

THE THANA GRAM

SPRING 2018

Official Publication of the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association, Inc.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

BRAD RIDGEWAY, PRESIDENT • TFDA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dear Team TFDA,

Buttercups are blooming, and Spring is in the air here in our great state of Tennessee. I'm sure we still must go through dogwood winter, blackberry winter and several other cold snaps before warm weather is here to stay, but the sunshine is a welcome sight.

As our weather improves, I hope your Electronic Death Certificates are continuing to improve as well. Thank you TFDA members for your hard work in walking through this process. Several members of our Government Affairs Committee continue weekly conference calls with several state officials to voice your problems and concerns and get updates on the progress of the system. In February 2018, 6,600 death certificates were registered with the State of Tennessee. 44 % of them were completed fully electronic. This number continues to increase each month. The deadline is set for July 16, 2018 when no paper death certificates will be accepted. This will force the rest of our doctors to get on board.

Myself, as well as many of your funeral service friends from across the state can't wait to see you June 3 – 5, 2018. That's the dates of the 115th TFDA/TFSSC Annual Convention at The Embassy Suites and Convention Center in Murfreesboro, TN. So if you haven't been in a year or two, come join us this year. It's a great time to catch up with old friends and make new ones. Put it on your calendar and bring the kids for a great time together. The Convention Theme is "Creating a Future Together #TEAMTFDA". So come be a part of the Team. We need you!!!

My year of service as president is not over, but it has flown by thus far. But, there are many people that work hard to keep our association thriving. A special thanks to Bob and Dawn, as they hold the office together. They work very hard to keep us all organized and pointed in the right direction. TFDA can only function properly if we, as members, work together as a team. As this has been a year of great teamwork from a wonderful board and several great committees. This strong team ensures the Future of TFDA for others to follow.

We also have partners who work beside us helping to provide for our future. They are our endorsed companies whose goals are to help strengthen TFDA. They are Investors Heritage Life Insurance Company, Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions, and State Auto Insurance Companies. I encourage you to do business with these partners as they directly impact TFDA in positive way.

Serving with you,
Brad Ridgeway



Our Mission:

To be the Tennessee Funeral Professionals leadership advocate, through communication, education and legislation; thereby empowering the licensed funeral professional the ability to serve at the highest level.

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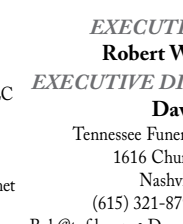
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2018 TFDA/TFSSC Memorial Service

2018 TFDA/TFSSC 115th Annual Convention

Sunday, June 3rd

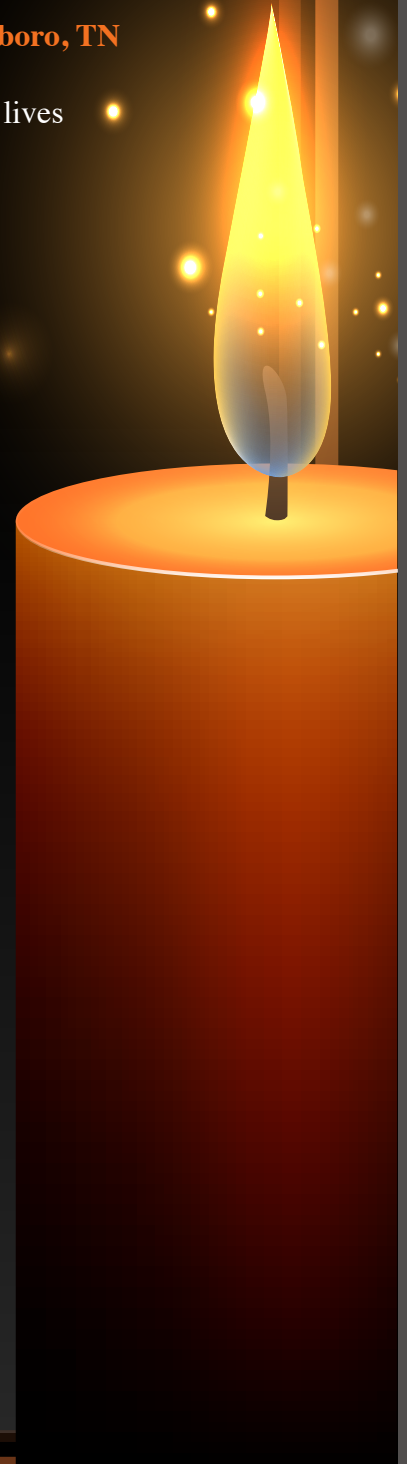
Embassy Suites Hotel & Conference Center — Murfreesboro, TN

What a great honor for our association to participate in celebrating the lives of our deceased loved ones who have left us this past year.

Please contact the TFDA Office if there is a loved one not listed that should be included. Phone (615) 321-8792 or by email the Rosemary Harrison, Memorial Chair at rosemary.mc@gmail.com.

Eva Louise Seratt
Brandon Michael Teague
Jordon Mikil Cooper
Jerry Lee Denton
Maurice Alexander Moffitt
Richard Owen Tate
Freda Gott Correll
Joseph Wayne Lindsey
Kenneth Leathers
Nancy L. Rahm
Claire Ayers Teasley
Laura Marie Hayes
Gerald Douglas Fitz-Gerald
Louie George Aregis
Jesse Lee Wallen
Vickie Kegerise

Opal Chilton
Nellie Ruth Layne
Katherine Hinds Smythe
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Larry Kelse Collins
Alvin L. Garner
Luke Howell
Lindsey Marie Osborne
Icie Peals Myers
John H. Smith





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Chris Christian NFDA Policy Board Representative

NFDA members will have an opportunity in August to elect individuals to serve in officer positions on the Board of Directors. Voting will take place August 1-14, 2018 (during the 2017 NFDA Election, association members approved changes to the association's Bylaws, which changed the balloting period from 30 to 14 days). Visit www.nfda.org/vote to view detailed information on each of the candidates.

The NFDA needs your help to ensure they have accurate information for all licensed funeral directors at your firm so they can communicate important information about the election and voting procedures via email. Please contact your member services representative at 800-228-6332 to verify the information they have on file.

The Advocacy Summit is April 25-27, 2018 at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, DC. Join fellow funeral service professionals from across the country to advocate on legislative and regulatory issues that affect funeral service and small business.

The Leadership conference in July 8-11, 2018 at The Omni Grove Park Inn in Ashville, NC.

The Business Conference is July 11-13, 2018 at The Omni Grove Park Inn in Ashville, NC. The NFDA Business Conference will equip you with practical tips and advice to; hire (and retain!) an all-star team, work smarter with training and time management, enjoy a fulfilling retirement, and so much more!

You can visit www.nfda.org for more information concerning these and see more that the NFDA offers.

Thank you

Chris E. Christian

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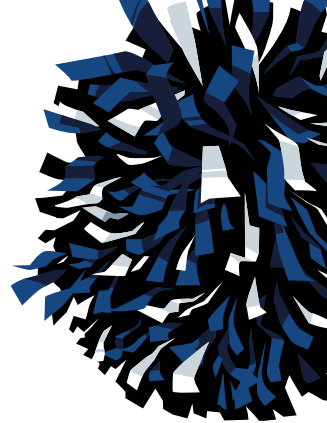
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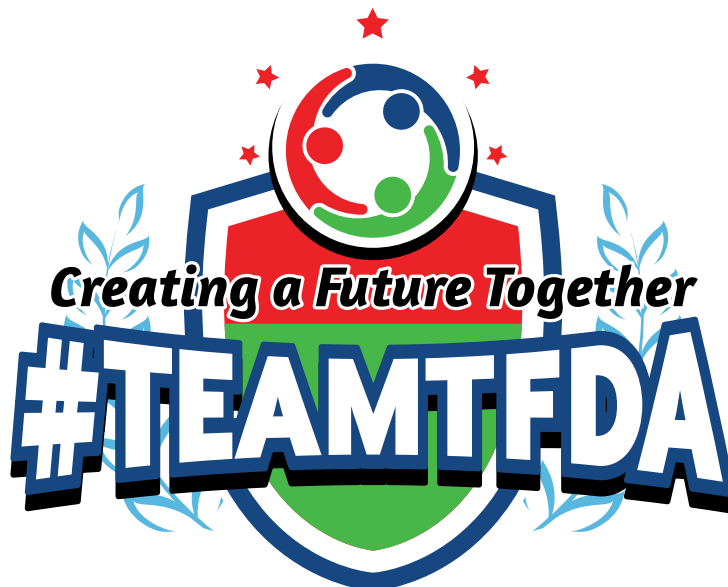
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2018 TFDA/TFSSC
115th Annual Convention

Schedule of Events



SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2018

10:00 am – 11:00 am

Interfaith Service: Come join us for a spiritual service to highlight your Sunday

12:00 noon

The Silent Auction Begins



Seminars:

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Jack Lechner, presents
*“Arlington National Cemetery,
Restoring the Honor”*

(Approved for 2 CEU's for TN, KY, AL)

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Kenneth Howe, presents
*“The Professional Car Society &
the Preservation of Funeral Service
Transportation: The Golden Age
of the Funeral Home Fleet –From
Horse to Automobile”*

(Approved for 1 CEU for TN, KY, AL)



5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

TFDA/TFSSC Memorial Service
Rosemary Harrison, Committee Chair

6:00 pm – 8:30 pm

TFDA/TFSSC Grand Opening of the Exhibits
(Approved for 1 CEU for TN, KY, AL)



8:30 pm – 10:00 pm

Atlantic Coast Sponsored Ice Cream Social

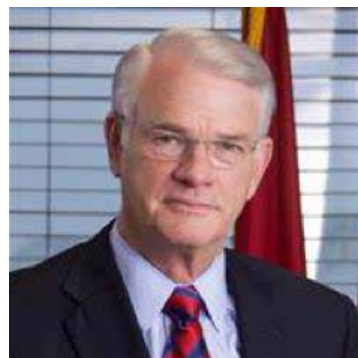
MONDAY, JUNE 4, 2017

9:00 am – 11:00 am

TFDA Business Meeting
(Approved for 2 CEU's for TN, KY, AL)

9:00 am – 10:00 am

TFSSC Business Meeting



11:00 am – 2:30 pm

TFDA Luncheon in the Exhibit Hall, along with a Seminar presented by Mayor Mark H. Luttrell, Jr., *“The Most Important Word – WE”*

(Approved for 1 CEU for the Exhibits from TN, KY, AL)
(Approved for 1 CEU for the Seminar from TN, KY, AL)

TFDA Luncheon Sponsored by Investors Heritage Life Insurance Company



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6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Monday Night Auctions with Dinner

TUESDAY, JUNE 5, 2018

115th Annual Golf Tournament

at Indian Hills Golf Course in
Murfreesboro, TN

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the Golf Lunch

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Seminar

1:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Mary Russell, presents

“2018: A New Year Identifies New Leadership”

(Approved for 3 CEU for the Seminar from TN, KY, AL)

6:00 pm – 10:00 pm

GRAND BANQUET

Presentation of the Esteemed Wall of Fame Award, who will be honored this year?

CASH GIVE AWAY! Before the night is over, \$1,000 will be given away. You must be present to win!

Please contact the TFDA Office if you or someone you know has

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Obituaries

MR. LUKE HOWELL



Tommy Howell's father, Lawrence Funeral Home, Chapel Hill, TN, President/Owner/Licensed Funeral Director & Embalmer, Tommy serves as a Tennessee Funeral Security, Inc., Board Member, he also served as a TFDA Middle Director.

Mr. Luke Howell, age 94, of Cartersville, Georgia, died Tuesday, February 20, 2018, in Cartersville, Georgia. Mr. Howell was born in Gordon County, Georgia, and was

a son of the late William David and Alice Amanda Bobo Howell. He served his country in the United States Army as a military policeman. He retired after 32 years as a vocational agriculture teacher for the State of Georgia, spending most of his teaching years at Cherokee High School in Canton, Georgia. Following his retirement from teaching, he worked for Goodyear Corporation in Calhoun, Georgia, and again, retired after 12 years of service. Mr. Howell was a member of the First Baptist Church of Cartersville. In addition to his parents, he was also preceded in death by twelve brothers and sisters.

Mr. Howell is survived by his wife of 70 years, Thelma Howell, Cartersville GA; daughter, Debbie (Nathan) Eberbart, Cartersville, GA; son, Tommy (Jane) Howell, Chapel Hill, TN; grandchildren, Laura English and Clay Howell; great granddaughters, Gabby Howell and Abigail English.

LAWRENCE FUNERAL HOME & CREMATION SERVICES, Chapel Hill, TN, 931-364-2233 (www.lawrencefuneral.net) in charge of arrangements.

MR. ALVIN GARNER



Alvin L Garner, age 86, passed away February 9, 2018 peacefully at home surrounded by loved ones. He was born July 26, 1931. He served in the U S Army and retired from Berry Funeral Home with 46 years of service. Preceded in death by his parents, Spencer and Lily Garner, and brother, James Garner. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Imogene Cupp Garner; daughter, Kathy (Claude) Shepard; and son, Tom (Mitzi) Garner; grandchildren, Megan (Ryan) Prettyman, Matthew Garner, Cynthia, Court-

ney, Deanna, and Brandon Shepard; brother and sister-in-law, Ralph and Eula Garner; 3 nephews; and 1 niece

Condolences may be offered at www.berryfuneralhome.com.

MR. LARRY KELSE COLLINS

Connie Strickland's father, office manager at High Point Funeral Home and Crematorium, Memphis, TN.

Larry Kelse Collins, 70, of Memphis, Tennessee, died peacefully at his home on January 20, 2018. Larry was born July 23,



1947 at Blackgum, Oklahoma, the son of Rev. James Kelse Collins and Alice K. (Craighead) Collins.

Larry attended Box School, Blackgum, Oklahoma and Vian High School, Vian, Oklahoma. He married Shannon Ary Collins in San Diego, California.

He served 22 years with the U.S. Navy. Larry was based in San Diego, California and was deployed on several Ships for Active Sea Duty. After this, Larry was Chief Yeoman for the remainder of his active duty stationed in Subic Bay, Philippines; NRD Raleigh, N. Carolina; Gulf Port, Mississippi and Memphis, TN.

Larry was preceded in death by his parents; three brothers, Glenn Collins, Jimmy Collins and Robert Bruce Collins; his sister, Vina Lou (Collins) Brister. Survivors include his wife, Shannon Ary Collins of Memphis, TN; one daughter, Alice Constance (Collins) Zabrowski-Strickland of Bartlett, TN, two grandsons, Damien Lee Zabrowski and Dominic Joseph Strickland of Bartlett, TN; two sisters, Grace Collins Botello, of Grand Prairie, TX, and Joyce Collins Gill of Blackgum, OK; and many other relatives, as well as a host of friends and loved ones.

<https://agentfuneralhome.com/obituaries/larry-k-collins/202/>

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Bud Myers served as TFDA East Director (2013-16)

ICIE PEALS MYERS, 96, of Tellico Plains and formerly of Alcoa and Maryville, TN went home to be with the Lord Saturday, March 3, 2018 at the home of her son while surrounded by her loving family.

The oldest of 14 children of the late J.C. "Lum" and Ellen Hamby Peals, Icie was in the first graduating class of the original Tellico Plains High School. With three teenage children at home, she enrolled and graduated from Maryville College with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Medical Technology and retired from Blount Memorial Hospital in 1987. After their retirements, she and her husband, Frank "Big Daddy" Myers moved back to Tellico to the Myers Farm. One of her greatest joys was quilting and giving all her children and grandchildren several "special" quilts. An expert seamstress, she made many custom clothes including cheerleading uniforms, wedding gowns and bridesmaid dresses and she won several awards for her dresses in the Autumn Gold Festival. Icie and her husband Frank Sr., assisted their son, Frank Jr. and his wife, Sharon Myers in the building and opening of Myers Funeral Home in 1973. They both continued to help in any way needed at the funeral home throughout their lives.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Frank Myers, Sr.; a sister, Clara Peals and six brothers, Elick "Red", Clifford, Doug, Charles, Elzie and infant brother, Jerry Peals and daughter-in-law, Margie Myers.

Survivors:

Daughter and son-in-law:

Patsy and Dwight Broome, Maryville, TN

Sons and daughter -in-law:

Frank Jr. and Sharon Myers, Tellico Plains, TN

David Myers, Maryville, TN

Sisters and brothers-in-law:

Eva Myers, Maryville, TN

Johnnie and Frank Fletcher, Trenton, KY

Robbie Boring, Beech Island, SC

Delzie and Hubert Young, Tellico Plains, TN

Brothers and sister-in-law:

J.C. "Jr" and Betty Peals, Tellico Plains, TN

Verlin Peals, Etowah, TN

Sisters-in-law:

Martha, Marilyn, Janie and Gina Peals and Dollie Myers

7 grandchildren and spouses:

Pam and Randy Shofner, Deborah and Randy Garland, Teresa and Billy Smith, Bud and Tammy Myers, Lee Ann and Tim Adams, Dana and Steve Ryan and Rebekah Myers

12 great grandchildren:

Bonnie Shofner, Maranda and Damon Shaw, Jodie Underwood, Amber and Jeb Best, Dalton and Leah Myers, Andrew and Alexander Yager, Ethan Garland, Will Smith

3 great-great grandchildren:

Maverick, Skyler and Mayvin Shaw

Several nieces and nephews

A special thank you to Home Health Care of East TN and Hospice and to all Granny Icie's caregivers, Martha Harris, Debbie and Sally McLemore, Melissa Morgan, Lisa Abercrombie, Joyce Gourley, and Carrie Chapman.

NOTE of thanks:

"To my friends in the Association office, Thank you so much for the attention show my family at the passing of my mother. The floral sprays and potted plant from TFDA, TFSI and the Past Presidents were so appreciated. It made me really proud to be associated with such fine people. Thank you for sending out mother's death notice and the response it brought."

Tony W. Hysmith

Shackelford Funeral Directors – Casey Chapel
Henderson, TN



LINDSEY MARIE OSBORNE, 36, passed away on February 28, 2018, at Holston Valley Medical Center, due to cardiac complications. Born December 25, 1981, Lindsey was a graduate of Twin Springs High School, Radford University, and also obtained a degree from John

Tyler Community College in Mortuary Science/ Funeral Service.

Lindsey was preceded in death by her parents, Wanda Jean and Donald Ray Osborne; grandparents Laura and Ray Price; Bessie Price; and Ray Osborne. She is survived by her sister Kari Albarado and brother in law Jonathan; twin nieces Marleigh and Peyton; Aunt Shirley Hillman; Uncle Mack Price and wife Linda; Uncle Wendell Price and wife Mary.

A donation has been made to the TFDA Memorial Scholarship Fund in memory of:

Mr. Luke Howell

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NFDA News

Will the EPA Reassess the Risks of Formaldehyde?

March 12, 2018

An important recent formaldehyde study and President's Donald Trump's proposed EPA budget may ultimately determine the scientific information to which we have access about the risk this chemical poses and whether exposure causes leukemia.

We in funeral service consider formaldehyde a critically important ingredient in embalming solutions. We know that formaldehyde is among the most studied of chemicals: between 1981 and 2016, there were twelve important domestic and international agency studies of formaldehyde as a cause of cancer, which suggest that formaldehyde exposure is not without risk.

In the 1980's, the EPA evaluated the cancer risk posed by formaldehyde exposure under its IRIS (Integrated Risk Information System) program. At that time, the EPA concluded that formaldehyde was a probable human carcinogen.

In 2010, the EPA issued a draft toxicological assessment under IRIS, finding that formaldehyde exposure causes leukemia. But, in 2011, the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences (NRC) widely-criticized EPA's 2010 assessment and EPA withdrew it, leaving in place the now nearly 40-year old IRIS risk assessment.

In February 2018, Dr. Kenneth Mundt, a leading formaldehyde expert, and his team published their evaluation of key new formaldehyde scientific studies, which considered, in light of the NRC findings, whether formaldehyde causes leukemia. The Mundt analysis suggests that the new science shows formaldehyde is not a cause of leukemia. Dr. Mundt noted that EPA now has the opportunity to consider this new science in completing its IRIS evaluation.

Although IRIS assessments are considered the preferred source of risk information used in standard setting and site cleanup decisions by EPA and generally relied upon by state, local, and international health agencies, and other federal agencies, such as OSHA, seven years after the NRC critique, EPA has set no deadline for updating its

formaldehyde IRIS risk assessment. To further complicate this limbo, the Trump has proposed to slash the 2019 IRIS budget, cutting it in half.

Whether right or wrong, Trump EPA officials in various areas have expressed skepticism about the worth of science, challenging the views of academics and casting aspersions on the value of science in regulatory decision-making. Yet, in this situation, science supported by industry (the Mundt study was funded in part by Hexion, although no Hexion employees were involved in the article's preparation) is of value to those who use formaldehyde and formaldehyde-based products, and worthy of EPA's consideration if the agency were to conduct and complete its IRIS assessment.

And, no matter if or when the EPA issues its revised IRIS assessment of formaldehyde, it is important to recognize the key role that effective ventilation plays in reducing formaldehyde exposure and the associated health risks in the preparation room. NFDA's report on its study of ventilation, *"Formaldehyde Vapor Reduction in the Funeral Home Preparation Room: Recommendations for Effective Preparation Room Ventilation,"* contains valuable recommendations and practical solutions for implementing an effective ventilation program.



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What Will OSHA Look Like Under President Trump?

March 05, 2018

Last week, the House Subcommittee on Workforce Protections met for a hearing, “A More Effective and Collaborative OSHA: A View from Stakeholders.” The timing of the hearing says it all: there is no Trump administration official confirmed as the head of OSHA and there is no political appointee to act on the recommendations stakeholders offered at the hearing, making the direction in which OSHA will head under President Donald Trump unclear at best.

The 2017 nomination of Scott Mugno, a FedEx executive, has not yet been voted on by the full Senate. The Committee chair, Rep. Bradley Byrne (R-AL), urged the Senate to move quickly to confirm Mugno. The hearing reflected the wide gulf between the Republican and Democratic views of an effective OSHA.

Republicans consider the Obama OSHA to have emphasized confrontation over cooperation and that more workers’ lives can be saved and injuries reduced through easily understood communication of existing standards and reliance on cooperative OSHA employer programs.

Democrats seek more OSHA inspectors and inspections, required record keeping of workplace injuries, and reinstatement of many of the regulations that the Trump administration has withdrawn.

Byrne, a former labor lawyer, described the purpose of the hearing as an examination of the effectiveness of OSHA, focusing on how the agency is ensuring safe workplaces and promoting smart, responsible regulatory policies for both employees and employers. Byrne said that many businesses had reported that while OSHA’s intentions are well meaning, they are unworkable in the real world. OSHA compliance costs are difficult for businesses, particularly small businesses, like funeral homes. Byrne praised the programs at OSHA designed to help businesses in a proactive way, such as the Voluntary Protection Program.

“Today’s hearing will focus on how OSHA can work more cooperatively with job creators, especially in the small businesses community, to expand its compliance assistance efforts and for employers to provide the safest and healthiest workplaces possible,” Byrne said.

Ranking member, Mark Takano (D-CA) noted that two years had passed since the committee last held an OSHA hearing and, in the meantime, nearly 10,000 workers had been killed on the job and at least seven million workers had suffered serious occupational injuries. Takano read a statement from the widow of an Ohio roofer, who died when he fell twenty feet from the roof of a home. The company settled for a \$6,000 OSHA penalty and the widow is urging Congress to strengthen OSHA penalties.

The testimony of two of the four witnesses, one representing the Chamber of Commerce and the other representing the Tree Care Industry Association, epitomized the gulf in the assessment of the appropriate role for OSHA.

Eric Hobbs, who represents the Chamber of Commerce, is a labor lawyer like Byrne, and he described OSHA’s desired role as guided by the question: “How can we help employers keep employees safe?” rather than by the question, “How can we make sure we are making examples of bad employers, or catching as many bad employers as possible?”

Hobbs described several areas in which OSHA can improve. These include welcoming input from all stakeholders, overcoming the adversarial relationship between OSHA and employers, and regarding the business community as partners. The Chamber urged OSHA to make maximum use of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA). In fact, NFDA members have successfully participated in SBREFRA panels sharing their views on the effective function of septic tanks in treating funeral home wastewater and the sufficiency of for existing infectious disease regulation of funeral homes.

The Chamber was highly critical of the enforcement methods OSHA uses to encourage employers to improve workplace safety, characterizing it as “regulating by shaming.” The Chamber complained that OSHA issued press releases when complaints were filed rather than when matters were resolved and failed to issue updated press releases when the amount of the penalties collected was reduced upon settlement. The Chamber considered OSHA, the employer and the employee all better off if inspections and closing conferences had the goal of finding solutions, instead of citations.

The Chamber urged OSHA to develop a new approach, even if enforcement were to remain as a core function. Instead, it said that OSHA should be seen as a resource for answers, making its guidance accessible and easy to understand. OSHA also should ensure consistency in interpretation among all the agency field offices and ensure that OSHA inspectors do not act in an antagonistic manner. The Chamber concluded by noting that OSHA had lost the trust of employers during the previous administration and must work hard to regain it.

Peter Gerstenberger of the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA) is responsible for developing the association's safety and training programs, expressed during his testimony frustration that OSHA was unable to issue a specific safety standard for arborists, an industry with a fatality rate that placed it in the top five most hazardous occupations in the United States.

OSHA and TCIA had worked in a collaborative manner in the past and there had been bipartisan support for a safety standard specifically for arborists. Instead, as is generally

the case for funeral directors, OSHA regulates arborists through a patchwork of standards generally intended for other industries that fail to address many of the core safety issues the arborists face.

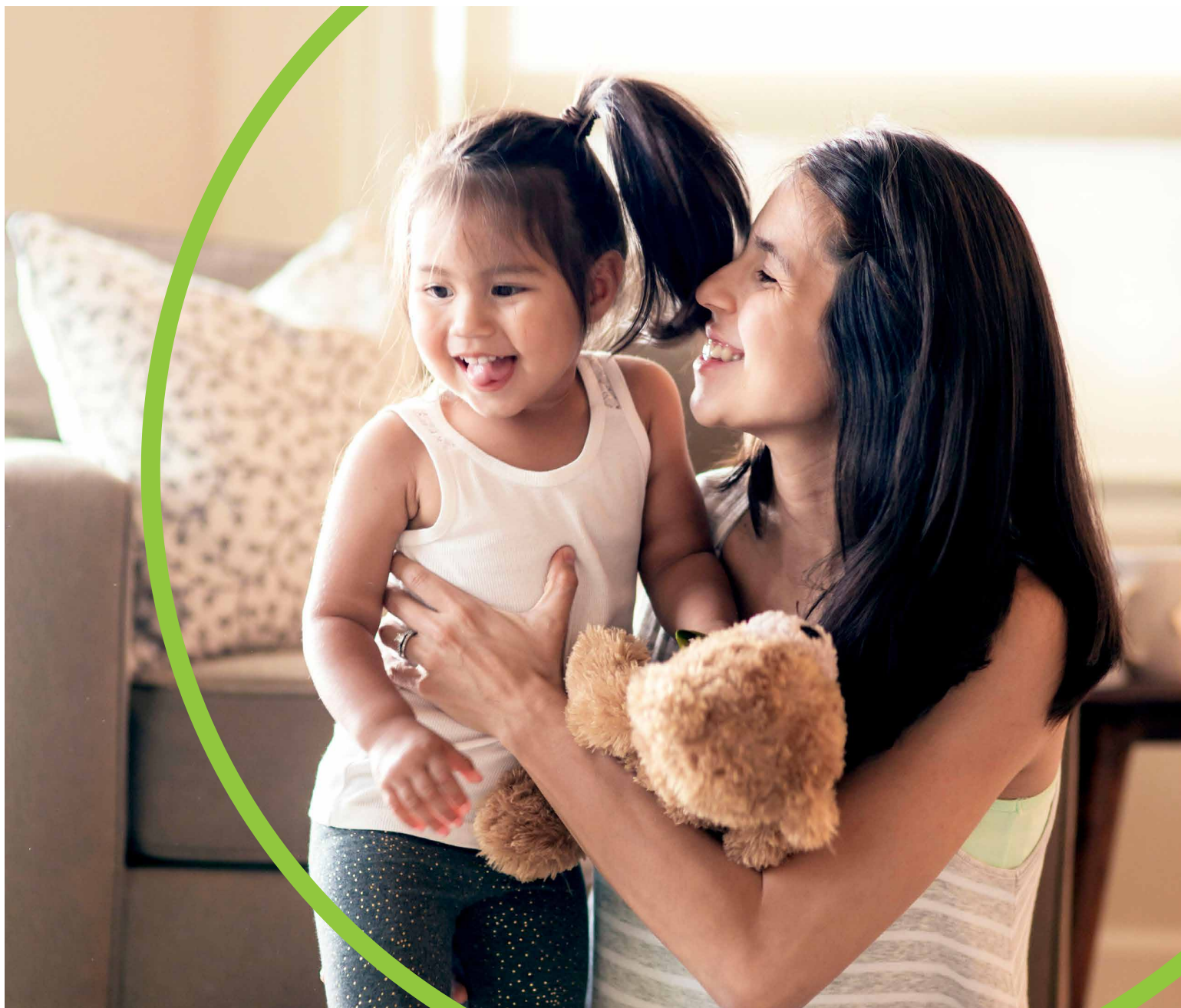
TCIA explained that an arborist regulation will set uniform standards for every OSHA inspector to apply and for every arborist to observe and would be widely communicated through outreach activities to promote safe practices.

The two other hearing witnesses were Dr. David Michaels, who served as the assistant secretary of Labor for OSHA under President Barack Obama (incidentally, Michaels was the longest serving OSHA assistant secretary on record) and J. Gary Hill, a small business contractor from North Carolina representing the National Association of Home Builders.

There is obviously a deep divide and, without leadership at OSHA, big questions remain about the direction in which OSHA will go under Trump.

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MARCH 19, 2018

EAST DISTRICT: Smith Event Center, Maryville, TN

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm “TFDA Education Enhancement for Funeral Professionals”

(Approved for 5 CEU's)

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm “Hospice and TFDA Round Table Discussion” (Includes Dinner)

(Approved for 2 CEUs)

MARCH 20, 2018

MIDDLE DISTRICT: Wilson County Expo Center, Lebanon, TN

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm “TFDA Education Enhancement for Funeral Professionals”

(Approved for 5 CEU's)

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm “Hospice and TFDA Round Table Discussion”, (Includes Dinner)

(Approved for 2 CEUs)

REGISTRATION FEES:

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm - Seminar \$50 per TFDA Member, this also includes the District Meeting (dinner included)

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm District Meeting \$20.00 TFDA Member (dinner included)

Non-Member Seminar \$75.00 per person

MARCH 22, 2018

Jackson Country Club, Jackson, TN

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm “TFDA Education Enhancement for Funeral Professionals”

(Approved for 5 CEU's)

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm “Hospice and TFDA Round Table Discussion”, (Includes Dinner)

(Approved for 2 CEUs)

REGISTRATION FEES:

1:00 pm – 5:00 pm - Seminar \$50 per TFDA Member, this also includes the District Meeting (dinner included)

6:30 pm – 8:30 pm District Meeting \$30.00 TFDA Member (dinner included)

Non-Member Seminar \$75.00 per person

No registration required.

All checks must be made out to TFDA

Do not hesitate contacting us if you have any questions.

Looking forward to seeing you there!

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Embalming Failures

By Karl Wenzel, CFSP, MBIE

Often we talk about the difficult cases that we have experienced and perhaps how the end results were not quite what we had hoped for or expected. Perhaps the body didn't "last" as long as we expected, maybe due to difficult conditions or some unforeseen situation. It has happened to even the best embalmers out there and you'd be lying to yourself if you say it hasn't happened to you. The issue that most concerns us is how many embalming failures, which we see on a daily basis, are due to embalmer error, or perhaps due to lack of experience or concern.

What is most alarming is the increasing number of lawsuits that are being brought upon funeral homes due to body related issues. There are many expert witnesses throughout North America dealing with funeral related lawsuits who will tell you the main legal issues they are called upon are regarding embalming failures. Smells, discolorations, decomposition, swelling, and unsightly end results are more common than we care to admit. These lawsuits can bring huge settlements to the client families we serve. Funeral homeowners and corporations do not want negative publicity brought upon their businesses so quick settlements are often the easiest way out.

The big question is why is this happening so frequently? Granted, the cases embalmers are dealing with on a daily basis are far more technically challenging than ever before. Modern medical intervention has created some serious concerns in the preparation room. But perhaps too little attention is being paid to the routine, "average" case we see on a daily basis. We may even go a little further and say "routine embalmer error" is the concern.

Embalming failure can happen at any stage of the embalming process and we have to rely on our experience to recognize when this occurs. I know firsthand that a high pressure work environment can lead to multiple errors. The demand for a quick turnaround of a remains and a rushed atmosphere can be problematic. So let's talk a bit about some common areas we need to focus on to help eliminate embalming failures in our preparation room.

In some parts of North America the embalmer is fortunate enough to receive remains with a medical report stating the cause of death. In other areas we are less fortunate and must rely on the physical appearance of the remains, with perhaps a bit of medical history the family may have told the director. Either way, the embalmer should be doing a complete pre-embalming analysis and examining

the remains thoroughly for any areas of concern. In many cases, by their pre-embalming condition, the remains will give you a fair idea of what problems you may experience during the embalming process. Emaciation, edema, decubitus ulcers, medical devices which are still present, and even the location of the removal, are helpful hints to the embalmer. We know that if the remains came from a hospital that chances are drug intervention is present, or if emaciation is evident then we may lack proteins within the body. It may sound frivolous to some of you reading this, but rushing through this process or failing to analyze the remains and allowing these signs to lead you to the proper embalming chemicals and technique, are sure to put you at risk for embalming failure.

Another thing that may lead to embalming failure is poor disinfection. Proper disinfection is critical to both the remains and the embalmer. We all wish to do our best and take a good paycheck home to our families, but the failure to properly disinfect puts the embalmer at risk of taking far more home to his/her family than just that paycheck. In turn, it also puts the remains at greater risk of bacteria attack. Neglecting this can cause massive bacteria growth. This can cause severe embalming failure issues with unsightly results. Let's take the mouth, for example. The human mouth is a host of over 20 billion microbes (according to Dr. Bill Landers who specializes in microbiology and periodontal disease). Some of these oral bacteria can double in as little as 20 minutes. If we fail to clean and disinfect the mouth to the best of our ability, the mouth can become a bacteria haven and work against the chemicals we use in preservation. The end result will be soft, spongy, discolored tissue surrounding the mouth. That greyish, darkening tissue the day after your embalming is not a chemical failure, it is an embalming disinfection failure.

One of the biggest causes of embalming failure is the lack of sufficient chemical or too much water within the mixture. Often bodies received in today's mortuaries are already "water logged." High moisture content within the tissue and low chemical concentration can easily create an under-embalmed body. Water contains no preservative properties and injecting a weak chemical solution containing more water than is necessary can create a potential disaster. I know we have all worked for employers who would like you to use the minimal amount of chemical possible to keep the profit margins high, but they will

appreciate you far more for keeping the lawsuits away by doing your job properly in the preparation room. That being said, I am an advocate of using a little bit more chemical than may be required. However, we need to know what these chemicals are capable of. Some types of embalming chemicals are crude and harsh on tissue. This can also cause areas of major concern. So know your chemical and how to use it effectively. Lawsuits in funeral service involving body preparation are commonly due to under-embalmed or poorly embalmed bodies. I have never heard of a lawsuit due to an over-embalmed body, or because an embalmer used more chemical than the manufacturer recommended.

I mentioned under-embalming in the last paragraph. We know that a weak chemical concentration and an excess of water can be a cause of failure, but what about the issue of just turning the machine off too early? I see way too many embalmers rely on tissue rigidity and coloration as their way of determining whether the body is embalmed well or not. They initially make up a good mixture of chemicals for arterial injection, they see early favorable results, and, for whatever reason, decide to turn off the machine early. They're done, and fail to finish injecting their entire chemical solution resulting in that under-embalmed body. A professional embalmer should be a bit more sophisticated in their approach than this. The capillaries on the surface of the skin are the first to clear with the exchange of the chemical solution passing through the arterial system to the venous system. The exerted pressure within the arterial system forces fluid exchange within the capillaries and into the interstitial space through a process called filtration. Failure to provide adequate amounts of fluid (or in our case chemical solution) can result in a surface embalming or "shell embalming" effect. If we turn off our machines too early or do not use enough volume of chemical solution we have set up a perfect scenario for a possible embalming failure.

There are so many different reasons for embalming failure. Using the wrong pressure during injection, or the wrong rate of injection, inadequate cavity injection or an improper method (see last month's article on cavity injection), improper chemical choices, and inadequate chemical strengths, the failure to pre-treat troubled areas, and the failure to monitor the remains in the days leading up to the service, are just a few. These can all be controlled by the professional judgement of the embalmer. Failure to recognize the causes and to correct your method of approach can lead to a failure to properly preserve human remains.

As professionals, our biggest failure is to not take the time to do the job correctly, or to rush through the embalming for reasons of time restrictions. That fast injection,

or that "30-minute embalming," is not in the best interest of the remains we are working on. I tend to chuckle to myself when I hear fellow embalmers brag about how fast they can embalm. This approach will lead you and your firm down a path that could easily put you in legal troubles resulting in a massive payout.

Take the time to remember those potential end results due to your method of approach. Learn to slow down and be thorough. Protect yourself and your firm by documenting your case by using embalming reports. Document, Document, Document, is the best way to legally protect yourself and your firm.

If you consider all the potential options and cover all the points we discussed here, you will make embalming failures a rare scenario in your prep room. It may still occur on occasion, but if we truly have taken a calculated approach and documented the methods used, we have taken the measures required of us as professionals. We owe it to ourselves as embalmers who take pride in our work, but, more importantly, we owe it to the families that have entrusted us with the care of their loved ones.

PULLOUT #1:

The human mouth is a host of over 20 billion microbes. If we fail to clean and disinfect the mouth to the best of our ability, the mouth can become a bacteria haven and work against the chemicals we use in preservation.

PULLOUT #2:

They initially make up a good mixture of chemicals for arterial injection, they see early favorable results, and, for whatever reason, decide to turn off the machine early. They're done.

PULLOUT #3:

Our biggest failure is to not take the time to do the job correctly, or to rush through the embalming for reasons of time restrictions. That fast injection, or that "30-minute embalming," is not in the best interest of the remains we are working on.