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*The Association of
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Homes of Virginia*

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To my friends and colleagues:

Fresh off a productive and very insightful 2014 Annual Convention in Virginia Beach, I would like to thank all that attended to make it a successful event. Alan Creedy gave a presentation that would make even the most seasoned owner/director think about the direction funeral service is heading. I must say that the Casino Night was a blast, my kids are still talking about that night.



For me the convention was a very special weekend we paid tribute to life of Bonnie Smith, one of the founders of IFHV and I was inducted to serve as your President. It is truly an honor to hold this position, for my father Robert N. Baker, III is one of the founders of IFHV and a past president. So the shoes to fill are large!

Our association is continuing to grow and I truly feel the reason for this growth is the value provided to our members. The value provided to our members not only comes in the form of continuing education, but being informed on the ever changing legislation in Richmond, to the staying in front of what may be coming that may affect our profession. IFHV has and is providing helpful information to our members fast and in form that is useful. We continue to stay on top of the legislative process in Richmond with the expert help of Bo and Bruce Keeney. Their leadership is invaluable to our association!

My goals while president are simple: to continue on our current path, to continue to provide our members the best and most current information in regards to legislation, education, regulations and best practices. Something new I would like to develop is a forum for IFHV. A forum in which members can ask other members general questions to help make good business discussions and to see what other are doing that works for them.

Why reinvent the wheel! I have found that someone else has already had the good idea, so why not ask colleges what works for them. Most often at meetings the most productive time is during general discussions, so expanding this may be helpful. An example question would be: "Who still has pews in their chapel. I am thinking of taking mine out, could others tell me any pros or cons to doing this." And the answer is.....!

I look forward to serving IFHV during my term as President. Please, if you have any question or concern about our association send me an email at blake@rwbakerfh.com or give me a call here at the R.W. Baker & Co. Funeral Home at (757) 539-4691.

I wish all the best!

Sincerely,

Blake Baker, IFHV President



Virginia Board of
Funeral Directors & Embalmers



The Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers has received calls from a FH in Newport News, VA and from a Farmville, VA police detective regarding different instances of a similar scam scenario. The common elements of the scam are:

- Someone calls a funeral home reporting that there has been a death in the family and the body is at a hospital in Norfolk, VA. (The Farmville detective stated that the hospital’s security specialist reported that they have had several reports of fraud involving deceased individuals at their hospital.)
- The caller states that FH handled a funeral for another member of the family. In both reported cases, the FH did handle the named funeral.
- The caller states that the deceased had insurance policies and eventually asks the funeral home to send money for transportation because the caller does not have the money to travel. The caller tells the FH that they can put the money on the bill so that the money will be available to the FH when the insurance is received.
- The amount of money requested has been less than \$300.

In the case reported by the FH, the scam involved an out of state FH. At one point, the scammer conducted a conference call with both funeral homes. It was the out of state funeral home that was defrauded.

Regards,

Lynne H. Helmick, MPA

Lynne H. Helmick, MPA
Deputy Executive Director
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A photograph of Steve Phelps, Vice President, sitting at a desk. He is wearing a white dress shirt and has a goatee. The background is a blurred office setting.

Steve Phelps, Vice President –

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Drive Through Funerals....The next Big Thing?



SAGINAW, MI (WNEM) -

Most people these days lead very busy lives. That's one reason owners of a local funeral home decided to make saying your final goodbyes a little more convenient.

The funeral home now has a drive-thru window. "You may find people who are afraid of funeral homes, now they can view their loved ones from the convenience of their car," said Ivan Phillips, owner of Paradise Funeral Chapel.

Phillips unveiled the drive-thru funeral services on Sunday.

"I wanted to bring something to Saginaw that we've never had here before," he said.

In the past, Phillips has allowed disabled family members to watch video of funerals and take part in visitation services over the Internet using cameras.

"The funeral industry is changing rapidly. So my intent was to bring something here that was accessible to the community," Phillips said.

As cars pull up to the drive-thru, curtains move back after a sensor in the ground detects a vehicle's weight. Sharise Phillips, manager of the funeral home, said the drive-thru offers protection from inclement weather and comfort for the disabled.

"We wanted to provide convenience and accessibility for our customers for the times and days they don't want to get out of their vehicle," she said.

Visitors at the event welcomed technology into the funeral business.

"I think it shows how far advanced people are, especially since we live in such an advanced society," Sylvia Brantley said.

Phillips is aware of critics who may conclude this may be an undignified way to part ways, but he said people should just give it a chance.

The idea is garnering mixed reaction from the community.

"We've been getting a lot of negative feedback because most people don't know how it works," Phillips said. He's getting a lot of flack from people upset about the drive-thru window.

"When you enter the drive thru you'll drop a memorial into the memorial box, sign the register book, drive forward and you'll be able to sit in the privacy of your vehicle for three minutes," Phillips said.

Paradise is providing the drive thru option to families at no additional charge. It's designed to allow more people to see someone who has passed away, even if they can't make the traditional visitation because of work, disability or other challenges.

"That would be an after hour visitation for the family if they choose to do so," Phillips said.

Anyone can drive up and pay their respects to the deceased.

Phillips said the design, which uses sensors to open and close the curtains when cars pull up and leave, costs more than \$300,000. He believes it's well worth it. He said everyone should have the option of drive thru visitation.

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Understanding the Value of Funeral Processions

By Alan D. Wolfelt, Director, Center for Loss & Life Transition



Often, it is this very lack of understanding of the value of various elements of meaningful funeral experiences (visitation, music, readings, eulogy, symbols, processions, reception) that causes some people to eliminate them.

Unfortunately, not understanding the WHY, or the value, of the elements, many grieving families forego them. Too often today they are stripping the funeral bare of ceremonial elements in favor of direct disposition. What they do not realize is that the

more they chip away at the full ceremony, the more they run the risk of missing the “sweet spot” of a meaningful funeral experience. As T.S. Eliot observed, “You can have an experience and miss the meaning.”

In this blog post focusing on the specific element of the procession, the author claims, “They’re a traffic hazard... a massive inconvenience... and completely useless.” Of course, as the author of a number of books that advocate for the value of funerals, I beg to disagree.

The procession (or cortège) literally means “to pay honor.” Often, the last thing we can do for someone we love is accompany him or her to the grave. While it provides the practical function of accompanying the dead person’s body (or cremated remains) to a “final resting place,” the procession serves a number of other needs as well. The procession is intended to activate community support. Drivers are encouraged to pull over and show respect for this final rite of passage, which signifies the transition between life and death. The procession puts the entire community on notice that one of their own has died. As drivers stop or pull over, they are invited to take pause and not only show respect for the bereaved family and friends, but to consider the preciousness of life and ponder their own mortality (one of the unstated reasons many people do not like processions). If we believe that taking a brief moment for community acknowledgment of a member’s death is a “massive inconvenience,” we have lost sight of all that is truly important.

In addition, driving in a procession often results in a sense of meaning and purpose for the participants. Their grief moves in unison and solidarity. Often their feelings inside are weighty and somber, and the weighty and somber movements of the procession expresses their internal reality. Mourning is internal grief expressed externally, and it is essential to healing. The procession is a form of mourning.

I would take this opportunity to remind everyone involved in funeral service about their responsibility as gatekeepers of ceremony surrounding death. You have an obligation to educate the families you serve and the general public about the value of funerals and the individual elements they consist of (in this case, the procession). Yes, processions do slow down traffic and force us to pause when we may be in a hurry. They are supposed to. In a fast-paced, convenience-oriented culture that is forgetting the value of meaningful funeral experiences, I invite you to join me in teaching your fellow human beings the reasons we have had processions for generations.

Dr. Wolfelt is a respected author and educator on the topic of creating meaningful funeral experiences. He has created a practical model that interfaces six essential functions of funerals with the elements of ceremony, and offers a training specifically for funeral directors on this bi-annually. Recipient of the Association of Death Education and Counseling’s Death Educator Award, Dr. Wolfelt is Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition and is on the faculty of the University of Colorado Medical School’s Department of Family Medicine. He is also the

author of many bestselling books, including Funeral Home Customer Service A to Z and Creating Meaningful Funeral Experiences. He also writes a regular column on customer service for The Director magazine.

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Virginia Board of Funeral Directors & Embalmers Update

- The Board of Funeral Director and Embalmers is proposing substantive legislative changes as well as changes to delete outdated parts of the Code. The major changes are as follows:
- 54.1-2800 revises the definition of embalming: “Embalming” means the preservation and disinfection of the dead human body by external or internal application of chemicals process of chemically treating the dead human body by arterial injection and cavity treatment or, when necessary, hypodermic tissue injection to reduce the presence and growth of microorganisms to temporarily retard organic decomposition. This change addresses Board concerns that licensees have been very liberally defining embalming. Examples used in previous Board discussions were the alleged practice of spraying the body with an embalming/disinfectant spray or applying an embalming powder to a body.
- 54.1-2806 Refusal, suspension or revocation of license. 54.1-2806 (20) is amended by the addition of the text underlined: Violating or cooperating with others to violate any provisions of Chapters 1 (54.1-100 et seq.) and 24 (54.1-200 et seq.), this chapter or the Regulations of the Board of Funeral Directors and embalmers or the Board of Health. Creates a new entry: 54.1-2806 (27) Mental or physical incapacity to practice his profession with safety to the public. Both changes broaden to the Board’s authority to refuse an applicant for licensure or suspend and revoke licenses. Chapters 1 (54.1-100 et seq.) and 24 (54.1-200 et seq.) are the general Code chapters which apply to all agencies under the Board of Health Professions umbrella.
- Legislation will be introduced on behalf of the OCME that proposes to allow Physician’s Assistants (PA) and Nurse Practitioners (NP) to be appointed as Medical Examiners. The proposal sets training requirements and requires an appointed PA or NP will be working under a practice agreement with either a regionally appointed Medical Examiner or the Chief Medical Examiner’s Office.
- Exempt Regulatory Action: To conform to changes in the Code of Virginia, 18VAC65-20-436(A) Authorization to cremate. Is revised. New language states: “A crematory shall require a cremation authorization form executed in person or electronically in a manner that provides a copy of an original signature in accordance with §54.1-2818.1 of the Code of Virginia.” This was effective July 30, 2014.
- Pending Regulatory Action: To amend 18VAC65-20-436 Standards for registered crematories or funeral establishments relating to cremation, the Board proposed permanent changes to replace emergency changes that expired September 30, 2013. The changes clarified methods for visual and positive identification. These were pending at the Governor’s Office for 66 days as of the date of the meeting.
- The Board approved fee increases that include a two stage special assessment for all current licensees. This action was a result of the Board’s financial deficit reaching back to the last increase in 2007.

Save the Date
IFHV 2015 Annual Convention
The Homestead Resort, Hot Springs, VA
July 17-19, 2015



One Day CE Conference November 5th Roanoke, VA

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 8:45 am - 9:30 am | Registration/Continental Breakfast/Exhibits |
| 9:30 am - 10:30 am | New Virginia Laws & Regulations & How to Comply |
| 10:30 am - 11:30 am | Update on Preneed in Virginia |
| 11:30 am - 12:30 am | How to use Social Media to better serve families |
| 12:30 pm - 1:15 pm | Lunch |
| 1:15 pm - 2:15 pm | Virginia Veterans Cemeteries – Proper Protocols |
| 2:15 pm - 3:15 pm | How to properly deal with Medicaid and Assignment of Benefits |



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IFHV complies with the Americans with Disabilities act. Special assistance request must be received no later than Oct. 15, 2014.) Full refund provided until Oct. 15th. After October 25th partial refunds will be provided. After October 25th no refunds will be provided.

Funeral business changing with the times

By RANDY HALLMAN Richmond Times-Dispatch Richmond Times-Dispatch

Caught up in grief this month after the untimely death of his wife, Deborah, Kenneth Robson III searched for a way he and all those who had known her could best pay tribute to her remarkable life.

Robson thought a traditional funeral wouldn't address the needs of her friends and admirers. He wanted something different. Unorthodox approaches to processing grief and celebrating life are becoming more common among people planning funerals for their loved ones.

There's been a recent shift away from traditional services, and industry professionals are responding to that shift with a willingness to improvise in assisting the survivors.

Robson, looking for the best way to bid farewell to Debbie, recalled a memorial that he and his wife had found moving and profound. A very close friend of his had passed away and, at a service that invited broad participation, stories of the friend's life flowed, were shared and were savored. "It wasn't the usual church funeral. ... Debbie and I talked about it afterward," Robson said. "We both said it was the best memorial we'd ever been to. That's what I wanted – something that reminded people how Debbie touched people's lives."

So it was that he spread the word about a "Kicking 'A' Party ... to share stories and reminisce." He encouraged friends and family to "wear bright and vibrant colors."

At the memorial, he arranged to have posters and slideshows. Memories bubbled up, and the mood was buoyant. Robson said. The service – held earlier this month at Deborah's beloved Steward School where she had worked since 1999 – was all he had hoped for.

"In no way was it a doom-and-gloom service," he said. "Everyone who knew Debbie felt better being around her. That's what this was about."

That kind of memorial, tailored to reflect the life of the deceased, was among the trends identified in a recent study by Virginia R. Beard and William C. Burger, who teach at Longwood University.

Their interest was spurred when they saw an ad for a funeral business in Farmville touting drive-through viewing. Mourners could view the deceased without leaving their vehicles – a nod to the infirm who would struggle to exit a car, and a convenience for someone without the time or inclination to share his or her grief with other mourners. "We thought, if it's happening here, it must be happening worldwide," Beard said.

They found out-of-the-ordinary examples around the world – a service on a boat on an Australian river, a body delivered to the cemetery on a moped in Ireland, services made available online so mourners across a continent or halfway around the world could share the moment.

In the U.S., variety abounds, Burger said. "One man was buried in a plexiglass box upright on his Harley-Davidson," he said. And in a service that got international attention, a woman's viewing was staged with her body at a table, cigarette between her fingers and a deck of cards and a beer can handy.

"There are all kinds of individuality," Beard said. "Some services have slideshows or power-point presentations. Instead of hymns, you hear classic rock. The majority of funerals are still traditional, but the restrictions have been pushed aside."

Virginia is not leading the way in the number of out-of-the-ordinary funeral services, Beard and Burger said, but there are eye-opening examples.



At a memorial in Henrico County last month for David Brockie, lead singer for the heavy metal band GWAR, thousands turned out for a raucous tribute party.

Fans, many of them decked in GWAResque faux-medieval gear, saluted the departed musician, screaming their appreciation as Brockie's own costume was set ablaze on a Viking-style boat.

Three years ago, after Donald "Doc" Thornton suffered fatal injuries in a motorcycle accident, his family remembered him with a theme party evoking one of his great passions, "The Rocky Horror Picture Show." At screenings of the 1975 cult film, where live actors routinely mimic the parts played out on screen, Thornton for years had been a regular as a lead character, Dr. Frank N. Furter. "That's how he got his nickname," said his wife, Tracy Thornton. "So that's what we decided to do," she said. "We asked people to come dressed as Rocky Horror characters. "The first two people who spoke made their tributes, which was nice," Tracy Thornton said. "My daughter was the third to speak. She turned on the music and got everybody up to dance the 'Time Warp.' " The musical number from the film turned the gathering into a joyous party, Thornton said, and the memorial "went from a solemn event to a celebration of his life. ... People still talk about it to this day."

Thornton said her husband was cremated and that when she dies, her body will also be cremated. Their ashes, she said, will become part of an artificial reef – an option offered by a Clearwater company.

An increase in cremations was another trend found in the study by Longwood's Beard and Burger. "In the 1980s," Beard said, "in the U.S. only 25 to 30 percent of remains were cremated. Now that figure is getting close to half of all remains." Burger noted that in Canada and Great Britain, nearly 75 percent of remains are cremated. Longwood's Burger said caskets, often fashioned from expensive materials and chosen for their solemn beauty, have been a big profit center for funeral homes. "With the move toward cremation," he said, "funeral directors are offering other services. ... In some ways, funeral directors are the new wedding planners. They fit the event to what the family wants."

Bertha Fleming, funeral director and office manager for Scott's Funeral Home in Richmond, said, "We have always said that a funeral is as individual as the individual. The family decides the way that they want to remember and honor their loved one, and we carry out the logistics." She said services are sometimes moved out of traditional religious settings to such places as a restaurant or the beach — different venues that can comfort the grieving family.

Woody Funeral Homes, with three Richmond-area chapels, also welcomes customized services. Bernie Henderson is president of Woody, the establishment that helped the Thornton family with their Rocky Horror celebration. "It's been said that the industry has seen more change in the past 10 years that it did in the previous 90," Henderson said. "That's probably true."

What was once a predictable process has been opened to imagination, he said. "We'll help make a funeral service as personal and unique as the family wants it to be. It's no longer a business of cookie-cutter services." Fleming, Henderson and the two Longwood faculty members all said environmental concerns have become an issue for some families.

Cremation eliminates the need for growing cemeteries, taking land that can be used to grow crops.

And some families ask for "green" burials, with bodies not embalmed and coffins made of wicker or untreated wood – so that body and casket will decompose at a natural pace, returning to the land.

Henderson said the true satisfaction of the business lies in understanding what a family wants and delivering that experience. He said the industry has a history of resisting change.

"We have to evolve," he said. "We have to stop making so many assumptions about what people want and make the service as meaningful as we possibly can.

"If we're not doing that," he said, "why should we exist?"



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