embalming chemical ever invented. His rationale was that gravity was nature's pure method which did not need electronic injection and/or forced injection with a hand pump. This veteran embalmer's results were consistently impressive.

A word about drainage. Copious amounts of drainage, I have discovered over the years, are not a good thing. Too much drainage depletes the body of natural moisture and creates unnecessary dehydration. This is particularly true in infant embalming.

Drainage in these types of cases will be received through the umbilical artery (remember this circulation is anatomically backwards from an adult) usually on its own accord and the actual amount of the drainage is not absolutely necessary in completing the injection process. Finally perform a thorough cavity treatment and aspiration and suture the umbilical vessels closed.

THORACIC AORTA- 3

The use of the thoracic aorta has been widely used as an injection site in the embalming of infants for many years. The benefits of this anatomical structure are that the thoracic aorta (as compared to other infant vessels) is fortunately large, and the incision is not seen. However times have changed and litigation concerning embalming procedures is definitely on the rise. Due to the type of incision required in this approach it is suggested that full permission and full disclosures of the technique are made to the individuals giving authorization for embalming.

A posterior incision is made. Once the features have been set the infant is gently placed face down on a bed of cotton padding to prevent the nose and facial features being distorted.

At the level of the fifth rib a simple crescent shaped incision is made on the left side of the infant laterally about one and one-half inches. This incision should extend down to the ninth rib. The border of the incision is raised and carefully dissected back toward the vertebrae. The thoracic aorta in an infant will be located left anterior-lateral to the vertebrae bodies and the inferior vena cava will be found right anterolateral to the vertebrae. The left lung can be compressed to allow ample room for access to the artery and vein.

The thoracic aorta is raised first and is freed and opened for the insertion of a short medium size carotid tube towards the heart. No drain tube is necessary in the inferior vena cava although a small spring forceps can be inserted to aid in drainage.

Before the beginning of the actual injection the infant is turned face up with the remains resting on the tubing connected to the embalming injector machine. There



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is little chance of this tubing being occluded by the infant's body weight. The hands are placed in the position desired by the embalmer and the injection process will begin.

With the sophistication of today's embalming chemicals and because of the small amount of arterial solution needed in infant embalming, waterless embalming is recommended. The moisture content of an infant is usually high so adding more water may well cause more problems than necessary. Sixteen ounces of a quality pre-injection can be used as the vehicle for the preservative chemicals. Add four ounces of a mild arterial chemical which might also have a coloring additive and inject this solution. The average infant can be completely embalmed usually with using less than half a gallon of this solution. Also the pressure and rate of flow should be kept as low as possible. This embalming environment is so delicate that I remember a veteran embalmer who would set the pressure and rate of flow by simply watching the flow before he inserted the cannula.

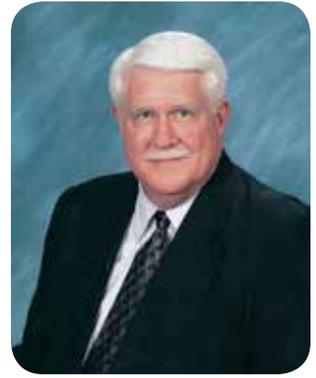
When the desired results are reached in the upper portion of the trunk the infant's body is turned over and the arterial tube is inserted to inject the lower portion of the extremities. The infant is again placed on its back and the arterial injection is continued. Upon completion of the arterial injection the body is turned face down for the removal of the arterial tube and ligation of the vessels. The rib section is then returned to its correct anatomical position and several interrupted bridge sutures are taken to hold it firmly in place. Turn the infant gently over on its back and begin a thorough aspiration treatment. Generally six to ten ounces of undiluted cavity fluid will be sufficient. Finally suture all incisions closed.

It is wise not to use concentrated dye in the arterial solution. Concentrated dye being used in such a small arterial solution has the risk of over coloring the tender tissues of the infant. It is suggested that an arterial fluid which already has a coloring agent (dye) mixed into the bottled solution be used. This insures that the risk of over coloring will be at a minimum.

“Part-III to be Continued in the February 2021 Issue...”

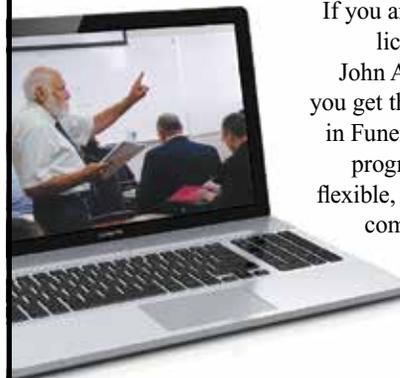
About Todd Van Beck

Todd lives in Nashville, TN with his wife, Georgia. He received an honorary Doctorate Degree in Humane Letters from Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service, Houston, TX, Master of Arts Degree in Pastoral Ministry from Mount Saint Mary's Seminary, Cincinnati, OH, Bachelor's of Arts Degree in Psychology and Philosophy from Mount Mercy College, Cedar Rapids, IA and Mortuary Arts and Sciences Diploma from New England Institute of Anatomy, Sanitary Science, Embalming and Funeral Directing, Boston, MA.



He is the Dean of the College of Funeral Management at the University of Memphis. He is a Certified Funeral Service Practitioner and a member of the Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice, a Certified Embalmer, the author of 4 books, 400 professional articles.

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INDUSTRY NEWS

Foundation Partners Group Acquires Five Firms from Brusie

Foundation Partners Group, a leading provider of innovative funeral and cemetery experiences and products, has announced the acquisition of five properties in Chico, California from the Brusie family. The acquisition includes Brusie Funeral Home, Bidwell Chapel, Affordable Mortuary, Chico Cemetery Association, and Glen Oaks Memorial Park.

“This acquisition represents our first operations north of San Francisco with five well-established brands providing an excellent platform from which to grow,” said Bob Bukala, Foundation Partners Group President and CEO. “The Brusie family and team have been dedicated to providing exceptional, compassionate care for over 70 years in the Chico community and the high standard of service they offer meshes well with ours. We are very proud they have chosen to become part of the Foundation Partners family and to help us grow our presence in California.” Brusie Funeral Homes and Cemeteries was founded in 1942 by Warren Pope Brusie and his wife Helen Brusie. In 1959 they expanded their business by establishing Glen Oaks Memorial Park. Their son, Warren Albert Brusie, took over the firm in 1970, at just 27 years old after the passing of his father. Warren Albert Brusie’s children, Marc and Amy, joined him in running the business in the early 1990s and are now third-generation owners. The Brusies purchased Chico Cemetery and Bidwell Chapel in 1994 growing their operations to four locations. In 2005, they added a fifth location when they purchased Affordable Mortuary from a retiring competitor. Marc’s wife, Janice Brusie, joined the firm as the Chief Financial Officer in 2000. Marc, Amy, and Janice have all worked together to run the business for the past 20 years.

“We almost sold to someone else in 2016, but it wasn’t the right fit,” said Marc Brusie, owner of Brusie Funeral Homes and Cemeteries. “Since then, we’ve considered succession planning more seriously and are happy to be joining Foundation Partners Group. They were very organized and efficient; and they wanted us to stay on to continue to support our families and the community. That was a huge bonus for us.”

“The team at Foundation Partners Group has been wonderful to work with during the acquisition,” added Janice Brusie, Chief Financial Officer. “We have been impressed with the

blended focus on our team’s needs and concerns and the integration process. They have encouraged us to stay and will be providing our staff with wonderful career opportunities moving forward.”

“The Brusie family has built a reputation for providing meaningful opportunities for families to create healing moments after a loss,” states Jason Widing, Vice President of Business Development at Foundation Partners Group. “We are looking forward to working with them to build on the legacy they have created in the Chico community.” “Despite the pandemic, we are continuing to explore partnerships with premier independent funeral home, cremation center, and cemetery owners like the Brusies.” added Tom Kominsky, Chief Financial Officer at Foundation Partners Group. “Assisting owners with their succession planning while offering open and honest advice is what helps set Foundation Partners apart.”

About Foundation Partners Group: Orlando, Florida-based Foundation Partners Group is one of the industry’s most innovative providers of funeral services. The company owns and operates a network of more than 150 funeral homes, cremation centers and cemeteries across 20 states. Our organizational structure allows us to embrace and grow the legacies of the local funeral homes we acquire while leveraging the economies of scale, deep understanding of technology, and our ShareLife® customer experience-centered approach to deliver truly innovative and compassionate care to the families we serve. Visit www.foundationpartners.com to learn more.



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INDUSTRY NEWS

Messenger Honors Top Sales Representatives for 2019 Achievements

Messenger, the leading provider in funeral stationery, personalization solutions and insurance funding, recently recognized its sales representatives with achievement awards through a virtual event held September 21, 2020. The Director's Movers and Shakers Award is presented to the sales representative who moved up the most positions in the total team rankings. This award was presented to both Keisha Addison and Brad Johnson for moving up four positions in 2019.

The President's Club Award is presented to the Top 10 representatives for 2019 and includes Tom Ahlers, Jay Amburgey, David Bednar, Jeffrey Burnett, Steve Coker, Meredith Feminis, Mike Kane, Dave Kolbe, Sherry Noble and Glenn Vaughn. The Vice President's Club Award is presented to the sales representatives rounding out the top 20: Keisha Addison, Paul Ambroselli, Cameron Audette, Michael Borrer, Ellie Dane, John Duncan, Todd Ely, Michael Suthoff, Bret Welsh, and father and son team Gerry and Greg Wright. "We are truly blessed with an amazing sales team who strive to go above and beyond in all that they do" states Bob Hoaglund, Vice President of Industry Relations at Messenger. "They are the main point of contact between our company and our funeral partners. Year after year, we see just how strong these relationships are and Messenger would not be where we are today without the commitment and dedication of our entire sales team."

Messenger's highest and most prestigious sales honor, Sales Representative of the Year, was awarded to Keisha Addison for her exceptional sales achievements in 2019. This award is bestowed to the sales representative who achieves exemplary sales performance and service throughout the year. "It's an honor to recognize Keisha for her accomplishments" stated Brian Clary, Sales Director, East Region for Messenger. "Keisha joined the Messenger sales team in 2017 and this award validates her hard work to build relationships and deliver solutions to funeral professionals in her territory." Addison serves funeral homes in state of Georgia. The Messenger Sales Team

consists of 45 sales consultants in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.

The Messenger Co., LLC, headquartered in Auburn, Indiana, was founded in 1913 by Frank Messenger, who started in the religious calendar business. Messenger has since become the leading provider of stationery, funeral service items and personalization services. In 2019, Messenger acquired Express Funeral Funding, the largest privately-held insurance assignment funding company. Focused on being a trusted partner to funeral professionals, Messenger delivers time saving solutions to increase customer satisfaction and add value. Messenger provides quality product and technology solutions with quick lead times and exemplary service, exclusive partnerships and one of the most experienced and extensive sales teams in the funeral industry. For more information about Messenger, visit www.messengerstationery.com or call 1.800.827.5151.



(L to R): Brian Clary, Messenger Sales Director – East Region; Keisha Addison, Messenger 2019 Sales Representative of the Year



The Messenger Sales Team - 2019

INDUSTRY NEWS

Deanna Wilkinson elected on International Memorialization Supply Association Board of Trustees

Express Funeral Funding (EFF), the nation's largest privately held FASTEST and EASIEST insurance assignment funding company is excited to announce Deanna Wilkinson, Director of Sales & Marketing, has been voted on the board of International Memorialization Supply Association (IMSA) Board of Trustees. "I'm honored to be a part of such a well-respected and long-standing association, and am grateful for the opportunity to work alongside so many dedicated leaders in the funeral profession," said Wilkinson.

The International Memorialization Supply Association (IMSA) is an organization of companies committed to supplying quality products and services to the funeral profession. IMSA's primary responsibility is to ensure funeral professionals have greater access to supplier products and services that are providing leading best practices and standards in the industry.



"We're excited to have Deanna as a member of our board as we seek to expand our network of funeral service suppliers," said Ronen Rybowski, president of IMSA and Behar Mapping.

For more information on Express Funeral Funding, please visit www.expressfuneralfunding.com. For more information on IMSA or to become a member please visit www.imsa-online.org.

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INDUSTRY NEWS

Starmark® Introduces New Artisan Series

Artisan Cremation Container Line Offers Affordable Options for Modest Viewings

RICHMOND, Indiana – Starmark, a leading provider of innovative funeral products, is proud to announce the introduction of its Artisan Series Cremation Container line. This line of containers offers high eye-appeal at price points that resonate with cremation families, resulting in more body -present service upgrades. The new Artisan Series Cremation Container Line offers funeral homes and their families:

Container choices that are very affordable; that generate an increase in body present events

High eye appeal, environmentally responsible, strong, and lightweight.

Facilitates new services above “no viewing” cremations such as private family services, simple farewells, witnessings, as well as Identification verifications.

Gerald Davis, President of Starmark Cremation Products explains, “An ever-increasing number of cremation families want to see the body again before cremation but most nice-looking cremation container products are priced too high to allow for cost-effective ID and Private Farewells. The Artisan Series Cremation Containers offer contemporary, high eye-appeal designs at price points that resonate with both funeral directors and cremation families.”

Starmark’s Artisan Series Cremation Containers are currently available through nationwide Starmark Distributors or may be ordered directly from the Starmark factory. To learn more about Starmark and the new Artisan Series Cremation Container Line, please visit www.starmarkcp.com or contact Starmark at 888-366-7335.

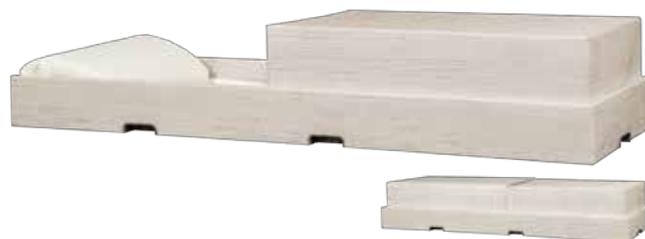
About Starmark Cremation Products: Starmark® Cremation Products, a division of Vandor Corporation, was founded in 2004 and manufactures in its more than 200,000 square feet of space in Richmond, IN with special distribution from its Lakeland, Florida



warehouse. The company manufactures cremation products sold directly to funeral homes and crematories nationwide as well as through a growing network of distributors.



The Beechwood: a new model in the Starmark Modest Gathering line that features a printed wood-grain design, a partially-hinged cap, and a 24” interior width.



The Driftwood: a new offering in the popular Transporter® Basic Cremation Container line that offers a printed driftwood motif and is available with interior widths of 21 ½”, 25” or 29”.



The Vista line of Basic Cremation Containers, part of Starmark’s Artisan Series, offers seven creative, contemporary designs, each with an interior width of 25”.

INDUSTRY NEWS

NFDA News

Funeral Directors to Get Top Priority for COVID-19 Vaccine

Funeral service advocates made a difference!

Recently, when NFDA asked you to join its efforts to tell the National Academies of Science Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) that funeral directors need priority access to the COVID-19 vaccine, you responded.

Today, NASEM released the “Framework for Equitable Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine,” which includes funeral directors in the highest priority phase for vaccine allocation. This significant step would not have happened without your help! The final framework puts funeral directors in Phase 1a for vaccine allocation, which is the phase for high-risk healthcare workers and based, in-part, on the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency designation of funeral professionals as critical infrastructure workers.

The framework released by the NASEM was requested by the CDC and the National Institutes of Health. The framework is designed to inform the decisions by health authorities, including the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), as they create and implement national and/or local guidelines for



COVID-19 vaccine allocation. (Note: Vaccines will not be mandatory.) You can read the full document from NASEM [here](#); the section related to funeral directors begins on page 95 of the PDF.

Thank you!

In challenging times like these, it is important that our profession speaks with one strong voice. When we work together there is nothing we can’t do! Over the last few months, funeral service advocates like you have made incredible strides in national policy. We cannot thank you enough for lending your voice to this important cause and being advocates for the funeral profession. Washington is listening and your voice truly matters! If you have any questions about this issue, please contact Lesley Witter, senior vice president, Advocacy at lwitter@nfda.org.

INDUSTRY NEWS

BRAVE Act Poised to Become Law

The House of Representatives today passed bipartisan legislation that contains the Burial Rights for America's Veterans' Efforts (BRAVE) Act. Part of a larger omnibus veteran's bill that passed the Senate last week, the bill now goes on to President Trump's desk where he is expected to sign it into law.

Sponsored by Sens. Gary Peters (D-MI) and Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Reps. Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) and Cheri Bustos (D-IL), the BRAVE Act will update the current burial benefit to treat all non-service-connected deaths equally, regardless of where the veteran passes away. Under current policy, survivors of certain veterans who die in a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facility are provided greater funds to cover the cost of a funeral than veterans who die in their home or another medical facility.

While the National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) advocates on hundreds of bills and regulations in every Congress, NFDA has made the BRAVE Act one of its core legislative priorities because the act sought to create equitable funeral and burial benefits for veterans.

"We would not have made it to this stage without the hard work of our members," said NFDA President R. Bryant Hightower Jr., CFSP. "Whether it was meeting with their members of Congress during the annual Advocacy Summit, making calls or sending emails, our members played a vital role by sharing the stories of veterans they served, building awareness of the BRAVE Act and securing co-sponsors. Their persistence paid off and for that, I say thank you!"

"I am so thrilled to see this bill finally headed to the President's desk," said NFDA CEO Christine Pepper, CAE. "Our members played a crucial role in getting this bill passed by Congress, so our nation's veterans receive the respect they deserve when they die. The passage of the BRAVE Act shows the power of grassroots advocacy and just how big a difference NFDA members can make for the profession and the families we serve."

"I am always so proud to join my fellow funeral service professionals in Washington, D.C., at the Advocacy Summit to advocate for funeral service and the families we serve. I have been honored to advocate to ensure these veterans receive a dignified funeral" said NFDA member, Hillary Adair from Arizona.

"As funeral directors, we are often the only voice for the dead. We care for forgotten and unclaimed veterans who deserve respect in death, just as in life" said NFDA member, Joe Tomon of Pennsylvania. "I have always been a big believer in strength in numbers and that is why I always join NFDA's advocacy efforts by coming to the Advocacy Summit or answering the grassroots call to action by contacting my legislators."

"NFDA advocates on four main topic areas," explained NFDA President-elect Randy Anderson, CFSP, CCO. "Veteran's funeral and burial issues; small business issues, like taxes and healthcare that impact our businesses; environmental health and safety; and mass fatality planning and response. NFDA has deep relationships in Washington, D.C., that are crucial for funeral service and help with things like getting the BRAVE Act passed by Congress and representing the interests of our members and the profession at the highest levels of the federal government."

NFDA is the world's leading and largest funeral service association, serving more than 20,000 individual members who represent nearly 11,000 funeral homes in the United States and 49 countries around the world. NFDA is the trusted leader, beacon for ethics and the strongest advocate for the profession. NFDA is the association of choice because it offers funeral professionals comprehensive educational resources, tools to manage successful businesses, guidance to become pillars in their communities and the expertise to foster future generations of funeral professionals. NFDA is headquartered in Brookfield, Wis., and has an office in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit www.nfda.org.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Roosevelt Investments Joins CI Financial

The Roosevelt Investment Group, Inc. (“Roosevelt”), a boutique wealth advisory firm with over 30 years of experience working with cemeteries, funeral homes, and their owners, is pleased to announce an agreement under which CI Financial Corp. (“CI”) (TSX: CIX) will acquire 100% of the firm. Based in Toronto, CI is one of the largest independently owned firms offering global asset management and wealth management advisory services in Canada. Roosevelt will join CI as a partner firm within its expanding wealth and asset management business.

The strategic combination will bring significant value to Roosevelt’s business by providing the firm with enhanced technology and expanded resources to stay ahead of and offer solutions to meet the ever-evolving needs of its clients. Roosevelt will continue to run as an independent firm on a stand-alone basis with Adam Sheer remaining as the firm’s Chief Executive Officer. In addition, the company’s investment team, investment philosophy, and process will remain unchanged. The partnership will allow Roosevelt to continue to offer its clients the deeply personal service, objective advice and the strategic investments clients have come to expect from the firm. CI is uniquely positioned to complement and expand on Roosevelt’s strengths. The firm is a highly regarded financial services company that has been setting the standard for investment excellence for more than 50 years and shares Roosevelt’s commitment to providing individuals and institutions with the highest-quality investments and advice. The firm is listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchange and, as of October 20, 2020, held approximately US \$155 billion in total assets.

“CI’s expertise in asset and wealth management puts them in a unique position to understand our firm’s DNA and how we differentiate ourselves,” said Adam Sheer. “In addition, CI’s support of our commitment to the funeral service and cemetery profession makes them an ideal partner for our firm and our clients.”

The acquisition of Roosevelt, headquartered in Midtown Manhattan, expands CI’s reach to New York, the largest financial market in the world. This

acquisition marks CI’s 12th registered investment advisor (“RIA”) transaction since February 2020 and continues its rapid expansion in the U.S. wealth management industry. Once completed, the addition of Roosevelt, with US\$2.7 billion in assets, and other pending acquisitions, will boost CI’s U.S. wealth assets to approximately US\$16.5 billion.

“We are excited to enter the New York market and thrilled to partner with Roosevelt, a firm whose deep roots in the region trace back to the family of President Theodore Roosevelt,” said Kurt MacAlpine, CI Chief Executive Officer. “Roosevelt has an extensive legacy of serving some of the most prominent families and individuals in New York – and beyond – and we are excited to provide them with the resources needed to continue to grow.” CI’s move into the U.S. RIA sector reflects its strategic priorities of globalizing the firm and expanding its wealth management platform. Following the close of all pending transactions, CI’s North American wealth management business will have approximately \$83 billion (US\$63 billion) in assets, an all-time high. CI’s total asset and wealth management assets will reach a record \$209 billion (US\$157 billion). (Totals based on asset levels as of October 31, 2020.)

About Roosevelt Investments

Roosevelt Investments is a boutique wealth management firm located in Midtown Manhattan with more than 30 years of experience providing comprehensive financial planning and asset management services to cemeteries, funeral homes, and their owners. The firm offers investment strategies with a focus on maximizing income and an emphasis on downside protection. In addition to managing perpetual care and preneed trust assets, Roosevelt’s experienced team provides cemetery and funeral home owners with financial, estate, retirement, succession, and exit planning services. The firm advises on over US\$2.7 billion in assets (as of September 30, 2020). Of those assets, over US\$360 million come from working with cemeteries, funeral homes, and their owners. For more information, visit www.rooseveltinvestments.com.

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