

# The Dead Beat



## The Caregiver's Soapbox



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

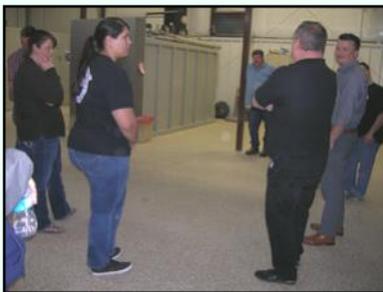
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Issue 2

### ASUMH Mortuary Students' Tour

On May 27, 2018 the mortuary students from the School of Mortuary Science of Arkansas State University at Mountain Home, Arkansas made a tour of Springfield Mortuary Services, Springfield, MO, Wilbert Funeral Services & SI Precast, Springfield, MO (where lunch was served) and finishing with a visit to the Klinger-Cope's Rivermonte Memorial Gardens. Those on the tour included Leann McGovern, Miguel Holding, Matt Buel, Katherine Cockrum and Brianna Uffman.



### In this Issue



Sketch of ????  
Pg 5



Kemper-Millard-Keim  
Funeral Chapel  
Troy, MO



Christine Toson Hentges  
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**Amy Howard Art Gallery**



**4412 No Answer**  
 By Ivy Douglas (Lowell's Daughter)

One Friday afternoon in January I decided to call Dad at the funeral home. As the phone was ringing, I began to wonder; since the funeral home had officially ceased operations and the answering service was no longer needed, who would pick up? Sure enough, I heard Joanne's pleasant voice on the answering machine. For the first time in my 58 years, no one answered at 4412. Someone always answers! This was my go-to number to reach anyone back home. I gave this number to college friends during the summer, knowing someone could reach me. Cyclists traveling across the country were given this number so if they needed anything, someone would be there to send help.



Someone was there at all times for the funeral calls, so growing up, we had a 2<sup>nd</sup> phone for 4412. When that phone rang, all had to be quiet: TV and stereo off, no piano playing, no clattering dishes, no talking. Just silence while Mom or Dad lifted the receiver and started to listen and take down the information. Grandma had a line; the store had a line...we were like Batman! But that is the nature of the funeral business; someone on call, ready to answer that phone 24/7.

The cordless phone, answering service and pager, followed by cell phones allows for a bit more freedom. The need for a person to "be by the phone" was dimin-

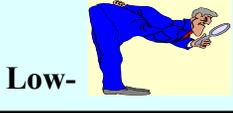
The editor's daughter Amy, who was mentioned in our previous issues, was quite the artist and we've decided to display some of her artwork every issue in her memory.



*Amy Howard*

ished. But still, someone always answered 4412. I never really appreciated how hard that was until I took call while working at a small hospital laboratory. After 4 years, I started to despise the sound of my phone ringing; even though I know those nights that I was called in were vital to a patient in need.

After listening to Joanne's spiel, I left a message, then texted my brother and sister how sad I felt not to reach a real person. However, 4412 will still be ringing. Sometimes it will be answered but instead of a funeral call it may be someone wanting to book an event at Prairie Sunshine Art and Event center, inquire about the Dead Beat, or just to chat with Dad or Joanne or Mom. And that's okay. They all have earned a well-deserved rest.



Low-

## Mortuary Muse By ell

### Achieving Regulatory Balance In the Funeral Industry...is it a pipe dream?

When I was a teenager attending district meetings with my parents, there was always a State Board member in attendance (usually the Secretary of the Board.) I thought being on THE BOARD was akin to being on the U.S. Supreme Court. Obviously the highest professional honor an embalmer could receive. In those days the Missouri embalmer's license was the whole show.

By the time I completed my oral exam, shortly before receiving my embalmer's license, I think my image of the board might have tarnished a degree. They all seemed like regular undertakers.

A few years later when our legislature passed a somewhat flawed F.D. licensing law, I was disappointed to hear some money had changed hands during the process. Now there are so many certification acronyms for so many facets of the profession, I wonder if there is anything meaningful to the consumer other than the price of direct cremation.

When it comes to education, licensing and rule making, how can you cover so many aspects and how can a board of volunteers ever sort out what regulations need to be changed, dropped or newly adopted?? And enforcement of the rules

has its own problems. It has not been uncommon to hear of suits where rule interpretation and enforcement have been used as anti-competition measures.

Board appointments themselves are sometime highly suspect in their motivation. A few years ago one of my friends and colleagues who was very highly regarded was thought to be a shoe-in for the appointment. Alas, the appointment apparently went to a funeral director who had made a healthy political contribution.

I have been inclined to think that perhaps marketplace trends and other consumer protection groups would make funeral industry boards irrelevant. The donor body parts scandal in Colorado that the Reuters News Agency reported on certainly shows a failure on some agency's rules or state law.

For several generations we thought the basic mortuary education—apprenticeship, mortuary school, student embalmer and licensing gave adequate professional training to take care of our client families and provide a living for our own family. Now this expertise is spread over many areas including health, finance/banking, psychology, engineering, accounting, H.R., etc. Senior management needs to have at least an MBA, to manage a large business profitably and give its employees a life after work. As for the generations whose work was their life—the ranks are getting pretty thin.

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](mailto:editor@thedead-beat.com)

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## James Shoemake Retires from Dallas Institute After 38 Years of Service



James Showmake, president of Dallas Institute of Funeral Service, retired in May from the college which he first joined in 1980 as an instructor. He has served as President since 1992.

He was a 1976 graduate of Dallas Institute, at the time known as Dallas Institute of Mortuary Science. During his studies he commuted while interning at the Christian Funeral Home in Decatur, Texas where he remained after earning his license. In 1978, he returned to Dallas where he served as manager and embalmer at Dallas Morticians Service until taking an instructional position at Dallas Institute in 1980.

Jim is looking forward to spending more time with Laura, his wife of over thirty years who herself is known by many as she has often worked with Jim at funeral industry conventions. A deacon at his church, Jim together with Laura plan to continue their active participation in church missions.

Good Luck Jim & Laura!!

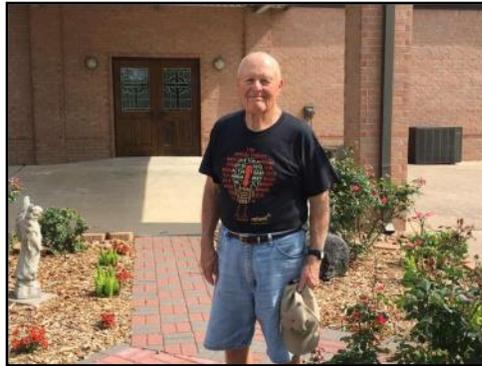
## RememberingALife.com: Empowering Consumers at Every Stage of the Journey

Brookfield, Wis. - The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA), the world's leading and largest funeral service association, has launched RememberingALife.com<<http://www.rememberingalife.com/>>, a guide to honoring a life well-lived, from planning a tribute to mourning a loved one.

RememberingALife.com<<http://www.rememberingalife.com/>> is NFDA's first stand-alone consumer website. It features information about what to do at the time of death, how to plan or preplan a funeral, how to find an NFDA funeral home and what to expect during the grieving process.

The content of RememberingALife.com<<http://www.rememberingalife.com/>> covers many topics, including service options, details about burial and cremation, and pre-funding options; however, if visitors don't find exactly what they're looking for, they can fill out a short form and NFDA will get them the information they need or refer them to their nearest NFDA-member funeral home for assistance.

## Pat Gorman, Past Sales Rep for Ozark Wilbert Vault Succeeds in Retirement



A familiar face to many people in Southwest Missouri and Northwest Arkansas, and nationally in the burial vault industry, Pat Gorman has put a new spin on 'retirement'.

He spent many years as the sales rep for Ozark Wilbert Vault Company and rose to national prominence in the Wilbet Burial Vault association. After the regional company was absorbed by a national chain, Pat returned to the Gorman Scharpf firm and until his retirement then he and Fran made the move to Katy, Texas.

Pat's father Doolin Gorman was a founding partner of the Gorman Scharpf Funeral Home in Springfield, Missouri. Pat, in turn, attended Worsham College in Chicago and worked in funeral homes in Columbia and West Plains, Missouri, as well as the family firm.

A 10-year resident of Katy who's a committed community volunteer when he and his wife aren't traveling is the **2018 City of Katy Senior Citizen of the Year.**

Douglas "Pat" Gorman, 84, doesn't like balderdash and prefers to keep life simple and low-key, but he will be in the spotlight on Monday, May 14. A 5:30 p.m. reception in his honor will be at The Fussell Senior Citizen Center, 5370 E. Fifth St. That will be followed by a special presentation by Mayor Chuck Brawner at 6:30 p.m. at Katy City Hall, 901 Ave. C, Katy. Gorman's been in the spotlight before. The Katy Area Chamber of Commerce honored him in April 2015 as its "Volunteer of the Year."

Houston Chronicle 5/8/2018

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](mailto:editor@thedead-beat.com).



# Behind the Back Fence

By Lowell

In the last issue I commented about the “Having the Talk of a Lifetime” deck of cards. I couldn’t visualize my house full of relatives sitting down as a group to seriously discuss these issues as infrequently that we are all together. Perhaps two or three individuals at a time, but not in the depth for which they are intended.

On the other hand—my friend Charlie, from Bartlesville, who is a Oklahoma Toastmaster officer looked at the cards and thought they would be great conversation starter questions.

\*\*\*\*\*

We have been making some modest renovations to the funeral home portion of our facility for other uses and to help with the eventual sale of the real estate. Some of the bird nest builders have been disturbed.

I have had enough other interests that there has been no regrets about not being involved in funerals. Of course, I did not plan on losing vision to this degree and other old age disabilities.

I remember meeting a funeral service colleague Gene Lohmeyer in a clinic down at Springfield years ago when he said, “Lowell, don’t ever sell out. I don’t have

any hobbies and I’m lost.”

I think at least two more of my neighboring colleagues will be retiring after selling out. Fortunately they are still in viable market areas.

Sharp business professionals can often switch to a niche market when original demographics make a drastic change downward. For many of us in the rural areas and some cities there is such drastic decline in population or economic factors there is no niche viable enough to survive in your service area.

This story has been repeated by every kind of business and profession since pilgrims arrived and the great plains were settled. In our town the first three coffin sellers on record only lasted briefly before our family started its 113 year run.

### 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](mailto:editor@thedead-beat.com)

The daughter of a previous client, Annetta Poirot, came across her mother’s sketch books for an art class that she had taken. We have come to the conclusion that this sketch was done of our fearless leader Harold Lowell Pugh.



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# After-Thoughts *By Joanne Howard*

Cemeteries—Aren't they the place we put our loved ones to feel they're secure and offer a place here on earth to visit them? Even when cremation is done, we want some place for the ashes in the ground, in a columbarium, on the mantle or scattered in a special place. But a place to remember them.



So I found it a bit offensive when several on the cemetery (the cemetery that my girls are buried in and eventually me and my husband will be located) board gave the feeling that what is good for the mowing people was more important than the people buried there. Or the people who were utilizing the cemetery for their loved ones.

Granted that you are really leasing the land from the cemetery and they make up their own rules. If you weren't burying your family and friends, there wouldn't be a reason for a cemetery.

To be worried about the cost of mowing and what makes it easier for mowers, to restrict the monument type, or flowers or even solar decorations, I feel I'm missing something. I want a cemetery to look nice and not like a hayfield, but people invest a lot making a presentable decoration to remember who is in those graves. Economical investment in stones, flowers and objects should be honored by mowers. If things are unacceptable, people should be notified before things are removed and especially attempts should be made to return items.

Damage to markers by chipping or moving by mowers should really not be acceptable. Putting chemicals

around graves to eliminate trimming should be done judiciously or sod could be damaged and older monuments could possibly fall over,

I seriously doubt that the cemetery mowers have considered the long term consequences physically, let alone emotionally.

After spending about 20 years caring for my girls' graves, I feel I can speak from experience. After all these years and until I join them in the graves, I care what happens to their memorials. Though, I'm not there as frequently, but I care if their flowers are looking good, and if objects I set on the monument are still there. I care if a lawnmower has clipped the edge off my mother's flat stone, which probably should not have been mowed over. I care if a small wooden cross I stuck by my mom's grave for mother's day, is broken down and laying there the next week, which happened to be memorial day weekend. Yes, that might have taken a bit of time or movement on the part of the mower, but small things like that matter.

So what is the answer? I'm really not completely sure, but I feel that you need to consider how the people might feel about destroying something that someone might have done for their loved one.

You really can't do very much for a loved one after they've past, but sometimes you just want to do it to make you feel better and hope your loved one might know about. As a mom, I just want to feel like I'm still caring for my kids or even my mother or anyone else I've cared for.

So trust me, I'm positive there are many others who get distraught when mowers feel they're more important than the people they're mow-

ing around. Knowing my daughters, if they had a chance they'd probably interfere with the mowing machines from heaven.

\*\*\*\*\*

Lately several instances of close friends getting bad health news has occurred. Even though I've been in the funeral profession for a long time, facing these kinds of crisis has been challenging.

I've had to face deaths of several close to me, but that doesn't make future instances any easier. Though praying helps, I have never been very good with change. I think I fight it because I've had it thrust upon me so much in the past with little control on my part. I hope I can gracefully trust in the Lord on these newest situations.

I pray for all facing changes of circumstances, health or even death sooner than they expected. Changes as I all too well know come whether we want them or not and may we gratefully accept and deal with whatever God presents us with.

May you see joy and love in everywhere you look whether in a short or long time.



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@thedead-beat.com](mailto:joanne@thedead-beat.com) or [jfhoward53@yahoo.com](mailto:jfhoward53@yahoo.com)

# The Accidental Celebrant

By Michael K. Jones

I had a conversation with my neighbor this past weekend. It was one of those over the fence type exchanges we see all the time on sit-coms. I forget how it started but we wound up talking about death, the afterlife and the people we leave behind. As she was making a point she suddenly stopped and bluntly stated, "Sometimes I just can't find words to tell you what I think about this."

Her statement got me thinking. I keep hearing that we live in a society where people avoid death. While that may be true for some I think there's something else going on. When I meet with families to plan services I detect little unwillingness to engage and discuss death. We're more than willing to talk about death. What seems to be the issue is that we often struggle to find the language to express our thoughts, emotions and experiences.

I recently came across some interesting numbers that help me with this shift in thinking. While I was read-

ing Kenneth Woodward's thought provoking *Getting Religion* I discovered that in the 4-year period between the years 1968 and 1972 roughly 1200 books on death were published. This is almost the same number published in the 18 years leading up to 1968. Each of these writers, in their own way, was trying to get us thinking and talking about death. They were trying to get us communicating in ways that had rarely been tried.

Perhaps all of this is because death is such a big reality in our lives it just can't be captured in the words we use every day. Maybe we need a new vocabulary. There may be a symbolic gesture that captures what we want to get through to others. A couple of weeks ago I was meeting a family to plan a funeral when the doorbell rang. When a family member opened the door a neighbor was standing on the front step. All he said was, "I don't bake so here!" With those words he handed the family two bottles of wine and ran off.

That physical gift said more than any words could get across. Maybe that's what we need when talking about death – a new language with which we can get on with life and honor the people we need to honor.



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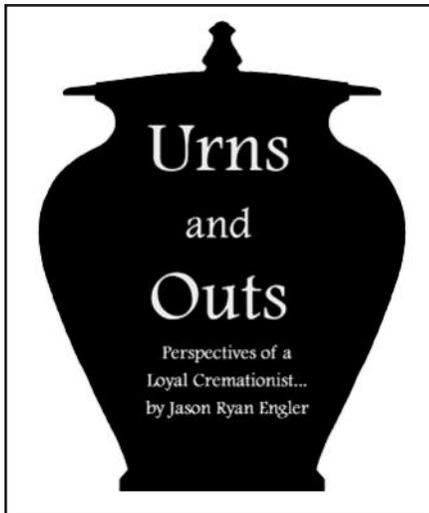
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### About the Author:

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.



In May I had the good fortune to travel to Germany for several days where I enjoyed the fabled culture of good food, beautiful architecture, and friendly German people. As a historian does, I took the opportunity to visit a couple of the oldest crematories in the country, one of which is the second-oldest in Europe. In touring the historic Leipzig and Gotha Crematoriums, I noticed the use of symbols in the architecture and on the various urns in the *urnenhalle* and *urnenhain* – a very prominent one of which is *die Flamme* – the flame.

The early cremationists recognized the purifying power of the flame, but they also often regarded the reduction of the body to its basic elements by the use of flame and heat as the means to which the soul was set free from the body. “Flame dissolves the perishable, freeing the immortal” is inscribed in German above the entrance of the Zurich Crematorium in Switzerland. *Vermibus erepti, puro consumimur igni* - “Saved from the worms, purified by the consuming flame” was a commonly published and inscribed sentiment in the early cremation movement around the world – and was first quoted by Prof. Ludovico Brunetti when he published his discourse on cremation in 1873.

After the cremation movement in the US shifted its focus from the importance of purifying the remains of the dead to the importance of the memorial, the flame motif became a bit less common. With the exception of several urns created by Gorham Bronze, the flame finial,

which is where the idea was most often expressed, became much less popular by the mid-1940s. This was not as true in Germany where even many of the modern crematories there continue to use the flame as part of their logos – not only in homage to their cremationist forebears, but also in recognition of the spiritual element of the flame and its various representations. Additionally, many of the modern urns that are offered in Germany have the flame as part of their decoration.

Another common symbol that often accompanies the flame motif is the powerful image of the legendary phoenix bird rising above the flame. The ancient Greeks believed in the phoenix as a representation of the rising and setting of the sun, and thus, it represented the cycle of life and death. When the phoenix had lived its days it died in a fiery blaze and was reduced to ashes, and then rose again from the ashes to live life anew.

Many early mystic teachings compare the phoenix with the regeneration and enlightenment of man. *Ignis natura renovatur integra* – “By fire, nature is restored in purity” – with fire representing the everlasting spirit. The teaching was that when a person lives entirely in the light or fire of the spirit, the fallible nature is purified and the person becomes a new creation – much like the phoenix. A very similar teaching comes from the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible when the Holy Spirit, represented in tongues of fire, came upon those who were gathered. From then on they were filled with the Holy Spirit and it purified them.

In the figurative sense, the flame of the everlasting spirit is the beautiful way in which we are purified while we live, whether it is through enlightenment, the Holy Spirit, or simply by the spirit of our own will. When we die, cremation is the literal purification which prepares the body for the memorial, the spirit for the life eternal, the memory for the hearts and minds of those in the old life. As the memorial is established to commemorate the old life, the new life – purified by the sacred flame, will begin...

That’s my perspective...



**Urn of the Issue:** Model #487 by the Voelsing Company of Giesen, Germany. Made in spun copper with a dark galvanized finish, it shows the common flame sym-

bol which is popular in German cremation urns. Cremation urns in Germany are larger than their US counterparts - this urn measures almost 11" tall, just over 7" in diameter with a capacity of 6 liters, or almost 400 cubic inches. The reason for this is simple. In Germany, cremated remains are not returned to families; instead they are returned to the funeral director in a sealed container called an ash capsule. The ash capsule cannot be opened as German laws state that cremated remains cannot be scattered or kept in the home. Therefore, the urns are made large enough to hold the ash capsule. Additionally, most urns are made to be biodegradable over time - this is because burial spaces are leased for 20 year terms. After 20 years, if the lease is not renewed, the stone is removed or returned to the family and a new burial takes place.



Jason Ryan Engler is a licensed funeral director and certified celebrant. He is The Cremation Historian for the Cremation Association of North America and the National Museum of Funeral History and a frequent speaker and writer on the subject of cremation in the US, urns, and their history. He is the cremation products buyer for Service Corporation International and lives in Houston, Texas, with his miniature dachshund, Otto.

## The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

By Ken Doka

Songs such as "Memories," "I Remember You," or "Memories Are Made of This," are among a few of the songs that celebrate memories. When someone we love dies, memories can sustain us. We are warmed in the cold nights of grief by the pleasant memories we will always retain. They are one of the continuing bonds we will always have with someone we loved. In my counseling, I frequently find individuals who will hold on to the pain because they believe that if the pain ceases, so will the connection. I remind them that one of the first signs they are doing better is when they can laugh at a story that is now too painful to recall.

The point is that we never lose the bond, or the memories, of someone we love. Sometimes they may give us a surge of grief, even years later, at those moments when we sorely miss them. Most of the time though, these memories warm and sustain us.

Yet some memories may not comfort us. Some memories may haunt us. Some may be bad. Evan had a wonderful relationship with his wife, Kathy, until she developed dementia. Then caring for her became very difficult. When Kathy died after eight years of deterioration, Evan commented on the fact that it was hard to even remember the wonderful memories they shared prior to her cruel disease. One of the things that I asked Evan to do was to make a memory book, a photo album of their life together before the illness. Evan later shared that this greatly helped, as the photographs reminded him of the many good times, and showing the albums of his children and grandchildren engendered their reminiscences.

However, some memories may be downright ugly. Not all relationships are positive. Some are filled with conflict and ambivalence. Tom and Denise's memories of their son, Don, were painful. Even as a young boy, Don was defiant. Don constantly fought with his

older sister and badly bullied his younger brother. There was constant conflict as Don started school. The parents had, as his father described, an almost standing time to meet with Don's guidance counselor, principal, and teacher to discuss Don's poor grades, bad attitude, and disruptive behaviors. In middle school, Don began experimenting with drugs. After dropping out of high school. Don died as a result of a drug-related car crash. Tom and Denise, as well as Don's siblings, felt a sense of release and relief at the death. Any good memories were few and fleeting.

In cases where the memories are so complicated, counseling may be helpful. When Tom and Denise were in counseling, it was suggested that they write a letter to their son and read it at the grave site. Even Don's siblings decided that they too wished to write the letters. They all wrote about their frustrations with Don and the fact that his legacy was almost a cautionary tale. They penned about their regrets and the lack of good memories. Yet, they also expressed their love.

The journey of grief is often warmed and eased by rich reminiscences. In some cases, memories may offer little or no comfort. Yet, we can find the help we need to journey on, even with the burden of these ugly memories.

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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*

A man had really bad headaches and each time his testicles would hurt. The doc tried everything then one day said perhaps we should castrate. ....The man said if the headaches don't go away lets try that....Well the doc did and sure enough the headaches left. He was sitting at home depressed one day not feeling like a complete man anymore and his wife said, "Honey, you're still a handsome man. When I get depressed I go shopping for new clothes, so come on lets go." They went to a man's suit store and got him fitted for a new suit. He looked in the mirror and felt so much better. He said, "Gee, I feel so good I think I'll get some different color under wear. I've always wore white and the young guys wear all colors these days." His wife agreed and he was picking some out when the clerk came over and said, "Sir, you're looking at 34 waist." The husband said, I have always wore 34." The clerk said, "Well when I measured you for your new suit you were a 38 and you don't want to wear your underwear too tight. It makes your testicles hurt and gives you really bad headaches."



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### 50th Wedding Anniversary

An elderly couple who were childhood sweethearts had married and settled down in their old neighborhood. To celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary they walked down to their old school. There, they held hands as they find the desk they shared and where he had carved, "I love you, Sally." On their way back home, a bag of money falls out of an armored car practically at their feet. She quickly picks it up and they don't know what to do with it, so they take it home. There, she counts the money and it's fifty-thousand dollars. The husband says, "We've got to give it back." She says, "Finders keepers," and puts the money back in the bag and hides it up in their attic. The next day, two FBI men are going from door-to-door in the neighborhood looking for the money and show up at their home. One knocks on the door and says, "Pardon me, but did either of you find any money that fell out of an armored car yesterday?" She says, "No." The husband says, "She's lying. She hid it up in the attic." She says, "Don't believe him, he's getting senile." But the agents sit the man down and begin to question him. One says, "Tell us the story from the beginning." The old man says, "Well, when Sally and I were walking home from school yesterday...." At this, the FBI guy looks at his partner and says, "We're outta here..."



\*\*\*\*\*

### Grumpy Mood

There were three little boys visiting their grandparents. The oldest came out and asked his grandpa, "Can you make a sound like a frog, Grandpappy?" Grandpa (Being in a kind of

## Comments

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.)

ill mood) responds, "No, I don't really want to make the sound of a frog now." So, the second little boy comes out and asks his grandfather, "Will you please make a sound like a frog?" Grandpa again says, "No, not now. I don't really want to do that. I'm in a grumpy mood. Maybe later." Then the third little boy comes out and says, "Grandpa, oh please....Please, please will you make a sound like a frog?" "Why do all of you boys want me to make a sound like a frog?" Grandpa asked. The little boy replied with a hopeful face, "Well, Mom said that when you croak we get to go to Disney World!!"



\*\*\*\*\*

### "Old is when....."

- \* Your sweetie says, "Lets go upstairs and make love, " and you answer, "Honey, I can't do both."
- \* Your friends compliment you on your new alligator shoes and you're barefoot.
- \* A sexy babe catches your fancy and your pacemaker opens the garage door nearest your car.
- \* You remember when the Dead Sea was only sick.
- \* Going bra-less pulls all the wrinkles out of your face.
- \* You don't care where your spouse goes, just as long as you don't have to go along.
- \* When it takes longer to rest than to get tired.
- \* When you are cautioned to slow down by the doctor instead of the police.
- \* "Getting a little action" means I don't need to take any fiber today.
- \* "Getting lucky" means you find your car in the parking lot.
- \* An "all-nighter" means not getting up to pee!!

\*\*\*\*\*

### Brown Trout

After a day of fishing on Lake Michigan, a fisherman is walking from the pier carrying two brown trout in a bucket. He is approached by a Conservation Officer who asks him for his fishing license. The fisherman says to the warden, "I was not fishing and I did not catch these browns, they are my pets. Every day I come down to the water and dump these fish into the water and take them for a walk to the end of the pier and back. When I'm ready to go I whistle and they jump back into the



*(Continued on page 11)*

## Chuckles (Cont.)

bucket and we go home. The officer not believing him, reminds him that it is illegal to fish without a license. The fisherman turns to the warden and says, "If you don't believe me then watch," as he throws the trout back into the water. The warden says, "Now whistle to your fish and show me that they will jump out of the water and into the bucket." The fisherman turns to the officer and says, "What fish?"

\*\*\*\*\*

### Dilbert's Words of Wisdom

1. I can please only one person per day. Today is not your day. Tomorrow isn't looking good either.
2. I love deadlines. I especially the whoosing sound they make as they go flying by.
3. Am I getting smart with you? How would you know?
4. I'd explain it to you, but your brain would explode.
5. Someday we'll look back on all this and plow into a parked car.
6. There are very few personal problems that cannot be solved through a suitable application of high explosives.
7. Tell me what you need, and I'll tell you how to get along without it.
8. Accept that some days you're the pigeon, and some days you're the statue.
9. Needing someone is like needing a parachute. If he isn't there the first time you need him, chances are you won't be needing him again.
10. I don't have an attitude problem. You have a perception problem.
11. Last night I lay in bed looking up at the stars in the sky and I thought to myself, "Where the h\*\*\* is the ceiling?"
12. My Reality Check bounced.
13. On the keyboard of life, always keep one finger on the escape key.
14. I don't suffer from stress. I'm a carrier.
15. You're slower than a herd of turtles stampeding through peanut butter.
16. Do not meddle in the affairs of dragons, 'cuz, like to them, you are crunchy and taste good with ketchup.
17. Everybody is somebody else's weirdo.
18. Never argue with an idiot. They drag you down to their level then beat you with experience.

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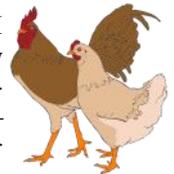
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\*\*\*\*\*

### Farmer John

Farmer John lived on a quiet rural highway. But, as time went by, the traffic slowly built up at an alarming rate. The traffic was so heavy and so fast that his chickens were being run over at a rate of three to six a day. So one day Farmer John called the sheriff's office and said, "You've got to do something about all of these people driving fast and killing all my chickens." "What do you want me to do?" "I don't car, just do something about those crazy drivers!" So the next day he had the county workers go out and erected a sign that said: SLOW—SCHOOL CROSSING. Three days later Farmer John called the sheriff and said, "You've got to do something about these drivers. The "school crossing" sign seems to make them go even faster. So, again the sheriff sends out the county workers and they put up a new sign: SLOW, CHILDREN AT PLAY. That really sped them up. So Farmer John called and called every day for three weeks. Finally, he asked the sheriff, "Your signs are doing no good. Can I put up my own sign?" The sheriff told him, "Sure thing, put up your own sign." He was going to let the Farmer John do just about anything in order to get him to stop calling everyday to complain. The sheriff got no more calls from Farmer John. Three weeks later, curiosity got the best of the sheriff and he decided to give Farmer John a call. "How's the problem with those drivers. Did you put your sign up?" "Oh, I sure did. And not one chicken has been killed since then. I've got to go I'm very busy." He hung up the phone. The sheriff was really curious and he thought to himself, "I'd better go out there and take a look at that sign...it might be something that WE could use to slow down drivers...." So the sheriff drove out to Farmer John's house, and his jaw dropped the moment he saw the sign. It was spray-painted on a sheet of wood:



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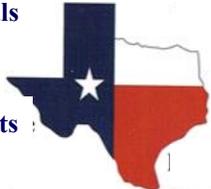
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## Death Notices of Fellow Funeral Service Colleagues



### MISSOURI



**James Alden Shields**, 45, of Rolla passed away on May 12, 2018. He was the son of Steven B. and Bette L. Shields, Steve was a longtime Missouri Casket Sales Rep. for Aurora Casket Company and later Artco Casket Company. Null & Son Funeral Home in Rolla handled his

memorial service.

### NEW MEXICO



**Sandra Strong Fitzgerald**, of Elephant Butte and Albuquerque, died April 5, 2018. Sandra was a pioneering woman in international funeral service and a fourth generation in the family funeral home. Her services were conducted by Kirikos Family Funeral Home.

### OKLAHOMA



**Frank C. Smith**, 67, of Tulsa passed away April 28, 2018. He attended Central State University, Dept. of Funeral Service in Edmond, OK. Frank received his OK Funeral Director and Embalmer licenses in March of 1976. Frank worked in the funeral industry for over 40 years until his retirement in 2017. Frank was a proud member of the Army National Guard and served over 20 years being discharged as SSG and he was also a veteran of the US Army. His services were under the direction of Bradley Family Funeral Home and Cremation Service.



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### TEXAS



**Harriet E. Bower**, 85, of Fountain Valley, California, passed away May 9, 2018. She was the mother of Glenn Bower, who is the President of the Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service. Her services were handled by Heritage Memorial Services in Huntington

Beach, California.

### TEXAS (CONT.)

**Judy Garland Davis**, 77, of Opelousas, Louisiana, passed away May 3, 2018. She was the mother of Vince Arena of Texas Service Life. Her services were directed by Melancon Funeral Home of Opelousas.



**Nancy F. Flanagan**, 81, of Grapevine, passed away April 13, 2018. She was the office manager at Wilbert of North Texas for over 20 years. Her services were directed by Lucas Funeral Home.



**Dora Jean Nobles**, 87, of Navasota, passed away April 12, 2018. She was the widow of Past President Chester Nobles, mother of Past President Douglas Nobles, grandmother of Jeffrey Nobles of Nobles Funeral Chapel that handled the service.



**Wanda J. Westerman**, 86, of Centerville, Ohio, passed away April 15, 2018. She was the mother of Gary Lee Westerman of Brown Funeral Home in Irving, TX who handled her arrangements.



**Bill Berry "Butch" Wilcox**, 76, of Burnet, passed away May 28, 2018. He went on to attend and graduate from Gup-ton-Jones School of Mortuary Science in Dallas. He and his wife Janice, along with their two daughters Ginger and Melissa, moved to Burnet when they purchased the

funeral home from Gene Clements in 1969. Later the funeral home was built in 1975 in Marble Falls. Bill was a Licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer in the State of Texas for over fifty years and was very proud to have received his fifty year pin from the Texas Funeral Directors Association a few years ago. His services were under the direction of Clements-Wilcox Funeral Home in Burnet.

**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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## Small business: The Heart and Soul of the Funeral Industry

By by Katie Hill,  
President & CEO Mortuary Lift Company



The bedrock of the American death-care industry is the small business owner. I'm one of them. As a group, we share common traits. We are active in our communities. We have chosen a career with heart. We look out for one another. And the people we serve are far more than "customers."

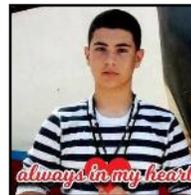
A recent example characterizes the nature of death-care professionals. The daughter of my long-time sales manager, Brenda Stratton, embarked on a 4,000-mile bike journey to raise funds and awareness for cancer. A noble effort, for sure. Brenda's advice as she saw her daughter off:



## Industry Associate Family Member Death Notice



**Jacob Alexander Miller**, 18, of Tampa, passed away Jan. 26, 2017. He was the son of Rainy Miller, sales representative of Zontec International. His services were handled by Blount & Curry Funeral Home -Carrollton.



"If you have trouble anywhere along the route, find a funeral home. They will help you."

Lately, however, I've become troubled by intruders in our tight-knit industry. Maybe you've experienced them, too. Offshore manufacturers siphoning dollars from our American marketplace. Those are the dollars that threaten our ability to pay a satisfactory wage and make improvements in our businesses to keep "American-made" the assurance of quality.

My business, Mortuary Lift Company in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has a staff of seven. I don't think of them as employees. They are like family and I treat them that way. I suspect you could say the same. We believe that employees who are compensated well and made to feel valued take pride in their work. The result? A high-quality, reliable product or service. I know that every time I reach into my own pocket to insure my staff and their families, make a 401k match and provide generous paid vacations, I'm not only rewarding a loyal group, but also reinforcing their commitment that our lifts exceed our customers' expectations. Isn't that the American way?

I believe my company, like yours, offers advantages that are not always found in products manufactured over-

*(Continued on page 17)*

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## Convention Time

We weren't able to go to any conventions this year, so I've got a few shots from Randy Emmert, Pierce Chemicals salesman. Hope everyone has had a good time at conventions, learned a lot and ready to take on new challenges.



**2018 KFDA Convention  
Topeka, KS  
Rick Rock speaking on "Embalming  
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### Oklahoma Funeral Directions Association Convention April 15 -17 , 2018



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**If you would like pictures of your convention shown, please send pictures to [joanne@thedead-beat.com](mailto:joanne@thedead-beat.com).**

**Small business: The Heart and Soul of the Funeral Industry (Cont)**

*(Continued from page 15)*

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ple, that they don't have a typical 9-to-5 workday, so we make our customer service accessible into the evenings. Our customers appreciate that typically they deal with just one of our associates who manages the many details. As Jon Wilson remarks about our associate who coordinated his purchase, "If problems occur down the road, I can call my friend Brenda. Who truly feels like a friend."

Importantly, **I'm proud** of our quality and the significance we place on ensuring value in a customer's investment with us. We make our products with no built-in obsolescence. There are 50-year-old units still in good operation. Our customers buy it once, buy it right and can be done with it. Jon Wilson of Oakey & Son Funeral Home in Salem, Virginia, tells us, "I have a friend with a 20-

*(Continued on page 21)*



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**A Student Named Ross**  
(From LIVELIFEHAPPY.com)

The first day of school our professor introduced himself and challenged us to get to know someone we didn't already know. I stood up to look around when a gentle hand touched my shoulder. I turned around to find a wrinkled, little old lady beaming up at me with a smile that lit up her entire being.

She said, "Hi handsome. My name is Rose. I'm eighty-seven years old. Can I give you a hug?" I laughed and enthusiastically responded, "Of course you may!" and she gave me a giant squeeze.



"Why are you in college at such a young, innocent age?" I asked. She jokingly replied, "I'm here to meet a rich husband, get married, and have a couple of kids..." "No seriously," I asked. I was curious what may have motivated her to be taking on this challenge at her age. "I always dreamed of having a college education and now I'm getting one!" she told me.

After class we walked to the student union building and shared a chocolate milkshake. We became instant friends. Every day for the next three months, we would leave class together and talk nonstop. I was always mesmerized listening to this "time machine" as she shared her wisdom and experience with me. Over the course of the year, Rose became a campus icon and she easily made friends wherever she went. She loved to dress up and she reveled in the attention bestowed upon her from the oth-

er students. She was living it up.

At the end of the semester we invited Rose to speak at our football banquet. I'll never forget what she taught us. She was introduced and stepped up to the podium. As she began to deliver her prepared speech, she dropped her three



by five cards on the floor. Frustrated and a little embarrassed she leaned into the microphone and simply said, "I'm sorry I'm so jittery. I gave up beer for Lent and this whiskey is killing me! I'll never get my speech back in order so let me just tell you what I know."

As we laughed she cleared her throat and began, "We do not stop playing because we are old; we grow old because we stop playing. There are only four secrets to staying young, being happy, and achieving success. You have to laugh and find humor every day. You've got to have a dream. When you lose your dreams, you die. We have so many people walking around who are dead and don't even know it! There is a huge difference between growing older and growing up.

If you are nineteen years old and lie in bed for one full year and don't do one productive thing, you will turn twenty years old. If I am eighty-seven years old and stay in bed for a year and never do anything I will turn eighty-eight. Anybody can grow older. That doesn't take any talent or ability. The idea is to grow up by always finding opportunity in change. Have no regrets.

The elderly usually don't have regrets for what we did, but rather for things we did not do. The only people who fear death are those with regrets." She concluded her speech by courageously singing "The Rose." She challenged each of us to study the lyrics and live them out in our daily lives.

*A Student Named Ross  
(Cont.)*

At the year's end Rose finished the college degree she had begun all those years ago. One week after graduation Rose died peacefully in her sleep. Over two thousand college students attended her funeral in tribute to the wonderful woman who taught by example that it's never too late to be all you can possibly be. When you finish reading this, please tell this peaceful word of advice to your friends and family, they'll really enjoy it!



These words have been passed along in loving memory of ROSE.—REMEMBER, GROWING OLDER IS MANDATORY. GROWING UP IS OPTIONAL. We make a Living by what we get, We make a Life by what we give.

*Small business: The Heart and Soul of the Funeral Industry (Cont.)*

*(Continued from page 17)*

year-old Mortuary Lift system and he's never had a single issue with it. That's incredible. Even if competitors would have been half as much, I still would have purchased a system from Mortuary Lift. The quality is outstanding and the service unmatched."

My story isn't unique. It's the proud story of every small business in our industry. So let's make a commitment to ourselves and each other to stand firm together. To proudly remain the backbone of the American death-care industry. To Buy American whenever we can and keep our dollars flowing domestically. It is the practical way to ensure the best care for the families we serve, as well as our own.

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**Some Animal Humor  
From "Let There Be Laughter"  
"Animal Antics"**

A little girl is out in the backyard brushing the dog's teeth, and her father stops by and says, "What are you doing?" She says, "Well, I'm brushing Scuffy's teeth." She pauses and says to her father, "Don't worry, Dad. I'll put your toothbrush back like I always do."



*Michael Hodgkin*

*The following personals ad appeared in a newspaper:*

**SBF (Single Black Female) Seeks Make companionship, ethnicity unimportant.**

I'm a svelte, good-looking girl who LOVES to play. I love long walks in the woods. Hunting, Camping, Riding in your pickup truck. Fishing trips. Cozy winter nights spent lying by the fire. Candlelight dinners will have me eating out of your hand. Rub me the right way and watch me respond. I'll be at the front door when you get home from work, wearing only what nature gave me. Kiss me and I'm yours.



Call 555-2121 and ask for Daisy.

*(The phone number was the Humane Society. Daisy was an eight-week-old black Labrador retriever)*

**Animal Curiosities:**

- \* If the plural of "goose" is "geese," is the plural of "moose" "meese?"
- \* What do chickens think we taste like?
- \* What do you call a male ladybug?
- \* When dog food has a new and improved taste, who tastes it?
- \* Why didn't Noah swat those two mosquitoes when he had the chance.
- \* God knew a turtle would be too slow to get home for dinner, so He just put him in a mobile home.
- \* If man evolved from monkeys and apes, why do we still have monkeys and apes?

*Compiled by Mary Hollingsworth*

# Marketing in Today's Mobile World

By Joe Weigel

Writing to promote a funeral home is both an art and a science that has changed dramatically over time. But the pace of that change has increased dramatically in the last several years, thanks to the arrival of the tablet and smartphones.

These devices are transforming businesses in many ways, but one that few have noticed is their impact on written content. You can take content that was written for a brochure, a direct mail letter, or a web page and simply display it on a tablet, but you're probably going to be disappointed with the results.

Communication professionals have watched text evolve as families have become busier and increased their use of technology. For example, articles and other marketing materials have become shorter. There was a time in the not-so-distant past when business-oriented articles like this one averaged between 1,200 and 1,500 words. Today, anything that approaches 800 words seems unusually lengthy.

Today's families are more of scanners than readers. They skim quickly

through content, looking for key points or information that's of interest. An effective writer anticipates that by making navigation easier.

In the past, writers composed sentences and paragraphs with the hope that the reader would hang on every word. Today, we accept the fact that most people will zero in on what matters most. We know they won't read every word, but we hope they'll come away with what's important to them.

When creating marketing content for tablets, the use of color offers another opportunity for guiding the reader. Sentences containing the most important thoughts or arguments can be highlighted in different colors. Small graphic elements such as photos and icons can be woven into the copy to spotlight key areas.

Copy length is an important consideration for two reasons. First, people who prefer to scan don't want to get bogged down with long copy. Second, these devices have small screens. That limits the

amount of copy that's visible at any one time -- an important consideration, because scanners generally won't scroll down unless you give them a very good reason for doing so.

Don't assume that today's families aren't paying attention to your messages just because they spend less time with your content. They're accustomed to soaking up massive amounts of information from multiple directions, often simultaneously. The key difference is not in how much they retain; it's in how they absorb it.



Joe Weigel is the owner of Weigel Strategic Marketing, a communications firm focused on the funeral profession that delivers expertise and results across three interrelated marketing disciplines: strategy, branding and communications. You can visit his website at [weigelstrategicmarketing.webs.com](http://weigelstrategicmarketing.webs.com). He also can be reached at 317-608-8914 or [joseph.weigel@gmail.com](mailto:joseph.weigel@gmail.com).

## Inspirational Quotes

"If you remember that there is something to learn in every problem, then you can learn to grow by the storms rather than being crushed by them." Paul and Dan Monaghan

Wholesome self-esteem is cultivated by practicing skills linked to the three building blocks of self-esteem: unconditional human worth, unconditional love, and growth. Glenn R. Schiraldi, *The Self-Esteem Workbook*

In life and business, relationships are important - but they are empty unless they are established and based upon trust. Horst H. Schulze

Success has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others. Danny Thomas

A smile says a thousand things all at once. A smile says I am open to talk, to listen, and to greet warmly. A smile is the best feature that anyone can have and to develop a winning smile will make you happy as well as everyone around you. Byron Pulsifer, [Keep Smiling](#)

## Small Funeral Homes Sales

By Richard S. Lee

When it comes to the sale of smaller funeral homes, the market and dynamics are much different than for firms in the 150 and up call volume range. Typically, a Buyer of a smaller firm is an individual or a surrounding firm that wants to expand their current base. Also, financing for these purchases is readily available although with recent SBA guideline changes, Buyers do have to provide more in personal funds at closing than in previous years.

\* In the last 12 months, I have brokered five funeral home businesses that had annual call volume of 100 calls or less and represented a great cross-section of the average small-town funeral home. Below are some sale facts that I thought would be beneficial to owners of smaller firms that are curious as to the current fair market value of their business.

- \* The firms were all located in smaller size towns in the states of Missouri, West Virginia, Virginia and Kentucky.
- \* The call volume ranged from 52 to 105 with the average firm performing 85 annual calls.

- \* The average cremation rate was 32% with about half of them having some service or rental casket income associated with it.
- \* The average annual true revenue (without cash advances) was \$475,000.
- \* The average annual cash flow (EBITDA) was \$135,000 which included a reasonable owner's salary.
- \* The average purchase price was \$775,000 with about 10% of that being paid over a ten-year period for purposes of a non-competition agreement.
- \* The average real estate value was \$450,000 or 60% of total purchase price.

So what does all of this mean? Well, if you are an owner of a smaller volume firm with revenues of around \$450,000 - \$500,000 and located in a smaller

community (under 10,000 population), then your business should have a realistic value of around \$750,000 - \$800,000 in today's market. Of course, every business is unique and these sale facts should only be used as a general guide.



**Richard S. Lee is the President of Lee & Associates**, a firm that represents funeral home owners in the sale and transfer of their funeral businesses. Since 1987, they have been involved in over 170 transactions all over the United States. The scope of their work also includes business valuations, accounting solutions and general consulting services. **Richard is always available for questions and may be reached at 407-257-5024 or email him at [Leebros@aol.com](mailto:Leebros@aol.com)**

## Sarcastic Remarks For Work

- \* And your crybaby whiny opinion would be.....?
- \* I started out with nothing and still have most of it left.
- \* I pretend to work. They pretend to pay me.
- \* Sarcasm is just one more service we offer.
- \* If I throw a stick, will you leave?
- \* If I want to hear the pitter patter of little feet, I'll put shoes on my cats.
- \* Does your train of thought have a caboose?
- \* Errors have been made. Others will be blamed.
- \* A PBS mind in an MTV world.
- \* Whatever kind of look you were going for, you missed.
- \* Suburbia: Where they tear out the trees & then name streets after them.
- \* Not all men are annoying. Some are dead.
- \* I'm trying to imagine you with a personality.
- \* A cubicle is just a padded cell without a door.
- \* Stress is when you wake up screaming and you realize you haven't fallen asleep yet.

## “Dear Counselor....”

By Bill Stalter

### Dear Counselor

**A local cemetery sells grave markers and monuments on a preneed basis. The cemetery will only guarantee the purchase price for 5 years, and thereafter, the price will be determined when delivery is requested. Is that permissible?**

In most Midwest states, it probably is. Cemeteries adopt this type of policy because consumers often seek to delay placement of a marker or monument even when it is paid in full. A grave marker serves as a reminder of mortality that most of us want to avoid. But, the consumer’s decision to delay delivery of a marker has an economic impact on the cemetery. The costs of granite and bronze are climbing much faster than the investment return on the cemetery’s merchandise trust. State law will require a percentage of the marker’s purchase price to be deposited to trust. The investment return on trusts are not keeping pace with marker costs, and so the cemetery will pass on monument costs when the consumer is refusing to accept delivery of the marker. Some cemeteries are including provisions in their contracts to require delivery, but other cemeteries would rather give the consumer the right to defer delivery so long as they also assume the additional costs.



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](http://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 4\*\*  
By Lowell Pugh**

PANIC!! No urinal or bed pan in the ambulance (probably my fault). A quick consultation through the glass partition behind the ambulance driver, my father. And then the crisis was averted. My father spotted a #3 tomato can lying along the highway in the right-of-way that had not been smashed and enough water in ditch to wash it out. Though thoroughly mortified, I resumed my role as attendant and tried to converse randomly with Mr. Wilfly, the patient.

After arriving at the Wilfly farmstead and getting Mr. Wilfly to bed, I was astonished when Mr. Wilfly started telling his wife Gertrude and her sisters Margaret and Myrtle what good care I had given him as the ambulance attendant. It was for me and later my wife Betty the start of a heart-warming relationship with this family.

Dad had grown up with the families, but aside from vaguely knowing who they were I was not in their world until that day in the ambulance. They

often remember our birthdays with a card and perhaps a small handkerchief with delicate handiwork trim.

The three sisters also cared for one of their aunts. Over the course of about twenty years we ultimately buried all seven of them and made a total of 26 ambulance calls. On the last call Margaret died in my arms when I lifted her from the couch.

From age 12—17 more of my summer free time was spent on the farm rather than in our store or the funeral home. At 17 though and with a driver's license more funeral home errands began happening.

One of the least desired duties was taking elderly folks to the welfare office in the county courthouse. I suspect that at least one of these couples "enjoyed" the fastest ride home they ever experienced.

A few of my cemetery equipment runs might also have been a tad careless. One which came close to disaster made me slow down a little. My helper that day was old Danny, a retired farmer who was very

calm and soft spoken. His friends often joked about the fact that Danny only curse phrases seldom used.

On this particular run to a country cemetery I was probably driving too fast for the graveled farm to market road or too preoccupied when the right angle intersection with another road came up. After sliding around the corner and getting the truck headed straight without scattering rough box and cemetery equipment along the right-of-way—I heard an audible sigh from the passenger seat as Danny said under his breath- "Son of a bastard."

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# Happiness

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Once a group of 50 people were attending a seminar. Suddenly the speaker stopped and decided to do a group activity. He started giving each attendee one balloon. Each one was asked to write his/her name on it using a marker pen. Then all the balloons were collected and put in another room.

Now these delegates were let into that room and asked to find the balloon which had their name written within 5 minutes. Everyone was frantically searching for their name, colliding with each other, pushing around others and there was utter chaos.



At the end of 5 minutes no one could find their own balloon. Now each one was asked to randomly collect a balloon and give it to the person whose name was written on it. Within minutes everyone had their own balloon.

The speaker then began, "This is happening in our lives. Everyone is frantically looking for happiness all around, not knowing where it is.

Our happiness lies in the happiness of other people. Give them their happiness; you will get your own happiness. And this is the purpose of human life...the pursuit of happiness."

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*Dylan's Directives*  
**The Funeral Family**  
*By Dylan Stopher*

So I first heard about funeral directing and embalming as a career when I was about 16 years old. I had never given it thought before, and when my mom married a funeral director, I thought she was crazy. Who would want to hear about death all the time? Why would I want to know about the sclerotic arteries of a 90+ year-old person who clearly had never eaten anything but salty food in their entire life? And what in the world does it matter to me to know that what should have been a one-point injection turned into a six-point marathon?

It was all unnecessary knowledge to me, and a little... no, a lot creepy. I mean, who talks about death so casually? It's a serious thing! We shouldn't be so nonchalant about how we discuss things of this magnitude. Should we?

After almost 20 years in the profession at this point, I'm going to tell you that I absolutely believe we should discuss them as normal and everyday topics. Would you like to know why? It's because they're unavoidable... and our families will benefit from it.

At this point, you've got to be asking if "families" refers to those we serve, because that is the primary group about whom I write. Thanks for knowing that, but no... this time I'm talking about the nuclear family to which we are each attached. Your spouse, significant other, parents, siblings, children, etc. These people are related to a death care professional. And they will have intimate insight into the goings on of the funeral home you work in. This is great for a plethora of reasons...

So let's start with the obvious one: they're the best sounding board you'll ever have! You come home from your work, and the question always comes up, "So, how was your day?" This is normal, natural, and just because our chosen profession is in death doesn't mean we should avoid the answer. Believe it or not, we actually do a lot more than just embalm and conduct final disposition. So we should talk about our day, let loose some of the stressors, gain wisdom and insight from an outside party for a vantage point we might not have considered initially. This is so important for so many reasons, because it allows us an extra pair (or more) of eyes into our career and the decisions we may make. It keeps us grounded. It keeps us focused. And it allows our family unit to remain



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connected, even though we don't spend every second of the day together.

The second big reason, and it's my favorite one to talk about, is that... wait for it... keep waiting... here it comes... this one's gonna shock you... **DEATH IS INEVITABLE!!!** It's a real, actual thing, and **NO ONE** on earth makes it out alive. Now, I do tell groups looking into pre-need options that there were two men who never had to experience death in the history of all history, Enoch and Elijah. If you really believe that you are going to be the third human being to not die, then good for you. But I have trillions of others who stand on the side of "you will actually die," and so it needs to be talked about.

As an aside to that particular point, I'll tell you that my children (14, 10, 9 respectively) don't fear a conversation about death. When my father-in-law passed away, only the oldest was aware... but it was a simple thing to explain that Grumpy was gone to Heaven. Sadness, of course, but no confusion. When my father passed away, my youngest then asked the question of where he was. When I shared that he was in Heaven with Grumpy, my young son said, "Oh, okay." Sadness, of course, but no confusion. And there was no dramatic flailing, no wailing and gnashing of teeth, no excess in the acceptance of the fact that a human being who mattered to us was now dead and gone from this world. My children understand death as a natural part of life, an inevitable end, a reality. I believe that they love a little harder because of that fact, and that they embrace fun a little more readily.

But here's the big kicker for why we should go home and talk about our day with our family, and it comes from years of waiting on thousands of families: I want my wife and kids to know what I want, who I am, and how I feel. I have sat across the table from so many people who have said that they didn't know what their loved one's wishes were for final disposition... that they wish they had said

*(Continued on page 29)*

**The Funeral Family -Dylan's Directives- (Cont.)**

*(Continued from page 28)*

something encouraging or loving just one more time... that they didn't really know how their loved one felt about multiple things, including the people now seated at the table... and I refuse to allow that to happen in my own home.

My family knows how I feel about them, and I will never stop telling them. They know my wishes when I pass away. They know how I feel about the standard songs we all play in funeral services (come on, even now you're humming Chris Tomlin's "Amazing Grace," or "Old Rugged Cross," or "I Can Only Imagine," or "How Great Thou Art" and you're giggling, because one or more of those will probably be played the same day you read this article). They know what kind of service I want to have. And would you like to know why they know all of that? Because I'm fully aware that death comes for us all, and I am no exception. So I take every available opportunity to share with my wife and children how much they mean to me.

It should go without saying, of course, that this isn't li-

cense to be callous and speak openly and loudly about the intimate details of an arrangement conference or an embalming procedure in public. However, even when we're guarded about details and specifics, we should still share with our family what's going on in our work lives. It matters to them, believe it or not, and I promise you... you'll feel better for sharing.

So please take this as an encouragement to go home tonight, sit down, and share with your family what you did today. Let them in, let them listen, let them be a part of your chosen profession. After all, if there's one family that demands your very best in your entire life... it's the one you share a home with.

**About the author:** - Dylan Stopher is a licensed funeral director and embalmer in the states of Texas and Louisiana, and currently serves with Wilbert Vaults of Houston, LLC. He is an active member of the SETFDA and the TFDA, and a regular contributor to both the Texas Director Magazine and the Millennial Director blog.



**International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association Elects Hentges as President**



**STERLING, VA (May 4, 2018)** – Christine Toson Hentges, CCE was elected President during the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA) 2018 Annual Convention & Exposition, April 18–21, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Hentges is president and CEO of The Tribute Companies Inc. in Hartland, Wisconsin. Hentges is a fourth-generation cemetery and is active in the ICCFA leadership. She previously served as co-chair of the ICCFA Women's Forum, was co-chair of ICCFA's Fall Management Conference in 2005, is a former board member and has held several Executive Committee positions.

She has been involved in many educational programs run by the ICCFA as well as the Wisconsin Cemetery and Cremation Association, Central States Cemetery Association and has written articles for various trade publications. She is a frequent speaker at seminars and workshops across the country and teaches at the ICCFA University.

**Dodds Elected President-Elect of International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association**



**STERLING, VA (May 7, 2018)** – Jay D. Dodds, CFSP, Chief Operating Officer of Park Lawn in Houston, Texas, was elected president-elect of the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA) during its 2018 Annual Convention & Exposition, April 18-21, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Dodds has more than 30 years of experience in the industry, working and managing in all levels of the funeral, cemetery and cremation business. He has managed over 179 properties, 2,000 employees in 25 states. He is a licensed funeral director, Insurance Agent and is a certified crematory operator.

Dodds served on the ICCFA Sales & Marketing Committee, as vice president, and has attended the ICCFA University. He currently serves as a trustee for both the ICCFA Educational Foundation and the Funeral Service Foundation, and a board member of the Pierce Mortuary Schools. He has been a speaker for continuing education programs on the subjects of grief and the funeral profession, acquisitions and succession planning and has facilitated a series of programs to help medical professionals understand grief in stillborn death situations.

Dodds also served on a number of community boards and committees, including the Masonic Lodge, Scottish Rite and Shrine, Rotary International and the United Methodist Church.



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