

# The Dead Beat



## The Caregiver's Soapbox

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



Volume 15

[www.thedead-beat.com](http://www.thedead-beat.com)

Issue 1

### The Arkansas Funeral Directors Association Convention



Newly installed officers of the Arkansas Funeral Directors Association for 2016-2017 pose with NFDA Policy Board Representative Randy Anderson. Pictured left to right, Brad Hayes (President Elect), Jason Ryan Engler (Vice President), Sarah Wilkerson-Casteel (Past President), Randy Anderson (NFDA), and Don Martin (President). Not pictured are Bobby Burns (Treasurer), Kenny Culpepper (Secretary), and Renata Jenkins-Byler (Policy Board Representative).

The Arkansas Funeral Directors Association held their annual convention February 26-27 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

During this year's convention, the AFDA enjoyed record-breaking attendance from member funeral homes. The convention kicked off with a cocktail reception hosted by Selected Funeral and Life Insurance Company at its historic headquarters in downtown Hot Springs. The building is an architectural wonder and a true community landmark. The entire second floor of the

building bustled with attendees while a string quartet serenaded with classic tunes. The reception was followed by an elegant awards banquet held at The Regency in downtown Hot Springs.

President Sarah Wilkerson Casteel, of Wilkerson Funeral Homes in De Queen and Dierks, led the banquet and provided a review of the organization's activities in the previous year. In addition to passing the gavel to incoming president Don Martin of Backstrom-Pyeatte Funeral Home in Siloam Springs, Mrs. Casteel also presented awards and honors to those with distinguished service in the industry.

The association also made new inductions into the Arkansas Funeral Directors Hall of Fame, including Courtney C. Crouch, Jr. of Selected Funeral and Life Insurance Company of Hot Springs, presented by Sumner Brashears; Billy Holifield of Cobb Funeral Home in Blytheville, presented by Bill Booker; and the late D.R. "Bobby" Powell of Powell Funeral Home in Bald Knob, presented by Jason Engler. In addition, it recognized the Ralph Robinson family, a 5th generation funeral home in Jefferson County as the Arkansas Funeral Home family of the year, presented by Ron LeVigne. This year's award for Funeral Director of the Year

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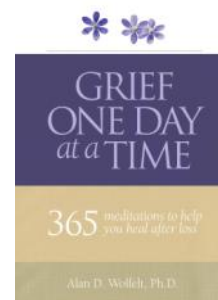
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## Amy Howard Art Gallery



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 Jack in Us

A man named Jack was walking along a steep cliff one day when he accidentally got too close to the edge and fell.

On the way down he grabbed a branch, which temporarily stopped his fall. He looked down and to his horror saw that the canyon fell straight down for more than a thousand feet. He couldn't hang onto the branch forever, and there was no way for him to climb up the steep wall of the cliff. So Jack began yelling for help, hoping that someone passing by would hear him and lower a rope or something.

"HELP! HELP! Is anyone up there?" "HELP!" He yelled for a long time, but no one heard him. He was about to give up when he heard a voice. "Jack, Jack, can you hear me?" "Yes, yes! I can hear you. I'm down here!"

"I can see you, Jack. Are you all right?" "Yes, but who are you, and where are you?"



"I am the Lord, Jack. I'm everywhere." "The Lord, You mean God?" "That's me" "God please help me! I promise if, you'll get me down from here, I'll stop sinning. I'll be a really good person. I'll serve You for the rest of my life."

"Easy on the promises, Jack. Let's get you off from there; then we can talk." "Now, here's what I want you to do. Listen carefully." "I'll do anything, Lord. Just tell me what to do."

"Okay. Let go of the branch," "What?" "I said, let go of the branch. Just trust Me. Let go"

There was a long silence. Finally Jack yelled, "HELP! HELP! IS ANYONE ELSE UP THERE!"

Have you ever felt like Jack? We say that we want to know the will of God, but when we find out what it is, we can't handle it. Sounds too scary, too difficult. We decide to look elsewhere. When He says, "Let go of the things that stand between You and Me, and trust Me with your life, it sounds pretty scary. But when we let go, we find freedom and safety in His hands.



## Mortuary Muse By Lowell

You never forget how to ride a bicycle—right? Well, does that mean you could never forget how to embalm a body? Maybe not, but I'll bet your proficiency can sure decline. More cremation and less embalming could easily cause a problem at some firms.

My own experiences lead me to that conclusion. Our firm which still exists—was always small, usually in the twenty to thirty case range. By the time I got my license and returned from the Army, I took over all of the embalming from my father (though if I turned around he was looking over my shoulder). It was about five years before he consented to the purchase of a Porti-boy injection machine. Dad and his uncle E. A. Phillips had always used a combination of gravity flow and a hand-operated air pump.

All autopsies were done in metropolitan areas and there were fewer injury deaths and no medical experimentation. Mostly normal cases except for an occasional decomposition problem.

Because our family had always operated some other businesses and we had limited employee help, I arbitrarily decided to turn full body embalming to neighboring colleagues when I reached age 55. In 1987 about a week before my birthday I was embalming my second client when we got a third call. I told my wife Betty to take the third body to our friend Norman Thompson over at the county seat as I just turned 55 a week early.

I had been officially embalming about 35 years. I continued to do cosmetics, dressing and casketing for another 20 years until my macular degeneration and weakening back curtailed this activity. Colleague Jo Jurgens, owner/operator of Daniel Funeral Home, Lamar, Missouri and Brian Simmons and crew at Springfield Mortuary Service, Springfield, Missouri have become our extended staff.

I have digressed somewhat from my original assertion that increasing cremation rates are going to affect some embalmer's proficiency. In my early years while our volume was still consistent, there were more "normal" cases. Problem conditions of trauma and more complicated body issues increased as our volume declined partly due to the emptying countryside. I found myself going back to the already outdated school books or consulting with Brian Simmons. The once frequent fluid salesmen with possible answers had disappeared.

Solutions to keeping current with embalming techniques may be attending a convention or association seminar but time, distance and scheduling are often problems for staff to be able to attend. So, your favorite trade embalming service could be a convenient way for embalmers to keep up-to-date on the latest problems and procedures. Mortuary service trade firms could invite embalmers to observe, or if permitted by regulation, even assist in a variety of procedures. It seems to me like a winning situation for both embalmers and mortuary services. Comments?

About the Author: Lowell Pugh has had funeral director and embalmer licenses in Missouri and Texas and continues the operation of the family funeral home which started in 1904. He is publisher of **The Dead Beat** which began in 1999. He can be contacted at **The Dead Beat** address.

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## Bob Harrell—Higginbotham Funeral Home, Cross Plains, TX Retired

After 34 years of dedicated service to the Cross Plains Community, Robert (Bob) Harrell, Funeral Director/Manager of Higginbotham Funeral Home, is setting his sights on a well-deserved retirement and spending more time with his recently retired wife, Dee Harrell, two children, 6 grandchildren and doing what he loves gardening, hunting, tinkering on his farm equipment, tending to his livestock out at the homestead (Undertaker's Acres).

Bob was born in Big Spring, but grew up in San Saba County. His parents were farmers and lived near Richland Springs where Bob graduated high school in 1962. Following high school, he worked for funeral homes in San Saba and Brady, for oil refinery in Odessa and then enrolled in Dallas Institute of Mortuary Science in 1972.

After Bob finished mortuary school, he worked for Wright-Morelock Funeral home in Brownwood and then he moved to Mineral Wells. The next seven years he worked for Baum Funeral Home and 8 months for Baum-Carlock-Bumgardner Funeral Home also in Mineral Wells. In February of 1982 Bob and his wife, Dee and their two children Scarlett age 12 and Joshua age 6 moved to Cross Plains where Bob was employed by Higginbotham



Bob with his diploma from mortuary school

Funeral Home as Funeral Director/Manager. Bob became an integral part of the community serving those during their time of grief. He was very dedicated to his position and took pride in every aspect of funeral service, and was very willing to share his knowledge and experience with young people who chose this work. Bob never looked at his career as just a job he looked at as his calling and he had a servants heart and he felt that this is where God wanted him.



Bob and Dee Harrell

Even though Bob was not born here or grew up in Cross Plains he called this wonderful caring community his home. Bob immersed his self into the community not only in his job but he also served as Fire Chief for 15 years for the Cross Plains Volunteer Fire Department. After the Wild fire that stuck the community in 2005 he had to step down due to smoke insulation. He is now looking forward to being able to have the free time to be more involved with his family and to enjoy working on his farm.

His retirement celebration was Saturday, March 5 at the First Baptist Church Family Life Center.

### James Darby To Receive Lasting Impact Award From ICCFA Educational Foundation

**STERLING, VA (February 4, 2016)**—The Board of Trustees of the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association's Educational Foundation has selected James Darby as the recipient of the 2016 Lasting Impact Award. The award will be presented during a reception on April 14 from 6 to 7 p.m. during the ICCFA 2016 Convention & Exposition in New Orleans, Louisiana.

All proceeds from the event will benefit the Education

Foundation scholarship fund, used to offer funeral professionals financial assistance to attend ICCFA education events, such as ICCFA University and other programs.

The Lasting Impact Awards were created to recognize those individuals who have made significant contributions to furthering professional development and life-long learning in the funeral, cemetery and cremation profession.

As James "Big Jim" Darby says in his book, "no one looks up to a grave digger." But digging graves is how he started his



(Continued on page 25)

**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@thedeat-beat.com](mailto:editor@thedeat-beat.com).**



## Behind the Back Fence

By Lowell

There are research specialists that make a living by finding out things like what kind of logo or icon would best represent what you do or what you want potential clients to think you do. Looking over funeral service ads, brochures, letterhead, etc., you see a variety of logos and icons and wonder if the possible client thinks of the same things the funeral director thinks and how does it really reflect what we do?

You see birds, doves, swans and seagulls turning to go back home. You see trees, single trees, and whole forests of trees or leaves falling, autumn leaves and wind blown leaves. Flowers are always big, especially roses, carnations and lilies. And what about hearts? Broken hearts, bleeding hearts and loving hearts are as common as hands. Hands that reach out, clasp or touch and all of these icons may be imbedded in or surround a wreath. The wreaths might look like an old fashioned door badge with a flowing black ribbon or perhaps a laurel wreath (did someone bury Caesar?). Eternal flames have appeared at times. Perhaps one of the most consistently used icons is the stately horse drawn hearse. I used to like that one too since we had one before my time. Quite a number of colleagues have beautifully restored hearses on their properties.

But how does a millennial view a horse

drawn hearse? What does an antique hearse signify to them? Lately when I think of a horse drawn hearse I have this picture in my mind.

I see a 3/4 rearview of a hearse racing down a country lane in a cloud of dust. It is slightly airborne on the rough trail, the wheels show a little wobble and one of the doors is swinging open. The undertaker's tall black hat has blown off and the drivers black snake whip is curled over the roof during his backstroke. As he lays on the whip trying to get a little more speed out of the team. They are racing for their lives for in the far right background of the scene we see the firestorm of the Prairie fire of cremation about to devour all in its path. I suspect the editor thinks I have too much time on my hands. (Editor- "Yes")

\*\*\*\*\*

Most funeral service colleagues like to hear what others are doing, so please share your story with our readers including your hobbies or other interests. We also want to hear about your industry and professional concerns. Comments need to be signed but we will withhold your identity if you wish.

\*\*\*\*\*

We would also like to hear about any green burials you have been in-

volved in. In the past we have had some immediate burials that except for the casket would have been totally green. One without a shroud, but he did have a necktie and cowboy boots.

These burials were usually chosen due to lack of funds not because of green awareness.

We are well positioned for green burials. A very old cemetery with plenty of space and minimum grounds keeping is available. The cemetery is in the country and is frequently visited by wildlife including birds, deer, foxes, bobcat and turkey.

Grave markers are optional since GPS location can be used. If there are no green burials in you area we can arrange for a green burial at this location. If you are a long distance away you should arrange for refrigeration storage and delivery to the cemetery on the day of interment with the Springfield Mortuary Service. You may contact Pugh Funeral Home in Golden City, Missouri to make arrangements for the plot purchase and burial.

\*\*\*\*\*

Last week I heard of a new economic study which determined that 59% of the U.S. population would have great difficulty raising \$1,000 in case of a family emergency. I suspect that the percentage would be even higher in our demographic. (And we wonder why the cost of funerals is so overwhelming to many of our families....)

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#### About the Author:

**Lowell Pugh** has had funeral director and embalmer licenses in Missouri and Texas and continues the operation of the family funeral home which started in 1904. 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)

## After-Thoughts *By Joanne Howard*

First, in case you were wondering I left the last word off of my last column. The sentences should read, "Life goes on with new loved ones, even canine ones. No replacements, but additions to your life."

\*\*\*\*\*

Now I've been dealing with numerous health issues lately that have really blocked my thoughts for writing this column. Between dealing with a cold and other health issues of mine and my husband's, motivation and inspiration have not been in abundance. As people have said, "getting old is not for sissies," I am totally relating.

But then age and illness make you wonder about your mortality. Working in the funeral profession highlights it when you assist in burying those close to your age. Also it's not easy when you bury good friends even if they had a good full life.

So as I recover and feel more like myself I started contemplating what I would like to share with you.

What do you do when you know your life and the quality of it is less than you desire? Several times over the last few months the thought has crossed my mind, what should I be doing if I don't have much time left?

Not that I have been given such a dire prognosis, but as you age you know it's getting closer to the end.

My problem is that I don't seem to have many reasons to look forward to the future with my small group of remaining family and friends. I don't have a very large bucket list. I really need to come up with more goals to accomplish before I get called home, especially since my girls didn't have many chances.

What do I still need to complete in my life to leave it a better place? There's a song I listen to "I Was Here" by Hillary Dawn Scott, Gary Scott Burr, and Victoria Lynn Shaw. The chorus gives the essence of what I am talking about.

"I wanna do something that matters,  
Say something different,  
Something that sets the whole world on its ear,  
I wanna do something better,  
With the time I've been given,  
I wanna try  
To touch a few hearts in this life,  
And leave nothing less  
Than something that says,  
I was here."

Some people would think they left their children to continue to do good

things, but what if you don't have any or they've all gone before you. Others may think leaving works of art or writing are important to leave their mark. But I think that the most impressive thing you can leave is the love you have given others. Love that lasts in their hearts, long after you've gone.

Love that showed you cared. Love will be remembered much more than things. Love was you showing God to others.

I hope when I die that whatever is done for my last celebration of life remembers that I loved them and I hopefully made a positive mark on them. My love will show "I was here."



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: [jfhoward53@yahoo.com](mailto:jfhoward53@yahoo.com)

### Is Your Hut Burning?

Is your hut burning? The only survivor of a shipwreck was washed up on a small, uninhabited island. He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him, and every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed forthcoming. Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect him from the elements, and to store his few possessions. But then one day after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, the smoke rolling up to the sky. The worst had happened;

everything was lost. He was stunned with grief and anger. "God, how could you do this to me!" he cried.

Early the next day, however, he was awakened by the sound of a ship that was approaching the island. It had come to rescue him. "How did you know I was here?" asked the weary man of his rescuers. "We saw your smoke signal," they replied.

It is easy to get discouraged when things are going bad. But we shouldn't lose heart because God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of pain and suffering. Remember, next time your little hut is burn-

ing to the ground, it just may be a smoke signal that summons the grace of God.

For all the negative things we have to say to ourselves. God has a positive answer for it.

You say: "It's impossible!"

God says: *All things are possible (Luke 18:27)*

You say: "I'm too tired."

God says: *I will give you rest (Matt 11: 28-30)*

You say: "Nobody really loves me."

God says: *I love you. (John 3:16 & John 13: 34)*

You say: "I can't go on!"

God says: *My grace is sufficient (II Cor. 12: 9)*

(Continued on page 27)

For BOSS

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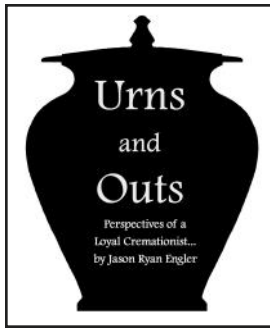
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I am a fan of opera music. Some people have difficulty listening to the intense vocal expressions offered by the world's great classical writers, but for me, listening to fine classical music often helps me relax or it invigorates. One of my favorite operas that has both effects on me is *The Magic Flute*, an interesting piece by the phenomenal Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

I recently came into possession of a unique book by Max Heindel entitled *Mysteries of the Great Operas* - harkening

back to famous works by Richard Wagner. In such operas as *The Ring of the Niebelung*, *Tannhauser*, and *Lohengrin*, Wagner tells the tales of German and Norse history and legend, and along the way gives some of the most beautiful and memorable music ever heard. The Bridal March is from *Lohengrin*, *Ride of the Valkyries* is from *The Ring Saga*, and *Pilgrim's Chorus*, notably performed in cartoons, is given to us in *Tannhauser*.

In Heindel's book, he correlates the mysteries of life with the symbolism in these great works of musical genius. One of my favorite passages in the book tells of the struggle of life. He writes:

"According to the teaching of the Norsemen, those only who died in Battle were entitled to be taken to Valhalla. [Odin] desires none but the strong and the mighty warriors... In this there is a great lesson, for none but the noble and the fearless who spend their days fighting the battle of life to the very last breath are worthy of advancement... It does not matter where we work or what the line of our experience may be, so long as we faithfully battle with the problems of life as they appear before us... we must keep on working and striving until the day of life is done."

That's quite a lesson to be learned.

When I die, I will go to Valhalla. I don't mean that I'm such a hard worker that I deserve the nobility of Odin's Valhalla when I die. I mean I'll literally go to Valhalla: the Valhalla Chapel of Memories in St. Louis. It is an historic crematory and columbarium and its founders were heavily involved with the Cremation Association of North America. That's where my niche is and my urn awaits, and I'll be in good company of the early cremation memorialists.

The major decisions in my life are driven by meaning. When I purchased the niche at Valhalla in St. Louis years ago, I thought of the honor it must have been for those who died in battle to be chosen for rest with Odin in Valhalla. Then I thought of the *Walküres*, those angels of war that carried the fallen ones to their rest in those magnificent halls, and I realized how similar that act is to those of us who care for the dead. It was only when I read the wisdom of Max Heindel that I realized that we are all worthy of that noble rest.

del that I realized that we are all worthy of that noble rest.

I often come into contact with funeral professionals who are facing burn out. We all know that this profession can easily weigh on our minds and bodies so that it makes it difficult to offer empathy and sympathy. I confess that I have felt some tinges of burn out at times as well. I am, however, very encouraged by the words of Max Heindel, and his admonition to carry on the work that we are called to do. I hope you'll find encouragement in these words as I have. There is too much to gain to give up on the care we give those in most need of our support.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge on these pages a recent experience I faced in my own life - the passing of one of my most favorite people in the universe, my dear sweet Granny. She played such an instrumental part in my upbringing and her death has truly changed my life. At age 85, in seemingly good health, she passed away unexpectedly after suffering a stroke and from injuries sustained from the subsequent fall. The professionals at Schertz Funeral Home in Schertz, Texas, including long-time friends Tess, Kim, Leonard, and new friends Tudy, Julia, Isaac, and the entire staff, all made her passing more bearable - for my family, and for me personally and professionally.

After a beautiful service of remembrance, Granny was cremated, her spirit set free, and her purified remains placed lovingly in a MacKenzie urn, appropriately personalized, and interred by the hands of her loved ones in our family plot. I have such a peaceful remembrance of the entire experience, even though it has been a tumultuous experience going through the grief process. I've lost love, I've lost loved ones, but I couldn't have prepared myself for this loss no matter how hard I could have tried. My Granny spent her life working for the good of others. Her light shines brightly in me, and in all those lives and hearts she touched.

That brings me back to my story. I know that it can be difficult and trying to face the battle of life. However, encouragement is given by the example of loved ones, fellow professionals, friends; knowing that our future reward is worth the hard work, and especially here and now our hard work makes a difference. I've seen it and felt it, so I know this to be true.

Benn Pitman was a 19th century stenographer and phonographer and was the husband of Jane Pitman, who was the second person cremated in the LeMoyne Crematory in Washington, Pennsylvania. Following Mrs. Pitman's cremation, Mr. Pitman wrote Dr. LeMoyne a letter thanking him for his kindness. Encouraging Dr. LeMoyne, who was in ill health at the time, he wrote "Bear the burden of life, if burden it proves at times - for the sake of others and the helpful example it is to us who have some years of work yet to do."

Let us all "keep on working and striving until the day of life is done." It is worth the effort and worth the example!

That's my perspective...

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Jason Ryan Engler is a funeral director and "The Cremation Historian" who serves as the official historian for the Cremation Association of North America. He is Secretary/Treasurer of the Northwest Arkansas Funeral Directors Association and serves as an officer on the board of the Arkansas Funeral Directors Association. He is a frequent contributor to deathcare publications and often speaks about cremation and its history to funeral, cemetery and cremation trade associations. He resides in Northwest Arkansas with his miniature dachshund, Otto.

Check his blog at <http://urnsandouts.blogspot.com>

He can be reached at [cremationhistorian@hotmail.com](mailto:cremationhistorian@hotmail.com)



# I Wasn't There

By Ken Doka

Maylene was deeply upset when her husband died. He was at home in hospice care. Though semi-comatose, he seemed to be stable. Yet, when she woke one morning, she found him dead. She had so wanted to be there—to share those last moments, to hold his hand, as he passed. She felt not only bad that he had died alone, but also that she had been cheated.

I could understand her pain. MY dad died in a similar way. When he woke one morning, he had felt different. Ill for a few months and now in hospice care, he asked if he were dying. The question was not, do I have a terminal illness?" He knew he did. Rather it had an immediacy— what Callanan and Kelley, authors of *Final Gifts*, termed "nearing death awareness" He seemed to be asking, "Am I dying now?" I asked what prompted the question. He said he felt different—not in pain, just different. His wife and children gathered and stayed by his side. As night approached, he stated that he felt better and that we should go to our own rooms and get some sleep.

He died that night.

My sister felt very much like Maylene—guilty that she had not been there, sharing those final moments. I thought about that as well but took comfort from a sense that maybe he realized he could not die with us there—he needed to be alone.

The timing of death can sometimes be very mysterious. Years ago, research Phillip Pine found that social factors seemed to play some role in how individuals die. His research supported those old family stories of people holding on to reach a milestone birthday or waiting until a traveling relative finally made it home. It reminds us that the timing of someone dying is more than simply a physical event. There are spiritual, psychological, and social facts at play. In the end, the timing of a death is as mysterious and unpredictable as a birth.

Often part of our guilt may rest on the need to finish some business—to say a last goodbye or share or ask for forgiveness. If that is an issue, we may still find ways to do that. For Maylene, it was writing a letter that she read at her husband's graveside, thanking him for the years of marriage. For others, it may involve speaking to an empty chair or simply saying a private prayer.

Perhaps the best lesson we can learn is that while we cannot control the timing of death, we do have some control of how we time our lives. We can live life with the knowledge of that mystery—making sure little business is never left unfinished. My dad's enduring legacy was a simple principle—never go to bed angry. By that he meant share feelings and for-

giveness daily. It was his lesson that comforted my sister. She had left little unfinished business. The time of his death did not change that.

\*\*\*\*\*

This article was originally printed in *Journeys: A Newsletter to Help in Bereavement*, published by Hospice Foundation of America. More information about *Journeys* can be found at [www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org) or by calling 800-854-3402 and is published monthly by the Hospice Foundation of America, 1621 Connecticut Ave., NW, #300, Washington, DC 20009. Annual subscription-\$12.00.



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)



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## Chuckles

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

"I just received this funny little story and I thought it would be worth printing," said Karen Williamson.

"The graveside service just barely finished, when there was a massive clap of thunder, followed by a tremendous bolt of lightning, accompanied by even more thunder rumbling in the distance. The little old man looked at the preacher and calmly said, "Well...she's there."



\*\*\*\*\*

A blonde called her boyfriend and said, "Please come over here and help me. I have a killer jigsaw puzzle, and I can't figure it out or how to get it started." Her boyfriend asked, "What is it supposed to be when it's finished?" The blonde said, "According to the picture on the box, it's a tiger." Her boyfriend decided to go over and help with the puzzle. She let him in and showed him where she had the puzzle spread all over the table. He studied the pieces for a moment, looked at the box, then turned to her and said, "First of all, no matter what we do, we're not going to be able to assemble these pieces into anything resembling a tiger." He took her hand and said, "Second, I want you to relax. Let's have a nice cup of hot chocolate and then..." he sighed, ..... "Let's put all of these frosted flakes back into the box."

\*\*\*\*\*

An 80-year-old couple is having problems remembering things, so they decide to go to the doctor to get checked out. When they arrive at the doctor's, they explain to the doctor about the problems they are each having with their memory. After checking the couple out, the doctor tells them that they are physically okay, but that they might want to start writing things down to help them remember. The couple thanks the doctor and leaves. Later that night while watching TV, the old man gets up from his chair. His wife asks, "Where are you going?" He replies, "To the kitchen." She asks him for a bowl of ice cream to which he replies, "Sure." She then asks him, "Don't you think you should write it down so you can remember it." He says, "No, I can remember that." She then says, "Well, I also would like some strawberries on top. You had better write that down 'cause I know you'll forget." He says, "I can remember that, you want a bowl of ice cream with strawberries." She replies, "Well, I also would like whipped cream on top. I know you will forget that so you better write it down." With irritation in his voice, he says, "I don't need to write that down, I can remember that." He fumes off into the kitchen and when he returns 20 minutes later he hands her a plate of bacon and eggs. She stares at the plate for a moment and says, "You forgot the toast."



\*\*\*\*\*

## Comments

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

Two confirmed bachelors were sitting and talking. Their conversation drifted from politics to cooking. "I got a cookbook once," said the first, "but I could never do anything with it." "Too much fancy cooking in it, eh?" asked the second. "You said it. Everyone of the recipes began the same way—'Take a clean dish and ....."

\*\*\*\*\*

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson went on a camping trip. As they lay down for the night, Holmes said: "Watson, look up into the sky and tell me what you see. Watson said, "I see millions and millions of stars." Holmes asked him, "And what does that tell you?" Watson answered, "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Theologically, it tells me that God is great and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, it tells me that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you? Holmes answered, "Somebody stole our tent."

\*\*\*\*\*

Two friend played golf together frequently and one was much better than the other. In spite of this, the lesser player was a good sport about it and never took strokes to even up the game; however, he always secretly vowed to find a way to get even. One Saturday morning he showed up with a large gorilla at the first tee. He said to his friend, "I've been trying to beat you for a long time and almost gave up. That is, until I heard about this golfing gorilla. I'm sure you won't mind if he plays for me today. In fact, if you're game, I'd like to try to get back all the money I've lost to you this year. I figure that comes to about a thousand bucks. What do you say?" the other guy laughed and said, "Let me get this straight. You want me to golf against a gorilla for a thousand dollars? Fine. After all, how good could a gorilla be at golf?" The first hole was a slightly curved par-5 of 450 yards. The guy hit a beautiful tee shot 275 yards down the middle, leaving himself a 6-iron to the green. The gorilla took a few powerful practice swings and then laced the ball 450 yards with just enough hook to place it right at the pin, stopping it about four inches away from the hole. The guy turns to his friend and says, "That's incredible! I never would've believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes. Well, that settles it. I have no interest in being totally humili-



*(Continued on page 11)*

## Chuckles (Cont.)

ated by a gorilla. You send this freakin' gorilla back to where he came from, and I'll meet you at the clubhouse for a drink and to write you a check." After having a few drinks and handing over the check the guy asks, "By the way, how's the gorilla's putting?" Same as his driving." "That good, huh?" the guy says. "No, I mean he hits putts the same—four hundred and fifty yards at a time"

\*\*\*\*\*

Two fellows were discussing a co-worker's interest in the new employee. "Don't know why he's so interested," said one. "There's nothing upstairs. She's nothing but an air-head." The other replied, "I don't think that's the floor he's getting off on."

\*\*\*\*\*

### Thoughts to Ponder:

- ♦ Do not walk behind me, for I may not lead. Do not walk ahead of me, for I may not follow. Do not walk beside me, either; just leave me the h### alone.
- ♦ The journey of a thousand miles begins with a broken fan belt and a leaky tire.
- ♦ It's always darkest before dawn. So if you're going to steal your neighbor's newspaper, that's the time to do it.
- ♦ Don't be irreplaceable, if you can't be replaced, you can't be promoted.
- ♦ No one is listening until you make a mistake.
- ♦ Always remember you're unique, just like everyone else.
- ♦ Never test the depth of the water with both feet.
- ♦ It may be that your sole purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others.
- ♦ It is far more impressive when others discover your good qualities without your help.
- ♦ If you think nobody cares if you're alive, try missing a couple of car payments.
- ♦ Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way why you criticize them, you're a mile away and you have their shoes.



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- ♦ If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.
- ♦ Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish, and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.
- ♦ If you lend someone \$20, and never see that person again, it was probably worth it.
- ♦ Don't squat with your spurs on.
- ♦ If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything.
- ♦ Some days you are the bug, somedays you are the windshield.
- ♦ Good judgment comes from bad experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment.
- ♦ The quickest way to double your money is to fold it in half and put it back in your pocket.
- ♦ Timing has an awful lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance.
- ♦ A closed mouth gathers no feet.
- ♦ Duct tape is like the force; it has a light side and dark side and it holds the universe together.
- ♦ There are two theories to arguing with women. Neither one works.
- ♦ Generally speaking, you aren't learning much when your mouth is moving.
- ♦ Experience is something you don't get until just after you need it.
- ♦ Never miss a good chance to shut up.




\*\*\*\*\*

Long, long ago an old Indian chief was about to die, so he called for Geronimo and Falling Rocks, the two bravest warriors in his tribe. The chief instructed each to go out and collect buffalo skins. Whoever returned with the most skins would be the new chief.

About a month later, Geronimo came back with one hundred pelts, but Falling Rocks never returned. Even today as you drive through the West you can see signs saying: Watch Out for Falling Rocks.

-Toni Sortor




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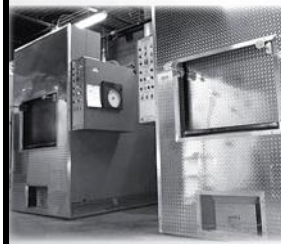
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## Death Notices of Fellow Funeral Service Colleagues



### ARIZONA



**Kennard Powell Black, Sr.**, 83, of Florence died December 13, 2015. He was grandfather of Heather Long, Arizona Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Association. He served in the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. His arrangements were under the direction of Mariposa Gardens Memorial Park and Funeral Care.



**Jack A. Keller**, 94, of Mesa died December 23, 2015. He served as president of the Arizona State Funeral Board and was instrumental in bringing the mortuary college to Mesa. He served in the U.S. Air Force between 1942 and 1954, retiring from the Air Force Reserve as a lieutenant colonel in 1965. He graduated from Eastern Michigan University in 1953. Messinger Mortuaries handled his services.



**Arturo Villescaz Sanchez**, 55, of Phoenix, died December 2, 2015. He was the husband of Martha Sanchez with Greenwood/Memory Lawn Mortuary & Cemetery, who directed his services.

### COLORADO



**Helen Mari Chalupa**, 90, of Littleton, passed away October 29, 2015. She was the mother of John Chalupa who is a General Manager with Olinger Mortuaries in Denver, Colorado for many years. John is a 1983 graduate of Dallas Institute of Funeral. Funeral services were held at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church in Ord, Nebraska. Olinger Chapel Hill Mortuary in Littleton, CO and The Ord Memorial Chapel were in charge of the arrangements.

### IOWA



**George L. Gay**, 91, of Iowa City, passed away Dec. 27, 2015. He served in U. S. Navy during World War II. He graduated from the Worsham College of Mortuary Science. He purchased the former Oathout Funeral Home in Iowa City which became the George L. Gay Funeral Home. He was a honorary member and past president of the Iowa Funeral Directors Association and National Funeral Directors Association. His services were directed by the Gay & Ciha Funeral and Cremation Service.



**Drew Jacobson**, 16, of Woodward, died Dec. 7, 2015. He was the nephew of Jay Jacobson, with Ochiltree Funeral Service and Aftercare, who handled his service.



**Jeff Kloster**, 34, of Overland Park, KS formerly of Marenco, IA, died January 13, 2016. He was the son of John Kloster of Kloster Funeral Home that directed his services.



**Thomas M. Sorden**, 66, of Brainerd, MN, formerly of Lone Tree, passed away on Dec. 25, 2015. He was a graduate of the Dallas Institute of Mortuary Science. He owned and operated Sorden Furniture and Funeral Service in Lone Tree and Riverside for many years. The Henderson-Barker Funeral Home in West Liberty were in charge of the arrangements.

### KANSAS



**Mary L. Wiseman**, 89, of Kansas City passed away Jan. 1, 2016. She was the mother of Richard Wiseman, of Porter Funeral Homes and Crematory who handled her services.

### MISSOURI



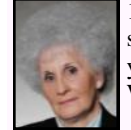
**Charles "Chuck" W. Barthel**, 87, of St. Louis, passed away Dec. 1, 2015. He served his country as a member of the U.S. Marine Corps in both World War II and Korean War. He was a funeral director from Hoffmeister Colonial and Kriehauser South Mortuaries in St. Louis, who directed his services.



**Sammy 'Lucille' Bell**, 86, of Neosho died Jan. 31, 2016. She worked at Clark Funeral Home in Neosho for many years who handled her arrangements.



**John R. Cooper**, 51, of St. Louis passed away. He was owner of McLaughlin Funeral Home for nearly 30 years, who handled his services.



**Imogene R. Junkins**, 79, of Joplin, passed away Feb. 15, 2016. She was a licensed funeral director and had served with Mason-Woodard Mortuary for the last 38 years. Her services were also handled by Mason-Woodard Mortuary.



**Thomas Weldon Keckley**, 58, of Carl Junction, passed away on March 21, 2016. He graduated from the Dallas Institute of Mortuary Science in 1981. He joined Parker Mortuary and served 33 years and was the current co-owner. Parker Mortuary, Joplin, MO handled his arrangements.



**Irma Jean Shearin**, 83, of Farmington passed away Jan. 30, 2016. She was the mother of Southeast Missouri Funeral Director and Embalmer Linda Sherin-Stout, former owner of the Shearin-Sparks Funeral Home of Bonne Terre.

### NEBRASKA



**John (Bill) Fusselman**, 88, of Syracuse passed away Jan. 19, 2016. He enlisted in U.S. Army serving as a S/Sgt. During WWII. He graduated from San Francisco College of Mortuary Science in 1949 with degree in Mortuary Science. He worked for Crosby Kunold Mortuaries in Omaha. In 1953 he owned Fusselman Funeral home in Louisville, NE. In 1964 along with his business partner Milo Perry, he purchased Sattler Funeral Home in Plattsmouth. In 1968 he purchased Tonsing Funeral Home in Syracuse and operated the Fusselman-Perry Funeral Home in Louisville, Syracuse and Plattsmouth. He was past president of NEFDA. After his retirement he remained active with the funeral homes until the time of his death, serving 60 years as a licensed funeral director. Fusselman Allen Harvey FH conducted his services.





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**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**

## NEW MEXICO



**Robert L. "Bob" Kilburn**, 91, of Deming passed away Nov. 21, 2015. He entered the United States Army Air Corps in 1942, discharged in 1945. He was a licensed funeral director at Adair Funeral Chapels in Tucson for many years and later the Baca's Funeral Chapels in Deming until his retirement. Baca's Funeral Chapels directed his services.

## OKLAHOMA



**Catherine Ann Carter**, 63, of Muskogee passed away Dec. 8, 2015. She worked alongside her husband, Mike Carter, in operating Lynch Supply and Heartland Casket Company. Her services were directed by Cornerstone Funeral Home and Crematory.

## TEXAS

**William "Mickey" Benold**, 65, of San Antonio, passed away on Feb. 15, 2016. He was a funeral director/embalmer at Mission Park Funeral Chapels South, who handled his services.



**Clarence Edwin "Ed" Bessent**, 69, of Early, passed away Feb. 15, 2016. He worked for Davis-Morris Funeral Home and was a funeral director at Heartland Funeral & Cremation Service, who directed his arrangements.

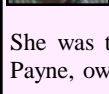


**Zonelle "Nell" Henry Fulton**, 80, of Ferris, passed away March 19, 2016. She was the mother of Charlie Fulton, a member of NTFDA and with Restland Funeral Home in Dallas. Her arrangements were handled by Moorhead-Epps Funeral Home, Gun Barrel City, TX.

**Doris Jean Fulton-Gilbert**, 56, of Dallas, passed away Feb. 20, 2016. She is the sister of Charlie Fulton, member of the NTFDA Board. Her services were directed by Moorhead-Epps Funeral Home, Gun Barrel City, TX.



**James W. King, Sr.**, 83, of Nacogdoches, passed away on March 20, 2016. He was the father of James W. King, Jr., funeral director in Houston and Nacogdoches. His funeral arrangements were under the direction of Cason Mon-Metcalf Funeral Home in Nacogdoches.



**Johnnie E. Payne**, of West, passed away on Jan. 14, 2016. She was the mother of Larry and Robby Payne and wife of late Alvin Payne, owners of Aderhold Funeral Home in West, who handled her services.



**Arthur Lee Pieper**, 92, of Inadale, passed away on Feb. 28, 2016. He was the father of Robert Pieper, funeral director for Cate-Spencer & Trent Funeral Home in Sweetwater, TX and they directed his funeral services.



**William J. "Bill" Thompson**, 90, of Lago Vista, TX passed away on Dec. 25, 2015. He was the General Manager/Owner of Grammmer-Oberle Funeral Home in Port Arthur until his retirement. He is the father of Matt Thompson, Funeral Director in Charge and Kevin Thompson, funeral director/embalmer at Doeppenschmidt Funeral Home in New Braufels. Arrangements were under the direction of Cook Walden in Austin and Grammmer-Oberle in Port Arthur.



**James "Doug" Douglas Weathersbee**, 82, of Rotan, died on Jan. 6, 2016. He served two years in the U.S. Air Force. He attended the Dallas Institute of Mortuary Science and co-owned and worked at the funeral home with his brother Mac for 40 years before retiring in 1999. Weathersbee-Ray Funeral Home handled his funeral arrangements.



**Ernest A. Welch**, 90, of Big Spring, passed away on March 10, 2016. He served in the United States Army Corps during World War II, flying B-25 Bomber planes. After service he worked at a local funeral home and pursued a career in funeral service. He graduated from Dallas Institute of Mortuary Science in 1947 and became a licensed funeral director in 1950. He worked at River Funeral Home and became a partner and it became River-Welch Funeral Home. He also worked for Mr. Coy Nalley and Mr. J.C. Pickle and upon their retirement purchased their funeral home and consolidated the firm to Nalley-Pickle & Welch. In 1981 he help establish Directors Investment Group and Funeral Directors Life Insurance Company (FDLIC). He was a former Funeral Director of the

(Continued on page 17)



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## Death Notices of Fellow Funeral Service Colleagues (Cont.)

### TEXAS (Cont.)

(Continued from page 15)

Year Award recipient. His services were directed by Nalley-Pickle & Welch funeral Home & Crematory of Big Spring.



**Walter A. Wilson**, 83, of Dallas died Jan. 13, 2016. He worked with his family at the Wilson Funeral Home in Tampa, FL. He later moved to Texas and worked at Lott's Mortuary. In 1966 he founded the Cedar Crest Funeral Home in the Oak Cliff sector of Dallas. In 1980 Cedar Crest opened its Plano location and merged with Wilson Financial Group of Houston in 1987. He was a clinical instructor of embalming at Dallas Institute of Funeral Service and a 1959 graduate of Gupton-Jones College of Mortuary Science. Wilson was a member of the Dallas Local Funeral Directors and Morticians Association, National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association and the Epsilon Nu Delta Mortuary Fraternity, Inc. His arrangements were under the direction of Paradise Funeral Home in Dallas.



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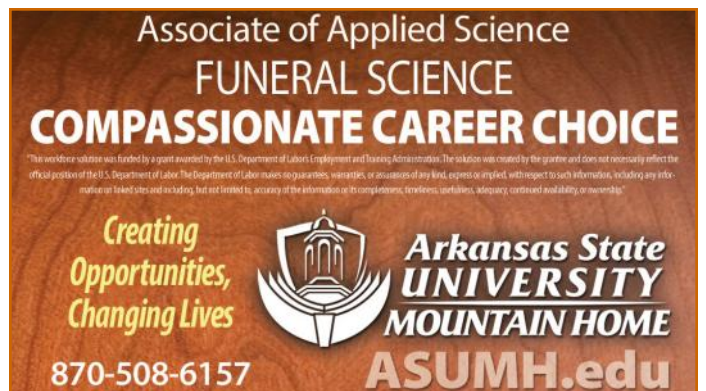
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## A Dream Interview

I dreamed I had an interview with God. "Come in," God said. "So, you would like to interview Me?"

"If you have the time," I said. God smiled and said, "My time is eternity and is enough to do everything; What questions do you have in mind to ask me?"

"What surprises you most about mankind?" I asked.

God answered, "That they get bored of being children, are in a rush to grow up, and then long to be children again. That they lose their health to make money and then lose their money to restore their health. That by thinking anxiously about the future, they forget the present, such that they live neither for the present nor the future. That they live as if they will never die, and they die as if they had never lived..."

God's hands took mine and we were silent for awhile and then I asked.... "As a parent, what are some of life's lessons you want your children to learn?"

God replied with a smile, "To learn that they cannot make anyone love them. What they can do is to let themselves be loved. To learn that what is most valuable is not what they have in their lives, but who they have in their lives. To learn that it is not good to compare themselves to others. All will be judged individually on their own merits, not as a group on a comparison basis! To learn that a rich person is not the one who has the most, but is one who needs the least. To learn that it only takes a few seconds to open profound wounds in persons we love, and that it takes years to heal. To learn to forgive by practicing forgiveness. To learn that there are persons that love them dearly, but simply do not know how to express or show their feelings. To learn that money can buy everything but happiness. To learn that two people can look at the same thing and see it totally different. To learn that a true friend is someone who knows everything about them...and likes them anyway. To learn that it is not always enough that they be forgiven by others, but that they have to forgive themselves."

I sat there for a while enjoying the moment. I thanked him for his time and for all that He has done for me and my family, and he replied, "Anytime, I'm here 24 hours a day. All you have to do is ask for me and I'll answer." People will forget what they said. People will forgive what you did, but people never forget how you made them feel.

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## The Miracle

by Michael Anderson

I found this in some old e-mails. I tried to pursue getting permission from the author since it was written in 1998, never could connect but felt it was too good to pass up. Hopefully he would have been happy to share with us.—Editor

There is a majestic quality-  
In everyone for all to see.  
Some keep it hidden, some never realize-  
The magnificence they hold in others' eyes.

Ah, yes, life itself is the gift.  
Though the memory, itself, Time doth sift.  
And some might think the reverence gone -  
As those we love one by one pass on.

But the intricacies Faith doth weave-  
In commemoration for all who grieve.  
Are the blessings given to rebirth -  
From souls no longer of this earth.

At first notice I came undone,  
My father staring at me through my son.  
But now in joy I ascertain—  
Through him, my father lives again.

I look to heavens' resounding grace—  
Renewed appreciation of life and my place.  
Knowing as each new born child opens their eyes—  
The miracle continues, no one really dies.



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## ICCFA Names 2015 “Keeping It Personal” Award Winners

**STERLING, VA (February 11, 2016)**—The International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA) has named its 2015 KIP (Keeping It Personal) Award winners, recognizing the best in personalization in the cemetery and funeral service profession.

Created by the ICCFA Personalization Committee, the KIP program honors recipients in five categories: Best Practices/Personal Touch; Most Personalized Service/Memorial; Events; Innovative Personalized Product (suppliers only); and Most Personalized Pet Service/Memorial.

This year’s contest attracted 32 entries from the United States and Canada. Communications and marketing professionals from outside the cemetery and funeral service profession performed the judging.

Information on the winners is available on the ICCFA website at [www.iccfa.com/kip](http://www.iccfa.com/kip). Applications for the 2016 KIP Awards will be available from ICCFA this spring. ICCFA congratulates the winners and all who entered the 2015 KIP Awards.

The winners are as follows:

### **MOST PERSONALIZED SERVICE OR MEMORIAL**

#### ***First Place and Grand Prize Winner***

**SCI/Striffler-Hamby at Park Hill Cemetery: Personalization for a Young Fisherman’s Visitation**  
Columbus, Georgia

### **BEST PRACTICE/PERSONAL TOUCH**

#### ***First Place***

**Rose Hill Cemetery of Hagerstown Maryland: Cremation Memorial**  
Hagerstown, Maryland

#### ***Honorable Mention***

**Cook Funeral and Cremation Services (Cook Family Services): A Holiday Remembrance**  
Grandville, Michigan

### **EVENTS**

#### ***First Place***

**Catholic Cemeteries Archdiocese of Newark: Birdhouse Event**  
Newark, New Jersey

#### ***Honorable Mention***

**Cook Funeral and Cremation Services (Cook Family Services): Widows and Widowers Picnic**  
Grandville, Michigan

### **INNOVATIVE/PERSONALIZED PRODUCT (SUPPLIERS)**

#### ***First Place***

**Cemetery360: Virtual Reality Experience**  
Sacramento, California

#### ***Honorable Mention***

**Answering Service for Directors: Web Chat Connect**  
Media, Pennsylvania

#### ***Honorable Mention***

**Frazer Consultants: Tribute e-Guest**  
Middleton, Wisconsin

#### ***Honorable Mention***

**FrontRunner Professional: Simpler Times**  
Kingston, Ontario, Canada

### **MOST PERSONALIZED PET SERVICE OR MEMORIAL**

#### ***First Place***

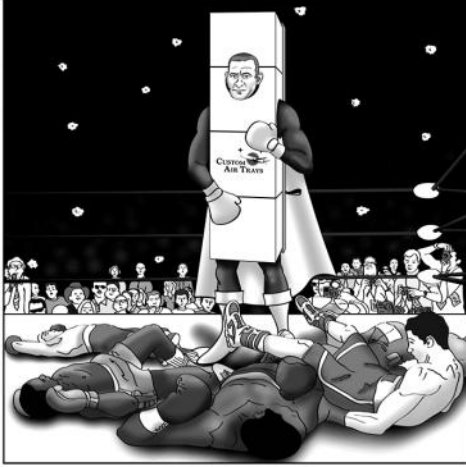
**Beyond the Rainbow Pet Hospice & Memorial Center: Honoring the Life and Service of Pepper**  
Fort Worth, Texas

Grand prize winner SCI/Striffler-Hamby at Parkhill Cemetery receives a free registration to the 2016 ICCFA Annual Convention & Exposition, April 13-16, at the Morial Convention Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. All first-place and honorable mention winners will be recognized at the convention and in *ICCFA Magazine*.

Founded in 1887, the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA) is the only international trade association representing all segments of the cemetery, cremation, funeral and memorialization industry. Its membership is composed of more than 9,100 rooftop locations and 18,000 professionals in the cemetery, funeral home and crematory industries, as well as memorial designers and related businesses worldwide. To learn more, please visit [www.iccfa.com](http://www.iccfa.com) or connect with ICCFA on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).



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## Work Smarter and Not Harder

With all of the changes and challenges in the funeral industry these days, an owner has to be open to moving out of their comfort zone and start utilizing companies that offer services that enable an owner to work smarter and not harder.

Here are a few that come to mind:

**Insurance Assignment Funding Companies** – This allows the owner to get paid quickly on a pre-need policy that becomes at-need. There are several companies that offer this service and the charge is minimal – usually 3.5% - 4% of the policy amount. Yes, you may be giving up a small percentage in order to receive your funds within a few days, but it

sure beats the alternative of having to wait for months for the insurance company to finally pay. On a \$7,000 policy, I would gladly give up \$250 so that I could get the \$6,750 paid to me immediately and not have to go through the aggravation of dealing with the insurance company.

### **At-Need Funding Companies**

- There are a handful of these companies around and it's something that is starting to become more attractive to owners to use when they have families with very limited or no funds to pay for an at-need service. With these companies, the family applies for a personal

loan to pay for the cost of services and then those funds are paid to the funeral home (and with no recourse). The downside here is that the loan approval rates are generally around 55% - 60%. But for the ones that get approved, it's great for the funeral home. The biggest question is if the family cannot get approved for a loan, what do you do - let them make payments to you and never get fully paid or tell them nicely that you cannot help them?

If you haven't looked into using these type of services I think you should. I am always available for any questions and may be reached at 407-257-5024 or you may email me at Lee-bros@aol.com.



**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 also is President of Lee Funeral Funding, a company that provides financing to families for at-need funeral costs. **Richard is always available for questions and may be reached at 407-257-5024 or email him at Lee-bros@aol.com.***



## Three Simple Writing Tips to Increase Engagement

Content marketing: the buzzwords uttered by everyone associated with marketing a funeral home or cemetery. It doesn't matter if you call it marketing communications, copywriting, blogging or just writing, content marketing is the crafting of pertinent and engaging material to connect with a firm's target audience. Regrettably, not everything that is penned is a winner. Just the opposite. Without knowing it, you may be making a few simple mistakes that are preventing you from creating an effective content marketing campaign. To improve your effectiveness as well as realize and increase your success rate, avoid these frequent mistakes:

**Producing trivial content.** When you create content with only your interests in mind, you disregard the interests of the reader and the topics that are of interest and important to them. While you may be proud of the cemetery's new backhoe or the funeral home's new hearse (and feel they are worthy of a Facebook post), most families could care less. So how do you create content that really strikes a chord with readers?

**Keeping it to yourself.** Don't merely put your content on your website and expect results. The more you repurpose your content, the more views it will get and attract the attention of a search engine. Distribute your content to appropriate outlets on social media. Post your blog to discussion groups about funeral service on LinkedIn, put the press release you sent to the local media on your website and tweet a link on Twitter when your publicity release is published.

**Focusing on quantity, not quality.** While it's crucial that you constantly create new content, quality is far more important than quantity. When you generate engaging and thought provoking content, you build trust, increase engagement and demonstrate thought leadership. In addition, Google prefers high quality content to mundane content – even boring content sprinkled with keywords.

It's no secret that the landscape for content marketing is an ever changing one. As a result, it can make achieving success a moving target. But by following the above tips – along with testing and experimentation – you'll be better off than most funeral and cemetery companies when it comes to content marketing.



*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.*

*For more information, you can visit his website at*

[weigelstrategicmarketing.webs.com](http://weigelstrategicmarketing.webs.com).

*He also can be reached at 317-608-8914 or*  
[weigelstrategicmarketing@gmail.com](mailto:weigelstrategicmarketing@gmail.com).

## What Every Pilot Should Know

1. Every takeoff is optional. Every landing is mandatory.
2. If you push the stick forward, the houses get bigger. If you pull the stick back, they get smaller. That is, unless you keep pulling the stick all the way back, they get bigger again.
3. Flying isn't dangerous. Crashing is what's dangerous.
4. It's always better to be down here wishing you were up there than up there wishing you were down here.
5. The ONLY time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire.
6. The propeller is just a big fan in front of the plane used to keep the pilot cool. When it stops, you can actually watch the pilot start sweating.
7. When in doubt, hold on to your altitude. No one has ever collided with the sky.
8. A 'good' landing is one from which you can walk away. A 'great' landing is one after which they can use the plane again.
9. Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make all of them yourself.
10. You know you've landed with the wheels up if it takes full power to taxi to the ramp.
11. The probability of survival is inversely proportional to the angle of arrival. Large angle of arrival, small probability of survival and vice versa.
12. Never let an aircraft take you somewhere your brain didn't get to five minutes earlier.
13. Stay out of clouds. The silver lining everyone keeps talking about might be another airplane going in the opposite direction. Reliable sources also report that mountains have been known to hide out in clouds.
14. Always try to keep the number of landings you make equal to the number of take offs you've made.
15. There are three simple rules for making a smooth landing. Unfortunately no one knows what they are.
16. You start with a bag full of luck and an empty bag of experience. The trick is to fill the bag of experience before you empty the bag of luck.
17. Helicopters can't fly; they're just so ugly the earth repels them.
18. If all you can see out of the window is ground that's going round and round and all you can hear is commotion coming from the passenger compartment, things are not at all as they should be.
19. In the ongoing battle between objects made of aluminum going hundreds of miles per hour and the ground going zero miles per hour, the ground has yet to lose.
20. Good judgment comes from experience. Unfortunately, the experience usually comes from bad judgment.
21. It's always a good idea to keep the pointy end going forward as much as possible.
22. Keep looking around. There's always something you've missed.
23. Remember, gravity is not just a good idea. It's the law. And it's not subject to repeal.

## James Darby Award (Cont.)

(Continued from page 4)  
career.

The Darby family, Charles and Florence Darby along with their two sons, James and David, moved to Danville, Illinois, in 1960 after purchasing Sunset Memorial Park. On a hot, humid day, young Jim, still in high school, was digging a grave by hand. He paused to ask himself if this was really what he wanted to do with the rest of his life. The answer was "yes."



Greenwood, Inc., was founded in the late 1960s in an effort to increase the size of the existing business, expanding into a burial vault company. Through research and study, the Darby brothers introduced a stronger,

arched cover design and more efficient manufacturing process that revolutionized the industry. The company trade name was born, Trigard, for the three layers of protection a Trigard burial vault provides for the casketed remains of a family's loved one.

Today, the Darby family not only manufactures Trigard burial vaults, but also uses them as funeral home owners. Sunset Funeral Home opened in December 1984 as one of the first funeral home/cemetery



combinations in the state of Illinois. Few companies had such an opportunity because at the time, the combination operation was illegal in most states. Big Jim helped change the legislation that allowed the partnership of services to become a reality.

The Darby family and Trigard have since expanded the company to include ownership and operation of seven funeral homes in Illinois, Indiana and Arizona. Through the years of cemetery operation and ownership, the Darbys iden-

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tified a dire need for revolution in the bronze memorial business. They felt the existing options did not tell the story of the life of the individual. With innovation at the forefront, Trigard Engraved Bronze, now Trigard Memorials, was established in 2003. Additional manufacturing divisions have developed, including Greenwood Plastics Industries, which thermoforms custom plastics, and Hall of Fame Plaques and Signs.

In 2012, Big Jim was one of five honorees inducted to the inaugural class of the Vermilion County Business Hall of Fame in Illinois. He is also a past president of the Illinois Cemetery Association and past Board member of the International Memorialization Supply Association.



Big Jim is the "Walt Disney" of Trigard and stays involved with every aspect of his family's business. When he is in the building, the news spreads like wildfire. Employees seek him out and look forward to spending a few moments with him. He is quick to give a pat on the back and encourage them with his trademark phrase, "That's good stuff!" What began as a small family business has grown to provide jobs for more than 100 employees working in funeral service, manufacturing, customer



service, grounds maintenance and horticulture.

Current owners Donna Darby-Walthall, Linda Darby and Rich Darby continue Big Jim's vision. His other two children, Karen Darby-Ritz and Scott Darby, have also joined the business along with several grandchildren, furthering his dream of a lasting leg-



(Continued on page 28)

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## The Arkansas Funeral Directors Association Convention (Cont.)

(Continued from page 1)

went to the president of Roller Funeral Homes, Mr. Bill Booker and was presented by Renata Jenkins Byler.

The convention continued the following day with a breakfast saluting past presidents of the Arkansas Funeral Directors Association, the annual business meeting and continuing education sessions. The convention concluded with an afternoon luncheon at Oaklawn, where the third race was dedicated to AFDA Past Presidents.

This year's sponsors included the National Funeral Directors Association, Federated Insurance and Story Clip.

The board for the new year was inducted and includes Don Martin-President; Brad Hays -President Elect; Jason Engler-Vice President; Bobby Burns-Secretary; Kenny Culpepper-Treasurer; Renata Byler-Policy Board Representative and Sarah Wilkerson Casteel-Past President. AFDA's day to day operations are led by Legacy Consulting.

The Arkansas Funeral Directors Association is the leading organization for the funeral home industry and serves its members through continuing education, advocacy and public relations. The association exists to allow Arkansas funeral homes to work together to maintain the industry's highest standards of excellence and service.

## Is Your Hut Burning? (Cont.)

& Psalm 91:15)

You say: "I can't figure things out."

God says: *I will direct your steps (Proverbs 3: 5-6)*

You say: "I can't do it!"

God says: *You can do all things (Phil 4: 13)*

You say: "I'm not able."

God says: *I am able (II Cor. 9: 8)*

You say: "It's not worth it."

God says: *It will be worth it (Romans 8: 28)*

You say: "I can't forgive myself."

God says: *I forgive you (I John 1: 9 & Romans 8: 1)*

You say: "I can't manage."

God says: *I will supply all your needs (Phil 4: 19)*

You say: "I'm afraid!"

God says: *I have not given you a spirit of fear (II Tim 1: 7)*

You say: "I'm always worried and frustrated!"

God says: *Cast all your cares on ME (I Peter 5: 7)*

You say: "I don't have enough faith."

God says: *I've given everyone a measure of faith (Romans 12: 3)*

You say: "I'm not smart enough."

God says: *I give you wisdom (I Cor. 13: 30)*

## "Dear Counselor...."

By Bill Stalter

Dear Counselor,

**A consumer protection group has recommended to families in our area that POD accounts are better option than a preneed funeral contract. They are also advising families against the purchase of a preneed contract. Is there anything wrong with that advice?**

There is if the family is facing a spend down decision regarding qualification for nursing home assistance. State assistance agencies and nursing homes are probably recommending the purchase of an irrevocable preneed contract as a way to reduce their resources for eligibility. Most states' laws will exclude preneed contracts or irrevocable funds designated for final expenses, but not POD accounts or Totten Trusts. Another consideration is whether a family wants to ensure the funds are spent on the funeral arrangement of their choice. The State of Nebraska has had issues with family survivors cancelling out POD funded arrangements and taking excess funds that the state would have a claim for. To guard against that, state auditors are attempting to have banks enter into more restrictive agreements with funeral homes and consumers. Consumer advocates advise against preneed contracts because of the perceived penalties for cancellation or because of restrictions that funeral homes impose for the transfer of the contract. If those reasons resonate with your families, you can counter those concerns with a 100% funded, non-guaranteed contract.

**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. Email:**

[wastal@swbell.net](mailto:wastal@swbell.net)



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).

## James Darby Award (Cont.)

acy.

Jim Price, CCFE, CCrE, president of the ICCFA Educational Foundation, says that Darby has always provided profound guidance on remaining the course, staying positive, motivating yourself and others while achieving success in life and work.

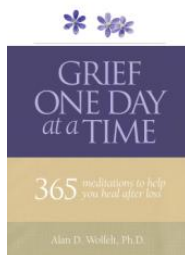
"Jim was so successful as an innovator and leader, based on the fact that he had the courage and self awareness to find his passion, follow his heart and be himself—an important insight for all of us," Price said. "Our profession has created a league of giants over this past half century—none larger than James 'Big Jim' Darby!"



Founded in 1887, the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association is the only international trade association representing all segments of the cemetery, cremation, funeral and memorialization profession. Its membership is composed of more than 9,100 rooftop locations and 20,000 professionals in the cemetery, funeral home and crematory industries, as well as supplier and related businesses worldwide.

## New Book Offers Daily Support for Mourners

Fort Collins, CO... Companion Press announces the publication a a new book entitled "**Grief One Day at a Time: 365 Meditations to Help You Heal After Loss**," by renowned grief educator Dr. Alan Wolfelt.



After a loved one dies, each day can be a struggle. So each day mourners can turn to this daily companion for comfort and understanding. With one brief entry for every day of the calendar year, this compassionate gem of a book by grief counselor Dr. Alan Wolfelt offers brief, one-day-at-a-time doses of guidance and healing. Each entry includes an inspiring



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or soothing quote followed by a discussion of the day's theme and a short meditation. Perfect for griever's nightstands and small enough to tuck into a purse or backpack, "Grief One Day at a Time" is poised to become one of the most popular and helpful books for mourners.

Author, educator, and grief counselor, Dr. Alan Wolfelt serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Fort Collins, Colorado. The author of **Understand Your Grief** and many other books for grief caregivers and mourners, Dr. Wolfelt is committed to helping people mourn well so they can live well and love well. He is available for interviews on the normal, necessary journey through grief and on healing through active mourning.

"**Grief One Day at a Time**" is available in both softcover and e-book formats. To order and to learn more about Dr. Wolfelt's books on grief and loss, visit [www.centerforloss.com](http://www.centerforloss.com) or call (970) 226-6050.

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**As We Drive By** We love to take pictures as we go by funeral homes and interesting places, but we'd welcome pictures, if you send them to us.



Peterson Funeral Home, Aurora, MO



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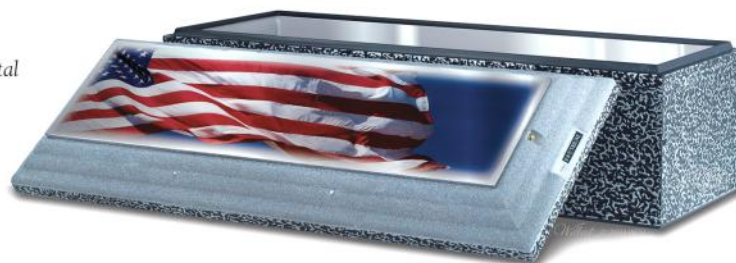
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