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Tributes, Grief & Aftercare

Why Do People Make Tributes to Other People?

Notes from the Editor by John Yopp

Royal Tribute - The Hearse of Windsor Queen

Elizabeth II by Gregg D. Merksamer

Special Tribute - Out of the Ordinary Gifts Left on
Famous Gravesites by Jess Farren

Glass-Front Niches: Helping Families Tell the
Full Story of Their Loved One's Life by
Matthews Memorialization

5 Reasons Why Successful Funeral Homes Share
Grief Information by Dr. Jason Troyer

What About the Kids? Creating Space for Children
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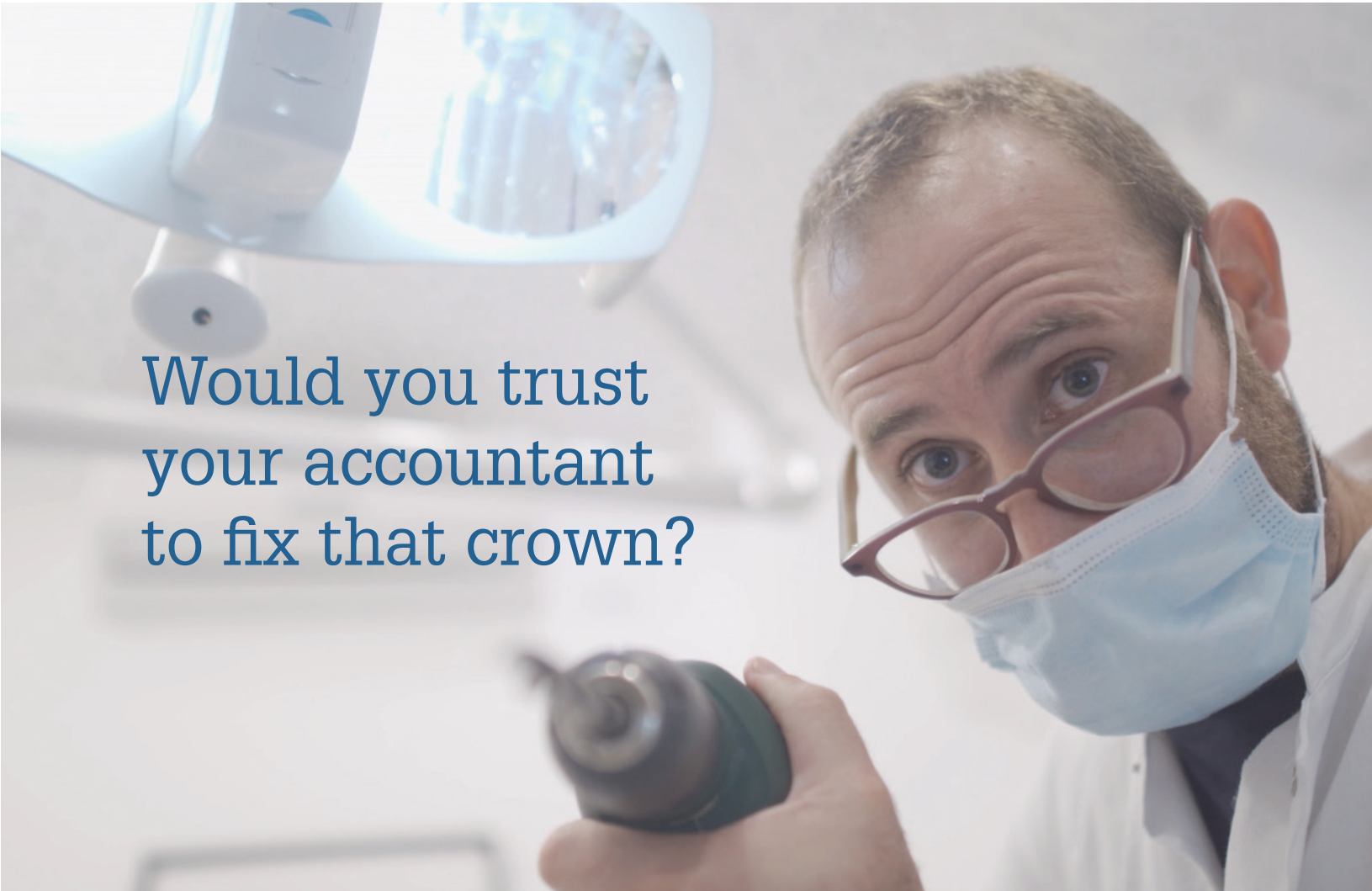
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“There is no way to make people like change. You can only make them feel less threatened by it.”
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notes from the editor

Why Do People Make Tributes to Other People? by John Yopp

Tributes are a special way to honor the life of someone living or deceased. They help those who hear the tribute to recognize the unique contributions the person made to the world around them. These special speeches, songs, and poems also help the person's legacy to continue by encouraging others to spread the same kind of love, kindness, or generosity that the person displayed.

Too often, people aren't recognized for their contributions to society, their family, and their community. To solve this issue, tributes are created for those who are living or deceased as a way to honor them for their impact on the world.

While living tributes are usually held for famous members of society, families often memorialize their deceased by offering tributes after they are dead. These tributes occur during funeral, memorial, and celebration-of-life services.

Tributes for a deceased member of your family can be paid no matter the size of impact the person had on the world. If they touched your life, that's enough of a reason to create a tribute in their honor. Then, through your tribute, they can impact the lives of those in attendance and their legacy will continue.

Different Types of Tributes for a Living or Deceased Person

Whether a tribute is created for a person who is still living or a person who died, the types of tributes are similar. The biggest difference will be in the way that a person is talked about in the tribute. Those who are still living will often be thanked for the contributions they made and continue to make to the world. Those who have died will be thanked for how they made the world a better place.

Here are several types of tributes you might consider creating for someone you love.

Online Memorial Sites are growing in popularity and are being used to supplement or in place of a tradition-

ally published obituary. While an obituary published in a newspaper can only be read by those who happen to see the obituary on the day it's published, an online memorial website can be accessed by all of your friends and relatives as soon as it's published and onward.

Many online memorial sites allow friends, family, and visitors to the site to interact by posting pictures and videos of the person, signing a digital guestbook, and posting memories they have with the person.

Other benefits of an online memorial site include indefinite web hosting, allowing you to keep the website up forever, an unlimited photo and video gallery, and donation buttons for friends and family to donate in a person's honor. Donation buttons are especially popular for families that want to raise money for an important cause such as cancer research in lieu of traditional funeral flowers.

A **Tribute Speech** usually made during a memorial celebration or a celebration of life gathering, but it can also be spoken during a funeral. This speech often highlights important contributions the person made to their family, their community, or their industry.

The person you're thinking of doesn't need to have revolutionized the world or found a cure for cancer to be the recipient of a tribute speech. Memorializing the impact they had on your life or the life of their family is a stirring tribute to a life well-lived and will demonstrate how they used the time they had for good.

Honoring Loved One's Life or Paying Tribute to the Life and Memory of a loved one is an especially meaningful way to ensure that their legacy continues. Not only will you create something special in their honor, but those in attendance during your tribute will also benefit from your retelling of what made your loved one special, important, and valued. Creating a tribute is one of the best ways you can honor the life of your loved one.

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Modern Funerals

Magazine

Royal Treatment - The Hearse of Winsor

By Gregg D. Merksamer

When the seven-decade reign of Queen Elizabeth II ended at Balmoral Castle on September 8th, 2022 - how fitting since her mother's ancestry made Her Majesty the most-Scottish British monarch since James I! - It set in motion an epic funeral plan that had been worked on and continually revised since the 1960s. The dividend of Operation London Bridge's to-the-minute focus on even the smallest details was a ten-day spectacle of such scale, symbolism and solemnity surely none of us will see it surpassed even if we're lucky enough to live 96 years ourselves.

Great Britain's first State Funeral since Winston Churchill's 1965 send-off would, to start with, draw so many foreign dignitaries (more than 500 representing 168 countries counting 18 monarchs, 25 prime ministers and 55 presidents) one security official interviewed by the BBC compared it to "having a hundred state visits in one go." No wonder most of them excepting Joe Biden were brought to Westminster Abbey by bus instead of "Beast" and a nationwide mobilization saw 10,000 London Metropolitan Police augmented by officers from all over the UK to guard against terrorists, pickpockets and anti-monarchist protesters who more likely needed protection from the Loyalist majority. The funeral's other statistical superlatives included a Royal Air Force Boeing C17 tracked on Flightradar24's website and mobile app by a record 4.79 million people as it flew The Queen's body 325 miles from Edinburgh to RAF Northolt near Heathrow; 5,000 participating armed forces personnel for the funeral's London and Windsor portions that came from places as far-off as Canada and New Zealand; 24,000 vehicle attack barriers; TV coverage by 100-plus cameras including a "God's Eye" 101 feet above Westminster Abbey's altar; and a "Queue of all Queues" that ran almost five miles along the Thames' South Bank from Lambeth Bridge to Southwark Park. A thousand Red Cross monitors and myriad other Samaritans like the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby helped make sure this line safely and smoothly conveyed over a quarter-million people to Westminster Hall where Her Majesty's coffin (reportedly made three decades

in advance by the specialist firm Henry Smith out of oak from the Royal Family's beloved Sandringham Estate in Norfolk) laid in State beneath the Royal Standard and the Imperial State Crown. Numbered yellow wristbands allowed people to get food or use a Port-A-Loo without losing their place in line - a warmly-dressed Sri Lankan woman from Harrow named Vanessa Nathakumaran camped out 50 hours to score band #1 - while British soccer celebrity David Beckham democratically regarded his overnight queue wait as an experience "meant to be shared together."

Bookending all this were two special hearses that would become history's most scrutinized and saluted funeral cars since the Daimler DS420 that took Princess Diana to her final resting place on her family's Althorp estate a quarter-century ago. Professional Car Society "hearse-torians" who roused themselves awake by 5 am EST Sunday, September 11th to watch live coverage of The Queen's final departure from Balmoral were certainly surprised (like many patriotic Britons tuning in at 10 am locally) to see her coffin inside a German-made Mercedes bearing window nameplates from the Edinburgh funeral concern William Purves.



A Bi-nz-bodied Mercedes-Benz E-class hearse bearing the body of Queen Elizabeth II departs Balmoral Castle, bound for Edinburgh followed by Princess Anne in one of the two identical Bentley State Limousines built for her mother's Golden Jubilee in 2002. The sight of funeral director William Purves' nameplates in the hearse's side windows proved so controversial online that the company's website temporarily crashed! - www.royal.uk photo



William Purves' Binz-bodied Mercedes E-class hearse "WP 4597" delivers Queen Elizabeth II's coffin amidst trademark pageantry to the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh, where it spent the night of September 11th, 2022 in anticipation of the following day's service at St. Giles' Cathedral. Observe William Purves' controversial window nameplates had been removed by this stage. - www.royal.uk photo

Curiosity - and viral criticism of the free advertising this firm was getting as its glass-topped, "WP 4597" vanity-plated Benz traveled to Edinburgh via the River Dee Valley, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth and the awe-inspiring Queensferry Crossing Bridge (notably touting the UK's tallest bridge towers) opened to traffic by The Queen in 2017 - would crash the company's website and compel its Chairman Tim Purves to post a statement excusing the nameplates as "part of the standard livery on all our funeral vehicles" while also insisting "we have never sought to gain any PR from our involvement with the Palace." Whether the logos were intentionally or inadvertently placed they were, inevitably, removed well before WP 4597 brought Her Majesty's remains up Edinburgh's Royal Mile to their overnight respite at the Palace of Holyroodhouse. Despite this gaffe the Queen's six-hour, 180-mile journey down the eastbound A93 and southwesterly M90 motorway corridors per "Operation Unicorn" (the contingency plan for her passing in Scotland) would be best-remembered for moving tableaux of Aberdeenshire farmers arranging their tractors into roadside honor guards and EVERYONE turning out in quaint Deeside villages like Ballater and Banchory. Tim Purves' online message also detailed, intriguingly, his company was "required to change the colour (sic) of our signature silver Mercedes hearse to black in line with Royal protocol."

European pro-car cognoscenti like Your Correspondent were immediately aware the builder of WP 4597 was




Princess Anne marches behind her mother's Binz-bodied Mercedes hearse as the Queen's September 12th, 2022 cortege heads up Edinburgh's Royal Mile to her Scottish service at St. Giles' Cathedral. Note the sculpturally interesting flower rails flanking the car's glass roof. - Gregg D. Merksamer "telly grab"

Binz Automotive GmbH of Lorch, Germany, which was originally founded by Michael Binz as Lorcher Karosseriefabrik Binz & Co. in 1936 and remains notable as the world's number one builder of Mercedes hearses, limousines, ambulances and incident command "authority vehicles." Wikipedia and myriad car enthusiast websites monitoring the funeral further detailed this four-door "H4" Binz Mercedes (H2 designates the company's two-door hearses) was based on a mid-sized, 2009-16 "S212" generation E-Class station wagon sporting the platform's 2013-16 styling revisions, whose wheelbase and rear quarter panels were stretched slightly more than 1.1 meters (43.5 inches) combined to create a 2800 mm long (110.2-inch) rear



The Binz-bodied Mercedes hearse that handled the Scottish chapter of Queen Elizabeth II's State Funeral arrives at Edinburgh Airport where her coffin was transferred to a Royal Air Force C17 for its flight to London. The Scottish government reported over 26,000 people lined up along the route from town to bid farewell to their beloved Sovereign. - Gregg D. Merksamer "telly grab"



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Queen Elizabeth II's 2022 State Funeral also starred the Royal Navy State Funeral Gun Carriage previously used to bear the coffins of Queen Victoria in 1901, King Edward VII in 1910, King George V in 1936, King George VI in 1952, Sir Winston Churchill in 1965 and Lord Louis Mountbatten in 1979. While the September 14th cortege from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Hall saw it handled by six uniformly-sized black horses unperturbed by crowds and the once-per-minute thunder of Hyde Park cannons and Big Ben's tolling, the pre-and-post-funeral September 19th processions to Westminster Abbey and Wellington Arch would see it pulled by 98 Royal Navy cadets with 40 more braking from behind. This tradition came about when horses proved skittish during Queen Victoria's 1901 funeral. - Wikimedia Commons

floor. Airborne cameras viewing the Queen's coffin and its Scottish Royal Standard through the car's glass roof - her funeral could well make this a common fitment on future British hearses - also established WP 4597 had two small second row seats flanking the coffin deck's frontal corners to accommodate pallbearers.

Lingering objections about the use of a German Mercedes in Scotland surely dissipated when the Royal Air Force's Boeing C17 Globemaster "KITTY-HAWK01R" (whose tail number ZZ177 cleverly read "LLIZZ" upside down) finished its one hour, 12 minute flight from Edinburgh Airport to RAF Northolt at 17:42 London time on Tuesday, September 13th and the Queen's coffin was placed inside a never previously-seen Jaguar State Hearse built by Wilcox Limousines/Eagle Specialist Vehicles Ltd. in the Manchester area town of Wigan. This bespoke creation - reportedly co-designed by Jaguar Land Rover and the Royal Household with personal input from The Queen - was specially-finished with a transparent roof, powerful interior spotlights, rear-hinged #2 side doors, crown-topped "E" quarter panel monograms and (like the Rolls-Royce and Bentley State Limousines I'll soon discuss in detail) black-over-Royal Claret two-tone



Nine-year-old Prince George & 6-year-old Princess Charlotte (now second and third in line to the British throne) ride in the jump seats of the Royal Mews' 1978 Rolls-Royce Phantom VI State Limousine during their great-grandmother's September 19th, 2022 funeral procession through London. Note the car's taller-than-standard roof touts Perspex "bubbletop" viewing inserts but no longer flies the Royal Standard like it did when King Charles III used it in Edinburgh on September 12th. Observe also the "Bobbies" posted along the procession route are keeping their eyes on the crowds in front of them despite what must be tremendous temptation to peek at the cortege passing behind them. - Wikimedia Commons

paintwork; no provision for exterior license plates; and a statuesque, silver-plated bronze "bonnet" mascot depicting St. George slaying the dragon (all recalling how The Queen's spouse Prince Philip similarly oversaw the design of a pickup-style, military bronze-green Land Rover Defender hearse for his own April, 2021 funeral). This Jaguar's first public duty would be the conveyance of Her Majesty's coffin 14 miles southeast to London starting on the A40, where scores of motorists defied encroaching darkness and damp "Wellie weather" to stop their cars and pay their respects before the cortege picked up Bayswater Road and progressed through tremendous crowds (many clapping or crying "hip, hip, hooray") at Marble Arch, Hyde Park Corner and Constitution Hill before circling Queen Victoria's statue and entering Buckingham Palace where the Royal Family was afforded private time with their beloved matriarch in the Bow Room.

As the State Hearse is based on the final-generation "X351" XJ platform Jaguar discontinued in 2019, it was obviously commissioned and completed (despite Wilcox executives "keeping mum" when questioned) well in advance of Her Majesty's passing in common with so many other elements of Operation London Bridge. The X351's "aluminium" structure surely posed no special conversion challenges since Wilcox bodied its first hearses using this metal back in 2003



The Wilcox Jaguar State Hearse departs Wellington Arch at Hyde Park Corner with The Queen's head chauffeur Andy Fitzgerald at the wheel. Next stop is Windsor Castle 22 miles west of central London. - Gregg D. Merksamer "telly grab"

and this three-generation family firm's experience as a coachbuilder dates all the way back to the Austin Princess hearses it debuted in 1948. Wilcox's website further recalls the firm got its start in 1945 when William Wilcox won a contract from Ealing Studios to chauffeur film crews and actors and decided he'd do better selling limousines versus renting them. Though Jaguar no longer makes a sedan suitable for Wilcox's handiwork, its current portfolio features a Bentley Flying Spur hearse and all-electric Nissan Leaf Tekna and Citroën e-Berlingo offerings for funeral firms serving UK cities with "low emission zones" subjecting older petrol and diesel cars to hefty entry fees or even outright bans.

The precisely-timed, 38-minute procession that left Buckingham Palace at 2:22 pm London time on Wednesday, September 14th to ensure the 3 pm sharp arrival of The Queen's coffin at Westminster Hall for its lying-in-State also saw the first official use of the Royal Navy State Funeral Gun Carriage since Lord Louis Mountbatten's post-assassination services on September 5th, 1979. Wikipedia details this conveyance - also used to carry the coffins of Sir Winston Churchill in 1965, King George VI in 1952, King George V in 1936, King Edward VII in 1910 and Queen Victoria in 1901 - was originally built by Vickers, Sons and Maxim in 1896 and modified for funeral duty three years later through the fitment of rubber tires and a cataloque. While its September 14th trip up The Mall and on through Horseguards, Whitehall and Parliament Square involved an all-black, uniformly-sized six-horse team unperturbed by crowds and the once-per-minute



The Jaguar State Hearse motors from central London to Windsor Castle with The Queen's head chauffeur Andy Fitzgerald at the wheel and a long line of Royal Range Rovers following behind. A backup Jaguar hearse belonging to the Royal Household's funeral director Leverton's was spotted in a discreet second convoy well behind. - Gregg D. Merksamer "telly grab"

thunder of Hyde Park cannons and Big Ben's tolling, the September 19th procession from Westminster Hall to Westminster Abbey would see it pulled by 98 naval ratings (cadets) with 40 more braking from behind as the drumbeats of Beethoven's Funeral March furnished a "metronome of grief" in the words of one BBC commentator (the cadet count would be 137 for the afternoon march from the Abbey to Wellington Arch after one sailor fell ill). This visually stunning tradition got its start in 1901 when the unexercised Gun Carriage horses that met Queen Victoria's funeral train at Windsor proved so skittish they nearly toppled her coffin. Victoria's grandson-in-law Prince Louis of Battenberg (also Lord Louis Mountbatten's father) accordingly asked if the Royal Navy sailors present would pull the carriage to Windsor Castle instead, which they did after drag ropes were improvised from the horses' harnesses and the royal train's communication cord.

With 22 miles separating central London from The Queen's final resting place beside her parents, sister and husband beneath St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, the Wilcox Jaguar State Hearse again took responsibility for her coffin at Wellington Arch around 1:30 pm local time on the 19th. Melbourne, Australia PCS member Roger Thiedeman was able to confirm for us through MAJESTY Magazine's Managing Editor that Elizabeth II's Head Chauffeur Andy Fitzgerald was at the Jaguar's wheel for its westward drive past grateful subjects gathered along Hyde Park's south edge where the Albert Memorial and Royal Albert Hall heralded



After the Jaguar State Hearse entered Windsor Castle's Quadrangle through the George IV Gate, it proceeded under military and Royal family escort to St. George's Chapel where its duty to The Queen concluded after a bearer party carried her coffin up the Chapel's west steps. - Gregg D. Merksamer "telly grab"

subsequent roadside crowds in Hammersmith and Chiswick. As accumulating flowers on the hearse's roof, hood and windshield evoked Princess Diana's 1997 funeral, aerial coverage of The Queen's cortege (followed by a discreet second convoy containing a back-up Jaguar hearse from the Royal Household's undertakers Leverton & Sons) revealed most of the A30's side roads

were barricaded by busses or police vans for security's sake and the parallel M4 motorway was as empty as the skies above Heathrow Airport. The State Hearse also passed Runnymede (where King John famously signed the Magna Carta in 1215) before entering the grounds of Windsor Castle through the Shaw Farm Gate to join a final procession up the Long Walk to the George IV Gate and the traditionally private Quadrangle beyond where The King and other Royal Family members escorted it through the Engine Court and the Norman Arch as The Sevastopol Bell - rung only when a British monarch has passed away - tolled for the first time since George VI's death 70 years ago.

While the Jaguar State Hearse's service to Queen Elizabeth II concluded once her coffin was carried up the west steps of St. George's Chapel for a final Committal service where Grand Prix racing champion Jackie Stewart and assorted past and present servants of the Royal Household were among the 800 guests, it is certain we will see it tend to many future Windsor Family funerals as a permanent addition to a Royal Mews fleet that also kept a pair of 20-year-old Bentley State Limousines and a 44-year-old Rolls-Royce Phantom VI busy during the



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The oldest Rolls-Royce limousine that saw action during Queen Elizabeth II's State Funeral (and the only one touting dual side-mount spare tires) was this 1950 Phantom IV used most-memorably by Harry & Meghan to leave St. George's Chapel after the September 19th Committal service at Windsor Castle concluded (Meghan also rode in it with her mother on her way to marry Harry on May 19th, 2018). This H.J. Mulliner-bodied beauty was the first of just 18 Phantom IVs made exclusively for heads-of-state through 1956 (the Shah of Iran and Generalissimo Francisco Franco of Spain had theirs armored), which also stood out as the only "straight 8" Rolls-Royces ever offered on the thinking this engine type was thought optimal for extended running at parade speeds. - Tracey Hind photo via Wikimedia Commons

2022 State Funeral as detailed here ...

- While the Bentley State Limousine that entered service during Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee celebrations in 2002 first came to funeral watchers' notice when Princess Anne used it to follow her mother's Mercedes hearse 180 miles from Balmoral to Edinburgh on September 11th, it was the ending of the September 19th Committal service at Windsor Castle that delivered exciting confirmation two of these entirely bespoke cars were actually built. These first-ever Bentley State Limousines also broke a half-century of Rolls-Royce dominance at the Royal Mews and were the first cars serving in this role to employ unitized versus body-on-frame construction. Bentley was actually able to build them in-house thanks to 34 craftsmen employed at its Crewe, Cheshire works who proudly signed commemorative plates affixed inside the cars' body shells.

- An extra-tall Perspex "bubbletop" ensured the Phantom VI State Limousine stood out as the 2022 State Funeral's most-distinctive Rolls-Royce. This truly-regal, Royal Claret-and-black parade car was constructed on chassis # PGH101 to be The Queen's 1977 Silver Jubilee

gift from the British Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, but labor troubles at H.J. Mulliner, Park Ward Ltd.'s Willesden works in northwest London ultimately delayed its delivery until March, 1978. The Royal Standard, per-protocol, flew above its windshield when King Charles III rode in it before and after his mother's September 12th service at Edinburgh's St. Giles' Cathedral, but was removed before his Queen Consort Camilla, The Princess of Wales Kate Middleton, 9-year-old Prince George and 7-year-old Princess Charlotte (now third in line to the throne after her father and brother) used it to ride directly behind the State Gun Carriage during the September 19th procession from Westminster Abbey to Wellington Arch.

- The oldest Rolls-Royce limousine in action during Queen Elizabeth's funeral (and the only one touting dual sidemount spare tires) was the 1950 Phantom IV used most-memorably by Harry & Meghan to leave St. George's Chapel after the September 19th Committal service at Windsor Castle concluded (Meghan also rode in it with her mother on her way to marry Harry on May 19th, 2018). This H.J. Mulliner-bodied beauty was the first of just 18 Phantom IVs made exclusively for heads-of-state through 1956 (the Shah of Iran and Generalissimo Francisco Franco of Spain had theirs armored), which also stood out as the only "straight 8" Rolls-Royces ever offered on the thinking this engine type was thought optimal for extended running at parade speeds.



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Special Tribute - Out of the Ordinary Gifts Left on Famous Gravesites

by Jess Farren

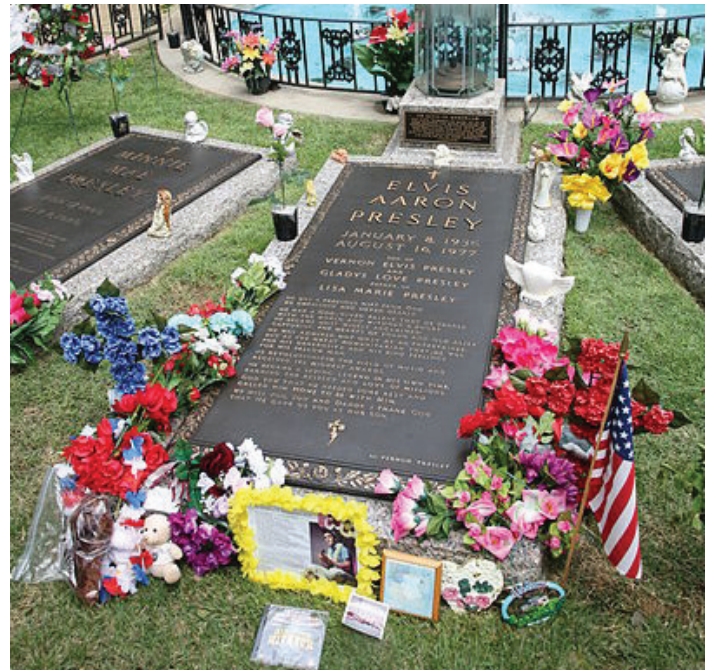


“The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.”

In the early 1800s, poet Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote these words upon reflecting on the life and death of John Keats. It is a moving passage that reminds us how the experience of spending time within a cemetery can provide deep moments of reflection for visitors. Gravesites are not just physical spaces but symbolic places of connection. Many are driven to visit the final resting places of people they may not have known in life but wish to honor and remember in death.

For centuries, people have flocked to burial sites of religious icons and leaders. During the 19th century, folks often picnicked in cemeteries and spent their spare time making gravestone rubbings of the carvings they found the most striking. While scores of books have been published for decades containing the locations of famous gravesites, in recent years this process has been simplified with helpful online databases. Today, a growing number of people will plan their vacations around cemetery visits.

It is interesting to consider how one’s popularity or notoriety in life can impact one’s final resting place. This is sometimes reflected even in the items that are left behind at the grave. While it is certainly common to find



About 600,000 people a year visit Elvis’ grave in Graceland. Photo Credit: (Daniel Schwen/CC BY-SA 4.0)

flowers, letters, flags or coins on the graves of famous individuals, there are some that attract a different type of remembrance. From the lipstick kisses on Marilyn Monroe’s tomb to the “I Voted” stickers placed on Susan B. Anthony’s grave every Election Day, these final resting places have become famous for the gifts and tokens left behind.

Here are 7 Famous Gravesites Where Visitors Leave Something Other Than Flowers

1. Potatoes on Antonie-Augustin Parmentier’s grave.

Do you remember that scene in *The Martian* where Matt Damon’s character realizes he can survive on the red planet by growing potatoes? While that story may have been fictional,



Photo Credit: Bart Hölscher/CC BY-SA 3.0

it brings to mind a story about another man who dis-

covered that tubers could be a literal lifesaver. French scientist, Antonie-Augustin Parmentier lived in France during a time when potatoes were considered unfit for human consumption. After becoming a prisoner of war in Prussia during the 7 Years War and forced on a constant diet of potatoes, Parmentier discovered through firsthand evidence that they were not harmful to humans and could in fact help keep the people of France fed during times of famine.

Thanks to Parmentier's efforts, the potato not only kept the poor fed but also became a staple of the French diet. In Paris's famed Pere-Lachaise Cemetery, among the rows of gravestones for celebrated icons you'll find a gravesite bordered by potatoes plants. There is often at least one potato if not many sitting on top of the headstone as well. While Parmentier had many great accomplishments throughout his life, his work championing the potato became his greatest legacy and is reflected by the fact that people still bring them to his grave more than two hundred years after his death.

2. 'I Voted!' Stickers on Susan B. Anthony's Grave

It's known as a Rochester Election Day ritual. Every Election Day, women travel to Rochester, NY to visit the grave of famous American suffragette, Susan B. Anthony. They come to leave behind their 'I voted' stickers on her gravesite. Anthony fought for women to have the right to vote so this poignant display every year serves to honor her life's work. Many will line up at Rochester's Mount Hope Cemetery in the early morning and wait in line for hours just to have the honor, prompting the cemetery to extend hours during the election season to allow more visitors. The ritual has become so beloved and widespread that the cemetery decided they needed to create a sleeve for the grave in 2020 to protect the fragile marble from being damaged by the adhesive on the stickers. We commend them for encouraging this awesome tradition while taking steps to ensure Anthony's headstone remains preserved.

3. Pens and Pencils on Annie M.G. Schmid's Grave

When ASD Family-Member Owner, Marty Czachor Jr., traveled to the Netherlands in 2019 he made it a point to visit the picturesque Zorgvlied Cemetery which is well known for its collection of creatively decorated graves. Among the striking monuments there, he discovered the grave of beloved children's author, Annie M.G. Schmid. Known as "the mother of Dutch theatrical song," Annie penned beloved children's literature

and is considered to be one of the greatest Dutch writers of all time. To pay tribute to her life, cemetery visitors will often leave behind pens and pencils at her gravesite. As you can see from this photo Marty captured, the tradition is still going strong today more than 20 years after her death.



4. Lipstick Kisses on Marilyn Monroe's Grave

Among the rows of crypts located at Westwood Village Memorial Park, there is one that stands out from all the rest due to the pink hue of its marble. One might assume from a distance that Marilyn Monroe's tomb is pink



Photo Credit: Arthur Dark/CC-SA 4.0

by intention, but when you move closer you can see that the pink shade is not a different type of marble but rather the effect of red lipstick marks being left on monument over the years. The tomb is often covered with multiple lipstick marks left by her adoring fans.

Just as she commanded attention in life, Monroe's tomb continues to attract interest to this day. It is pretty incredible to think about how that many years of lipstick residue could result in marble stone actually changing color. Of course, you would be forgiven if, in 2022, the idea of all those people putting their lips on the same few inches of space might not sit well. It will be interesting to see if this trend will live on in perpetuity, like Monroe's memory, or if the cemetery will one day put a stop to it.

5. Peaches, Chocolate, Toys and Onions on Roald Dahl's Grave

To a certain generation, Roald Dahl is perhaps the most

influential writer of all time. Depending on the day you visit the beloved author's grave at Saints Peter and Paul Cemetery in England, you might find any number

of items sitting atop the modest black slab. A chocolate bar left by someone who loved Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory or perhaps a row of peaches left by visitors who were fans of James and the Giant Peach. In addition to his love of writing, Dahl was also an avid gardener with a special penchant

for enormous onions. This is why, among the toys, peaches and chocolate bars you might also spy a random onion placed beside his grave. Amazing how one man's life (and incredible imagination!) can lead to so many symbolic associations.



Photo Credit: tpholland/CC BY 2.0

6. Soup Cans on Andy Warhol's Grave

About 20 minutes outside of downtown Pittsburgh, the unassuming St. John the Baptist Byzantine Catholic Cemetery houses the remains of visual artist, Andy Warhol, father of the pop art movement. For a man with such a larger-than-life, eccentric personality, it is surprising just how ordinary looking his gravesite appears to be at first glance. Then again, Warhol was renowned for taking everyday objects like the Campbell's Soup Can and making them the focus of his artwork so perhaps this is exactly as he would have wanted it. Of course, there is one thing that makes the grave stand out and that is the many soup cans that are often left on top of it by visitors. It is a very fitting symbol for a man who transformed ordinary objects into works of art.

7. Drawn Xs on Marie Laveau's Tomb

Notorious New Orleans Voodoo Queen, Marie Laveau, may or may not be buried in St. Louis Cemetery No. 1. Laveau died in 18881 and there is some debate among where her remains were interred. However, that doesn't



Photo Credit: Public Domain/CC0 1.0

stop the flood of tourists and occultists who visit the site where she is believed to be entombed every year, often in hopes of having their wishes granted. You see, years ago a rumor began to circulate that if you drew an X on the tomb, turned around three times, knocked on the tomb and yelled out your wish, your desire would be granted. If that sounds absolutely insane to you, you're not alone. For years, cemetery conservationists have tried to discourage this, arguing that the absurd ritual has absolutely no basis in voodoo practice and damages the fragile 200-year-old tomb.

Today, in order to visit the tomb, you must tour the cemetery with an authorized guide due to the prevalence of people coming to leave their mark. Interestingly enough, there are two other tombs in the cemetery that others claim are Laveau's true resting place. Both are marked with many Xs as well. In addition to (illegally) leaving the Xs behind, tourists have also left hair pins and accessories as gifts for Laveau who was rumored to have been a hairdresser. Of course, even this is not known for certain much like most of Laveau's life. Interesting that the person who has the second most visited grave in the United States (second only to Elvis!) remains shrouded in mystery.



Photo credit: Lucid Nightmare/CC BY-ND 2.0

Glass-Front Niches: Helping Families Tell the Full Story of Their Loved One's Life

By Matthews Memorialization

Coming out of the Covid 19 pandemic, cremation rates everywhere are at an all-time high increasing the demand for cremation memorialization as many consumers have a clearer view of the value of permanent memorialization. Whether planning for their own end of life decisions or having experienced the passing of a loved one, people are realizing when they take cremated remains home or scatter them, they leave no lasting record of a life well lived. Families are searching for better memorialization options that help them tell their story or the story of their loved ones.

“When considering cremation, families turn to funeral homes and cemeteries to understand their options,” R. Michael Eddy-Herrera, president of Matthews Cemetery Products said. “It is our job to educate these families about the importance of permanent memorialization, and to provide them with a wide variety of final disposition choices after cremation. By comprehensively serving cremation families’ needs, we remain relevant.”

As more families learn they have options when making cremation arrangements, the conversation is shifting from “Just scatter me” to “What are my options for a permanent memorial after cremation?” Choosing cremation offers great flexibility, including an incredible variety of permanent memorialization choices that help families remember their loved ones and preserve their story for future generations.

Because families are seeking more meaningful cremation memorialization choices, glass-front niches have become the fastest growing segment of cremation memorialization. Creating a memorial that tells a person's full story goes beyond a memorial that only includes a birth date, death date and maybe an emblem. A glass-front niche offers the opportunity for so much more personalization and really illustrates the “dash” between the birth and death dates and truly tells the story of someone's life. If you are not currently offering these one-of-a-kind tributes to the families you serve, you may be missing an opportunity.

Families Can Create One-of-a-Kind Memorials

Just like families choosing burial, families choosing cremation want flexibility and find great comfort in carefully curating a special memorial. Glass-front niches allow families the ultimate ability to tell their loved one's personal story by displaying precious photos and mementos along with an urn. Which is more impactful: A bible emblem as a representation of mom's devotion or displaying the well-worn pages of the beloved bible she read nightly?

Because of the high level of personalization, no two glass-front niches will ever look the same. From a lifetime achievement award to a beloved baseball or grandpa's reading glasses, there is no more personal way to highlight an individual's passions and accomplishments to tell the story for future generations.

A glass front-niche keeps a loved one's memory front and center and in close proximity to family and friends to visit, creating an intimacy that is unmatched. Many other options simply do not compare to the special remembrance created by a well-decorated glass-front niche.

Cemeteries and Funeral Homes Can Generate Additional Revenue

Glass-front niches are highly desired by families as a premium form of memorialization, driving profitability and a strong ROI. Consider how many niches you can fit in the space one casket requires. With expert guidance and planning you can set a pricing strategy to accommodate a variety of budgets and family needs, including varying niche sizes, special feature niches and more. Niches also provide an opportunity for ongoing revenue streams, including keeping families engaged by encouraging them to redecorate the niche for holidays and other special occasions.

The flexibility of glass-front niches makes them appealing for funeral homes and cemeteries. Because



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they require a much smaller footprint compared to most other forms of ground or mausoleum burial, you can install them just about anywhere, turning previously unused space into a revenue-generating area. From hallways to office space, you can even convert a garage to a beautiful room of glass-front niches and build new heritage for your location. Designs can easily be scaled to plan for future capacity and phases as the demand for cremation in your area grows.

Every glass-front niche is as unique as the cemetery and the families they serve, providing a prime opportunity for meaningful themes and personalization. Technological advancements mean more design choices than ever. From traditional to contemporary extrusions made of bronze, aluminum or steel to beautifully detailed backgrounds images, custom niche frames and more inviting lighting. Anything is possible.

Cremation families in different parts of the country want different things so taking the time to understand the local market is critical so that you may plan a niche that truly serves your community's heritage and interests with special, highly personal memorialization.



Customer Commitment

Matthews Aurora™ Funeral Solutions is committed to helping families move from grieving to remembrance by providing products of superior craftsmanship and solutions that meet the needs of every family who wish to honor and remember their loved one. As a leading provider to the funeral home industry, we offer our customers an extensive variety of high-quality wood, metal and cremation caskets, urns, keepsakes, memorial jewelry, stationery and other programs, products and solutions. The Matthews Aurora™ Funeral Solutions team is focused on providing our funeral home customers with outstanding service and support, helping your firm better serve the families in your community. For more information about how we can help your firm, please contact your Matthews Aurora™ Funeral Service Consultant or call us at 1-800-457-1111.

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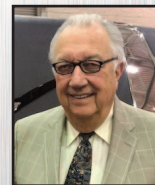
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The background of this section is a dark, atmospheric photograph of a cemetery with tombstones and trees.

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5 Reasons Why Successful Funeral Homes Share Grief Information

by Dr. Jason Troyer

After working with hundreds of funeral homes over the last 10 years, I have developed strong opinions as to how funeral homes should operate. If I had to distill my views into one statement, it would be this: The funeral home that creates the strongest emotional connection with the greatest number of local families will be the most successful.

This is true in most aspects of life. We make the extra drive to the restaurant where the owner remembers us. We use the accountant who isn't the cheapest, but really understands our business. We patronize the auto repair shop where the mechanic doesn't talk down to us. We return to the physician or the dentist who makes us feel comfortable and takes the time to answer our questions. The same is true for funeral service. People return to the funeral home where they have the strongest emotional connection to the staff.

There are many different opportunities to create an emotional connection with local families. We can be considerate during the removal or transfer of their loved one. We can show our compassion with an unhurried arrangement conference. By providing customized touches and unexpected personalization, we can show that their loved one's service is special and unique. However, all of these situations occur after their loved one has been brought into our care. Given that more families are living in communities where they have no previous experience with a local funeral home, the challenge is to begin to develop this emotional connection before an at-need situation arises. How do we do that?

One way is to compassionately provide grief information. Successful funeral homes know that by offering high-quality and modern information about grief, they can build relationships and develop trust before families need their services. Here are 5 ways that grief information can help set successful funeral homes apart from their competitors.

1) Prove Your Expertise

Funeral directors should not try to be grief counselors,

but this does not mean they should shy away from providing helpful information. Giving community members helpful information about grief can help establish funeral professionals as experts in their field. For example, the community assumes that all funeral directors will have a selection of caskets and urns. But they will be impressed if a funeral director can provide a resource to help them explain the death of a grandparent to their child.

2) Grief Connects With Everyone

Grief is rare in that it is a topic that most people do not discuss and yet has been experienced by almost everyone. This means that there is a large potential audience and most people still have many questions. Funeral homes can provide grief information on a wide range of topics that might be of interest to the families in their community. Examples of topics include:

- How does a bereaved child deal with grief throughout childhood and adulthood?
- How do I grieve a family member that I hated?
- Is my grief process normal?
- How long should grief take?
- How do I deal with the loss of an ex-spouse?
- What rituals do I use if I don't consider myself to be religious?
- I'm worried about my widowed parent – are they experiencing normal grief?
- My grief after the loss of my dog is as strong as the loss of my grandparents – is that normal?
- How am I going to get through Mother's Day after my mom has died?

Funeral homes that help the bereaved answer these questions will be remembered as the funeral home that cares about more than the sale of merchandise and wants to be helpful long after the funeral is over.

3) Grief Information Has a Long "Shelf Life"

In addition to connecting with almost anyone, grief information also has a long "shelf life." After experiencing a significant loss, most people remain open to information and support long after the death. The

bereaved are always looking for information that will inform them. They continue to look and listen for examples of other people who have experienced the same loss. They want to see if they share common experiences or if there is advice they can use.

Funeral homes that continually share grief support and information will be seen as continually relevant. Conversely, funeral homes that only focus on providing at-need services will lose contact with families in the years when their services aren't needed.

4) Sharing Grief Information Builds Trust

Most bereaved individuals simply want to know if their grief reactions are normal and how they can honor and remember their loved ones. Providing this information is a wonderful way to connect with individuals in your community – even if they didn't use your funeral home. Providing information reinforces that you take grief seriously and you are recognizing the whole person. Being a source of grief information reminds these individuals that your role is broader than providing funeral products; it is also about providing personal care from pre-need through aftercare.

5) Build Relationships with Local Partners

In addition to serving families, funeral homes can also become known as a source of grief information for local partners such as hospice professionals, clergy, mental-health professionals, teachers, and other community professionals. Funeral homes can collaborate with these professionals to offer grief education to their staff and volunteers. One way to disseminate information about grief is through printed materials. For instance, you might purchase grief books for every member of a support group at your local community center or offer child-friendly resources on grief to school counselors following the tragic loss of a student.

Another strategy is to sponsor a speaker to provide training and education for your local partners. Many of these professionals (e.g., hospice nurses, social workers, etc.) are not only interested in the information but also require continuing education credits. By doing so, you can help local professionals to better assist grieving individuals in your community while also demonstrating that your funeral home is committed to addressing grief-related issues. Ultimately, these strategies demonstrate that you truly care and that your community partners can confidently refer their cli-

ents, patients, parishioners, and families to you. How do these strategies work in real life? Let me share a brief, but true story. One morning not long ago, an older woman walked into the funeral home where I work. She appeared to be in her early 60s and could pass for a grandmother on any TV show. She took a moment to pat our therapy dog's head and whispered a few kind words to him before stepping into the office. She confidently asked her question, "I heard that you have free grief information here?"

Sally (a real person, but her name has been changed) was mourning the death of her 30-something daughter to cancer. Although she was grieving, her primary concern was her eight-year-old granddaughter who lived several hundred miles away. Sally knew her granddaughter was never going to be the same, and Sally wanted to be fully prepared to support her in her grief. After giving her some free booklets and checking out several books on helping grieving children from our Resource Library, Sally thanked the funeral home staff and was off.

Stop and consider this for a moment. Sally has a smartphone and could use Google to ask the same questions. She likely has a Prime account and Amazon would deliver any book she wants within two days. But instead of using any online resource, she decided to walk into our funeral home to ask for help because she heard we offered these resources. In doing so, she was introduced to our therapy dog and our office staff. She received the information she desperately needed as well as some in-person support. When Sally begins to consider preplanning, where will she go? If her best friend needs a question about funerals answered, who will Sally tell her to call? I will say it again: The funeral home that creates the strongest emotional connection with the greatest number of local families will be the most successful.



Dr. Jason Troyer is a counseling psychologist and grief educator. He helps hundreds of funeral homes with social media, grief resources, staff trainings, and community presentations. You can learn more and contact Dr. Troyer at www.JasonTroyer.com.

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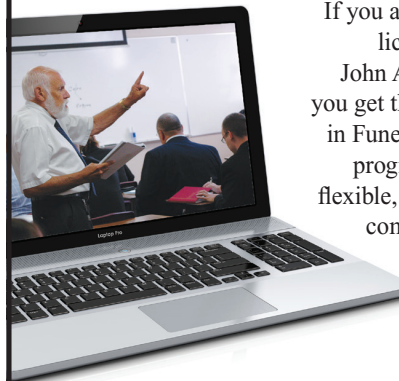
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What about the kids? Creating space for children in a funeral home setting.

By National Alliance for Children's Grief

When someone dies, the entire family is impacted, including the children. A child-friendly space in your funeral home ensures the entire family is cared for compassionately. Funeral homes that are welcoming to children make the family feel comfortable, which can set you apart.

What is a Child-Friendly Space? A child-friendly space is a dedicated space within the funeral home that feels safe and comfortable for children as they cope with and process the death of their loved one. This can look like a wholly defined space or a simple collection of resources based on the resources available to you and your firm. When you have limited space and time, start small.

Regardless of your space or time constraints, a great starting point is to provide simple craft materials to give children an opportunity to find comfort and promote creativity. Suggested items that complement your space and provide additional support to children include blank or lined white and colored paper, pencils, markers (washable), colored pencils, crayons, scissors, and glue sticks. A cart or bookshelf space and a comfy seat will go a long way to creating a safe environment for children during a stressful time. This can be a fixed physical space or something mobile and able to be moved to wherever the child(ren) are located in the funeral home.

If you would like to grow the footprint of your child-friendly space, consider adding items like a few easily played games (Trouble, Jenga, UNO, playing cards, Connect Four, etc.), a little library (see books in the suggested resource list), toys that encourage imaginative and expressive play (doll house, puppets, play doctor sets, etc.), stuffed animals, and fidget items. It is helpful if some of the items create opportunities to explore feelings such as books, coloring pages, prompts, or whiteboards.

If you have the space, it is worth considering if a separate area can be converted permanently into a

child-friendly space. This can be a dedicated space or a multi-purpose space that is converted as needed. In planning this space, regardless of the size of the space, set the intention that this space is for children—plan for child-friendly colors and furniture that is inviting. Decor could include rugs, posters/wall art, chalkboard on the walls, and warm, friendly, and comforting things. For this space, we suggest some of the ideas below.

- Reading space with items such as pillows, a bean bag chair, couches, and books.
- Craft area with items such as lap desks or a table and chairs and craft kits.
- Calming items such as stuffed animals, mindful breathing items (pinwheels, Hoberman spheres, etc.), or aromatherapy.
- Toys can be chosen with many goals in mind. Fidget toys allow for the release of energy. Outdoor playground space can also help with the release of energy. Toys that support children playing together, like Lego or blocks.
- Consider putting a live feed into the room. Can they hear and see what is happening during the services while they are in your child-friendly space?
- If there is an opportunity (i.e., staff that feels comfortable or you are working with a community partner with grief support expertise), purposeful play and conversation with children in this space can ensure there is space for the child to ask questions about death or funerals. Whatever your plan for child-friendly spaces, it is important to consider supervision by a trusted adult should be a component of any plan involving children.

Remember, you don't have to do it alone! This is an excellent opportunity to reach into your community networks and collaborate! Who else has expertise/resources that you can collaborate with? Certified Child Life Specialists, grief centers/hospices that serve pediatrics, or therapists/counselors in your community that work with children can help support you and answer questions about child-friendly spaces and your support of the families you serve more generally.

Accommodating the child in the space and the service. Part of the commitment to child-friendly funeral homes also includes accommodating the child in the practices in the funeral home. This can start from the initial conversation with the family planning to visit the space. As they prepare the children, videos or photos are worth sharing to help them understand what the space looks like. Do you have a virtual tour or photos of the relevant spaces that can be shared with caregivers in advance? This can help to demystify the funeral space for children who have never experienced it.

When the family comes to the space, consider a tour with the child in mind so they can get familiar with the space and can better understand what to expect. Ideally, this would occur before the service. Be sure to identify the spaces the children will be in or other important public areas (i.e., bathrooms). During your time together, encourage open conversation and answer questions truthfully in partnership with the caregiver. Use simple, straightforward, age-appropriate language and listen to their questions. Let their questions guide where they need clarification.

In considering the service, it is always important to consider how to incorporate the child. Share these options with the caregiver and encourage them to discuss those opportunities with the child beforehand. Support this conversation as needed and reassure the child that it's okay to change their mind at any point. Support the family in defining a backup plan if the child is struggling or decides they no longer want to partake in certain aspects of the ceremony. Suggesting that the family designates a 'buddy' for the child can be helpful. Remind the caregiver that the child can choose which rituals and aspects of the end-of-life ceremony they will participate in.

Not all rituals will work and are appropriate for all children- it depends upon their ability to focus, maintain attention, and desire to participate. Fortunately, it does not have to be all or nothing. It's okay for a child to decide not to participate in an aspect of the ceremony. For example, children under the age of four may not do as well during a formal ceremony like a funeral or mass service. Still, they will be perfectly content at a less formal service like a visitation or celebration of life.



NACG

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- Visit www.nacg.org to learn more

Consider sharing options for ways children can participate in end-of-life ceremonies and rituals. These include but are not limited to reading a letter, poem, or passage from a spiritual text, playing music, singing, creating and displaying artwork, putting something inside the casket, grave, etc., serving as a pallbearer, passing out ceremony programs or choosing a special color for everyone to wear in honor of the person.

In closing, consider connecting the children and families you serve to resources and support in the community. The National Alliance for Children's Grief (NACG's) website lists providers in communities across the country who provide dedicated support and programs for grieving children and families. You can find services for families local to you on the "Find Support" tab at www.nacg.org. Connecting with other children who are grieving allows them to share their stories, understand that they are not alone, and validate and normalize their experiences. This can be incredibly powerful in supporting the child as they adjust to life without their person. The NACG website has a large number of free resources on topics relating to grief and children, and sharing the website with the families you serve ensures they have an identified place to see support.

About the National Alliance for Children's Grief:
The National Alliance for Children's Grief (NACG) is a non-profit organization that raises awareness about the needs of children and teens who are grieving a death and provides education and resources for anyone who supports them. Our vision is for no child to have to grieve alone. Through the collective voice of our members and partners, we educate, advocate and raise awareness about childhood bereavement. www.childrenrgrieve.org.



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The Child and Death

Part II of a III Part Series

By Todd W. Van Beck

Children and death. That seems to be automatically an inappropriate subject.

When I was President of a Mortuary College I encountered a 20 year old woman who came to me because she had a preoccupation with death. She had decided that she wanted to become a funeral director. Many people, including her own immediate family, felt that this was an extremely odd thing for a young woman to want to do. Yet, she had this very strong desire to become a funeral director and I suggested that she and I explore her hopes and dreams. I asked her when she had decided to pursue funeral service as an occupation.

Initially she could not think of any firm reason for choosing funeral service. I asked her to go back and examine her life as to what had happened to her as far as the experience of death was concerned. It was with a great deal of reluctance that she began to talk about her life.

She told the following story. Growing up she and her sister had shared a room until she was about eleven years old. At that time her father fixed up another room and said she could have it as her own.

She indicated that gesture was the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to her. She would go to her room, close the door and enjoy just being in charge of her own space, her own room. She decorated it the way she wanted it, and hence made it completely her own.

One day she was asked to sit down with her mother and father to discuss something extremely serious. Her grandmother had become seriously ill and the father and mother had decided that the grandmother was to come and live with them. Therefore this young girl would have to move back with her sister and give up her room to her grandmother. Naturally this young girl thought that this was the most terrible thing that had ever happened to her and she was unable to control her hatred and anger she felt for her ill grandmother. She said she wished her grandmother would die so she would not

have to give up her room.

The grandmother represented a threat and symbolized an intruder thrust into this young girl's life. Her room, the one thing that represented establishing her own identity as a person had been taken away from her.

The grandmother lived their only a month before she died. Now this young girl was overwhelmed with a sense of complicity in the death of her grandmother – in other words her dream had come true!

Throughout our conversations she came to a realization that she had not thought of her death preoccupation in these precise terms, but was honest with herself that it was at that point in her past that she became preoccupied with the subject of death – what was death like and what it meant. Consequently in terms of a vocation she was drawn to funeral service because as a funeral director she would be on the front lines in the opportunity to discover more about death than any other person in the community and this is precisely what she wanted to know.

The more we talked about this issue the more we both felt that becoming a funeral director might be a very good career choice for her. Out of an understanding of her own experience she was laying a good healthy foundation to evolve into a wise guide and counselor to others as they encountered the experience of death. I do not believe her immediate family ever totally understood this but she did and that was all that ultimately mattered.

Every funeral director in every community are living witnesses to the fact that someone is able to confront death openly and honestly and at that point can become both indirectly and directly an educator at the point where people become involved with a death and try to come to terms with this life crisis. No one basically knows more about death in the community than does the funeral director.

Consider for a moment how much more beneficial it would have been if earlier this young girl had been encouraged to talk about her death experiences, her anxieties and fears about her guilt with her grandmother, instead of being burdened with her own struggle for professional identify by being greeted with roll eyes, sighs, and comments about how weird and strange the funeral profession is. A tremendous amount of time was basically wasted in her young life due to her struggle to determine the meaning of her own death experiences.

Sometimes we see in adults, grown persons, mature professional people anxiety and apprehensions concerning death which is a source of disturbance for them and hence is many times unwittingly projected to others.

Many years ago I was invited to sit in on a state wide meeting of a council of churches. The team project to which I was assigned was to help compose a guide on how church members should deal with death. Our team was charged with writing a pamphlet on this subject. Interestingly when the team arrived for our first meeting we discovered to our amazement that the clergy person who was chairing the proceedings had

already written the pamphlet. Further more when I read the information he had put together I was stunned to read that the pamphlet instructed people who were going through a death to eliminate any ceremonial response to death.

The intent of the pamphlet was to give instructions concerning funerals which were to be followed by the constituent churches in that state from that time onward. The pamphlet said that any "acting out" procedures were considered pagan, a waste of time, money and energy and hence a completely futile process.

Throughout the meeting I was very interested in how this clergy person controlled the meeting. The members of the team were able to question punctuation, grammar and sentence structures within the pamphlet, but we could not say anything about the central idea which was to eliminate funerals altogether.

During the break one of the other team members commented that it seemed to him that there was a great deal of emotion from this clergy persons approach to the subject of death which was glaringly projected into the pamphlet and this needed to be explored carefully. Therefore later that evening when we all gathered for

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dinner this team member broached the subject to the clergy person. Basically the question was asked as to how he came up with all these very interesting ideas on handling death.

Without any apparent awareness of cause and effect relationships the clergy person blurted out his own experience. He told the entire team that when he was eleven years old and living on a farm his father had accidentally been pulled through a hay baler and was killed. He continued to relate that his entire family went to town on the day of his father's funeral and he was left alone on the farm and that, he said, was the most miserable day of his life. By implication the clergy person was saying that he was never going to allow anything like that to happen to another person and hence the instructions concerning no funerals in his pamphlet. Then this clergy person told us more of his story.

This clergy person eventually went on with his life. He went to college then to a first rate seminary and was assigned to a parish. One of the first things he was asked to do upon his assignment was to handle a funeral. He arrived at the last minute, conducted the shortest funeral service possible, and left just as quickly as he could and immediately went to his superior in the church saying "I don't know how I'm going to make it, I just can't stand doing funerals."

The church official was very wise and basically agreed saying that he also did not think this clergy person was cut out for the parish ministry and in turn gave him an administrative post. The author of our pamphlet became Director of Youth Work for the state and from that time on rose in the councils of the church until he was in this position of authority and was able to project his death anxieties on everybody else – without being aware of it himself.

Upon hearing this life story one of the team members asked him if he did not see any connection between his own experience with death and what he had formalized in the pamphlet. Apparently what began to emerge from this insight was highly significant because the next morning the team rewrote the entire pamphlet and the original one was never published.

It is highly significant how childhood experiences which are not examined can set the course of life – for

good and not so good. It is important for us to examine, to find some point at which we can come to terms with ourselves and explore the meaning of our own experience. Unless we become wise at these important points in life what we communicate to our children is not our wisdom and our perspective but instead our anxiety.

What then, if anything, can adults do about this situation? One of the things we can do is to bring into focus the developmental process in the child's life so we can better understand how their perception about death grows.

Possessing some basic insight as to how one would talk about death at different ages will help us avoid the types of situations we have seen in these case studies.

Children from birth to basically three have no abstract concept of death. However a child at that age can have a tremendous sense of loss, separation and grief. A great empty spot can quickly develop in the little one. The child might ask direct questions such as "What is dead?" At this point simple answers are usually best. A three year old will not be able to think about thinking so abstract answers will be basically a waste of time. The answer to adults may be so simple it might even seem foolish but if the response is honest and direct it is a beginning.

At this period the child has a great sense of the loss that has entered into his or her life structure and due to the small size of their life structure the loss is often times magnified. In response to this loss the child has specific needs for love and care. They need to have their empty spot filled as quickly as possible by someone who can love and care for them. This becomes a starting point for dealing with the emotional crisis that the death has created. When children are loved and cared for they know that even in the most disturbing emotional crisis in life someone will be there for and with them.

Between roughly ages four to seven the child is primarily concerned with exploring the meaning of his or her own body – in other words an interest in biology is present.

Children in this phase are curious about how their body functions; how other people's bodies function and

hence they ask direct biologically oriented questions. “Do dead people get hungry?” “Do dead people have to go to the bathroom?” Therefore when the child experiences a death they will naturally ask questions in this major area of interest. This is also a time of possible uncertainty because the child does not know how to bring death sharply into focus.

The child will ask questions such as “Will it hurt my grandma if I jump on her grave?” The child basically knows that grandma is dead but still somehow they cannot sense what being dead really means. Awareness is beginning to form in the child’s mind that there is a difference between being dead and being alive.

Questions might well be frequent in this period of learning for the child. “How do you eat when you’re dead?” “Can you see when you’re dead?” “Can you hear anything when you’re dead?” The adult response needs to be simple, direct with honest answers. “You don’t eat when you’re dead.” “You don’t see when you’re dead?” “No, you don’t hear when you’re dead?” Remember you are dealing basically with the child’s physical awareness, not a philosophical treatise on the metaphysics of death.

It is unwise to tell children concepts about death which you yourself do not believe. In addition it is helpful to not over-answer. As soon as one starts to over-answer he or she is doing the same thing as if they had refused to answer at all. This only projects a sense of anxiety to the child and anxiety is one of the most difficult things with which a child has to cope with.

The four to seven year old child needs simple answers to the questions which are asked. If one doesn’t know exactly what the child has asked just respond with the open ended question – “What do you mean?” The child will usually elaborate, but they will elaborate on their terms and this elaboration may well not make much sense to the adult. That is ok, let it pass.

When the child gets a bit older they will move beyond this biological phase and in the process becomes more completely a social being. The child goes out into the community, they share their life experiences with others, and they make close friends at school. When death occurs the child may still have lingering questions and curiosity concerning physical concerns and issues, but they have also moved to another level, the social level

and their questions become more inclusive and sophisticated. The child might ask “Who will take care of my friend now that his father has died?” They are aware of their parents taking a cake to a bereaved home and they ask the meaning of this custom. At this phase the child begins to grasp the vitally important life lesson of how people support each other in times of personal crisis.

The child who is included in the death rituals and customs of a family and community sees first hand without any elaborate instruction the social processes that begin as people gain support from each other at the time of death. The child is an eye witness to the power of the fabric of life being pulled close together to sustain people when their world of meaning is fractured because of a death. The child is an eye witness in seeing the structure which is built beginning with love and care for others and from this eye witness position the child moves towards a more mature and inclusive social dimension which promotes respect, concern, caring, compassion and understanding for other people. It is a powerful life lesson – when it happens.

(Part III of III, Continues Next Issue)

Todd lives in Cincinnati, OH with his wife Georgia. 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. He is associated with Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science.



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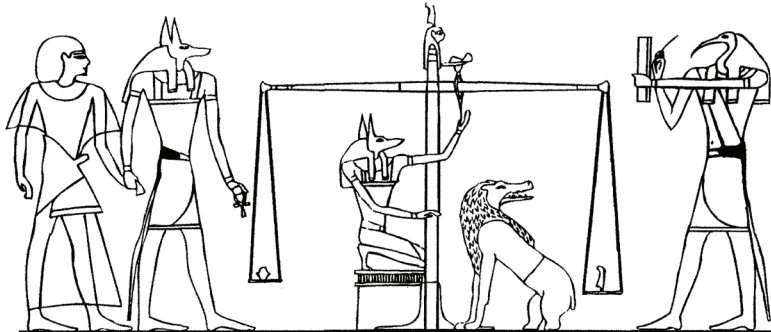
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