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Texas Director

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**The Victorian
Age in Cemeteries:
White Bronze Markers**

**What it Means
to Be a Funeral
Director's Kid**

**Ornate
Puebla Chapel
Could be
Considered a
Wonder of the
World**

Fifty Years of Service: Angelina "Angie" Morales Sanchez



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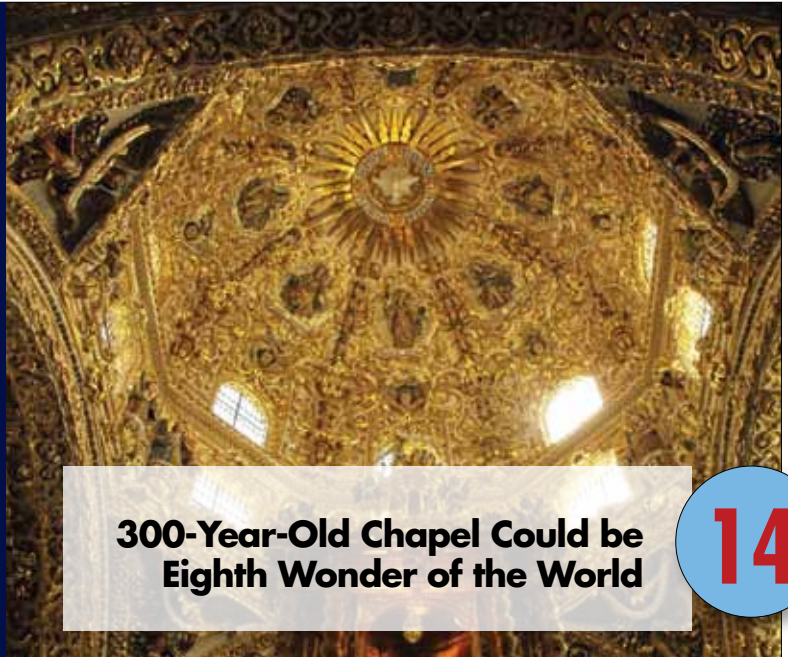
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Happy spring to all of you! We have not had much of a winter this year so it has seemed like spring, at least in Victoria, for months now.

It is that time of year when our regions are putting their spring meetings together and choosing who will be their Funeral Director of the Year, Supplier of the Year, Young Professional of the Year and the recipient of the Ed C. Smith Lifetime Achievement Award. They are also inviting new board members to join their regional board and thanking the board members who are going off their board.

Starting on March 30 and the four weeks that follow, I will be traveling this great state of Texas to attend these regional meetings and will have the pleasure of installing their officers. If you have not attended the meetings in your region in the past, I encourage you to do so. They are a great way to meet your fellow professionals in your region and network with our suppliers, as well. Also, if

you think you might be interested in serving as an officer in your region, feel free to reach out to the members of your regional board or myself. It is a great way to meet the members of your region and also a way to see if you might want to participate at the state level as a board member of the Texas Funeral Directors Association.

As I am writing this article, I am preparing to attend a stakeholder's meeting for the Texas Funeral Service Commission on several rule changes that are being proposed, which include: continuing education requirements, display of license, score needed to pass/fail the National Board Exams for provisional funeral directors and embalmers, embalming vs. aspiration, and digital copies of the "Facts about Funerals" brochures.

Drafts of these rules are posted on the Texas Funeral Service Commission's website. These changes will be voted on at the Texas Funeral Service Commission meeting to be held at 9 a.m., Tuesday, March 21, and I hope

you will try to attend, if possible.

As you all know, we are in a legislative year and our state legislature is in FULL swing. We have several bills we are closely following that pertain to our profession and will keep you updated as they move through the legislative process.

Now, let's talk about something FUN! As everyone knows, the mantra for our state capitol is "Keep Austin Weird" and although I had several suggestions to do so, that is not the theme of our convention. However, in keeping with the music scene in Austin, it did inspire some of the event themes we are using for this year's convention. I do not want to spoil all of the surprises because our convention invitations have not gone out yet, but I do want to highlight a few changes that we have made for this year's event that I am really excited about.

First of all, we have great family friendly events planned all week, but for now I want to focus on the Expo and Gala. Our Expo this year will be ONE DAY. Yes you heard me right, ONE DAY, on Wednesday starting at 9 a.m. with breakfast and lunch both being served in the Expo Hall at the Palmer Events Center. In keeping with the success from last year, we will have the "Kids Cove" again this

year to keep them occupied so their parents can enjoy the exhibits. We are also going to have the "Idea Center Stage" again, and space is limited, so reserve your spot ASAP. There will not be any other convention events taking place during the Expo, so we are expecting record crowds! We are also reaching out to vendors outside of our profession to give those partners of yours not in this profession something to shop for.

Now, let's talk about the Gala! It is going to be held on Wednesday evening this year and you are not going to want to miss it. We have Groove Knight, a local Austin band who play a mix of 70's and 80's music and they know how to entertain. We will also have Casino Night after dinner is served with lots of great prizes to win. The theme of the Gala is going to be "Neon Nights" (yes, I was born in the 70's and grew up in the 80's) so picture something like your high school prom with bright colored dresses, tuxes with bow ties and cummerbunds to match the dress, big hair, and lots of dancing. So ladies, get busy looking for that dress now.

Remember, "Don't Stop Believing & Take the JOURNEY" at this year's TFDA Convention from June 4th to the 7th! I look forward to seeing you all there. ★

Disaster Training to Be Held in Temple

The TFDA Disaster Team has an immediate need for interested directors to be trained to be emergency responders in every region of the state, so this is an excellent opportunity for orientation and training for new First Responders.

Classes will be held every Tuesday, Beginning April 5 and continuing through May 23, from 6-9 p.m.

In addition, this training opportunity is open to funeral directors who want to formulate a disaster plan for their individual funeral homes.

Classes are free and open to everyone.

To reserve your spot and confirm your plans to attend, please call Sabrina Young, Harper-Talasek Funeral Home, at 254-773-4564.



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Report from "the Hill", the 85th Texas Legislature

By Senator Bill Haley



Preparing an article discussing legislative activity a month ahead of publication is wrought with foreboding and a possibility that the whole article will be outdated.

During a legislative session, these articles are written as events are unfolding and changes can be everyday occurrence. They are then sent to The Texas Director with the hope there will be at least some veracity left in them when the magazine arrives sev-

eral weeks later. During the session, several weeks can produce a great deal of change in the structure of a bill going forward.

The Texas Funeral Directors Association is introducing four bills.

(1) One bill will give the Texas Funeral Service Commission (TFSC) the authority to suspend a driver's license issued to a person who fails to pay an administrative penalty imposed by the TFSC, regardless

of whether the person holds a license issued under Section 651.551, if the commission determines that the person has violated this chapter or a rule adopted under this chapter.

(2) Another bill will add a crematory operator to the TFSC membership. Of the seven seats on the TFSC, three are reserved for the funeral service industry. Currently, two of these three seats are occupied by a licensed funeral director who is also an embalmer. Another is occupied by a licensed funeral director who is also an embalmer and registered cemetery owner or operator. This bill will add a licensed crematory establishment operator to the third seat currently occupied by an embalmer who is also a funeral director. Four seats are occupied by members who represent the public, are not regulated by Section 651.051 (a) of the Occupations Code, and have consistently shown an interest in supporting consumer protection.

(3) A third issue is related to transporting a body for the purpose of performing an autopsy back to the county from which the body originated. Currently, the law states: "The commissioners court shall pay a reasonable fee for the transportation of a body to and from a place where an autopsy can be performed under this article if a justice of the peace orders the body to be transported for the purpose of an autopsy."

Currently, the law only requires a sending county to pay transportation to the place of where the autopsy will be performed, leaving the recipient county or the family of the deceased to foot the cost of returning the body to the family in the originating county.

(4) A fourth bill HB 1292 by Representative Richard Pena Raymond (District 42 - Laredo) and SB 983 by Senator Craig Estes (District 30 - Wichita Falls) relates to the TFSC. The bill sweeps a number of archaic provisions from the law and updates various procedures to conform to laws passed in the last several years.

If you have any question as the session continues, feel free to contact me at bhaley1@gmail.com. Karen and I will keep TFDA members apprised of activities at the capitol during the 85th session relating our profession of the Texas Legislature proceed. 🌟

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Legislative Update

By Karen Grice

The fetal remains rule has been blocked by the courts. However, there are three Senate Bills heard and left pending in the Senate Public Health Committee. The House State Affairs committee will hear the companion House Bill on March 8.

Want to watch the hearing archive? Go to <http://www.senate.texas.gov/av-live.php>

Bills to Watch

The TFDA Legislative committee met on January 17 and the TFDA Board met on January 18 to hear about upcoming legislation under consideration by the Legislature. The following were discussed:

- **HB 1292** – Raymond (relating to the Texas Funeral Service Commission). This is the cleanup bill requested by the commission to make the law and rules align.
- **SB 65** – Zaffirini (assigns penalties to

cemetery organizations that discriminate based on race, color or national origin.)

• **HB 994/SB 513** – Wray/Rodriguez (relating to disposition of remains and anatomical gifts.) TFDA concerns: substituting a notary for two witnesses – repealing Chapter 692 of the Health and Safety Code.

• **HB 535** – Longoria, RE the Crime Victims Compensation Act. Adds real property damage to list of compensations, adds a cap of \$50,000. Fund has recently increased funeral compensation to \$6,500 (not a part of this bill).

• **SB125** – Huffines. Requires the Texas Funeral Service Commission to live stream all meetings. The TFSC is willing to comply if law is passed, but it will be costly to the agency due to upgrades to internet systems required to comply.

• **SB 336** – West & HB 1287 – Rose. Relates to the release of bodies (and body parts) after an autopsy. This bill “codifies prevailing practice in the Dallas Medical Examiner’s office” Concerns relating to releasing body parts to Organ Procurement Organizations, and releasing funeral homes of responsibility if Medical Examiner keeps tissue or body parts.

• **HB 1155** – Davis, Sarah- Relating to Alkaline Hydrolysis. This bill was not posted prior to the meetings. However, we knew it was being filed. Committee nor board wanted to oppose this bill

• **SB 81/HB 63** – Nelson/Davis, Sarah. Relating to Cancer Prevention and Research. The Texas Funeral Service Commission is listed as one of the agencies to be included.

• **SB 561** – Hancock. Relating to un-

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claimed insurance or annuities (including for pre-paid funerals). Creates a Master Death File. This bill was filed after our meetings.

♦ **SB238** – Huffines/ SB 258 – Huffines/ SB 406 –Hall. All related to fetal tissue/abortion in some manner. The feeling was these bills (if passed) will be challenged to the Supreme Court.

♦ **HB 1234** – Smithee & SB 561 – Hancock. Relating to the identification and handling of unclaimed life insurance and annuity contract proceeds (new since last newsletter).

To follow these and other bills go to <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/Home.aspx>.

Enter bill number or keywords into Search Legislation. Stay informed!

Rules Changes

(discussion from a Stakeholders Meeting, February 10)

There were four possible rules changes.

203.26 Consumer Brochure. The commission wants to sell a license to use a pdf version of the Facts About Funerals for those people (often preneed sales people) who want to send an electronic copy to people along with the other forms. This would not allow funeral homes to print their own, they would still have to give each family a copy of the printed ones they purchase from the commission.

Discussion: The commission raises about \$70,000 in annual revenue that they do not have to turn over to the state (they do have to turn over license fees). They use these “discretionary” funds to pay expenses incurred by the agency above the levels the state funds them. The group consensus was that this rule would be acceptable, if there was a sliding scale for the fee based on whether the firm (or individual) receiving the electronic copy was a large or small user of the printed forms.

203.24 Display of License. The commission would like to allow someone who only occasionally works at a funeral establishment to have a copy of their license in a file rather than on display on the wall of the funeral home. The commission wanted one in each client’s file to assist the inspectors when they come to a funeral home.

Discussion: Keeping a master file of

copies of all licenses used by people who might work part time or temporarily at a funeral home (or for an employee who leaves) would be preferable. The file could be paper or electronic and would be maintained for 2 years (the life of an active license).

203.8 Continuing Education: The commission proposed reducing the number of hours of CE required to 6 (the required courses). The reasoning was the paperwork and time required to approve the continuing education.

Discussion: The consensus of those there did not want to reduce the number of hours required to renew a license. There are many reasons, but to reduce the hours would provide Texas Funeral Directors with lower standards than most states. To maintain the respect of the public, one should not lower the standards of the workforce. There was much discussion about requiring that at least 4-6 hours be done in person and not on-line.

It was suggested that if CE was approved by the Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice, that TFSC did not need to

review again. A suggestion to include course work at an accredited Mortuary Science college as CE requirements was also made. This rule will be revised and come back again.

203.5(n) Provisional License. The commission was uncertain about whether 75% on the National Mortuary Law Exam was the proper evaluation of a graduate’s ability to become a funeral director. Wanted input as to what was the proper pass rate.

Discussion: The National Mortuary Law exam took a beating from the representatives from the schools. They cannot determine when a person fails where the weaknesses are (just find out pass/fail). The schools are planning to assist the commission in coming up with a Texas Exam for students to take that the schools could give in a proctored setting. This is still a work in progress.

After the discussion on February 10, the Commission made changes to the draft rules. They can be found at <http://www.tfsc.state.tx.us/news.html> ★

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Meet Tiffany L. Cooper-Aguilar

I proudly work at Palmer Mortuary & Cremations for Legacy Funeral Group in Seguin.

Birthplace: I was born in San Jose, California on April 6, 1978.

High school and year of graduation: I attended Manteca High School, in Manteca, CA, graduating in 1996.

Mortuary school and year licensed: I am a graduate of San Antonio College. I became a licensed funeral director in 2012, earned an Associate's Degree in Mortuary Science in 2013 and became dual licensed in 2015.

First funeral you attended and what you remember about it: The first funeral I can recall attending was for my great-grandfather in Los Angeles. He had a grand funeral at a huge church. There were many folks in attendance and it was the first time (and only) I had ever seen a full-size casket blanket made out of roses. He was interred in the famous



Forest Park Cemetery and after the graveside service, we walked around, looking for famous people who were also buried there.

Funeral you'll never forget and why? I will never forget the memorial service for my father, Curtis J. Cooper (01/05/1949 - 03/15/2013), may he rest in paradise. It was the first time I had lost anyone imme-

diately to me. I was extremely close to him and the loss I felt was incredible.

Why you chose funeral service: I chose to enter the funeral service because I felt it was the first job I ever had that merged work and helping others.

Memorable mentor(s): My three most memorable mentors would be, Clyde Boothe, who was my manager at Zoeller Funeral Home, in New Braunfels, where I apprenticed. He was so honest, he always commanded respect and was a great teacher on how to serve families. He encouraged me to step up to any tasks set before me and to be a leader. Kirk Betz showed me how to work with the utmost professionalism and effectiveness...and last but not least, my husband, Chris Aguilar. He has shown me so much as a funeral director and embalmer; he is always willing to help me, teach me and support me.

What you would add to what you learned in mortuary school: At San Antonio College, besides learning textbook theory, I learned perseverance, determination and self-value. In the middle of my last semester of college, my father passed away and when it came time to walk the stage, I did not want to participate. Mr. Jose Moreno graciously asked me why and I mentioned my reason. He asked me to consider walking the stage for my daughter, to be an example to her. After our conversation, I walked and I didn't regret it. Walking the stage, gave me a huge sense of self worth and enabled me to be the best kind of example for my daughter. (Thank you Mr. Moreno!)

What do you believe are the most important skills of a funeral director today? The most important skills for a funeral director to have in this day and age would be attention to detail, strong work ethic, dedication and professionalism.

Why I joined TFDA: I initially joined TFDA because, as an employee of Legacy Funeral Group, we are encouraged to participate and get involved. After I met Chris, he was very involved and I would attend events with him, so it seemed natural to become involved. I started out by participating in leadership,



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being on the board for SCTFDA, and now I serve as Vice President for the South Central Region. I am enjoying being part of the future for our region and I hope to make a difference in my profession through TFDA.

What you see as the greatest reward of being a director? The greatest reward that comes from being a funeral director in a small town is seeing the folks you serve, everyday. No matter where I go, I always see someone I have served or met at the funeral home. A lot of folks come up to me, hug me or they start crying when they see me. Those kinds of rewards mean a whole lot to me.

Greatest challenge facing directors today: The greatest challenge facing funeral directors today is maintaining a high level of professionalism. It always surprises me when I see directors, with years of experience, lacking empathy, understanding and grace when they are working with families.

Community memberships, voluntarism, activities: In the community of Seguin, I am on the board as the secretary for the Seguin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. I also am involved in the SVPO at Jim Barnes Middle School, the Seguin Chamber of Commerce and I volunteer every year at the Hot Shots Fish Fry, Cops n Kids, local dog rescue(s). Every now and then, I'll take some meals to a couple of homeless folks I've become friends with, and I volunteer my time, helping apply cosmetics for local young ladies who are going to a prom or formal.

What I get most out of from being a member of TFDA? Being a member of TFDA has really helped me put a name with a face and feel comfortable reaching out to others in the association. For example, now when I call Capital Mortuary Service and ask for Mike, I know who he is (through TFDA) and his company's high standards of service. Whenever I see him, he is always pleasant and smiling and believe it or not, those kinds of encounters help me decide who I contact for help. Networking, building relationships and getting to know others in our profession is a must.

Advice I would offer to young women thinking about a career in funeral service: To really consider what your time is worth (if they are willing to sacrifice spending time away from their families), what your limits

are and ultimately what your overall goal(s) in the profession would be.

What makes you a good funeral director? Grit, hard work, determination, thinking outside of the box, caring for every family and respect for everyone, whatever their place in our society, makes me a good funeral director and a good human being.

Family: I am married to the infamous Chris Aguilar, a licensed funeral director and embalmer with The Dodge Company. We have the smartest, brattiest and most beautiful daughter, Kamille, who is 13 years old and in the 8th grade.

Favorite sport, hobby or pastime: I've

never played sports, I don't even really recall having any official hobbies. I do like to spend time with my family, travel, check out new restaurants, catch a flick at the movie theater, and take naps.

How I recharge my "batteries": When I am at home, drinking root beer, reading magazines, watching documentaries with my Boston Terrier (Betty) and taking naps (I can fall asleep anywhere!).

If I had \$1 million, I would: build a shelter, where homeless people and abandoned (owners passed away) animals could work, live and thrive. I'd adopt all kinds of children and I would start a clothing closet for the children in the town where I live. ★



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300-Year-Old Chapel Could be Eighth Wonder of the World



In Puebla, Mexico, not far from Mexico City, sits a breathtaking 16th century chapel. And unless you know about it, you probably will leave without seeing it...but it's worth looking for, no matter how crowded your itinerary is.

Puebla's Templo de Santo Domingo, built in the 16th century, is encased in a severe gray facade – a facade that offers no hint of the breathtaking beauty inside. Upon entering you'll find the church to be a masterpiece of baroque architecture and decoration.

The grandiose altarpiece of the main altar, the spectacular onyx pulpit, and the sumptuous plasterwork and gold leaf contribute to the extravagant decor that characterizes Mexican baroque style.

The Capilla del Rosario (Rosary Chapel), on the south side of the church's main altar, is the most magnificent aspect of this church's interior. The chapel is, arguably, the best example of the New Spanish Baroque style, built to honor the Virgin Mary as well as to teach the practice of the rosary. The Dominicans, (the order in charge of the temple) were ardent promoters of daily rosaries.

Built between 1650 and 1690, the Rosary Chapel features an astonishing artisanal work, mixing the traditional Catholic symbols

with those of the region under a prominent gold-plated leaf.

Windows around the upper level of the chapel allow sunlight to enter, bathing the space in exquisite natural light which seems to make the gold glow.

This is the first chapel in Mexico dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, to whom the Dominicans had great devotion. Tradition says that the Virgin Mary gave the rosary to Saint Dominic, the founder of the Dominican order.

Dominican friar Juan de Cuenca conceived the Rosary Chapel as a way of showing the Dominican order's devotion to Our Lady of the Rosary, but also as a teaching tool in the evangelization process.

On the chapel walls six paintings tell the biblical story of Jesus since his birth to his debate with the doctors at the temple. Each painting features the Virgin Mary and are called "Gozos de la Virgen." Beneath each painting is a succession of blue and white ceramic tiles, known as "Talaveras de Puebla," that form a gigantic rosary. Each bead being represented as an angel's head.

Immediately under the dome is an altar and a baldachin (also called Ciprés – a canvas cloth held over an important figure). The baldachin is fashioned of marble covered in gold.

Each of the images in the chapel is significant and relate to the Virgin Mary, the life of Jesus, or the Dominican order. The tabernacle at the center of the chapel contains an image of Our Lady of the Rosary surrounded by marble columns; the second level holds an image of Saint Dominic, and the archangel Saint Gabriel perches at the top.

Ornate sculptures, masterful paintings and more extravagant gold leaf cover every inch of the walls and ceiling of the Rosary Chapel, creating a dazzling effect. The chapel is sometimes referred to as "the golden house" because of the lavish use of gold leaf.

Although several works of art compete to match the splendor of this temple, the Rosary Chapel is unique, not only for being located in a place where gold was scarce, but also because its 23-carat gold-plated leaf has remained attached to the decorations for more than 300 years.

This unusually long adherence is partially due to the composition of the glue used. Some local guides say this glue was composed of aloe, honey, bull's blood and egg whites (although a restoration made in the 1970s might have helped too). ★



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What It Means to Be a Funeral Director's Kid

By Hunter H. Hewell



Being a funeral director's kid (FDK) is similar to being a movie producer's kid in that most people don't really understand what it is your parent does; or they think they do, but they actually have it all wrong.

As I was growing up, a lot of people thought what my dad did was a "scary" profession, or they would respond with something like, "Well I just couldn't do that, it would freak me out too much," when I told them my father was a funeral director, and I usually helped out at his funeral home as a summer job. However, I would usually have to explain to them what exactly it means to be a funeral director, and typically, they would nod their head in agreement as the light bulb came on as to what a funeral director actually does.

After these conversations, the person who claimed they would be "freaked out" to be a

funeral director still walked away from the conversation thinking they did not possess the characteristics to work in the funeral profession. However, this time, they realized being a funeral director is not about having a dulled indifference to the dead, but rather having a stronger sense of compassion for the living...and FDK's get a front row seat to this compassion.

Growing up as a funeral director's kid in a small town, I've lived most of my life with people telling me how wonderful my father is. They don't tell me these things because of his embalming skills or the way he arranges flowers around the altar at the First Methodist Church. They tell me how great he is because of the way he cares for their families in their moment of need. Funeral directors are there to serve people during the worst

days of their life; in the moments where they have lost those they love.

Funeral directors not only ensure the deceased receive a proper, dignified service and burial, their main job is to help the family be as comfortable as possible during an uncomfortable time. As an FDK, I have witnessed my dad and his employees serve people on a daily basis, putting the family of the deceased loved one first.

Funeral directors often go above and beyond to make sure the family's wishes get fulfilled in regards to the service. Directors must set aside any personal preferences in order to fully recognize and provide what the family wants, and they do this all because of a passion for serving others and call to comfort those who are hurting.

Growing up in a family who works in the funeral business, I have come to learn what it means to care for those who are hurting. Every evening when my family sits down for dinner, my dad prays over the meal. But along with asking for the blessing of the food, my dad also prays for the families our funeral home is serving. He doesn't have to pray for them. No one would know if he didn't. However, he does this because he feels it is a calling to serve these people, and he must do so wholeheartedly.

It takes perspective to realize some careers go beyond just a job, and transcends simply employment into a calling. Funeral directing provides that perspective and requires more than just a desire to make money. In order to be a dedicated funeral director, one must feel the necessary passion and commitment to serving people in their time of need. Being a funeral director's kid has taught me about compassion, service and a few necessary life skills, such as how to arrange tissues on a church pew. ❖

Hunter Hewell is the son of Tres and Melanie Hewell, owners of Tres Hewell Mortuary in Seguin. He is a senior at Baylor University, majoring in journalism but plans to enroll in law school after graduation.

It's all well and good to look back after the fact and see what we should have done, but we rarely know what path is best when we take that first step.

— *Christine Feehan* —

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It's Okay...

By Dylan Stopher



I want to start by saying that I am not a licensed medical professional... so what I'm about to share is not to be taken as medical advice or counseling suggestion. I'm one of you, so this will all be my own opinion.

Burnout... is very real. So let's take a moment and look at what it is.

Burnout happens in any profession or occupation when there is no rest, no reprieve, no time away. When it comes, it usually brings with it a certain apathetic and unconcerned attitude towards daily tasks, and anxiety about each day. It can affect anyone, and it is no laughing matter.

For the funeral professional, burnout is especially dangerous. But how do we recognize it and/or combat it? I can answer that in two simple words... we simply agree "It's okay."

It's okay to take a day off. I know, somewhere in your mind you believed at one point that if you weren't in the building,

things would go wrong. Maybe you're right. Maybe not. But a fatigued director who is battling exhaustion is of little use when the mistakes begin to pile up.

Who pays the price? The family, of course, and all for the belief that no time off is allowed. I know it's hard, because we come to the profession because of a calling, and we yearn to serve. However, recharging in a day or two off on a regular schedule will go a long way for your own well-being and the quality of service you deliver to your families.

In conjunction with this, it's okay to trust your teammates. Yes, one of them in your past may have made a mistake. Get ready for the truth here... so have you. We all have. If you want to prevent a replay of the same mistake in the future, the best solution is not to be present for every second of every day. No. The best solution is to write it all down, conduct a proper handoff to your colleague

(who very likely feels the same calling as you, and probably carries the same passion for service as you), and make certain the family and your colleague know you have complete confidence in the service going smoothly without you present. Now answer me honestly... is there any greater show of confidence in your firm and your team than letting them serve in your place?

Expanding on this concept further, it's okay to take a vacation. Unplug physically, mentally and emotionally. Leave. Leave for several days. Go home and serve your own family...and/or yourself.

Relax, enjoy some time without the looming constancy of a potential death call and subsequent midnight removal. Breathe easily, see some sights, and be free of emails. In these moments, you'll realize one of the many reasons you serve families with everything in your being: it's because you want someone to someday serve your family in the same way. So refocus yourself by stepping away and taking stock of what really matters in your life...and, if I may be so bold, leave the country and don't respond to anything while you're gone. It's great therapy.

To continue on that note, it's okay to turn off your phone. We live in a digital age where our smart phones literally have the capability to manage our entire firm at the touch of a button. Answering service calls can be recorded and scripted out, every manner of investigation can be performed into the goings on from a distance, and all that does is keep work right in front of your face. All the time.

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that, so I learned it is perfectly okay to turn off my phone. It's okay for you, too. Trust me, it will do you good.

Now, let me clarify a few things. When I turn off my phone, it's not for enormous periods of time. Generally only a few hours at most, mostly in the evening (because I don't work for a funeral home anymore). I also have implicit trust in my team. If a client cannot get me personally, they call the office or leave a message. Either way, they are taken care of.

When I vacation with my family, we do leave the country...preferably on a cruise ship. The phone doesn't work there, and that's one of the reasons we take cruises. The five of us reconnect by not having access to social media or email demands or phone calls that require an answer. It's a wonderful time.

Lastly, and likely the most serious thing I'll ever say in any article, I would like to point out it's okay to seek professional help... and I want to reassure you on that point by restating it clearly. It is perfectly acceptable to seek professional guidance. There is nothing wrong with having a sounding board, a person to vent to, a friend to lean on or a

therapist to help you walk through difficulty.

Funeral directors see serious things. Heavy things. We serve everyone, regardless of the manner of death, tolerance, belief system or any other such qualifier. And it's no joke, we carry a burden.

People talk all the time about how it "takes a special person to do what you do," and they're not wrong. But that doesn't make us superhuman... like everyone else, we feel and we hurt and we need relationships to carry us through things. Otherwise, that dangerous apathy I mentioned earlier grows

into a cold and cynical approach to families – and to life. And then we've hurt the very people we originally intended to help.

Burnout is real, my friends. I've felt it, and I know you have, too. As I said, I am not medically certified to provide any certifiable advice in this arena... but I can tell you, if you'll take a moment and realize it's okay to have time for yourself, to have time away from the office, to have time away from your phone, to trust your team, then you will be able to recharge and return with better focus and an even stronger drive to serve. ✪



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The Victorian Age in Cemeteries: White Bronze Markers



This is the first of a six-part series, focusing on the various types of cemetery markers, the rituals of various regional and ethnic groups and the meanings of their use.

Ever wander through an older cemetery and found a seemingly new headstone or monument tucked between those that boasted more than a century's worth of years? If you've stumbled across a "white bronze" marker popular in the late 1800s, that may explain the incredible difference.

These zinc monuments and headstones were primarily the work of Monumental Bronze Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut, and its subsidiaries. M.A. Richardson, who worked as a cemetery superintendent, created the zinc alloy process after observing the need for a new and better material for cemetery monuments.

The markers were produced from roughly the mid-1870s until 1914, when the company (which went through various transfers and reorganizations) stopped production of grave markers. It continued casting bronze and other metal moldings until final bankruptcy in 1939.

The grave markers made by Monumental Bronze Co. were referred to as "white bronze," although they are neither white nor bronze. They are made of zinc, and exposure

to the elements gives them their distinctive blue-gray color. (Zinc is also the material found as the coating on galvanized nails that make them weather resistant).

The markers are hollow so there will be vertical seams at the corners. There are stories of how gardeners hid garden tools in tall white bronze monuments and how outlaws hid their loot in them.

To create a white bronze marker required several steps. An artist would begin the process by carving similar designs used on traditional granite and marble headstones into wax forms. Plaster would be poured into the wax forms and allowed to set, creating a plaster cast. A second, identical plaster cast would then be made. This would be the cast that the sand molds were made from and cast in zinc.

The zinc castings were then assembled and fused together with molten zinc. Once assembled and fused, the monuments were sandblasted to roughen the surface and then treated the metal with a finishing process called "steam bluing" to create a stone-like finish. And the final step, a secret lacquer



would be applied to chemically oxidize the monument, creating the bluish-grey patina – hence the name white bronze. (Much more romantic sounding than zinc).

Every white bronze marker was made to order. With over 500 monuments to choose from the possibilities were infinite. To begin, a base and monument shape would be chosen. Then selected panels would be placed onto the monument with special screws. These panels included images of flowers, fraternal symbols, religious designs, and other Victorian motifs.

The metal is nearly 100 percent pure. It weathers very well, and monuments made from zinc frequently look as good today as they did when they were first installed.

The markers were sold with the claim that they would last a long time, were about one-third less expensive than an equivalent marker carved from stone, and were modern and progressive.

White bronze monuments were most popular during the 1880s to 1900, a time when many considered granite and marble stones to be too expensive. But there were those who looked down on the white bronze marker as being a cheap imitation of a solid granite stone. Some cemeteries even banned them, probably due to the urging of local granite and marble monument companies.

Sometimes poor quality repairs are made to zinc markers by using steel screws, usually as replacements for missing screws. The steel screws can rust and cause discoloration. These zinc markers have stood the test of time better than their neighboring contemporary stone markers eaten away by

lichens and mosses.

There were no dealer showrooms, just an “agent” with an illustrated catalog, who could sometimes send you to a nearby cemetery to see a marker that he had sold. In fact, the marble and granite tombstone makers often resented the Monumental Bronze agents because, with no stock, no tools, no facilities, and no training, the agents could sell the least expensive white bronze marker for as little as \$2.00, underselling the traditional carvers who had a considerable investment in time and money.

For whatever reason, Monumental Bronze markers never became really popular. Oakwood Cemetery in Austin, another cemetery in Amarillo and a few in Houston have zinc monuments, but many cemeteries do not have any white bronze markers at all and as you move farther west, there are even fewer.

When you come across a cemetery with more than a few “white bronze” markers, this may indicate an unusually successful agent served the area.

Monumental Bronze Co. also manufactured the Civil War statues that stand in some larger cemeteries, and on many court house lawns. The company reported they had



SOLDIERS’ AND SAILORS’ MONUMENT, Stratford, CT— is significant artistically because it is an example of a standard-bearer design executed in cast zinc. The classical details set the monument apart from most, as does the fact that the sword is drawn. It also includes poetry in its lettering, again setting it apart from most. The quotations have not been identified.

The Stratford monument underwent a \$100,000 repair and rehabilitation program in 1986-87 because it was showing signs of strain and was coming apart due to the weight of the metal. The problem was addressed at Stratford by introducing an internal steel framework, but the northwest corner nonetheless has now opened up again.

soldier and sailor monuments in 31 states.

Whatever else may be said about white bronze markers, they certainly are “genealogist-friendly.” After 100 to 125 years, every word, every name, every date is as clear and legible as the day it was cast.

Their disadvantage is that zinc is brittle so the markers can be broken. Also, over time, large markers “creep” (sag), and so require an

internal structure to support them.

Most of the markers have bolt-on panels so that an older monument could be kept up-to-date with newer burials. The panels themselves were made through 1939. A special tool, looking vaguely like a screwdriver but with a negative rosette bolt head where the end of the screwdriver blade would be, was used to loosen and tighten the cast zinc nuts. ★

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Fifty Years of Service: Angelina “Angie” Morales Sanchez

New Braunfels’ First Female Mortician



In the March 20, 1969, edition of the *New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung*, Angie Morales, then 24, was described as, “a willowy, young brunette and one of a family of 17 morticians practicing throughout South Texas.”

A new graduate of Commonwealth College of Mortuary Science in Houston at the time, Angie was succeeding her father, Charlie Morales, as manager of Morales Funeral Home in New Braunfels after earning her license in 1966 and completing her apprenticeship at Earthman’s Funeral Home in Houston. “I was so grateful to the Earthman’s for my apprenticeship because I saw so much in the city I would have never seen in a small town. It was an education in itself and I worked with some amazing directors.”

“At that time, Dr. Michael DeBakey had begun performing heart transplants, one of the first surgeons in this country to do those procedures,” she remembered. “There also were many unnatural deaths in Houston, some from crimes, many from accidents... all situations I wouldn’t have experienced in New Braunfels at that time.”

Angie said she was hesitant, at first, about going to mortuary school. However, she was taught and mentored by the legendary funeral director, Tex Gartman at Commonwealth. “He gave me the confidence it took to handle any case,” the director recalled. “Even at the time, everyone in my class at Commonwealth knew how fortunate we were to have such a brilliant teacher, mentor

and friend to work with.”

“I had always loved serving others,” Angie admitted, “and when I came home to New Braunfels from mortuary school, I knew I would be serving friends and families I had grown up with – at a time and in ways very few people could help. Being part of this profession became an honor and a blessing,” she added.

Charlie Morales retired from funeral service March 10, 1969, but remained active in the business. He passed away April 17, 1975, at age 78.

“My father opened Morales Funeral Home at 171 East Common Street in 1923,” Angie said, “and if I’m not mistaken, I think we were the first funeral home in New Braunfels.”

“All of his brothers – Felix in Houston, Frank in Austin and Andrew and Max in San Antonio – were funeral directors and owned funeral homes. Uncle Felix also owned a radio station and a cemetery. I think Uncle Felix went to Commonwealth, but I’m not sure. That was way before my time,” she laughed. “I have pictures from the newspapers where they all went to TFDA conventions in Austin.”

A sister-in-law and an aunt in Houston also became licensed funeral directors. Angie describes her older brother Alfonso as a master embalmer and a reconstruction artist. “Six of my father’s great-grandchildren came into the profession in 2016,” she said.

She speaks of her experience in mortuary

school with fond memories. “I won’t say it was easy,” she said with a mischievous smile. “When I attended my first class after I enrolled, there were only three women. Two dropped out, leaving me as the only girl... and I can tell you, it’s not like they give out licenses. I had to work hard for mine.”

After completing the requirements of her profession, Angie established her practice in New Braunfels, in part to help her aging father. “It’s a good place to raise a family, and our funeral home has served several generations,” she explained.

“I grew up in New Braunfels,” said the director in a recent interview. “I still get calls at 4 or 5 in the morning on Mother’s Day from people asking if I remember where their parents are buried.”

She said these inquiries are not surprising. “My dad used to take care of the cemetery for the Catholic church – Our Lady of Perpetual Help,” she said. “He knew where all the graves were...and I grew up helping him. It’s one of the older cemeteries in our community and Dad would pay out of his pocket to have the cemetery cleaned. Some people thought it was our cemetery because it was important to him to keep it looking nice, but it belongs to the church.”

She added, “Back then, people dug their own graves. Dad would measure and they would dig the graves themselves. The Garzas did openings and closing at the time.”

A 1965 graduate of New Braunfels High School, Angie and her family, which included seven children (all born at home) lived in a traditional apartment at the funeral home. Her tireless mother, Francisca, helped her husband while rearing her family. “My mom was a strong woman,” she said.

Charlie Morales was born January 30, 1897 in Gruene, to Hilaria Hessbrook Morales – a German-Irish woman (1883-1939). His father, Felix Sr. (1869-1921), was Spanish.

Charlie’s wife, Francisca Sanchez Mo-

rales, was born in Laredo, Oct. 4, 1903. She passed away May 7, 1985 at age 81. All are buried at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Cemetery in New Braunfels.

"By the time I was in second or third grade, I knew my father buried people, that he was an 'undertaker,' a word that was used a lot. I knew he dealt with death," Angie said.

"My father provided ambulance service to New Braunfels but shielded his children from the gristlier accident scenes he worked. I kept asking my dad to take me with him on an ambulance run and finally, when I was a teenager, he let me ride along."

"A teenage boy had been hit by a train, and it was bloody and gruesome," she recalled. "My dad told me to let go of whatever I had seen. Otherwise it would haunt me, and I did as he said, but it wasn't easy."

She also recalls a case at Texas Childrens Hospital in Houston many years ago where two little girls had come from another country for open-heart surgery. "They didn't make it," Angie said, "but I remember how beautiful they were with their angelic faces and long, blonde hair. It was difficult."

In a later interview published in the *New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung*, the funeral director had this to say: "Through the years this funeral home has served the people of New Braunfels, there have been many changes, but one thing remains certain. Funerals are still traditional. They are going up in price, like anything else. It just depends on the individual."

"Some funerals are elaborate while others are simple," she continued. "We do our best to cater to the individual family's needs."

Morales said she could empathize with the feelings of those families who come to her after experiencing a loss because she has experienced death in her own family. "Once you've lost someone, it's easier to deal with because you've experienced it. You know what the family is going through."

"Cards and all the words in the world will not ease the pain or make it go away. It just helps for the family to realize people care," the director said. "And even though I've spent much of my life in the funeral home, I still am affected by my job on a daily basis. I think you'd have to be immoral not to feel someone else's pain," she explained.

Angie closed Morales Funeral Home in New Braunfels in 2007 after 88 years of operation and two generations of service to the community. However, Angie couldn't stay away – from her calling and her commit-

ment to her community.

She is now completing her fourth year on the staff of Zoeller's Funeral Home and continues "being there" for her neighbors and New Braunfels' families. "I came back to work because part of my life is missing."

"My Saturdays are dedicated to my husband and family and to the charities I support," she said, and each evening of the week she reads the Scriptures, says rosaries and prays for everyone she knows who needs help or is sick.

Angie said she was humbled when the TFDFA President recognized her for her 50 years as a licensed funeral director, calling her an inspiration to other women in funeral service. "I held it together pretty well until the assembly of funeral directors at last June's convention stood. Then I cried."

Her pride in her family is unmistakable. Aside from her large extended family, Angie's cheering section when she was presented with her 50-year pin included her husband, her son and his wife, granddaughter Riley and grandson Reid. After their mother was killed, she also is raising 23-year-old AJ and 22-year-old Brian.

She married Bonifacio Nov. 21, 2004, the same day her parents exchanged vows. "We've been together a long time...and he gets me."

"I am really blessed," she said, "by my family and my profession...and I believe God has guided me to this place."

One of her charities is Wounded Warriors. "Through our Lion's Club, I bake 20

loaves of banana bread and cookies for our wounded," she said.

Rumor has it she also has baked birthday cakes for her co-workers...and for every service at Zoeller's, Angie is sure to remove roses from the casket spray to present to family members at the close of the interment. "I try to find the tightest rosebuds and then tell the family to hang them upside down to dry and to add it to their precious memories of their loved one."

If she hadn't been encouraged to become a funeral director, Angelina Morales Sanchez believes she would probably have become an attorney. "I'm terrible about speaking my mind and arguing...and especially when I'm right, you can't shut me up," she admitted. "I always take up for the underdog and fight for the underprivileged. Some have wondered why I didn't become a lawyer. I get that from my Mom. She was spunky and loud. Dad was quiet and reserved."

"Dad was kind and compassionate. He was respected because he was there to help, no matter what. He never said no to anyone, never closed his door. Color made no difference," she remembered.

"He was my biggest mentor...and with his guidance, I became the funeral director I am today, understanding a family, at this time in their lives, needs kindness and compassion as well as a good listener. This, to me, is one of the most important gifts you can offer a family, listening to their needs and then meeting them...and I've always believed, it doesn't cost you anything to go the extra mile." ★



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A Lesson from the Sea for Funeral Service



From outer space, the first recognizable landmark on Earth is the Great Barrier Reef, the largest living organism on the planet. Located off the eastern coast of Australia, this enormous reef is the largest in the world, covering more than 186,000 square miles.

The world's second largest reef can be

found off the coast of Belize in Central America.

While coral reefs look as though they are made of rocks or plants, corals are definitely animals. Coral colonies are composed of many tiny, cup-shaped animals called "coral polyps." A single polyp may be as large as a saucer or smaller than the head of a pin.

Over the years millions of coral polyps in colonies create the framework of the coral reef. Coral reefs grow very slowly. It may take up to a hundred years for a coral reef to grow one to three feet.

Alone, these polyps are powerless, but when they join together in colonies, they work cooperatively to build coral reefs, which not only serve as nurturing habitats for other sea life, but also — as in the case of barrier reefs — form a tremendous amount of protection for the coastline.

Now, think of TFDA within this context. Alone, a funeral director has the power to direct funerals and to support his/her lifestyle. As an owner, this individual's power multiplies according to staff size and numbers of services conducted each year.

When funeral directors join TFDA, their individual power is increased exponentially. As an example, the power of the group to exert itself into the process of passing or

killing new legislation becomes substantial compared to the power of a single director in the same situation.

Consider the single coral polyp floating in the sea as juxtaposed to the colonies of polyps working together to create a barrier reef. Unattached, there is no way for the colonies to shield the coastline, but when they come together, these same colonies share their strength, structure and power.

The same is true when it comes to new products and information and the interpretation of these so they can be easily applied to the individual director's practice.

Having a network of trusted professionals in TFDA, directors often have the advantage of speed, i.e., the faster a firm can inject change or new products or equipment into its offerings, the greater that firm's power to disrupt the market it serves.

When your movements as a firm can be anticipated by the competition, you pose no threat...but when a new practice is unanticipated, you take the upper hand in the marketplace.

General George S. Patton understood the need to constantly bring the fight to the enemy. Gen. Patton also clearly understood the value of speed in the way he conducted operations.

During World War II, speed of movement often enabled troops to minimize any advantage the enemy may have temporarily gained. Even more importantly, Patton realized speed allowed him to take full advantage of every favorable opportunity...and combining speed with determination, each successive advantage was more easily gained than the previous one.

Like colonies of coral polyps coming together, they can take in more nutrition and, as a group, their rate of growth is faster than a single polyp eating his fill of plankton and other nourishment. Like the coral colony, an association of funeral professionals can take in more information, analyze and digest new trends faster, even tweaking new practices to fit regional traditions.

To current members, membership in the state's largest, most powerful voice in funeral service offers not only a rich and nurturing experience, a strong social and business network and a powerful barrier against the flotsam and jetsam of partisan politics. ★

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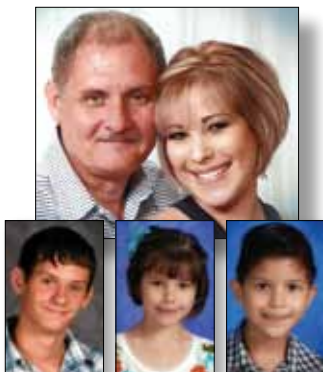
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The Importance of Identifying the Elephant in the Room



The Mfuwe Lodge in Zambia was built next to a mango grove. As it happened, this grove had been visited by several generations of one family of elephants between late-October and mid-December for many years, a season that corresponded with when the mangos ripened and fell to the ground.

One year, when the elephants returned, they found the luxury lodge in the way. Never forgetting the rewards of their visits to their favorite grove of mangos, the elephants simply ambled through the lodge's lobby, swaying right past the front desk to reach the grove of trees.

Although this story depicts — literally — an elephant (or in this case, a family of elephants) in the room, the phrase “The elephant in the room” more commonly describes an issue that goes unacknowledged. The elephant might be inferred or subtly mentioned, but in most cases, the elephant/

issue remains unnamed.

Anyone who has worked in any business — be it your neighborhood Jiffy Lube, a Starbucks or a funeral home — has seen lots of elephants in the room, either singularly or in herds. These “elephants” might be the dysfunction in a family everyone is aware of but nobody wants to talk about. Or, it could be the lack of accountability of a manager, the burnout of a colleague or poor performance of another. Whatever the issue, the elephant goes unnamed and unmentioned.

Unchecked egos, weak operating agreements and poor hiring practices keep elephants lurking. Any of these elephants in the room also can lead to significant failures we have witnessed, like the NASA o-ring disaster and Bernard Madoff's betrayal of his clients' trust.

As a leader, your goal is not to prevent elephants from entering your team. No,

the real objective should be to create a culture that encourages the rapid and risk-free identification of elephants. There are complex dynamics that create and keep an elephant in the room, so here is one simple strategy you can use to help your team identify elephants:

Agree to rules of engagement, which make it easier for team members to take a stand and do the right thing.

Think back to your school days. Each teacher, usually on the first day of the year, explained the classroom rules of engagement: raise your hand if you have a question, request a hall pass to use the restroom, place your homework on your desk each morning, respect others' property, etc.

These rules helped both the teacher and students focus on the most important thing in the classroom — learning.

Defining the rules of engagement can help your team, employees or group focus on what is most important — service, results and personal growth.

The rules of engagement can address how to make decisions, share information, consider ideas for improvement, review performance, analyze prevailing protocols and/or prioritize and resolve conflicts.

Rules of engagement do not have to be written in perfect prose, but they must fit your team members or employees and be embraced by them.

Here are other examples:

- If an issue is not resolved after five e-mails, you must meet (phone or in person) to resolve the issue.
- All reports must be reviewed by at least one other team person before delivery to the next level.
- Customer-related tasks always have a higher priority than internal tasks.
- No employee meeting lasts more than one hour.
- Every project is debriefed for lessons learned within one week of project completion.

Excellent leaders keep the rules of engagement visible and use them to make decisions... even small decisions. These leaders also rely on their entire team to ensure each member (including themselves!) is performing within the rules of engagement. This encourages and empowers the team to uphold the rules and point out elephants as they appear. ★

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San Antonio Director Named NextGen Professional of the Year

Selected Independent Funeral Homes has named Helen Loring Dear of Loring Mortuaries in San Antonio as the 2017 recipient of its NextGen Professional of the Year Award. Loring Dear was honored at a ceremony at the opening reception of the group's annual NextGen Seminar, held January 22-26 at the Iberostar Cancun, Mexico. Recipients are presented a physical award and reimbursed for the meeting registration. The award highlights career achievements, community involvement and achievements of funeral professionals under the age of 50.



Loring Dear, President of Porter Loring Mortuaries, began her journey in the funeral profession at the age of 16 as a housekeeper at her family's firm. Since then, she has worked in virtually every position within the firm, performing each role with the utmost compassion for the families she serves. Active in numerous organizations in her profession and in her community, and her in-

volvement in Selected has played an integral part of her development and growth. She is a Selected Study Groups participant and a graduate of Selected's Leadership Academy, an intensive two-year leadership training program. Graduates of this program complete a Capstone project to demonstrate and apply the leadership tools developed over the course of the program.

The focus of her Capstone project was on teen suicide rates in the San Antonio area. She soon determined that there were few resources for teens in her community and wanted that to change. For a year, she worked with several local nonprofit directors to plan a Roundtable on Teen Suicide. The meeting resulted in the creation of the Alamo Area Teen Suicide Prevention Coalition (AATSPC).

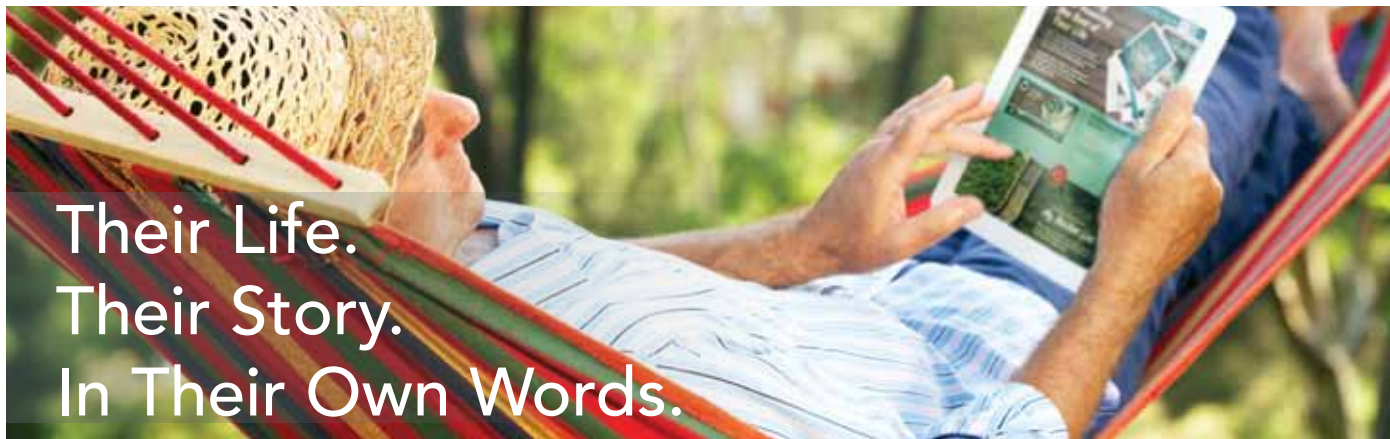
"I have been personally involved with and marveled at the community commitment that Helen has made which resulted in establishment of the AATSPC. Helen's leadership regarding this pressing issue has now evolved into a major effort with staffing,

a Teen Advisory Board and participation by almost every school district in the San Antonio region," said Marian Sokol Ph.D., and Executive Director of the Children's Bereavement Center of South Texas. "She has been recognized in our community as a dynamic young woman who is among the 'Rising Stars of Texas.'"

In 2016, Helen was chosen as one of San Antonio Business Journal's "40 under 40," honoring young leaders succeeding in business and contributing to their community. "Helen undoubtedly has a bright future and is a remarkable reflection on her family, her community, her business and Selected," noted one judge on the Professional of the Year Award panel.

Perhaps Helen's father, Porter Loring, III, put it best when he said, "Beyond the professional accolades is a devoted wife and mother of two young children, who ensures that she devotes time to her family as well as taking care of the business. Integrity and perseverance are at the core of everything that Helen does."

Further information on Selected Independent Funeral Homes can be found at www.selectedfuneralhomes.org.



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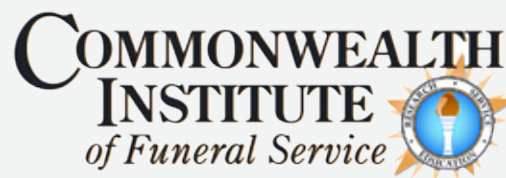
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Ballard

Everette Ballard, Jr. passed away on February 9 in Houston surrounded by his family. Everette was a licensed funeral director and embalmer for 56 years and was a long-time member of TFDA and SETFDA.

Everette was born on February 11, 1939 in Richmond, Texas to Everette and Bobbie Ashley Ballard. He grew up in Rosenberg, Texas and graduated from Lamar High School in 1957. On July 11, 1958, Everette graduated from Commonwealth College of Sciences, in Houston, with a diploma in Funeral Services. He worked diligently and long hours to complete the state required apprenticeship to earn his Embalmers license in September 1960 and his Funeral Directors license in April 1961.

During the 1960s, Everette was a sheriff's deputy for the Fort Bend County Sheriff's Office and also worked at Garmany & Carden Funeral Directors in Rosenberg, Texas. He moved to McAllen, Texas in 1971, where he worked for Virgil Wilson Funeral Home in McAllen, Texas. In the late 1970s, Everette owned his own funeral home, Blooming Grove & Frost Funeral Home, in Blooming Grove & Frost, Texas area. In the 1980s, he moved to Alvin, Texas

and worked for Froberg Funeral Home in Alvin; and later worked at Jack Rowe Funeral Home in League City.

On March 31, 1986, Everette joined The Dodge Company and would become one of the most knowledgeable and well respected representatives in Texas. He served mostly funeral homes in Southeast Texas, but also called on firms in South Texas for quite some time.

On May 11, 1991, Everette married his beloved Janie, in Houston. They spent wonderful time together traveling many roads in Texas. Together, they visited many funeral homes, attended numerous conventions and association meetings, and visited with countless funeral directors, which often developed into long and cherished friendships.

After 25 years of service, Everette retired from The Dodge Company in 2011. He did not retire from traveling the roads of Texas as he started a transfer service serving several funeral homes and others in the industry. He also began working for Schmidt Funeral Home, in Katy, where he was currently working.

Throughout his career, Everette was an amazing mentor to many funeral directors, embalmers, and others in the funeral in-

dustry. He often served as a preceptor with Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service mentoring students and provisional licensees. He taught continuing education classes and also taught seminars on embalming techniques including seminars in other countries. He was an active member and vice president of the Commonwealth Alumni Association. Everette loved setting up travel for the Alumni Association, especially cruises that included continuing education. He was also a member of the Lions Club.

Everette was a member of the Texas Funeral Directors Association and an active member of the Southeast Texas Funeral Directors Association. Over the years, he has been the chosen recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the Texas Funeral Directors Association Sales Representative of the Year in 1999. He was also recognized by the Texas Funeral Directors Association with 50 years of service as a funeral director in 2009.

Everette was a caring and loving husband and father. He was accepting and not judgmental. Everette totally forgot his stepchildren were his stepchildren because to him they were all his children. Second only to his love for Janie and his family, Everette loved to fish especially salt water fishing. Everette and Janie loved to travel and went on many cruises. Recently they travelled to Germany where they spent 30 days sightseeing and spending time with their daughter and her family.

He is survived by his wife, Janie Ballard; his children: Neysa Choate and her husband Marty, Noel Ballard and his wife Susan, Tobi Shea and her husband Gregg, Courtney Ballard, Janelle Lyles, Darlene Thomasson and her husband Timothy; his grandchildren: Cameron Choate, Taylor Choate, Chloe Ballard, Andrew Ballard, Zachary Murphy, Jessica Morton, Alicia Shea, Kaitlynn Shea, Brooke Johnson, Faith Dahl, Brennan Dahl, Brandy Aguiluz and husband Chris, Nicole Evans and her husband Jared, Thad Thomasson, and Melissa Thomasson; and his great grandchildren: Ashley Aguiluz, Sarah Aguiluz, Kayla Aguiluz, Lucy Aguiluz, Nathan Evans, Tiffany Evans, Orion Raschke, Haley Raschke, Katelyn Light, Stephen Nathaniel “Nate” Morton.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Everette & Bobbie Ballard, and by a great grandson, Caston Thomasson.

Funeral services were held on February 13 at the Schmidt Funeral Home Grand Parkway Chapel, in Katy, with Rev. Daniel Schramm officiating. Interment will be private.

To honor Everette's passion and commitment to funeral service education, the Everette Ballard Memorial Scholarship will be established. The family requests memorial gifts should be made payable to the Commonwealth Alumni Association, 415 Barren Springs Drive, Houston, Texas 77090, for the Everette Ballard Memorial Scholarship.

Clayton

Elizabeth "Libby" Neal Clayton, 76, passed away February 14. She is the wife of TFDA Past President David Clayton with Clayton Funeral Home in Pearland, Texas.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Gus and Gladys Neal; and sister, Doris Toler. Libby is survived by her loving and devoted husband of 58 years, David Clayton; sons, John G. Clayton and wife, Brenda, Neal Clayton and wife, Amber; daughter, Debbie Clayton Lee; sisters, Alice Pearson, and husband, Carl, Patsy Moore and husband, Dewayne; brother-in-law, Fred Toler; eight grandchildren, four great grandchildren with one on the way; and a host of other family and friends.

Libby grew up in the Valley and graduated from San Benito High School. She met a young man who was in the service at the Naval Auxiliary Air Station – Port Isabel, Texas. For 58 years Libby and David raised a family, ran a successful company, traveled the world and carried their family on many of those adventures. She made friends everywhere she went and she could remember names and numbers of everyone. Libby always went out of her way to make people feel special, whether it was a thoughtful gift for someone or putting on a party for 50 at her home with all the bells and whistles. She loved to do for others, especially family and friends. You seldom saw her that she wasn't planning something or talking on the phone. The phone for Libby was just an extension of her hand as she used it to stay in touch with everyone. Libby was very close to her sisters and wanted to talk to them every day if she could. When she became a "MeMe" it was one of her proudest accomplishments and no one could out spoil her grandchildren. Libby loved them dearly and it was her grandchildren that were part of the reason she agreed to move to Houston after living in the Dallas area for more than 50

years. Even as her health began to worsen, she never let that get her down. Libby was up every morning bright and early in her wheelchair to start her day. Just when she thought her grandchildren were her greatest joy, she found even more joy with her great grandchildren. She was always so proud of all her family and loved to share her joy with anyone who would listen. Libby was a lady with true grace, poise and courage, even after losing her sight, her ability to walk or cook for her family which provided her favorite memories. She will be greatly missed by all who knew and loved her.

Donations may be made in Libby's honor to the Texas Funeral Directors Association in Austin at www.tfda.com or the charity of your choice.

Services in Pearland, Texas were held February 17 at Clayton Funeral Home in Pearland, Texas, with Pastor Keith Anderson officiating. Services in Terrell, Texas were held February 18 at Max Slayton Funerals and Cremations, with Pastor Keith Clayton officiating. Interment followed at Oakland Memorial Park in Terrell, Texas.

Dodge

Mike Dodge (legally named George B. Dodge, Jr.) died January 29 after dealing with Parkinson's disease and declining health for the last few years. He happily spent most of his life as the vice president and treasurer of The Dodge Company, working with his brother Jake (Arnold) and later both daughters, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This second home, and other favorite place, was Pemaquid Beach, Maine, where there will be a second service and burial later this year.



Services were held Feb. 18 at the Sweeney Funeral Home in Billerica, Mass. For anyone who would like to make a donation in Mike's name, please consider the Lincoln County Animal Shelter, P.O. Box 7, Edgecomb, ME 04556 (his favorite), or a charity of your choice.

Marshall

Marty Sue Marshall, owner of Charlie Marshall Funeral Homes & Crematory in Aransas Pass and Rockport, passed away on Feb. 12. She was born in Beeville, Texas on October 25, 1952 to Violet Marshall Duncan and Charlie Marshall.

She was known to most people as a whirl-

wind force who certainly exemplified that dynamite does come in small packages. In the last month of her life, Marty Sue was diagnosed with an incurable cancer, and left this world to be with the Lord on February 12, 2017.

Marty Sue went to Aransas Pass High School, where she was a cheerleader and voted "Most Popular". She spent her adult life continuing her dedication to the Coastal Bend area, working alongside her father, Charlie, in their business, Charlie Marshall Funeral Homes and Crematory. She was his right hand gal, and after his passing, Marty Sue ran the company with the same commitment and ethical integrity that her father had taught her. She loved her community deeply and believed in giving back. In 2009, Marty Sue founded and became CEO of the Rockport Rockettes, an exclusive ladies club, whose mission is to celebrate friendship and provide charitable support to local organizations across Aransas County. She was so very proud of this organization. She was also a member of the Women's Club of Aransas Pass, the Rockport Center for the Arts and was involved in the Aransas Pass Chamber of Commerce.

She was a strong supporter and contributor to many local community events and non-profit organizations, including the Humane Society and Adoption Center of Rockport/Fulton, Aransas County 4-H, and the Rockport Center for the Arts.

Marty Sue had a way of making each and every person she touched feel special, and she could light up a room like no other. Her energy and spirit were infectious, and while she expected perfection in many parts of her life, you always knew where you stood with the direct honesty she offered freely. In a time of need, you wanted Marty Sue on your side, as she was a warrior at heart for the things she believed in, and her loyalty was immense.

In her younger years, Marty Sue loved gardening, children, horses, and painting. She played the piano and the guitar, and took dance lessons. As she grew older, the source of her passion revolved around her friends, her family, the Rockettes and her business. She had a knack for getting things done and making things happen, and in a timely manner. She was a true dichotomy: Bossy and to the point, and yet she had a soft sensitivity about her.

Marty Sue's family was her pride and joy. She is survived by her daughter, Bridget Sue

Ramey St. John, and son-in-law, Bruce St. John, of Austin; her daughter, Jordan Taylor Marshall of Rockport. Her stepson, Dennis Ramey, and his wife, Maria, and her stepdaughter, Ralee Dawn Ramey; also her brother, Bill Marshall; and many nieces, nephews, and lifelong friends, and was graced with her grand puppy, Noah.

The family would like to offer a special thank you to Frances Howell, who was by her side during her final days, to Dr. Bruce who provided outstanding care and comfort, and to Harbor Hospice who launched into action when needed, providing the utmost level of care. Additionally, the family would like to express immense gratitude to the wonderful and dedicated Charlie Marshall Funeral Homes Family, who will continue to serve families in the community in the spirit with which Marty Sue and Charlie demonstrated.

Funeral services were held February 18 at Charlie Marshall Funeral Homes and Crematory in Aransas Pass. There will be a private family burial.

Marty Sue's spunk will live on in those who adored her.

Expressions of sympathy may be made by donations to Humane Society and Adoption Center of Rockport/Fulton.

Robertson

Delbert Wayne Robertson, father of former Texas Funeral Service Commissioner Patrick Robertson and grandfather to TFDA Secretary Treasurer Chuck Robertson, passed away on January 26.

He was born June 17, 1934 in Clarendon to George Andrew "Andy" and Sallie Elizabeth Robertson. Delbert is a native of Clarendon and a 1952 graduate of Clarendon High School. Delbert is also a 1953 graduate of Landig College of Mortuary Science in Houston. He then volunteered for the U.S. Army near the end of the Korean War and was stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso. In August 1953, he married Patsy Darlene Wallace in Clarendon.

He returned home to Clarendon in 1956 and became a funeral director for Murphy Funeral Home for almost 10 years before obtaining a job with Blackburn-Shaw Funeral Directors in Amarillo in the mid 1960s. Delbert then came back home and

worked again for Murphy Funeral Home. He then opened Clarendon Funeral Home in October 1973.

In December 1973, Delbert Robertson along with Maurice Schooler and Mack Gordon, funeral directors from Amarillo, purchased Murphy Funeral Home. Murphy Funeral Home and Clarendon Funeral Home ownerships combined and the name was changed to Schooler-Gordon-Robertson Funeral Directors.

In 1975, Patrick Robertson, Delbert's son, graduated from mortuary school and joined the firm. In January 1977, Delbert and Patrick bought out Schooler-Gordon and the name changed to Robertson Funeral Directors. In 1998, Delbert and Patrick opened a satellite location in Claude. In October 2003, his grandson Chuck joined the firm. The Robertsons purchased funeral homes in McLean in 2009, Shamrock in 2011, and Memphis in 2009, and bought out their competitor in Memphis in 2015. After Patrick's death in 2014, he then became partners with his grandson, Chuck. He has been a licensed funeral director and embalmer in Texas since 1957 and was rec-

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ognized as a 60-year licensee at the Texas Funeral Directors Association convention this past June.

Delbert is a lifetime member of the Clarendon Volunteer Fire Dept. and served as the Fire Chief of the Department for 32 years from 1980 until 2012 when he retired from that position and has been a lifetime member since 1953. He also a certified firefighter through State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas.

Delbert has served more years as a regent than any other board member for Clarendon College, and is the longest continuous member of the Clarendon College board of regents. He was a member of the very first independent board of regents and was a board member when the new Clarendon College campus was built and opened in 1968. He has served in various board offices and has served under many of the college presidents. He is also a member of the Clarendon Lions Club where he has served in many offices including past president. He was a member of the Donley County Hospital District board when the new hospital was built in 1971 and held various offices on that board as well.

He is also a member of American Legion Adamson-Lane Post 287 Hedley Chapter & is a 50-year member of the Clarendon Masonic Lodge #700, AF & AM.

Delbert has been awarded funeral director of the year three times by the Panhandle Funeral Directors Association for the years 1979, 1985-1986, & 2004-2005. He also was awarded the Panhandle Firemen's & Fire Marshals' Association Firefighter of the Year in 2008. The Clarendon Chamber of Commerce bestowed their highest honor, The Saints Roost Award, on him in 1984 and again in 2001. In August 2009, he married Naomi Lowe in Red River and they made their home in Clarendon and Shamrock.

Delbert is preceded in death by his parents; his first wife, Patsy on June 7, 2008; his son, Patrick on December 22, 2014; his step daughter, Linda Allison in 2015; two sisters, Maxine Howe and Georgia Speed; a brother, Glenn Robertson; a daughter in law, Edie Robertson.

Survivors include: his wife, Naomi Lowe of Shamrock; a daughter, Debbie Thompson and husband Michael of Clarendon; three grandchildren, Greg Collins and wife Jennifer of Bushland, Tiffanie Word of

Clarendon, and Chuck Robertson and wife Amanda of Clarendon; seven great grandchildren, Abi & Maci Collins, Tristan Black, Gavin & Aiden Word, Jaxon Robertson, and Keighen Crump; his sister, Margaret Vines of Wellington; a daughter in law, Vicky Robertson of Clarendon; three step sons, Gary Lowe and Dennis Lowe both of Shamrock, and Boe Lowe and wife Sue of Lumberton; a step daughter, Glenda Harvey and husband Mike of Jonestown; a step son in law, Con Allison of Shamrock; his adopted grandsons, Cameron Word and Brayden Phillips; numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and step grandchildren and step great grandchildren.

The family suggest that memorials be made to the Clarendon College Foundation, Clarendon Volunteer Fire Department, Citizens Cemetery Association, or a favorite charity.

Services were held January 30 in the Clarendon College Harned Sisters Fine Arts Auditorium in Clarendon with Rev. Bill Hodges officiating. Interment followed at Citizens Cemetery in Clarendon.

Arrangements were at the direction of Robertson Funeral Directors.

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APEX Continuing Education Solutions is now partnering with TFDA to help you meet your continuing education needs. To qualify for the TFDA partnership, simply go to TFDA.com and click on "Continuing Ed-

ucation" and then on the Apex link. You will be taken to their website where you can sign up for CE hours. TFSC has approved all the continuing education modules. It is possible to get all 16 hours, including the required hours, through this program. You may study the modules and take the tests online, or order the modules through the website and have them mailed to you. The cost is reasonable and the process user-friendly.

Credit & Debit Card Processing

Authorized Credit Card Systems has no start up fees, no monthly fees, no contracts and no cancellation fees. Their credit card processing rates are very competitive and may be lower than the rates you are paying now. For a quick comparison of rates, or to add a new location or for questions regarding your existing service, please contact Anthony Truitt at (512)659-5592 or anthony@authorizedccs.com.

Electricity

SimplySmart Solutions offers competitive non-biased electricity bids from multiple Retail Electric Providers with personal attention, accessibility and customer service. The team works together with each customer to ensure that member's electricity needs are met in a timely and cost-effective way.

Contact: Jessica Dusek at (512) 691-6260 or Jessica.duske@nrgsimplysmart.com.

Final Assistance

Full Circle Care is a unique service will provide your families with the assistance they need to finalize matters such as credit cards, bank accounts, credit bureaus, pensions, social security and much more. They make calls with the family on a three-way conference call. For more information, please call Matt Van Drimmelen, (888) 713-4625, matt@finalassistance.com

Funeral Financing

Stairway Lending is a quick and easy way for your family to secure a loan for funeral expenses. They assist the family in their time of need from a large pool of lending institutions. It is much like a personal loan. The funeral director has no obligation to follow

up for payments. For more information, contact Josh Holloway (205) 572-5640 or email jholloway@stairwaylending.com. Website: www.stairwaylending.com

Group Health – Retirement (401k)

Advanced Benefit Solutions offers TFDA members a free confidential evaluation of their employee benefit program. ABS can offer proven cost-saving alternatives and increased benefits. Products include employee retirement programs, group life insurance, long-term disability, dental and group medical insurance. Call Ron Seibel at (800) 291-2009 or fax (512) 582-9493. Customer service and satisfaction is guaranteed.

Internet/Phone/Cable

SimplySmart Solutions can help with service and/or equipment. Let us know when your current contract is expiring if you want to improve internet speeds and/or phone services to make your business more efficient. Contact: Jessica Dusek at (512) 691-6260 x104 or Jessica.duske@nrgsimplysmart.com.

Online Newsletters

MultiView produces and provides a weekly email newsletter, Funeral Trends, to the TFDA membership. The information in the newsletter is industry related covering a variety of news stories from across the country. They also sell advertising on the TFDA website. Members have the opportunity to purchase advertisements in the newsletter or on the website. For information on advertising rates, please contact Geoffrey Forneret at (469) 420-2629 or email gforneret@multibriefs.com.

Phone "On Hold" Systems

HEAR HERE "On Hold" Systems offers customized music and message "on hold" service to TFDA and its members. They can help you project your professional image each time you find it necessary to place a caller "on hold" by creating custom productions especially for your business. They are proud to offer their services without any equipment to buy or contracts to sign. You can hear a sample of their service by calling the TFDA office. For more information about this great image enhancing marketing tool, call Vince at (800) 613-3197 or visit them online at www.hearhere.net.

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MEMBER SERVICES These services are provided to TFDA members only.

AT&T Discounted Cell Phone Service TFDA members are eligible for a 10 percent discount. This is for personal accounts under users' social security numbers. Business accounts are not eligible. They offer some great specials not available anywhere else. To access the link, you must go to the Members Only portion of the TFDA website and log-in. You may also take your membership card to any AT&T store to verify eligibility.

TFDA Job Bank assists funeral homes, commercial embalming establishments and crematories looking for personnel. Information is posted to the TFDA website for 90 days unless otherwise stated. Using the TFDA job bank significantly increases your applicants and shortens your search time. Licensed funeral directors and embalmers are encouraged to email their resumes to joyce@tfda.com so that potential employers can contact them. Contact the TFDA office at (512) 442-2304 for more information.

Verizon Wireless Service TFDA members (all existing and new customer Verizon accounts) will receive an 8 percent discount off their monthly bill along with discounts of up to 25 percent off all accessories. This discount applies to business accounts and personal accounts. All activation fees will be waived for new services provided, along with early termination fees up to \$350. All agreements will be for a duration of two years. Apple products will not receive discounts. To initiate your account, contact Will Godfrey (832) 349-5106, will.godfrey@cellularsales.com.

El Dorado Motor Group offers TFDA members and their employees the ability to purchase GM vehicles at fleet pricing. El Dorado Motors will sell all eligible vehicles at GM Supplier Pricing as detailed on the manufacturer's invoice. This is truly a "no hassles/no haggle" process. For each vehicle purchased, they will donate \$50 to the Colin Owens Memorial Scholarship Fund. Contact Tom Bresnahan in McKinney, Texas, at (972) 569-0101.

Funeral Service Credit Union, located in Springfield, Illinois, is a state-chartered credit union established in 1983 that provides financial services to funeral service professionals, their employees and immediate families. This credit union is endorsed by NFDA, many other national funeral service organizations and state funeral directors associations. They offer many services and very competitive rates. For more information, visit www.fscunet.org or call toll-free (866) 701-3728 or (217) 546-5480.

Music Licensing TFDA members are eligible for the same low rate for music licensing as is available to NFDA members. NFDA allows members of the state associations to receive a discounted music license. The 2017 music license is \$246. This is a considerable discount over the price you would pay to become licensed directly with each agency (ASCAP, BMI and SESAC). For a copy of the 2017 NFDA music license renewal form, go to www.tfda.com and click on "Helpful Forms." Failure to obtain an annual license may result in substantial fines.

Men's Wearhouse Men's Wearhouse is the go-to menswear store for funeral directors of all ages. Superior suit selection is broad on styles and brand names. To get discounts go to www.tfda.com, then Members Only.

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2017 TFDA CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March

21 Tu
 30 Th

Texas Funeral Service Commission
 South Central Meeting

Austin
 Austin

April

4 Tu
 6 Th
 10 Mon
 12, 13
 18 Tu
 19 W
 25 Tu
 26, 27, 28
 27 Th

East Texas Meeting
 Southeast Texas Meeting
 North Texas Meeting
 South Texas Meeting
 TFDA Services, Inc. Board
 TFDA Board Meeting
 Panhandle Meeting
 Advocacy Summit
 West Texas Meeting

Mineola
 College Station
 Fort Worth
 Laredo
 Austin
 Austin
 Lubbock
 Washington, DC
 TBD

June

4-7

TFDA Convention

Austin

August

7, 8, 9

TFDA Leadership

The Woodlands

October

24 Tu
 25 W
 29 – Nov. 1

TFDA Services, Inc. Board
 TFDA Board Meeting
 NFDA Convention

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NASA Webcasts Funeral for Eugene Cernan, Last Man on the Moon



Eugene Cernan, who died Jan. 16 at age 82, is known for being the last man to set foot on the moon as part of NASA's Apollo missions. It was perhaps fitting that his Jan. 24 Houston funeral was webcast world-wide. All those of planet Earth (with Internet access) could watch the funeral on Space.com, courtesy of NASA-TV.

The hour and half service, held at St. Martins Episcopal Church in Houston, now lives on perpetually on YouTube, where many high-profile funerals reside for mourners to watch.

Cernan was a NASA astronaut and U.S. Navy

captain, and he flew in space three times, two of which were missions to the moon as part of the Apollo program and an earlier Gemini flight where he took a two-hour spacewalk.

On his first visit to the moon, Apollo 10, the crew circled and did "everything but" land. He finally got his chance to touch down during Apollo 17, NASA's last moon mission, where he was the final person to leave the lunar surface.

With Cernan's death, six out of the 12 humans who walked on the moon are now deceased.

The funeral was under the

direction of Geo. H. Lewis & Sons. At a later date the family will gather for a private interment at the Texas State Cemetery in Austin, where full military honors will be rendered.

"I lost another friend and the world lost another hero," said Apollo 11 lunar module pilot Buzz Aldrin.

"With the passing of the First Man — Neil Armstrong, and the passing of the Last Man — Gene Cernan, it is up to us 'Middle Men' to carry on the spirit of Apollo into the future for our nation and the world," Aldrin wrote on his website.

"Gene Cernan will always

be remembered as the 'last man on the Moon' — at least until the next person walks there," Michael Neufeld, a curator in the space history division at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C., wrote on the Smithsonian museum's website. "Perhaps the most articulate of the moon-walking astronauts, he felt that it was his mission to make his audiences feel as if they had been there too."

"As we say goodbye, it seems fitting to share the last line in Gene's book, as he explains his experience of walking on the moon to his then five-year-old granddaughter, 'Your Poppie went to Heaven. He really did.'" 🌟

Cross over to a better future



Wilbert ESP is more than a cloud-based application for funeral professionals. It's a flexible, customized program that facilitates education and the selection of a burial vault for families.

Through slides, video and funeral professional guidance, families concisely learn about burial vaults and personalization options. An on-screen display of the specific Wilbert vaults that you offer - along with your funeral home's retail pricing - guides families through the selection process. At the end, a summary of the selection and other details such as service dates and times for at-need arrangements is generated and stored.

Isn't it time to cross over to a better Educated Selection Process?

Watch the Wilbert ESP video: wilbert.hmsbox.com/esp

Contact your Wilbert Funeral Services representative today!

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