

The Dead Beat

The Caregiver's Soapbox



Dedicated to providing information about the people and places involved in the funeral industry



Volume 17

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Issue 5



Pennies from Heaven

By Julie Bain,

published in Reader's Digest in 2007.

My dad loved pennies, especially those with the elegant stalk of wheat curving around each side of the One Cent on the back. Those were the pennies he grew up with in Iowa during the Depression, and Lord knows he didn't have many.

When I was a kid, Dad and I would go for long walks together. He had an athletic stride of 1.9 meters, and I had to trot to keep up with him. Sometimes we'd spy coins along the way – a penny here, a dime there. Whenever I picked up a penny, he'd ask, "Is it a wheat?" It always thrilled him when we found one of those special coins produced from 1909 to 1958, the year of my birth. On one of these walks, he told me he often dreamed of finding coins. I was amazed. "I always have that dream too!" I told him. It was our secret connection.



Dad died in 2002. By then, I was living in New York, which can be exciting, or cold and heartless. One grey winter day, not long after his death, I was walking down Fifth Avenue, feeling bereft, and I glanced up and found myself in front of the First Presbyterian Church, one of the oldest churches in Manhattan. When I was a child, Dad had been a Presbyterian deacon, but I hadn't attended in a long time. I decided to go.

Sunday morning, I was greeted warmly and ushered to a seat in the soaring old sanctuary. I opened the program and saw that the first hymn was 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God', Dad's favorite, one we'd sung at his funeral. When the organ and choir began, I burst into tears.

After the service, I walked out the front doors, shook the pastor's hand, stepped onto the sidewalk – and there was a penny. I stooped to pick it up and turned it over, and sure enough, it was a wheat. A 1944, a year my father was serving on a ship in the South Pacific.

That started it. Suddenly wheat pennies began turning up on the sidewalks everywhere. I got most of the important years: his birth year, my mum's birth year, the year his mother died, the year he graduated from college, the war years, the year he met my mum, the year they got married, the year my sister was born. But alas, no 1958 penny – my year, the last year they were made.

Meanwhile I attended church pretty regularly, and along towards Christmas a year later, I decided I ought to join. The next Sunday, after the service, I was

(Continued on page 17)

In
this Issue



From My Purview
Pg. 22



Prairie Post
Pg. 16

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Amy Howard Art Gallery



The editor's daughter Amy, who was mentioned in our previous issues, was quite the artist and we've decided to display some of her artwork every issue in her memory.



Amy Howard

The Empty Chair

A man's daughter had asked the local minister to come and pray with her father. When the minister arrived, he found the man lying in bed with his head propped up on two pillows. An empty chair sat beside his bed. The minister assumed that the old fellow had been informed of his visit.



"I guess you were expecting me," he said.

"No, who are you?" said the father.

The minister told him his name and then remarked, "I see the empty chair; I figured you knew I was going to show up."

"Oh, yeah, the chair," said the bedridden man. "Would you mind closing the door?"

Puzzled, the minister shut the door. "I have never told anyone this, not even my daughter," said the man. "But all of my life I have never known how to pray. At church I used to hear the pastor talk about prayer, but it went right over my head."

"I abandoned any attempt at prayer," the old man continued, "until one day four years ago my best friend said to me, 'Johnny, prayer is just a simple matter of having a conversation with Jesus. Here is what I suggest. Sit down in a chair; place an empty chair in front of you and in faith see Jesus on the chair. It's not spooky because he promised, 'I'll be with you always.' then just speak to him in the same way you're doing with me right now."

"So, I tried it and I've like it so much that I do it a couple of hours every day. I'm careful though. If my daughter saw me talking to an empty chair, she'd either have a nervous breakdown or send me off to the funny

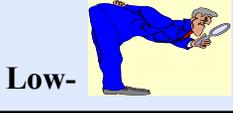
farm."

The minister was deeply moved by the story and encouraged the old man to continue on the journey. Then he prayed with him, anointed him with oil, and returned to the church. Two nights later the daughter called to tell the minister that her daddy had died that afternoon.

"Did he die in peace?" he asked.

"Yes, when I left the house about two o'clock, he called me over to his bedside, told me he loved me and kissed me on the cheek. When I got back from the store an hour later, I found him dead. But there was something strange about his death. Apparently, just before Daddy died, he leaned over and rested his head on the chair beside the bed. What do you make of that?"

The minister wiped a tear from his eye and said, "I wish we could all go like that."



Low-

Mortuary Muse By ell

Death care..... Is it a calling, an obligation or just a job???

You have often heard it said of someone really competent that his dedicated profession is a calling. It's sort of a divinely inspired mission. In our circles it is usually referring a funeral director or clergy. I'm sure many people feel, and rightly so, is about themselves fulfilling a calling. For some it could be a family tradition/obligation with varying degrees of proficiency. It is, however difficult to believe anyone works in death care as just a job attitude even though they might be proficient at what they are doing.

Twenty-two years ago at the National Foundation of Funeral Service counseling week of seminars, I was surprised at the number of attendees who were turning to death care for their second or even third career.

Perhaps all careers are merely stations along a pathway with many branch intersections or forks. Turn right or left at an intersection and travel on it a ways. A new interest might become a new career or enhance the current one. Oh, you drew a blank on that one—we'll go back to the old path but keep your eyes on the alert for a new interest that may lead to another career.

If you have read my column, "The Prairie Post," which started this year, you know it is about my passion for pre-

serving native grasslands and my work with the Missouri Prairie Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and other environmental groups.

In August of 2015 I gave a brief presentation to about 100 prairie enthusiasts from seven states who attended the 40th anniversary of MPF's Golden Prairie being designated as a National Natural Landmark. I remarked that I had never had a single hour of formal environmental education, but had learned from several great mentors and personal observation (the core 320 acres of Golden Prairie was owned by my family). Instead of any formal environmental training I had a 64-year career as a funeral director. That brought a nervous titter from the audience.

I went on to explain that I felt working with grieving people for 60 plus years was one reason that I have such a good relationship with people who are grieving the loss of our native habitat either through economic necessity or wanton greed.

This week I was pleased to learn that my remarks three years ago have a new degree of validity. Mental health professionals have felt that many people, especially younger people, are suffering from environment or climate change anxiety and are offering therapy to help with this.

If there is a point to this space filler it may be—It's not just a job—it is a pathway but watch for the fork in the path.

About the Author:

Lowell Pugh has had funeral director and embalmer licenses in Missouri and Texas. He is publisher of **The Dead Beat** which began in 1999. He can be contacted at **The Dead Beat** address and editor@thedead-beat.com

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The Frank Dawson Story

By Charlie Shipman



I met Frank C. Dawson and his son Dike at the National Speakers Association (NSA) conference in Dallas this past July. They own the Dawson Funeral Home in East Liverpool, Ohio. Frank C. took the business over from his dad, Frank A. in 1934. Frank D. (Dike) is operating the funeral home now.

During the 1960's and 70's and to a lesser degree in the 80's and 90's, Frank spoke to hundreds of state meetings of the then National Selected Morticians, which later became the Selected Independent Funeral Homes. He also spoke to numerous state

meetings of the NFDA and spoke to their Leaders Conference which is comprised of Presidents of all the state organizations. He did his professional speaking representing Clark Vault. Because of all his speaking engagements, he was encouraged to join the NSA.

Frank first got his funeral director's license in 1960 and his embalmers license two years later in 1962.

These days, Frank helps out Dike at the funeral home only when they get in an overload situation. Otherwise, he spends his time helping the Lou Holtz Upper Ohio Valley Hall of Fame Museum. Frank was one of the driving forces behind establishing the museum and scholarship fund to honor East Liverpool's most famous resident, legendary Notre Dame Football Coach Lou Holtz. The museum holds all of Lou Holtz's sports memorabilia. The museum is a must see. Each year a banquet is held to raise money for scholarships for students to attend trade school, and to honor other noteworthy persons.

The Dawson Funeral Home is most famous for conducting the funeral of Oklahoma native "Pretty Boy" Floyd. Out of all the funeral services he has conducted in his career, he was always struck by bereaved family and friends saying something to a dead corpse that they couldn't say to them when they were alive.

Have you had an OPEN HOUSE, built a NEW ADDITION to your funeral home, developed a new PROGRAM FOR GRIEVING CLIENTS, RECEIVED AN HONOR from your community, have an interesting HOBBY or DONE SOMETHING THAT WAS JUST PLAIN FUN? If so, tell us about it. We want to tell your story (WE LOVE PICTURES, TOO) call us 800-575-2611, fax us 417-537-4797 or e-mail us: editor@thedead-beat.com.

Mortuary Lift Introduces Back-Saving "Stepper" for Home Removals

-- Cedar Rapids, Iowa, December 2018 -- A new electric stair-climbing transport device from Mortuary Lift promises to take most of the labor out of moving remains from private homes.

The Stepper makes it possible for a staff member to remove a body of several hundred pounds without a helper, and without the typical back strain:

On stairs, a second set of wheels electrically grabs the next step and pulls the wheeled platform up--or lowers it down--eliminating manual lifting and pulling

A 3-step hydraulic prop stand simplifies transferring remains from horizontal to vertical



The device evolved from a question funeral home directors asked Mortuary Lift over and over. "They would say, 'you saved my back in the preparation room;

now can you help with removals?'" explains Katie Hill, president of the company and a licensed funeral director.

"It can be extremely awkward and difficult to safely transport bodies from second floors, basements, rooms filled with furniture and clutter, etc. The Stepper not only does the lifting and pulling; it enhances the dignity and professionalism of removal while the bereaved family looks on. With this product, we are continuing to redefine lifting."

One-person operation cuts costs

Since an individual can operate The Stepper alone, it will help funeral home directors reduce labor costs as they struggle to address changes in the industry, such as the increasing popularity of less-profitable cremations.

Plus, it opens funeral work to virtually anyone. "Over half of mortuary school graduates today are female," Hill notes, "so the need for transport aids keeps increasing. The average remains weigh over 200 pounds, and it is not good for anyone's back to lift and move that much weight."



Interest was high when The Stepper was introduced at the National Funeral Home Association conference in October. "We were busy from open to close, and stayed late every day taking orders," Hill says. "Back injuries are the most common injury in the industry, and one after another, show visitors said, 'I need this!'"

Stepper fits industry standards for stretcher height, straps, boards and pouches. See it in action on the Mortuary Lift website (mortuarylift.com) and Instagram (mortuaryliftcompany).



Behind the Back Fence

By Lowell

I probably was aware of funeral supply salespersons when I was three or four years old. They would talk or play with me at the business office located in our retail store. During the 80 plus years that I had contact with perhaps 40 or 50 suppliers, I recall only one supplier who seriously demeaned a competitor's products.

A few years ago we were selling an occasional air seal style non-porous polypropylene burial vault which contained recycled material that appealed to some of our environmentally concerned clients. I liked the fact that they were lightweight and easy for me to display in our 2nd floor selection room. The material they were made of was similar to the grave liners used in the veteran's cemetery in our area. The vaults were guaranteed by the manufacturer and I had them serviced by my primary concrete vault manufacturer and distributor.

Unexpectedly several cemeteries notified us that they would no longer accept this product for burial in their cemeteries. When asked why, we learned that one of the outer receptacle distributors in our area had circulated a photograph of a crushed non-porous polypropylene vault. Supposedly the incident happened in cold weather, but there were no details. I was always inclined to believe this was a contrived event, since the products were guaranteed by their manufacturer.

In this period of time stories about funeral professionals and ambulance service seem to have little relevance. That however does not deter some old codgers from relating stories.

During the 40 years our firm operated ambulance service and even during the succeeding seven years I was a city volunteer paramedic, there was occasionally a very sad transfer call.

A family or perhaps a county judicial court proceeding would ask the ambulance service to transfer a patient to State Hospital #3 in Nevada, Missouri—

the insane asylum. Most often the patient suffered from senile dementia with family members no longer able or willing to take care of them. Sometimes the patient was lucid enough to know what was happening. I have no idea what the percentage of senile dementia cases were in relation to the total number of occupants in old #3.

Entering the building that infirmary M or F was located in was much like any hotel or caregiver facility until stepping out of the elevator and be confronted with two sets of locked doors. When your escorting attendant turned you over to the ward receiving attendant—you entered another world. Stretching before you was a long lounge or dayroom. Most of the people in the room were wearing street clothes and were middle age to elderly. They stood looking out windows or sat in chairs, benches or the floor. There might be an old lady rocking a doll or someone playing with a toy; two people might actually be speaking to one or another; perhaps you might even be greeted or they just sat there moaning, rocking their body back and forth. At the end of this room you entered the ward for the bedfast patients.

As we passed through the large room on the return trip to the locked double entrance a patient might reach out to you. The look in their eyes said, "Take me home!" It was heartbreaking.

Fortunately this face of "Old #3" is now a part of history. Most of these folks are now in a home-like setting when possible.

It is nice the politicians have made a big white house available for one poor soul.

About the Author:
Lowell Pugh has had funeral director and embalmer licenses in Missouri and Texas. He is publisher of **The Dead Beat** which began in 1999. He can be contacted at **The Dead Beat** address and editor@thedead-beat.com

After-Thoughts *By Joanne Howard*

I've struggled to collect my thoughts to share in this issue. I have been imparting my feelings over the years in relation to my personal grief. So with this being the issue near the Christmas holidays, I have my normal challenges. People who have lost loved ones in the distant past or just recently, the holidays bring memories which help and hurt.

My husband and I have a bit of challenge during the holidays, partly because our youngest daughter died close to the Christmas holiday. The fact that she died on the day she was supposed to sing in a trio in the children's Christmas program at church makes those types of programs a sad time. Even though it's been 21 years this year, I still have a tendency to hesitate wanting to support those activities. Not that you don't want everyone to enjoy them it just brings forward many memories.

Of course, everything got a bit intensified when our second daughter died six years later. So now we don't have our children, but they would be of the age that we might have had grandchildren too. Seeing the girls' friends with their children gives another dimension of sad-



ness and missing something else.

These experiences do get better as time passes, but trust me the feelings of loss never go away. But I don't mention this for sympathy, it's just something to keep in mind when dealing with friends and relatives that have losses, especially losing around holidays.

Lately I have had friends and relatives that have lost spouses, parents and children. This will be the first holiday season without their loved ones and it will be hard. I continue to pray for those who have had these losses. I'm not really sure how to help these people because I strongly feel that everybody deals with grief differently. Yes, there are some similarities, but depending on your relationship impacts how strongly that grief will hit you.

You must try to dwell on those happy memories you have of your loved ones, especially at the holidays. Remember that day that you were able to share your love. It might bring tears. But they will be tears of happiness that those special people were in your life for however long.

I'm really not a Scrooge, but I have a tendency not to really decorate much for Christmas.



I would prefer no criticism for that since we really have no one that would see it and Christmas is in our hearts and I'll decorate my column.

This year has been very occupied with church activities that has created many demands on my time. Hopefully I am sharing my love with others with my efforts and keeping me from dwelling on my losses at this time of the year.

Remember there are many people having many trials and tribulations in their lives, but grief isn't always that evident. Let God be your guide to provide support to those that need it.

I feel this has been a bit of bumper column. But I truly hope I celebrate the holidays with gratefulness in my heart that I have had all my loved ones in my life and will see them again someday.




About the author: Joanne Howard is the editor of **The Dead Beat**. She has been a licensed funeral director since 1992 with Pugh Funeral Home in Golden City, MO and also the aftercare coordinator. Much of her writing in this column is influenced by her loss of her two daughters Laura at age 10 in 1997 and Amy at age 19 in 2003. Any comments or questions can be directed to 417-537-4412, P.O. Box 145, Golden City, MO 64748 or email: joanne@thedeat-beat.com or jfhoward53@yahoo.com

The Accidental Celebrant

“Say the Word “

By Michael K. Jones

Early in my ministry life I invited a friend and colleague to attend a funeral I was leading. I was curious how I was doing and valued his experienced and educated opinion. When the funeral was over we met for coffee to discuss how I had done. Before even speaking he held his arms out as if he was about to tell a fishing story. Waving one hand he said “You held your listeners here.” Waving the second hand he added “And then you tried to protect them by pushing death over here.” I was shocked. I went back and re-read my notes only to discover that I didn’t use the word death once. I was contributing to a society that avoided death.

Not only do we intentionally avoid death by actively pushing it aside we also work hard to ignore it. We try to push it out of our minds. We do so by filling our lives with noise, work and distractions. We carry on with our lives as if death is something we will never need to think about or experience. While this is a very human approach to life it is also somewhat dangerous.

A couple of weeks ago a friend of mine had a fatal heart attack while editing some music on his computer. We could tell by where we found him that his death was instantaneous. His immediate family live thousands of miles away and asked us to look for critical documents like a will. We couldn’t find anything. His files were a mess. We did find a estate planning workbook but when we opened it there was nothing written inside. We had no idea what his wishes were. We had no idea how extensive his financial affairs were. We just kept digging and hoping for the best.

Death is something we cannot avoid and ignore. It’s real and, to borrow a phrase from yet

another friend “It often comes without warning”. Funerals help make death real. They give a chance to name the loss we’re experiencing and point to the hole this loss leaves in our lives and community. While using the word “death” may seem harsh and shocking there is a good reason for doing so.

The deceased is gone and is not coming back. There will be a time when our turn will come. Will we be ready? Will we leave our loved ones a mess or a map for their road ahead? Which reminds me, I have to update my will.



About the Author:

A native of Fredericton, New Brunswick, **Michael K. Jones** was born and raised in Atlantic Canada. A former minister in the United Church of Canada he has ministered to a variety of congregations for over twenty years. *Dead Reckoning* is his second book. His previous release is *Empty Houses: A Pastoral Response to Congregational Closure*. When Mike is not writing he is enjoying walking and reading. He resides with his wife Trish in Calgary, Alberta.

Dead Reckoning is now available online through Amazon.ca.

Cherokee Casket Company, Inc. Announces New Website and Catalogs for 2019

Griffin, Ga: January, 2019 Cherokee Casket Company, Inc., internationally known for specializing in infant and child caskets and funeral related items, announces their new website www.cherokeechildcaskets.com. This site is now live and the new catalog set is now available for download.

Cherokee is offering a catalog set containing three catalogs to ensure a quicker reference for the funeral professional. Since these catalogs will be updated throughout the year, each can be quickly accessed or downloaded from our website with assurance you have the most up to date information on our products.

- * Volume #10 is our child product catalog with details on our specially sized caskets, urns, vaults and memorial books. Also includes the personalization samples and options.
- * Infant & Child Funeral Supplies Volume #2 is for the funeral professional. This catalog gives details on funeral home supply items.

- * Cherokee Personalization is our complete personalization guide with order forms that can be used by the funeral professional or family.

The highlight of our new catalogs and website are the unique personalization options. With the embroidery and vinyl works being handled in house, personalization can be completed in hours instead of days. Panels and blankets can be embroidered with names, monograms or with creative images from our library. Vinyl lettering or images can be added to the metal and hardwood caskets or style P0 through P5 vaults and combos.

For additional information contact the Cherokee Child Casket's customer service team @ 1-800-535-8667. Catalogs can be ordered via email request at info@cherokeechildcaskets.com or downloaded from our website www.cherokeechildcaskets.com.



About Cherokee Casket Company, Inc:

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Strategies for Growing in Grief

By Ken Doka

You can do more than just cope with loss. There are ways to even grow from grief and tragedy. These six principles can help you grow as you journey with your grief.

Build on your strengths. Look back at previous crises or losses. What strategies helped you then? They can be helpful now. Sometimes you may have to reframe them. For example, one woman told me that her spouse had helped her through the loss of a parent. But now she had to deal with the death of her husband alone. She realized, though, what helped was having someone to talk with as she coped. She found that she could find such a confidant in a close friend.

Your spirituality or philosophy also can be a great strength. Most spirituality and philosophies address loss and suffering. Ask yourself, how do my beliefs help me as I face this loss? Talk to those who share your beliefs.

Use your support systems. Your family, friends, co-workers and others can be of great help. Recognize their unique gifts. Some may be good listeners while others are good at helping in more tangible ways. Grief is hard work, and we may need time off from our grief. Some friends offer respite.

You can also find support in others who have had similar experiences. Grief groups offer validation of your reactions, strategies for coping, and hope. Moreover, as you help others through participation in a support group, you become more aware of your own strengths.

Remember the continuing bond. The people you love never fully leave you. You retain a bond with them through your memories, and the ways they affected your development. Think of the legacies they left you.

Focus on positive memories. Sometimes it helps to have something to reinforce those memories such as creating a photograph album or a jour-

nal, to keep those memories alive.

Use empowering language. If you focus on the tragedy of loss, you reinforce the tragic. Instead, focus on positive language, such as the courage you will need to meet the challenges of loss. Recognize that you make choices on how you cope with your grief. Learn from the decisions you make. Even small choices reinforce your ability to cope as you journey with loss.

Focus on growth. Periodically review how you have changed as you journey with grief. What new insights have you developed? What skills have you gained?

Be patient with yourself. The journey with grief is uneven as you both cope with your loss and learn to live a different life without a person you loved. As you grieve, expect both good and bad days. Some days you may be more productive than others. That, too, is part of the journey.

Remain hopeful. Life after loss will be different. But as hard as it may be to believe now, it can still have joy and happiness. Keep sight of the future. Focus on where you wish to be next week, next month, or next year. Think of the small daily changes you can make to bring you closer to your goal. Remember that while we have no choice about loss or the grief that follows, we do have choices about how we grieve. Choose growth.

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Kenneth J. Doka, Ph.D., is a Professor of Gerontology at the College of New Rochelle. Dr. Doka's books

include: **Disenfranchised Grief; Living with Life Threatening Illness; Living with Grief: After Sudden Loss; Death and Spirituality; Living With Grief: When Illness is Prolonged; Living with Grief: Who We Are, How We Grieve; AIDS, Fear & Society; Aging and Developmental Disabilities; and Children Mourning, Mourning Children.** In addition to these books, he has published over 60 articles and chapters. Dr. Doka is the associate editor of the journal **Omega** and editor of *Journeys*, a newsletter of the bereaved. Dr. Doka has served as a consultant to medical, nursing, hospice organizations, as well as businesses, educational and social service agencies. As Senior Consultant to the Hospice Foundation of America, he assists in planning, and participates in their annual Teleconference. In 1998, the Association for Death Education and Counseling honored him by presenting him an Award for Outstanding Contributions to the field of death education. In March 1993, he was elected President of the Association for Death Education and Counseling. Dr. Doka was elected in 1995 to the Board of the International Work Group on Dying, Death and Bereavement and elected Chair in 1997. Dr. Doka is an ordained Lutheran Clergyman. (*And a heck of a nice guy—Editor & Publisher*)

Chuckles

Editor Note: My apologies if anyone has been offended by jokes in this column

Good Advice from Maxine

- * People who live in glass houses should make love in the basement.
- * Never read the fine print. There ain't no way you're going to like it.
- * If you let a smile be your umbrella, then most likely your butt will get soaking wet.
- * The only two things we do with greater frequency in middle age are urinate and attend funerals.
- * The trouble with bucket seats is that not everybody has the same size bucket.
- * To err is human, to forgive—highly unlikely.
- * Do you realize that in about 40 years, we'll have thousands of old ladies running around with tattoos?
- * Money can't buy happiness—but somehow it's more comfortable to cry in a Porsche than in a Hyundai.
- * Drinking makes some husbands see double and feel single.
- * Living in a nudist colony takes all the fun out of Halloween.
- * After a certain age, if you don't wake up aching in every joint, you are probably dead.

Gossip

Mildred, the church gossip, and self-appointed monitor of the church's morals, kept sticking her nose into other people's business. Several members did not approve of her extra curricular activities, but feared her enough to maintain their silence. She made a mistake, however, when she accused George, a new member, of being an alcoholic after she saw his old pickup parked in front of the town's only bar one afternoon. She emphatically told George (and several others) that everyone seeing it there would know what he was doing. George, a man of few words, stared at her for a moment and just turned and walked away. He didn't explain, defend, or deny. He said nothing. Later, that evening, George quietly parked his pickup in front of Mildred's house.....walked home...and left it there all night. You gotta love George.



Ten Commandments

- * *Commandment 1*—Marriages are made in heaven. But so again are thunder and lightning.
- * *Commandment 2*—If you want your wife to listen and pay strict attention to every word you say, talk in your sleep.
- * *Commandment 3*—Marriage is grand—and divorce is at least 100 grand!
- * *Commandment 4*—Married life is very frustrating. In the first year of marriage, the man speaks and the woman listens. In the second year, the woman speaks and the man listens. In the third year, they both speak and the neighbors listen.

Comments

Just a note to let everyone know that I really enjoyed The Dead Beat, Vol. 17 Issue 4. WOW! I couldn't put it down. I read them all and this by far was the best. Keep up the good work.

Karen from Missouri,
P.S. Jesus Loves Me song was great. It has always been my favorite.

Dear Mr. Pugh,

I'm sorry we missed you! We spoke years ago about my sister Angela K. Davis. My husband Steve & I bought a lake house in Shell Knob this weekend & on our way back to Kansas City, we stopped in! We found the cemetery & Angela's marker. It's so perfect & beautiful! Thank you for keeping her memory alive! I still miss her terribly.

Love, Carole

Dear Joanne,

My future daughter-in-law is involved in her family's funeral home operation (Hayes Funeral Home in Hitchcock, Texas). Upon learning that her prospective father-in-law appreciates clean jokes, puns and humorous stories, she shared several past issues of The Dead Beat with me. I have thoroughly enjoyed reading not only the "Chuckles", but also the other articles and features. I was especially touched by the Christmas memories and inspiration thoughts that you shared in your After-Thoughts column. Thanks for providing your fine publication, and best wishes to you and yours for the Christmas season and the New Year.

Bill from Cleveland, TX

Feel free to share comments and thoughts to the editor at editor@thedead-beat.com or mail to The Dead Beat, PO Box 145, Golden City, MO 64748.

Chuckles (Cont.)

- * *Commandment 5*—When a man opens the door of his car for his wife, you can be sure of one thing: Either the car is new or the wife is.
- * *Commandment 6*—Marriage is when a man and woman become as one; the trouble starts when they try to decide which one.
- * *Commandment 7*—Before marriage, a man will lie awake all night thinking about something you say. After marriage he will fall asleep before you finish.
- * *Commandment 8*—Every man wants a wife who is beautiful, understanding, economical, and a good cook. But the law allows only one wife.
- * *Commandment 9*—Marriage and love are purely a matter of chemistry. That is why a wife treats a husband like toxic waste.
- * *Commandment 10*—A man is incomplete until he is married. After that, he is finished.

The Sparrow

Once upon a time there was a non-conforming sparrow who decided not to fly south for the winter. However, soon the weather turned so cold that he reluctantly de-



(Continued on page 11)

Chuckles (Cont.)

cided to fly south. In a short time ice began to form on his wings and he fell to Earth in a barnyard, nearly frozen solid. A cow passed by where he had fallen, and crapped on the little sparrow. The sparrow thought it was the end, but the manure warmed him and defrosted his wings! Warm and happy, able to breathe, he started to sing. Just then a large cat came by, and hearing the chirping he investigated the sounds. The cat cleared away the manure, found the chirping bird, and promptly ate him.

The Moral of the Story: Everyone who craps on you is not necessarily your enemy. Everyone who gets you out of crap is not necessarily your friend. And if you're warm and happening in a pile of crap, you might just want to keep your mouth shut.

Bill of Rights

Two lawyers, Bob and Bill, were having a heated exchange during a trial. The judge asked both lawyers to approach the bench. "Your honor," said Bob, "I objected because my distinguished colleague Bill was badgering the witness. It is obvious he has never heard of the Bill of Rights." "Rubbish!" snapped Bill. "I happen to know them by heart." Bob rolled his eyes in disbelief. "Do you now? Well, Bill, I have a hundred dollars that says you can't even tell me the first few words." Bill smirked and accepted the challenge and began. "I pledge allegiance to the flag..." "Damn," Bob interrupted, fishing the money from his pocket, "I didn't think you'd know it."



Ma was in the kitchen fiddling' around when she hollars out..."Pa you need to fix the outhouse!" Pa replies, "There ain't nuthin wrong with the outhouse." Ma yells back, "Yes there is now git out there and fix it." So..Pa mosies out to the outhouse, look's around and yells back, "There ain't nuthin wrong with the outhouse!" Ma replies, "Stick your head in the hole!" Pa yells back, "I ain't sticking my head in that hole!" Ma says, "Ya have to stick your head in the hole to see what to fix." So with that, Pa sticks his head in the hole and looks around and yells back, "Ma there ain't nuthin wrong with this outhouse!" Ma hollars back, "now take your head out of the hole!" Pa proceeds to pull his head out of the hole, then starts yelling, "Ma! Help! My beard is stuck in the cracks in the Toilet seat!" To which ma replies, "Hurts, don't it!?"



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- * BLAMESTORMING—Sitting around in a group, discussing why a deadline was missed or a project failed, and who was responsible.
- * SEAGULL MANAGER—A manager, who flies in, makes a lot of noise, craps on everything and then leaves.
- * ASSMOSIS—The process by which people seem to absorb success and advancement by sucking up to the boss rather than working hard.
- * SALMON DAY—The experience of spending an entire day swimming upstream only to get screwed and die.
- * CUBE FARM—An office filled with cubicles.
- * PRAIRIE DOGGING—When someone yells or drops something loudly in a cube farm, and people's heads pop up over the walls to see what's going on. (This also applies to applause from a promotion because there may be cake.)
- * MOUSE POTATO—The online, wired generation's answer to the couch potato.
- * SITCOMS—Single income, Two Children, Oppressive Mortgage. What yuppies turn into when they have children and one of them stops working to stay home with the kids or start a "home business."
- * STRESS PUPPY—A person who seems to thrive on being stressed out and whiny.
- * XEROX SUBSIDY—Euphemism for swiping free photocopies from one's workplace.
- * PERCUSSIVE MAINTENANCE—The fine art of whacking the crap out of an electronic device to get it to work again.
- * ADMINISPHERE—The rarefied organizational layers beginning just above the rank and file. Decisions that fall from the "adminisphere" are often profoundly inappropriate or irrelevant to the problems they were designed to solve. This is often affiliated with the dreaded "administrivia" - needless paperwork and processes.
- * 404—Someone who's clueless. From the World Wide Web error message "404 Not Found" meaning that the requested document could not be located.
- * OHNOSECOND—That miniscule fraction of time in which you realize that you've just made a BIG mistake (e.g. you've hit 'reply all')
- * CROP DUSTING—Surreptitiously farting while passing through a cube farm, then enjoying the sounds of dismay and disgust.

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Barbara Gladys Smith, 89, of Corono, California, passed away Sept. 15, 2018. She was the mother of **The Dead Beat** columnist, Rev. Janice Hoffman. Her services were under the direction of Weaver Mortuary and Crematory in Beaumont, California



Michael R. St. Pierre, 71, of Greenwood, IL, died Dec. 6, 2018. He retired as chairman of the board of Wilson St. Pierre Funeral Service and Crematory in 2016. He graduated from the Indiana College of Mortuary Science. He served as president of the Associated Funeral Directors International, National Selected Morticians and National Funeral Directors Association. He was a life member of Academy of Funeral Service Practitioners and representative of the American Board of Funeral Service Education. He also was involved in creation of the National Research and Information Center associated with the National Foundation of Funeral Service. Wilson St. Pierre Funeral Service and Crematory—Greenwood Chapel directed his funeral services.

KANSAS



Glen Edward "Eddie" Ball, Jr. 86, of McPherson, died Nov. 22, 2018. He was a graduate of Dallas Institute of Funeral Service. He worked as a licensed funeral director and embalmer in Wichita before moving to McPherson in 1945 to work alongside his father, Glen E. Ball at the Ball & Son Funeral Home. They co-owned the firm until Glen passed in 1981, leaving Eddie to operate the business until he sold it in 1996. Services were under the direction of Ball & Son Funeral Home.

MISSOURI



Charles R. Emmert, Jr., 75, of Joplin, passed away on Jan. 1, 2019. He was the father of Pierce Chemical sales representative Randy Emmert. His services were directed by Clark Funeral Home in Neosho.



Clydie Edward Evans, Sr., 87, of Houston, passed away Jan. 19, 2019. He was owner of Evans Funeral Home in Houston for 46 years which directed his funeral service.

Melvin Fisher, 79, of Bismarck, passed away. He was the father of Laura Mayo, owner of Patriot Vault Company. His services were directed by Horton-Wampler Funeral Home in Park Hills.

MISSOURI (Cont.)



William Clifton McWilliams, 59, of Rolla, passed away Jan. 13, 2019. He was medically retired from the United States Army and was in the military funeral honors program for 19 years. His services were handled by Null and Son Funeral Home of Rolla.



Lois Oltmann, 88, of Union, passed away on Jan. 11, 2019. She was grandmother of MFDEA Secretary/Treasurer Jessica Oltmann. Lois was one of the first female funeral directors licensed in the state of Missouri. While Ralph and Lois operated the funeral home, they also ran a hardware and appliance store, a bottle gas business and the ambulance for Union. Her services were under the direction of Oltmann Funeral Home in Union.



Virginia Putnam, 98, of Neosho, passed away Dec. 21, 2018. She was grandmother to Randy Emmert, Pierce Chemical representative. Her services were under the direction of Clark funeral Home in Neosho.



John Bernard Robertson, 78, of St. Joseph, passed away Jan. 8, 2019. He served in United States Army from 1960-62. He was the father of MFDEA Past President J.L. Robertson. His arrangements were handled by Rupp Funeral Home.



Rosalia "Sally" Wempe Smith, 98, of St. Joseph, passed away Oct. 22, 2018. A licensed funeral director, she worked alongside her late husband, Garth H. Smith, in owning and operating funeral homes in Seneca, Axtel and Marysville, KS as well as North Kansas City, MO. In 1956 they moved to St. Joseph and purchased the Heaton-Bowman Funeral Home and in 1962, they acquired H.O. Sidenfaden to form what is currently known as, Heaton-Bowman-Smith & Sidenfaden Chapel who handled her services. She served as chairman of the board for the funeral home as well as president of St. Joseph Crematory Company, St. Joseph Memorials, Inc and McNeil Grave Marker Company.



Donald Ray Varner, 84, of Macks Creek, passed away Oct. 21, 2018. A licensed funeral director since 2000, he joined the staff of Hedges-Scott Funeral Homes in 1999 and continued to operate the Macks Creek location for many years. The Hedges-Scott Funeral Home directed his service.

If you know of a fellow funeral service colleague that has died that we have not included, please send the information and picture if available (The Dead Beat, P.O. Box 145, Golden City, MO 64748) or fax it to us (417-537-4797) or E-Mail to Editor@thedead-beat.com



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NEW MEXICO



William V. "Bill" Hocker, 85, of Albuquerque, passed away Oct. 19, 2018. He served in the Army overseas. A licensed funeral director, he joined his father, Tony Frkovich at Grants Mortuary, which his parents founded in 1947. He later acquired ownership and operated it alongside his wife Kathy and sons Bill Jr., Robert, Stephen and John and friend James Martinez. He wrote two papers, "The Parental Loss of an Adult Child" and "Unsanctioned and Unrecognized Grief," along with numerous magazine articles. He was a graduate of California College of Mortuary Science. He was a member of the New Mexico funeral Service Association, where he later served as president. Elected to the National Funeral Directors Association board of governors, he served as president from 1988-1989 and was also president of the International Funeral Directors Association from 2010-2012. Rivera Family Funeral Homes directed his

OKLAHOMA

Samuel Eugene Cecil, 88, of Tishomingo, passed away Jan. 18, 2019. He served in the United States Army and the Army National Guard from 1947-51. He graduated



OKLAHOMA (Cont.)

from the Gupton-Jones College of Mortuary Science in 1963 and was a licensed funeral director for 10 years for Chapman (Now Tishomingo) Funeral Home. The he travelled Oklahoma and Texas for 24 years as a sales representative for The Champion Company.



Roger Stanley Clark, 68, of Tishomingo, passed away on Dec. 9, 2018. He went to mortuary school at UCO and for the last thirty plus years has served the funeral industry. While at SEOSU he began his career in funeral service at Bishop Funeral Home in McAlester and was owner of Clark Funeral Service in Tishomingo, Oklahoma. Roger was a member of the Oklahoma Funeral Directors Association, where he served as District 5 Chairman and Governor, National Funeral Directors Association. His arrangements were under the direction of DeArman Funeral Home.



Wendell Delano Little, 84, of Purcell, passed away Nov. 7, 2018. He joined the United States Air Force, training in radio and radar. He graduated from Dallas Institute of Mortuary Science. He moved to Stigler in 1960, was employed by Mallory Funeral Home. He purchased the Conner-Sparlin Funeral Home, and in 1977, Little's Funeral Home was established and he retired in 1995 and later worked for Havenbrook Funeral Home in Norman. His services were directed by Wilson-Little Funeral Home



TEXAS



James "Jim" Bradshaw Earthman IV, 61, of Bellaire, passed away Oct. 29, 2018. He graduated from the Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service with honors in 1995. He was the 4th generation of the Earthmans to go into the family business that was established in 1889, managing Earthman Bellaire for 28 years. He is the nephew of Past President Bob Earthman. His services were under the direction of Earthman Bellaire Funeral Home, Houston.



Glen Harris Canon, 80, of Waller, passed away on Oct. 22, 2018. He became owner and partner with his son Robert of Canon Funeral Home in 1975. Glen had retired. Canon Funeral Home directed his services.



John Robert Cathey, Jr., 53, of Needville, passed away on Nov. 27, 2018. He was the son of former TFDA Executive Director John Cathey, Sr. His services were under the direction of Davis-Greenlawn Funeral Home.



James "Truett" Fietz, 63, of Austin, passed away Oct. 30, 2018. He served families and their loved ones via the pre-need industry with Unity Financial Services.. His services were under the direction of Waldrope-Hatfield-Hawthorne Funeral Home.



Donato B. Guajardo, Jr., 68, of Del Rio, passed away Dec. 2, 2018. He worked alongside his father and mother in the family funeral business as a third-generation

(Continued on page 17)



Prairie Post

Bringing the Prairie Indoors.... Spring flowers are a memory and for the feeble of mind and body, a windswept prairie is not pleasant right now. Our solution to this dilemma??

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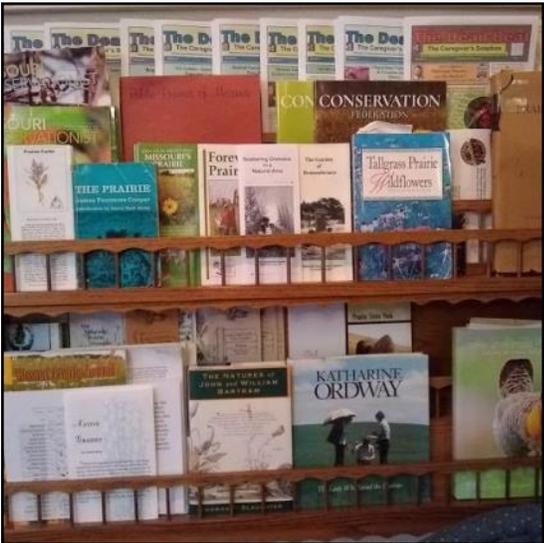
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prairie tours, researchers and prairie tourists. Cooky's Café in Golden City has been the prairie's refreshment stand, often directing tourists to me for prairie information. We have not had a formal opening yet, but have already had several out-of-state visitors.

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***Nop's—(Some of larger prints displayed) Noppadol Paothong Photography PO Box 7801, Columbia, MO 65205 info@npnaturephotography.com

TEXAS (Cont.)

(Continued from page 15)

funeral director and mortician for over forty years. He was father to Briana Ballenger, funeral director with Weed-Corley-Fish in Austin and Don B. Guajardo, III, funeral director with Trinity Mortuary in Del Rio. His services were under the direction of Trinity Mortuary, Del Rio.



Nuell Clarence McGrew, 101, of Arlington, passed away on Jan. 20, 2019. He is the father of Tom McGrew with Monarch Resources. His funeral services were directed by Wade Family Funeral Home, Arlington.



Betty Wyche Rader, 86, of Longview, passed away on Dec. 8, 2018. In 1953, her husband, Charley and his father, LeRoy, purchased the Rains and Talley Funeral Home in Longview. She was active at the funeral home acting as bookkeeper and secretary in the early years and later working the register at funerals. Her funeral arrangements were handled by Rader Funeral Home.



Martha Foshee Stewart, 84, of Tyler, passed away on Jan. 17, 2019. She is the mother of Chris Stewart, the owner of Stewart Family Funeral Home in Tyler who handled her services.



Melba Jo Westbrook, 88, of Dallas, passed away Jan. 17, 2019. She was a retired Sparkman/Hillcrest employee and wife of the late Don Westbrook, a Pierce Chemicals/Morticians Supply salesman in Dallas. Sparkman/Hillcrest directed her funeral services.



Pennies from Heaven (Cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

walking up Fifth Avenue and spotted a penny in the middle of an intersection. *Oh, no way*, I thought. It was a busy street; cabs were speeding by – *should I risk it?* I just had to get it.

A wheat! But the penny was worn, and I couldn't read the date. When I got home, I took out my magnifying glass and tilted the copper surface to the light. There was my birthday.

As a journalist, I'm in a profession where skepticism is a necessary and honest virtue. But I found 21 wheat pennies on the streets of Manhattan in the year after my father died, and I don't think that's a coincidence.



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Established in 2009, The NFDA Members' Choice Award (formally called the NFDA Innovation Award) represents the pinnacle of achievement for a funeral service vendor. By encouraging innovation within our industry, this award inspires companies within the funeral profession to seek out new ideas, technologies, and processes to make a positive impact on funeral directors and the families they serve.

"ASD is honored to be recognized by the NFDA in support of a feature that helps funeral professionals offer the highest level of customer service to their website visitors," says ASD Vice President and Family-Member Owner, **Kevin Czachor**.



"While no other company has won this award more than once, ASD is proud to now be a four-time recipient. Year after year, our company has demonstrated how fully committed we are to seeking out new and inventive ways to resolve communication issues for funeral directors."

On Monday, October 15, Czachor accepted the 2018 NFDA Members' Choice Award from Past President, **Kenneth Cahall**, at the 2018 Convention Opening General Session. ASD Family-Member Owner, Kathy Kelley, was also onstage during the award announcement as ASD was honored to be the only funeral home vendor ever recognized as a finalist by the NFDA twice in the same year. The company was also nominated for its **Spanish Translation Services**, which helps funeral directors to better serve Spanish-speaking families.

About ASD

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

ASD Wins 2018 NFDA Members' Choice Award for Company's Web Form WatchDog™ Feature

Salt Lake City, UT—ASD – Answering Service for Directors was named the winner of the **2018 NFDA Members' Choice Award** at the annual convention held October 14-17th in Salt Lake City, UT. This prestigious award is given annually to a funeral service vendor whose product or service was introduced during the previous year and represents creativity, innovation and excellence. ASD was honored to have two submissions selected as finalists this year and received the award in recognition of the company's **Web Form WatchDog™** feature.



With a growing number of people going online to research funeral options, web queries are becoming much more common and will only increase in frequency over time. Most funeral home websites have a 'Contact Us' form instructing visitors to leave their information and reason for contacting. When a form is submitted, it often is sent to a single, generic email address that is not monitored 24/7. In response to this dilemma, ASD created Web Form WatchDog™ to help funeral professionals become more responsive to submitted web forms. This feature allows ASD to monitor our clients' web inquiries and immediately alert them when an urgent need is communicated.

ASD's Web Form WatchDog™ can be added to any existing funeral home website. It was built to complement ASD's extensive array of web and mobile tools that help funeral homes stay better connected to their communities. It is fully compatible with the ASD Mobile app and ASD's internal website, allowing directors to easily access their web forms from any device.



“Millennial Directors –

“Funeral Home for the Holidays”

By: Matthew Morian, CFSP & Zach Carnley, CFSP

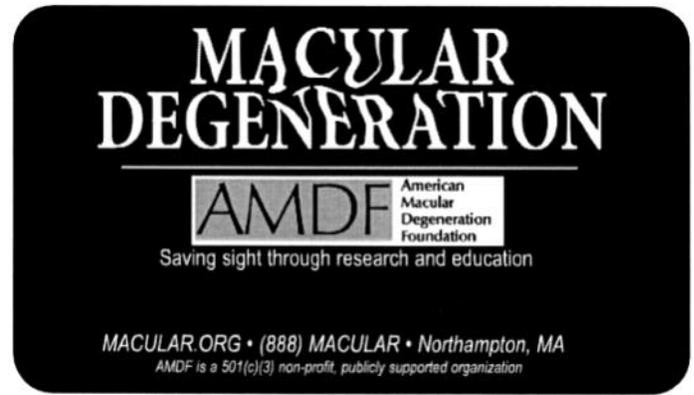
Matt: The holiday season is upon us, and that means it is getting busier than usual for most funeral professionals. I’ve always been curious as to why that might be. Maybe you’re reading this and shaking your head because it is not the same for you. From my experiences with multiple funeral homes here in North Texas, right around the start of November, people become more prone to passing away.

I used to chalk it up to the weather getting colder, but as I write this, it is 70 degrees in Texas in mid-November and we are still busier than usual. My theory centers on our society’s emotional attachment to the holiday season. Thanksgiving through New Years is a short window of time to cram a lot of feelings in to. Those who are actively dying are either struggling to make one last holiday with their families (those that pass in November and December) or have made it through their holiday plans and feel they can pass in peace (those that pass in January or February).

Zach: The holiday season does present a weird phenomenon that I could never quite understand. Yes, the sudden change of weather could play a major role in the spike. I would tend to agree with Matt here in that it seems most people typically hang on and somehow fight through the holidays before passing on. I believe it happens so much that most funeral homes expect and can typically plan to accommodate the sudden increase of volume.

I am nowhere close to having a medical degree, but I would like to think that the reason behind this is people giving it their all. I also tend to believe that most people remain positive around the holiday season, especially when they are surrounded by a loving and committed family. Whatever the case, I want to believe this to be true, just as my 7 year old and 3 year old still believe in Santa, I believe our sudden spike in volume is due to loved ones’ willpower to be with their family through the holidays.

I think this is also a perfect time to invest in holiday programs such as “Surviving the Holidays” or a Candlelight Remembrance Program. Both of these programs are very easy to plan and execute and should definitely be an annual event. Thanksgiving and Christmas present numerous ways to reach out to



your community and build your relationship. Simple things such as donating some Frozen Turkeys or delivering poinsettias to a hospice house go a long way. If you are not doing these very simple things, believe me, someone else is!

About our columnists:



Matthew Morian

Matt is a first generation funeral director & embalmer. He lives with his wife, Andrea and children, Oliver and Margot in Keller, Texas while being the managing funeral director of Lucas Funeral Homes in Keller and Grapevine, Texas. Matt has been in the funeral profession since 2010 and is a graduate of the Dallas Institute of Funeral Service. He was awarded the 2017 North Texas Funeral Director Association’s Young Funeral Professional of the Year as well as the 2017 Texas Funeral Director Association’s Young Funeral Professional of the Year. Matt currently serves on the board for the North Texas Funeral Directors Association. He also loves playing music, watching movies, spending time with his family and friends, as well as writing.



Zach Carnley

Zach grew up in Lampasas, Texas, where he graduated high school. While attending SFA, he took a part-time job at a local funeral home. There, Zach discovered his passion for funeral service. Zach graduated from the Dallas Institute of Funeral Service where he was class valedictorian and earned a degree in Funeral Sciences. Zach also has earned his Certified Funeral Service Practitioner (a certification above and beyond initial licensure) by being very active in his community and completing more than the necessary continuing education requirements. Zach was awarded the 2014 North Texas Funeral Director Association’s Young Funeral Professional of the Year as well as the 2014 Texas Funeral Director Association’s Young Funeral Professional of the Year. He serves on the board of the Texas Funeral Director Association Services Inc. and is on various other committees as well. He is the funeral home manager of Lucas and Blessing Funeral Home in Burleson, Texas. Zach and his wife, Courtney are the parents of two boys: Myles and Owen.

How To Handle A Heckler From My Purview

By Reverend Janice Hoffman

Occasionally, I am asked what would I do if a person at someone's memorial service began sharing inappropriately? I can say with gratitude that I have not had to handle a heckler or stopped in the middle of a memorial service I've officiated.

I have asked those who have come to pay their respects to share a memory or a story of their loved one. Once in awhile someone will share and share and share. Sometimes they share for far too long. With that said, I have not had to interrupt anyone while they were sharing.

Should someone attending a service I was officiating and began to be disruptive in their behavior, what would I do? At the point in the service when it is appropriate for family and friends to share, I 'turn over' the pulpit to whoever has come forward to share. At that point, I take my seat near the pulpit. I

have gotten up to comfort someone who when sharing becomes too upset to continue or perhaps needs a moment to compose themselves.

Should someone sharing a story which was clearly going south in their description, I would get up and put my hand on their shoulder in order to redirect their attention. I would whisper in their ear, "Perhaps this is not an appropriate story for the family to hear today", or "Could you save that story for after the service?"

At a service I officiated earlier this year, the deceased's girlfriend attended the service despite the family's wishes. The family were very concerned his girlfriend would make a scene because of her history of drinking along with anger outbursts. To ensure a peaceful service for their loved one, the family hired a police officer to be present just in case the girlfriend chose to make

a scene. Ironically, she never said a word. She didn't even speak when I opened the time for sharing.

We never know what will happen at anyone's service, nor can we predict someone's behavior at a time when emotions run high. As the minister given the honor of celebrating someone's life, I am prepared with a plan should someone choose to behave badly.



About the Author:

Ordained in 1999 as a non-denominational Christian Minister, Reverend Janice

Hoffman's ministry has included facilitating a Course In Miracles, leading an Attitudinal Healing support group, and hosting a guided meditation for a group that met weekly for over 13 years. Rev. Hoffman's work with mortuaries and families began in 2008. After the first funeral service Rev. Janice officiated, she had a deep awareness that honoring the life of a family's loved one was where she wanted to focus her ministry. Beginning with meeting with the family for an intake, Janice writes a custom service bringing comfort to families in shock and grief. None of us are promised tomorrow and bringing that awareness to others, fosters appreciation for those in our lives and the time we spend with them. Contact her at Janice@janicehoffman.com or 303-604-2222.

Life Is..... By Mother Teresa

*Life is an opportunity; benefit from it.
Life is beauty; admire it.
Life is a dream; realize it.
Life is a challenge; meet it.
Life is a duty; complete it.
Life is a game; play it.
Life is a promise; fulfill it.*

*Life is sorrow; overcome it.
Life is a song; sing it.
Life is a struggle; accept it.
Life is a tragedy; confront it.
Life is an adventure; dare it.
Life is luck; make it.
Life is too precious; do not destroy it.
Life is life; fight for it.*

Issues and Answers

By Richard Lee

Let's face it, the funeral business is changing on a daily basis and operating a small to medium size funeral home is becoming increasingly more challenging every year.

Over the past 25 years, I have represented over 180 owners in the sale or transfer of their funeral businesses and have also performed business valuations on another 150 or so. The vast majority of these businesses were smaller to medium size firms that performed somewhere between 40 – 125 calls annually.

As any owner of a firm this size knows, they are a "challenge to operate" for many reasons - ranging from how to staff it the most efficiently to buying versus consigning your casket inventory.

Since I do have vast experience with the smaller to medium sized firms (which repre-

sent the majority of firms in existence today), I would like to change the focus of my columns for 2019.

Beginning with the next issue, I would like to start having owners and directors call, write or email me with specific questions they have or issues that they are experiencing – good or bad. The purpose will be to have a forum and the sharing of multiple owner's experiences and challenges and how they resolved them or asking for the best way to handle a particular issue.

If owners will share their concerns and successes, then this can be a tool to help establish proper and efficient operating procedures - which are the key to having a profitable and sustainable small funeral business. The life span of the small funeral home is

being challenged every year, so let's try and help each other out to remain successful.

All correspondence to me can be anonymous and will be completely confidential and no names will be used. You may email me at Leebros@aol.com or call me at 407-257-5024.



Richard S. Lee is the President of Lee & Associates, a firm that represents funeral home owners in the sale and transfer of their funeral business. Since 1987, they have been involved in over

160 transactions all over the United States. The scope of their work also includes business valuations, accounting solutions and general consulting services. He is also President of Capstone Services Group LLC, an owner and operator of funeral homes. Richard is always available for questions and may be reached at 407-257-5024 or email him at Leebros@aol.com.



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“Dear Counselor....”

By Bill Stalter

Dear Counselor

I have a preneed funeral contract and a preneed burial contract. I have also executed a durable power of attorney in favor of my best friend, who will make sure my plans are carried out according to those contracts. I am divorced, and have one son, who I love but could not trust to follow my burial preferences. I have an older brother, but I am not sure he will survive me. What more can I do to protect my plans?

I sense you may be concerned that your son may seek to save money by switching your funeral plans to cremation. While you have taken two important steps towards protecting your funeral plans (preneed contracts and a power of attorney), there are a couple of additional steps that can be taken. Most states now have right of sepulcher laws that recognize the right to designate an individual to carry out disposition plans. So even though your son would have a higher right to control your funeral, the right of sepulcher law provides you a way to empower your best friend with your funeral plans. The right of sepulcher document should also name backups to your best friend. The right of sepulcher could designate a priest or minister, a designation you may not

want to make through a power of attorney. Another step to take would be to meet with the funeral home to discuss your preneed contracts, the power of attorney and getting a right of sepulcher designation that would ensure their performance of the contracts despite any objections from your son.



Bill Stalter answers our questions for educational purposes only. It is *The Dead Beat*'s intent to give the reader general information about legal issues, not to provide legal advice. If a reader needs legal advice, he or she should hire an attorney. Reading *The Dead Beat* should not be used as a substitute for legal advice from an attorney. When Bill provides legal advice he does so for Stalter Legal Services in Overland Park, Kansas. Bill also provides consulting services through Preneed Resource Consultants, which can be found at www.prenneedresource.com.

**We need some questions for the “Dear Counselor....” column. Please send your questions to Bill’s e-mail or The Dead Beat’s and we will get some answers in future issues.
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**A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Grave.....
I Became an Undertaker**

****Part 7**
By Lowell Pugh**

Continuing the story of my days in mortuary school, going to the Mortuary College brought about social realities that as a kid I never considered. There were no African-American folk in our county. There were African-American families, mostly farmers I think, about 20 miles away. A few had been in our store and a church group had performed at my church. It just never occurred to me that their lives were all that different from ours.

Well, the big bus station in Lebanon, Missouri woke me up. Other stops and restaurants kept me awake. The first trip into the school's embalming lab there were three autopsied bodies—two white and one black. They all looked alike under their skin. The fourth table had a white child that had starved to death. Children were starvingin Missouri? The real world is awakening me.

On the professional side of this drama, I was very fortunate to be invited to move into the attic bedroom at one of the two funeral homes owned by James "Jim" Lammers, the embalming and funeral directing instructor. My roommate Herman Dammerman of Lincoln, Illinois also came with me. I have had the highest respect for Jim Lammers and felt honored to receive the personal mentoring he gave Herman and I. The Cullen & Kelly Funeral Home was on Lindell Blvd. near the great cathedral. When there was no funeral activity the housekeeper/hostess, Mrs. "Mac" and her companion May, along with the Irish chauffeur "Skinny," kept the card games lively.

In the past, folks have commented that someone didn't have enough friends for pallbearers. In the city that may have been true. Mortuary students hired out as casket bearers at \$3.00 or \$5.00 per funeral. It was not only nice to get a little space change, but students got an insight of several different styles of operation—besides a chance to skip class. The casket bearers were picked up by a limousine from the funeral home or livery company. Sometimes they moved the deceased from a home or funeral home to a church chapel or place of interment. After services the limo driver would return us to the school unless he could be talked into a brief side trip.

On one of these trips class officers talked the driver into taking them to a riverside club in South St. Louis to make arrangements for a class party. It was about 4 p.m., of course, the nightclub wasn't open yet. The six young men ascended the stairway to the padded double door with two hexagon windows. A burly man with a scowl peered out at the six men and the new limo, then asked, "What mob is youse guys from?"

A few weeks into the third trimester, I headed home for the weekend in bright sunshine. When I drove over to my fiancée Betty's home things got very dark. Betty gave me the ring back. She wasn't sure. It was a very long bus ride back to St. Louis. The academic life for the next week or so was pretty bleak. As the weekend approached my roommate Herman who was 20 years older than me said rather forcefully—"If YOU don't get your act together I am going to fail." That weekend I retraced my steps to Betty's door and the sun came out again. We were married 10 days after graduation.

The graduation ceremony was held in the new chapel of

Valhalla Columbarium, Cemetery and Crematory. Was this prophetic considering today's cremation rate?

In February, 1953 I received my draft notice, but was able to take the State Board exam before being inducted in March and heading to Ft. Bliss out at El Paso, Texas.

The good news was that I passed the board exam and my one year as a student embalmer would be waived because of military service. One year later I was able to take the oral exam while on leave en route to Germany. The single question asked on the oral exam was "Where do you insert the trocar?" A few weeks later after arriving in Weisbaden, Germany with the 5th AAA—I received my embalmer's license. At last I was an under —er— ah —Mortician.

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Dylan's Directives

What Does It Mean To You?

“Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead, and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender sympathies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals.” ~ Sir William Ewart Gladstone

By Dylan Stopher

What does it mean to you to be a funeral director? Really stop for a second and think about it, please. And I don't want you to tell me what it means... which probably sounds weird, given that I'm the one asking... no, I want you to tell **YOU** what it means to be a funeral director. Why? Because every now and again, we need to remind ourselves why we do what we do, and what it means.

For a friend of mine named Abby, she says that being a funeral director means that she gets to serve others and be a shoulder to lean on in the worst time of their lives. She gets it. We're there to be the stability, the braces. We allow the family to borrow our own strength, to use our resolve, to stand on our platform of security with us. We enable them to move forward, and accomplish that which they think is impossible to accomplish: saying final farewells on this earth to a loved one.

Another friend of mine named Jamie believes that it means being a therapist. She's not wrong, either. We listen, we hear it all, and we maintain confidence with the families we serve. Think about it for a moment, and I guarantee you there have been times when you've been trusted with the deepest and sometimes darkest secrets in the family you were serving. You definitely have heard them before, because that's the nature of the business. Whether it's relational, financial, emotional, or any other such thing, its private information to which we're allowed intimate access... just like a therapist.

And my friend Zach has another take on it. He says, “Being a funeral director is not only the ultimate responsibility, but the ultimate opportunity to celebrate a life well-lived. We get to showcase an entire life in just a few days, and are entrusted to do so with compassion and sympathy. We are

event planners, embalmers, advice givers, solution seekers, and a shoulder to cry on. These things are what make me proud to suit up and walk through the doors of my funeral home every day.” Pretty stout stuff.

For me, though, it means that I'm accountable. Everything has to stop with me, because I'm the licensee, and if there's a problem... just like Vanilla Ice, yo, I'll solve it. It's also true, though, that even the solved issues are still issues, and they all track directly to me. It's pressure. And I love pressure, believe it or not.

It also means that I'm growing. The business is changing as people are changing, and if you cannot see that and stay fluid with it, you will lose. People who refuse to get aboard the Change Train get left behind, and all they talk about is “the good old days,” and how cremation is ruining the profession. Yeah... I'm not that guy.

And it is in that vein that I have to share with you a little set of questions I wrote myself many years ago following the service of one of the most important families in my career. There are eight of them, and I put them on a bookmark that I carried in my coat pocket. I read them before every arrangement conference, and read them again before every service. It was a serious ritual for me... and it kept me accountable and growing.

* One, **“Does my professionalism transcend my personality?”** I'm an outgoing, jovial, somewhat dry sense of humor kind of guy. Anyone who knows me knows that I love to joke around about everything. But in an arrangement conference, that cannot be the norm... at least, not right off the bat. I have to be a professional first, and earn the confidence of the family I'm serving.

(Continued on page 29)

Dylan's Directives– (Cont.)

(Continued from page 28)

- * Two, **“Does everything look good enough for me or my own family?”** Seriously, when was the last time you looked at a visitation room, chapel, or even arrangement office and asked if this was good enough for you? Would you want your family to see things this way? It should be that perfect, every time, and being in the shoes of the family who has lost someone keeps the focus in the right place for that.
- * Three, **“What more can I do to ensure that the level of respect I demonstrate, with and without words, meets and exceeds the expectations of the families I serve?”** Have I hit the ceiling of what is possible in terms of serving a family? Can I do more? Is it the way I stand? The words I choose? What can I do to make certain the family knows I'm there for them, and that they are my primary focus? It matters...
- * Four, **“How can I better employ my own initiative to enhance the level of service I deliver to every family I have the privilege to serve?”** I'm a go-getter in almost every aspect of life. I take charge, jump in with both feet, and I run full steam ahead until I'm done. I wasn't always this way, but at some point I figured out that initiative mattered to people. And then I figured out how much it mattered to me. So how do I use that to the benefit of the family? I'm proactive, I get things done faster than expected, and I don't waste time.
- * Five, **“Am I able to set aside my title and allow for my name to be familiar to them, even when I don't really know them?”** Not everyone is comfortable with this. I knew a director once who INSISTED that people call him “Mr. {Last Name}” (omitted to protect the innocent J), and was furious when people called him by his first name. It made no sense to me. And yes, he even did that with the families. It was baffling. Also, some folks find that level of comfort to be... well, discomfoting. Can we step past that and be familiar?
- * Six, **“How can I better show appreciation for their choice of me as a service provider?”**

Don't kid yourselves, friends... there's a funeral home that competes with yours, and if the families feel better when they go to that firm instead of your firm, they'll leave. People spend lots of money in funeral homes, and telling them “thank you” isn't too tall an order. So how do we do it? And do we keep that thought in the forefront of our minds as we serve?

- * Seven, **“Do I deliver 100% of my very best to every family I have the privilege to serve?”** Do I? Do you? They lost someone, and we have a brief time to get to know them, and then deliver an amazing service of remembrance to honor that life. They deserve our very best... not just the leftovers.
- * And eight, **“Am I doing everything that could possibly do, and serving in every way that I could possibly serve?”** Again, the people we serve deserve everything I've got. Everything. All of me. That's how we meet them where they are, and serve them in the way that they wish: we give and give and give of ourselves.

I seriously read this card before each conference, before each funeral. It changed my perspective on how I would approach things, put me in the right frame of mind, and reminded me of what it means to me to be a funeral director... I'm accountable and growing, and all for the benefit of the families I have the privilege to serve.



About the author: - Dylan Stopher is a licensed funeral director and embalmer in the states of Texas and Louisiana. He is an active member of the SETFDA and the TFDA, and a regular contributor to both the Texas Director Magazine and the Mil-

lennial Director blog.



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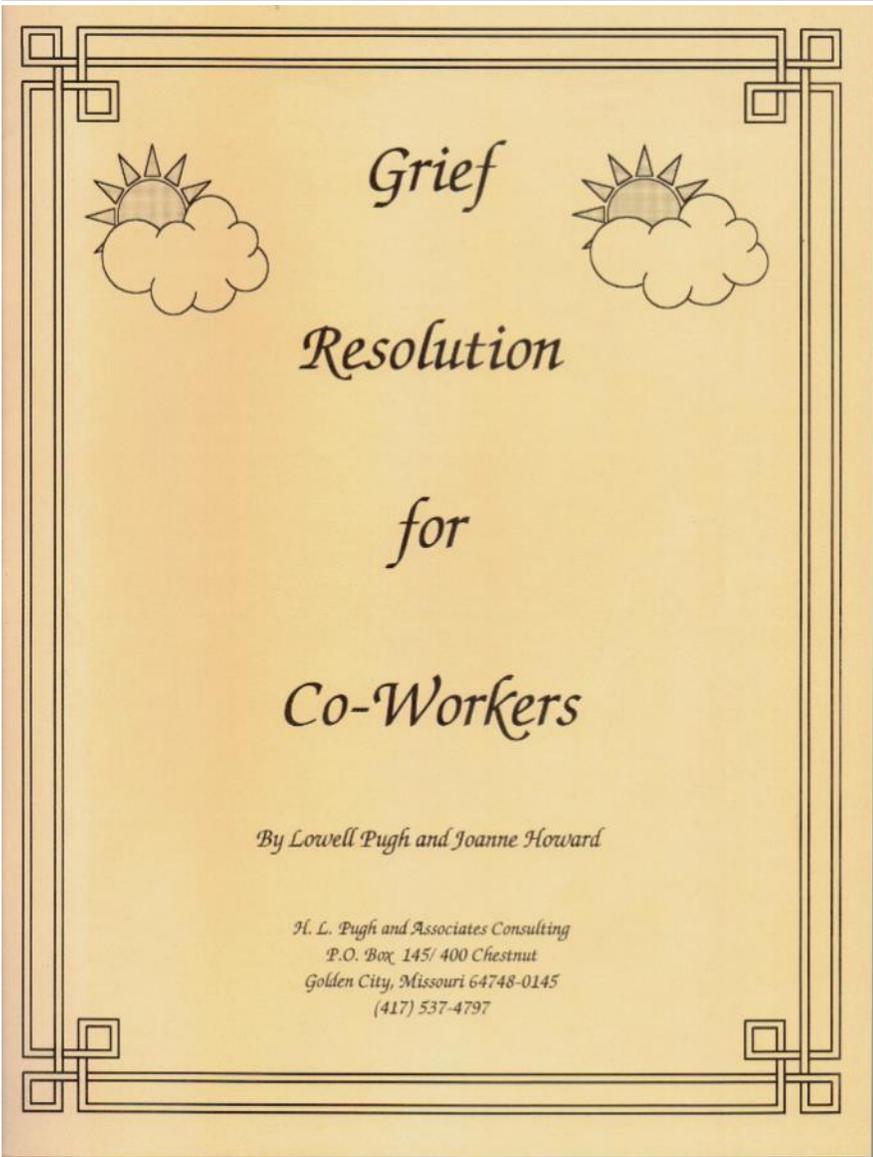
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