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**deceased*



FOCUS

... on the activities of the OHIO EMBALMER ASSOCIATION

No. 143
Winter 2026

P.O. Box 621320 • Cincinnati, OH 45262-1320

Winter Seminar

Wednesday, March 25, 2026

Hocking Hills Lodge Logan, OH

DAY AT A GLANCE

- .75 Hour – 8-8:45am Registration and Coffee
- 2.0 Hour – 9-11 Shane Ritchie – Embalming & Restoring Traumatic Cases
- 1.0 Hour – 11-12 Jon Rettig – Ohio Board Update part1
- 1.0 Hour – 12-1pm – Lunch
- 1.0 Hour – 1-2 Jon Rettig – Ohio Board Update part 2
- 2.0 Hour – 2-4 James Norris – The Evolution & History of the American Casket

**6 Hours of Continuing Ed have been applied for in Ohio
Cost \$110 Members and \$220 non members.**

ACCOMMODATIONS

Rooms are being held at the Hocking Hills Lodge
20020 SR 664 S, Logan OH 43138. Ph 800.282.7275
for OEA Rate of \$179 (Price may vary on room location and type).
The room block expires Feb 23, 2026. There isn't a direct booking link
for the Lodge but you can go to the website and use the promo code OEA135.

OEA Winter Seminar - March 25, 2026
Hocking Hills Lodge • 20020 SR 664 S, • Logan OH 43138
\$110 member - \$220 Non-member (includes new member registration fees and dues)

If non-member, please use space below for your current mailing address:

Name _____

Embalmer's license # _____ FD License # _____ Member ID _____ located next to your address

Address _____

City / State / Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

**Contact the
Secretary if any ques-
tions. 513.384.7846 or
hchohicks@me.com**

Please complete form (or photocopy) and send with the appropriate check and postage to:
O.E.A., PO Box #621320, Cincinnati, Ohio 45262-1320. 513.384.7846 www.ohemb.com.
Visit www.ohemb.com or Contact David Hicks 513.384.7846

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Greetings all,
Welcome to 2026 and the 95th year of the Ohio Embalmers Association.
Thank you to Woody Wilson for his great service as president these past two years. Also thank you to the board and the “always on the job” Secretary David Hicks for all their good work for OEA.
I am proud to be a part of OEA and all that we do to further continuing education and fellowship in our profession. In our daily work there are times we need to be open to new ideas and information. New ideas and techniques, sharing information, meeting other professionals from around the state, all occur at OEA meetings. Hopefully by participating in these seminars you will take home some new ideas and strengthen your own practice whether it has been two or forty-five years of service. OEA has some great programs planned for this year and I look forward to seeing you all there.

Best regards,
Jay Moffett

2026-27 SCHEDULE

Besides the meeting in March, OEA has lined up dates & venues for 2026 and into 2027. Hopefully this will allow all to better plan (as much as possible in this business) schedules. Future dates and venues are May 6 – our annual Cleveland meeting at Brennans, with all required hours being offered in one sitting. Sept 16 – Castle & Key Distillery, Frankfort KY. March 10, 2027 – Ferno, Wilmington OH. May 5, 2027 – Cleveland meeting at Brennans and Sept or Oct of 2027 TBD.

OTHER NEWS

OEA is working on updating records. Please add your Embalmers or FD Lic # to registrations and or renewals along with an updated email. The secretary is also going to use Constant Contact to get newsletters, updates and information to you quickly. Hard copies are still going to be mailed to addresses in our database. www.ohemb.com is usually up to date. Sometimes the mobile site doesn't work with the desktop so let Hicks know if you see a mistake.

Hocking Hills – Logan OH March 25, Cleveland is set for May 6 at Brennans and will feature all required hours. We will return to the Bluegrass state in Sept or Oct for another Bourbon themed event. If warranted, we will hold another event for all the procrastinators. Be sure to check out the website at www.ohemb.com. Email us at OhioEmbalmersAssociation@gmail.com.

SPEAKERS

Shane A.S. Ritchie

Shane is a licensed funeral director / embalmer in Ohio, a post-mortem reconstructive surgery specialist, educator, speaker, and a published author, with articles appearing in many funeral related publications including The Director, Southern Calls, Funeral Business Advisor, The Dodge Magazine, and American Funeral Director. He has been a guest speaker at events all over the United States, including the prestigious Fountain International Conference on Embalming and Reconstructive Surgery and was a winner of the 2016 FNA Distinguished Service Award. Shane may be reached at (304) 299-9069 or via email at shane@shaneritchie.com. Please visit www.shaneritchie.com for more information.

Jon W. Rettig, Sr.

Jon was born in Defiance, Ohio and is a 1973 graduate of Holgate High School, Holgate, Ohio. He then attended Lakeland College, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, majoring in business. He is a 1976 graduate of the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science, Cincinnati, Ohio and earned certification to enucleate donor eyes in 1979 from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. An Ohio licensed funeral director and embalmer since 1977, Jon is President of Family Care Services, Inc. which owns and operates the Woods-Rettig Funeral Home, Leetonia, OH, Warrick-Kummer-Rettig Funeral Home, Columbiana, OH, Van Dyke-Swaney-Rettig Funeral Home, East Palestine, OH, and Family Care Cremation Services, Columbiana, OH. In 2014 he was certified as a Certified Crematory Operator.

He is a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Leetonia, OH and Grace Lutheran Church, East Palestine, OH where he served on both church councils. He is a member and Past President of the Ohio Funeral Directors Association and served on most committees of the association. He is also a member of the National Funeral Directors Association and the Cremation Association of North America. Locally he is a member and past president of the Columbiana Rotary Club and was active in the Rotary Youth Exchange Program for several years, having his family host nine exchange students over the years. For nine years he served as a board member of the Salem Regional Medical Center, Salem, OH where he served on the finance committee, the quality improvement committee, and the Ad Hoc Information Technology Committee. He is also a charter member and past chairman of the Charitable Foundation of the Salem Regional Medical Center, Salem, OH and has served several terms on the Columbiana County Planning Commission.

He was appointed to the Ohio Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors in April 2016 by former Governor Kasich and reappointed to the board by Governor DeWine in July 2025. He served as president of the board from July 2016 until July 2019



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and is currently serving as chairman of the State of Ohio Crematory Review Board. In February 2025 Rettig was elected to the board of the International Conference of Funeral Examining Boards and was elected Secretary-Treasurer in February 2021. His term is up February 2026.

Jon is married to Ellen Mraz Rettig, a licensed funeral director and they make their home in Columbiana, OH. They have four grown children and six grandchildren.

James Norris

James Norris has been a licensed funeral director in Pennsylvania since 2020. He graduated in 2016 with a bachelor's degree in biology with a specialization in microbiology and biotechnology from Delaware Valley University in Doylestown. In 2018 he decided to enroll in mortuary school and graduated from the Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science in 2019. After graduation he returned to his hometown of Hummelstown where he currently works for the Trefz & Bowser Funeral Home.

James serves on the board of several funeral service organizations. He is the vice-president of the Dauphin County Funeral Directors Association, a board member of the British Institute of Embalmers North American Division, and on the board of the Hummelstown Cemetery Association.

James believes in giving back to his community, which led him to become involved in several community organizations. He currently serves as a Councilman on Hummelstown's Borough Council, the secretary of the Hummelstown Arts Festival, and a board member of Rowquin Dog Rescue. James also belongs to the Hummelstown Business and Professional Association, the Hummelstown Historical Society, and the National Association of Watch & Clock Collectors.

TOPICS

Embalming and Restoring Massive Head Trauma Cases - 2 hr

In this talk Shane will talk about the value of an open casket. Using real case studies that Mr. Ritchie has embalmed and restored he will demonstrate techniques used to allow for an open casket so families can say their goodbyes and have closure. Case analysis, fluid selections will be discussed along with the anatomy of the cranium and methods to reconstruct the bone and align the soft tissue. Finally, using 21st Century cosmetic treatments the deceased is restored to an acceptable appearance.

Ohio Board of Embalmers & Funeral Directors - 2 hr Law

Mr. Jon Rettig and possibly other Members of the Board will provide an update on happenings at the State level. This will count as two (2) hours of Law toward the four (4) special topic hours. Mr. Rettig will discuss recent changes and those currently going through JCARR process. Other areas included:

- Overview current Ohio Law and Rules as they relate to funeral service
- Overview of recent rule changes and those currently going thru the JCARR process.
- Review of recent changes to forms used in the apprenticeship program.
- Review of the role the Master Embalmer and Funeral Director.
- Review of the process followed by the Board when a consumer complaint is filed.
- Review of the makeup and process used by the Ohio Crematory Review Board
- Review of how the Ohio Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors interacts with the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards, Inc.
- Questions

James Norris - The Evolution & History of the American Casket: It's Not as Simple as You Think - 2 hr

When you hear the word casket a very specific image probably comes to your mind. You think of a rectangular-shaped container with handles on both sides and a lid that opens and closes. But how did we come to achieve the modern-day casket?

Many may ask "what's to say about caskets," but I hope to enlighten the audience on how extensive, and sometimes bizarre, the history of the casket is. I assure you this program will not be morbid but is intended to shed some light on a subject that most people don't really think about. Do you know the difference between a casket and a coffin? This is just one of the many questions that will be answered during this presentation.

The program will begin in ancient Egypt with the influence of sarcophagi on early casket makers in America and will travel through the years until we reach modern times. From cabinetmakers to large manufacturing facilities, we will touch on some of most influential innovators as their casket empires rose and fell. Did you ever wonder who crafted Marilyn Monroe's casket, JFK's, Dolly Madison's? Most likely not, but this will all be covered.

Along the way we will look at some of the most unique patents that never caught on. Have you ever heard of celluloid caskets? What about one made of papier mâché? There's probably a reason for that.

In the absence of modern medicine, people were terrified that they would be mistakenly buried alive. This is where life preserving coffins and grave signals originated. Not only did they want to make sure no one got buried alive, families wanted to make sure that their loved ones were safe from ghouls and graverobbers. What better way than to invent coffin torpedoes...No I am not making this up.

I promise that you will learn more than you ever thought that you needed to know about caskets and how they came to be what we think of today.