

THE THANA GRAM

Spring 2020

Official Publication of the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association, Inc.

President's Message

Randy Nash • TFDA Board of Directors



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Dear Friends,

I hope this finds you all doing well and staying safe. In these unprecedented times it is imperative that we stay positive and look forward to the good things to come. With all that has been going on both here in Tennessee and around the world it has been heartwarming to see all the positive things that people are doing for others. I have seen large organizations producing PPE for those on the front lines, businesses and individuals buying food and making sure that all front line workers are fed every day, signs outside hospitals and nursing facilities recognizing the heroes working there, funeral directors finding creative ways to continue serving families such as webcasting, Facebook live funerals and drive-thru viewings, and I have seen funeral directors in towns banding together to help one another to serve families to the best of their abilities.

Throughout the past few weeks, the TFDA Board and Staff have been hard at work for you, ensuring that we communicate with our members and advocate on your behalf when needed. Last week, our TFDA Board met via Zoom and decided to cancel our 2020 TFDA/TFSSC Convention. While this was not an easy decision, we feel that this was the best direction for us to go this year. I can promise you this: the 2021 Convention will happen and be bigger and better than ever. While the TFDA is financially stable, we do ask our member funeral homes to make a \$100 donation if you are able, to help offset some of the lost revenue from the convention cancellation.

Regardless of pandemics, one constant you will see are funeral directors ready to serve, ready to help and ready to care with dignity and respect. We are sometimes called the last responders and I am ok with that, but I also know that when a family calls our first response to them that we will take care of everything is what means the world to them during the loss they have experienced. I applaud all of you in what you do every day and I am proud to serve beside you.

With Easter just past, I am reminded of a story in the bible that some of you may not be aware of. After Jesus was crucified, there was a man named Joseph who was from Arimathea. Joseph is said to possibly be an uncle of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy man, he asked Pontus Pilate to take custody of Jesus' body and let him care for it. He took Jesus, prepared his body and laid him to rest in one of his own tombs (Matthew 27:57). Because of the care that Joseph of Arimathea took for Jesus, he is known as St. Joseph of Arimathea the Patron Saint of Funeral Directors.

I tell you that story of St. Joseph of Arimathea to say this, remember that Jesus rose again after 3 days in that grave that Joseph laid him in, and though we are going through some trying times, our country and our profession will rise again and be better than ever. I want to leave you with this, the Prayer of St. Joseph of Arimathea: *"Pray for us that our hearts will not be troubled by the burdens of this life; instead, that we will place all our trust in Jesus."*

Yours in Service Always,

Randy Nash

TFDA President

Our Mission:

To be the Tennessee Funeral Professional 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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BLESSINGS IN TOUGH TIMES

By Todd Van Beck

Blessings – what a wonderful word. In fact it is such a powerful word that the church has been teaching and preaching about the subject of blessings for two thousand years, and the church shows no signs of slowing down in addressing, interpreting, and reminding thousands, millions, billions of people what blessings truly are, and that a simple life lesson needs to be learned and learn well by everyone on earth concerning blessings just – COUNT THEM.

I have thought about the blessings of being a funeral director long and hard and feel the need to share these simple thoughts. Remember folks this is TVB writing so don't expect too much.

I have concluded that funeral directors are just different from most everybody else on the earth – and thank God we are different. I used to see this type of difference, this type of being separate from the crowd in the medical profession, and I still see it at times in the clergy, but the medical profession has clearly succumbed to big business, and the clergy – I will leave that subject alone in this article, for now.

Funeral directors are different. I don't know of many vocations where its members are so willing to invest their emotions in the lives of the people they serve than funeral directors. I actually cannot think of another profession where the professional gets as emotionally and hence personally involved in such an intense way with the people who pay them for their services than funeral directors. Yes, every profession will claim this intense relationship but when the subject of death is involved I think many other professionals prefer to make a hasty retreat and let funeral directors pick up the ball and create the relationship, and THAT IS A GOOD THING. This is a real blessing for us and for the community we serve. Funeral directors do not run away from death.

I have certainly seen the medical profession simply evaporate when someone dies. Until I see the day when a hospital once again allows a funeral director to walk into the front door with the cot to remove a dead human being instead of us being directed to the door next to the garbage dumpster to remove a dead human body I will hold onto my long held view that the medical profession does not have much interest in dead bodies or in death. There are some exceptions to this observation but not many.

I have often times asked myself "Todd why does this preacher give a well thought out funeral oration that lasts for a while and the name of the deceased is mention, as compared to this other preacher chap who gives a five minute funeral oration and then can't get out of the mortuary fast enough?" Yes I have seen the church leadership evaporate when somebody dies. There are some exceptions to this observation, but funeral directors do not evaporate when confronted with death.

Few if any career choices require the ability and per-

spective to deeply deal compassionately yet at the same time professionally and financially with people who are experiencing the death of somebody significant to them. To be sure there are callous, burned out funeral directors – but honestly folks, not many. Nurses deal personally and professionally with people but I have not ever encountered a nurse who also is involved with the financial payment agreements between the patient and the hospital, nor have I ever seen a nurse really worried about who and how the towel they just used is going to get laundered and how much that laundry is going to cost and who pays the laundry bill. I also don't know of an instance when the chief hospital administrator asks the orderlies on the floor how much brain surgery ought to cost, and then takes the advice.

When I was operating mortuary colleges and dealt with the future of this great profession I found I ended up evaluating student's not based just on their grade point average or even their ability to pay the tuition (a position got which me into a peck of trouble with my higher ups and betters) I privately evaluated them on this one factor: did they possess that extraordinary capacity for emotional involvement that is needed in crisis management to help friends, and strangers alike when death entered the picture. Honestly, I had students with a perfect 4.0 GPA who were the most selfish, self-centered, narcissistic human beings I had ever encountered, and I would not under any conditions had called them when I needed a funeral director. However I had students who had a 1.999999999 GPA, but they were blessings, they had the funeral director spark, and because of my belief in them I would end up giving them the 100th of a point, and I never regretted doing this although I was not popular with not just a few of the regulatory agencies that I was compelled to deal with. Yes, I was too easy – guilty as charged – however I have never once buried a copy of somebody's GPA with them in their casket.

The capacity to build a trusting relationship with a stranger in say less than ten minutes which is usually the time a funeral director has to accomplish this simply means that people who become funeral professionals are different from the average person, and this difference should be celebrated, shouted from the roof tops, and never ever discouraged or minimized. It is a true blessing.

The human attitude that most funeral directors possess of universal compassion for the least of these is certainly an admirable trait and I want to suggest it is admirable in the extreme, and also a trait that drives the anti-funeral people nuts because they can't control what is in a funeral directors heart and if funeral service is anything it is a matter of our hearts.

The anti-funeral people have attempted for years to create the profile that funeral directors are creepy, weird, and strange beings. Their efforts are always doomed

simply because of our ability to help grieving families with not only their business arrangements but also in handling and understanding their grief and no matter what that ability is impressive to say the least. The anti-funeral people not only can't do this, they don't want to do this. Too much work, too much of a personal investment, much easier to sit at a computer and blast away than to jump into the deep end of the funeral directors swimming pool. I personally believe that hundreds of thousands of human beings are living their lives more fully concerning overall mental health because somebody in funeral service had this blessing of talent, knowledge and skill in their very being. I also want to suggest that the world desperately needs more people like funeral directors that can combine kindness and compassion even in the light of some of the most distasteful circumstances that can happen in any community.

Let me further make my point. When was the last time you went to Wal-Mart or a café, or the dentist or Hospital and the clerk or waiter, or hygienists or physician referred to you as their "family?"

What a superb service idea and concept we in funeral service arrived at years ago – our customers are our "families". Would you prefer it when you bought your shoes, groceries, car insurance or video games or got your teeth cleaned that the people serving you, or supposed to be serving you, would view you and treat you like you were part of their own family? There is a reason why people like funeral directors.

I believe that funeral service is probably the only career where total strangers to the funeral director can consistently expect such treatment. This is a blessing to our communities.

Another blessing which is seldom talked about in our great profession is the funeral home itself. In reality, no matter if the funeral director owns the building or pays the rent, in reality the funeral home belongs to the families that are being served.

To be sure the funeral home is only a substitute for the family's real home, but in the end when somebody is dead it ends up being no less their own home, for a while. I believe this is one of the real blessings of being a funeral director. I remember a veteran funeral director telling me once that when I opened the front door, I was in reality welcoming our client families into THEIR home. The funeral home is a place maintained for the families so that they feel not just comfortable, but that they may hopefully feel right at home. I have always liked the old home concept in funeral home buildings.

Every city I have ever visited I have noticed that overall, the funeral homes are the most beautiful buildings in the town. Funeral homes, overall, are not only marvelous they are also homey. I personally always liked the old funeral homes with a front porch and the new ones that have a good old-fashioned front porch. Good stuff!

Ever taken a hard look at other places of business in your town? Go take a tour of your tax accountant's place of abode or take a look at the waiting area at your dentist's

office or your psychiatrists place. My psychiatrist's office is a museum to the memory of Dr. Sigmund Freud, which might well have silently contributed to my own deteriorating mental health issues over the years, which I would be happy to share with the reader in another article. Oh, by the way – ever visited one of the anti-funeral people's offices?

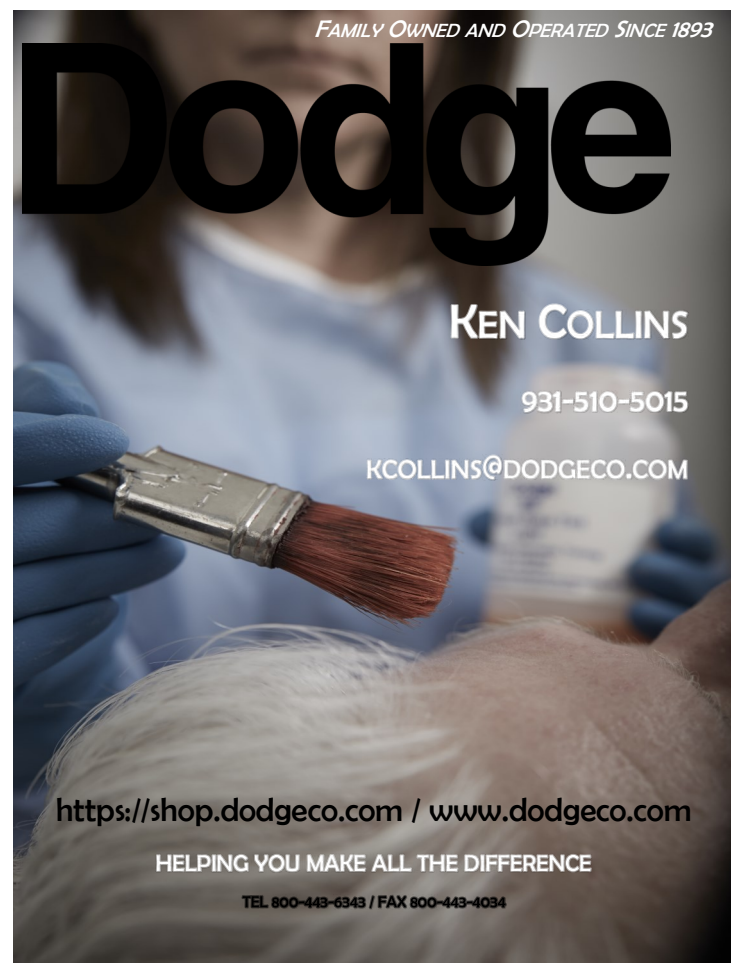
I have concluded that the beauty of most funeral homes is an unconscious way of buffering the perceived ugliness of death. I also believe this is the motivating reasons behind beautiful caskets, beautiful flowers, etc.

I am keenly aware today that strip mall funeral offices are present, and I believe that is ok. Sympathetic service is sympathetic service no matter where it is rendered. I once knew a funeral director who owned a funeral home and not one piece of furniture matched, and he did an adequate and livable number of funerals. So yes, the funeral home can be beautiful, but the real beauty of funeral service is what is in a funeral directors heart.

With this said I have to share that rarely if ever have I seen one building in any community where a financial contract for funeral goods and services can be signed one minute, and then there are emotional farewell kisses to the deceased in the same building within 48 hours. That is a blessing.

Funeral homes are wonderful places, and funeral directors are wonderful people. Anyway, that is my opinion.

Last thought in this article: My father was asked to go to war in 1941. I am being asked to go my sofa in 2020. I can do that. tvb



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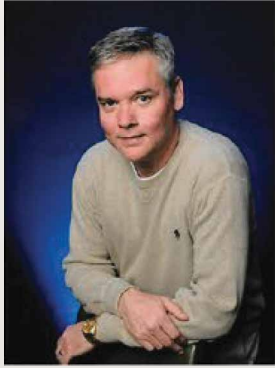
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Mike Blair (615) 308-7811
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I've been with Matthews Aurora for 22 years and a Funeral Director/Embalmer for 32 years. My travels include most of middle and west Tennessee and Western KY. Served as Past President of the Tennessee Funeral Supply Sales Club. Reda and I have a son, Brandon and we call Franklin, TN home.



Tripp Byrd (901) 652-0977
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I've been with Matthews Aurora since 1996, I started with a Regional Company called West Point. My travels include West Tennessee, North Mississippi and North Eastern Arkansas. I also served as Past President of the Tennessee Funeral Supply Sales Club. I live in Arlington, Tennessee with my wife Judy.



Daniel Pierce

I have been a Funeral Service Consultant with Matthews Aurora serving East Tennessee since August 2019, prior to that I served 2 years as an apprentice in the funeral service industry. I attended Tennessee Technological University, playing football and graduating with a degree in Business Management. My wife Cara and daughter Ruby and I currently reside in Cleveland, TN.



David Frye (812) 584-0146
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Regional Sales Director with over 15 years in leadership roles, most recently, the past year with Matthews Aurora. Cincinnati is my home where I live with my wife Amy and my triplet sons - Tucker, Tanner and Tyler.



Max Miller (618) 55-4367
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I have been a Funeral Service Consultant with Matthews Aurora for 26 years. Prior to that, I was a licensed Funeral Director/Embalmer for 25 years. I travel West Tennessee, North Mississippi and Southern Illinois for Matthews Aurora and reside in Anna, IL, with my wife Janis.



Tim Kalthoff (865) 567-0188
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Funeral Service Consultant with Matthews Aurora since 2006 and in the funeral service industry since 1985. I travel east and middle Tennessee territory and have served as Past President for the Tennessee Funeral Supply Sales Club. I live in Knoxville and Franklin and married to Pam, Funeral Director and Past President of Tennessee Funeral Directors Association. We have a blended family of six children and seven grandchildren.



Roger Grizzel (423) 292-6103
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I was in funeral service as a Funeral Director/Embalmer for 19 years before joining Matthews Aurora. My responsibilities for 28 years have been calling on firms in TN, KY & VA. Barbara & I have two daughters & two grandsons. We reside in Kingsport, TN.

*“What the world needs, now more than ever,
are people who are willing to share their voice
and lead with courage and
positivity through this time of uncertainty”*

Author unknow

Obituaries



Mrs. Shelby J. Hargis Collins, wife of Ken Collins, Dodge Co. Mrs. Shelby passed from this life on Saturday morning, February 22nd from the Vanderbilt Medical Center. She was born in Livingston, Tennessee to Bonnie Presley Hargis and the late George Hargis. Shelby was a 1983 graduate of Livingston Academy, and a member of the Willow Grove Church of

Christ. Shelby loved her family dearly and enjoyed every moment with them. She loved the lake and going out on her boat. Shelby loved traveling everywhere to listening to her son play music. She enjoyed her flowers around her house, going out to eat with her friends and family, and her dog Liz Goober.

Shelby leaves behind her husband, Ken Collins of the Willow Grove Community; son, Tyler Collins and wife Emily of Wilder, TN; grandson Aiden Collins; mother, Bonnie Hargis of Livingston, TN; sisters, Dianna Foster and husband Joey of Allons, TN, and Margaret Hull & friend Chris Fargason of Livingston, TN; brother, Chris Hargis and wife Sandy of Monroe, TN; several nieces and nephews, relatives and friends.

Memorial Donations may be made to the Aiden Collins Educational Fund at First National Bank.



Shelley is the wife of Randy McCarty, funeral director at McEvoy Funeral Home for over 25 years.

Shelley Sue Watson McCarty, age 55 of Paris, passed away Sunday, March 15, 2020 at Henry County Medical Center. Shelley Sue Watson McCarty was born December 3, 1964 in Fort Worth, Texas to Billy Ray Watson and Linda Bandy Watson, both of Joshua, Texas.

On September 28, 2013 she married Randy McCarty and he survives in Paris. She is also survived by her daughter, Anna Rae (Dave) Miller of Kennedale, Texas; two sons; Michael (Heather) Graves of Burleson, Texas and Carson McCarty of Paris, TN; brother, Steve Watson of Joshua, Texas; grandchildren: Lucas, Landon, Victor, and Caden Graves, and Ethan and Maggie Miller; sister-in-law, Sherry (Terry) Brown of Paris, TN; an aunt, uncle, nieces, nephew, numerous cousins,

and other family members.

Shelley was a member of Bethlehem Baptist Church. She was manager and designer at Paula Kelley's Florist for many years. She enjoyed making crafts, decorating, and dearly loved her family.



AGNES WATKINS FARRAR, age 96, of Jefferson City, TN went to be in the arms of the Heavenly Father at her home on Friday, March 20, 2020. She was a devoted member of First United Methodist Church of Jefferson City, where she taught Sunday School for many years. She graduated from Baroness Erlanger

School of Nursing in 1944, and was the oldest living graduate of the school. She was a dedicated nurse who served with love and compassion for over 60 years. She was a loving mother and grandmother, a loving friend to many, and like a mother to many others. She was preceded in death by her husband of 65 years, James "Jim" Farrar, to whom she dedicated her life in caring for; parents, Britt and Wilma Bible Watkins; son, Bill Farrar; sister and best friend, Nannie "Bertha" Watkins Cox. She is survived by her sons, Russ Farrar and wife Marion, Britt Farrar and wife Stacey; grandchildren, Clay, Jennifer, Tyler (Lasha), Taylor (Cassie), Kate and Gage; step-grandchildren, Ashley, Abby, Kaidence, Kambri and Ashton; brother, W. B. "Bud" Watkins and wife Betty; many special nieces, nephews, cousins and people that she considered family.

Special thanks to all the people too numerous to mention who loved and cared for her.

Arrangements by Farrar Funeral Home in Jefferson City, TN 865-475-3892 www.farrarfuneralhome.com



Daughter in-law to Tim Kalthoff, Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions & Pam Stephens, Williamson Memorial Funeral Home and Sister in-law to Mandi Marlin, Williamson Memorial Funeral Home.

Kristin Noel Perkins Kalthoff, age 44 passed away Tuesday, April 7, 2020. Kristin was a native of Knox County, TN and graduated from Karns High School. She attended Pellissippi Community College. Kristin worked

for many years as a Sales Representative in the cellular telecommunication industry. She was full of life, enjoyed laughter and a loyal friend. Kristin collected bunnies and Louis Vuitton purses. Survived by: loving husband that she adored, Judson Kalthoff; father, Paul Perkins; mother, Carla Perkins; father in law & mother in law Tim and Pam Stephens Kalthoff; sisters in law, Shannon Kalthoff Carver and Mandi Marlin; brothers in law, Matt Kalthoff, Jeff Kalthoff and Matt Martin; nieces and nephews, Camilla Kalthoff, Marghee Carver, Trey Carver, Stirlin Marlin, Langley Marlin, Matti Martin and Sam Martin; special niece, Julia Logan Horne; beloved cats, Grady, Shep and Itty Biddy; and very special friends, Katrina Logan Horne, Jessica Garland Baldwin and many other faithful friends. Memorials may be made to Knox County Humane Society or Young Williams Animal Center.

**"In the midst of movement
and chaos, keep stillness
inside of you."**

~Deepak Chopra

Stability in These Unstable Times



When times are tough the assurance of having quality people on which you can rely is priceless. TFDA would like to categorize the folks at Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions and Mary Russell as being such people.

Due to public safety concerns regarding the COVID-19 pandemic the TFDA March district meetings were cancelled. This cancellation would have jeopardized compliance for many TN funeral directors and embalmers license renewals for lack of CEU requirements. Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions and Mary Russell, on extremely short notice, offered to make available a one-hour, five-day webinar as a replacement for TFDA members needing the five hours of CEU's lost by the cancellation.

TFDA would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions and Mary Russell for their stability in these unstable times.

*we
will
get
through
this
together*

"Look for little moments of joy. You'll always be able to find them."

Laura Farrar, TFDA Director East

You are beautiful, for you are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Psalm 134:14

Mandi Marlin, TFDA Director Middle

"A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles."

Christopher Reeve
Marc Sims, TFDA Vice President

"Every tomorrow has two handles.

*We can take hold of it with the handle
of anxiety or the handle of faith."*

Henry Ward Beecher
Jeff Shackelford

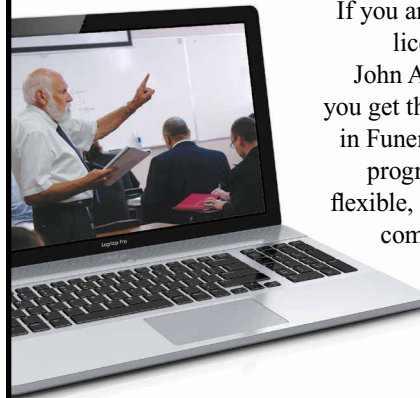


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“I will smile when I think of a small sapling growing tall over the years.”

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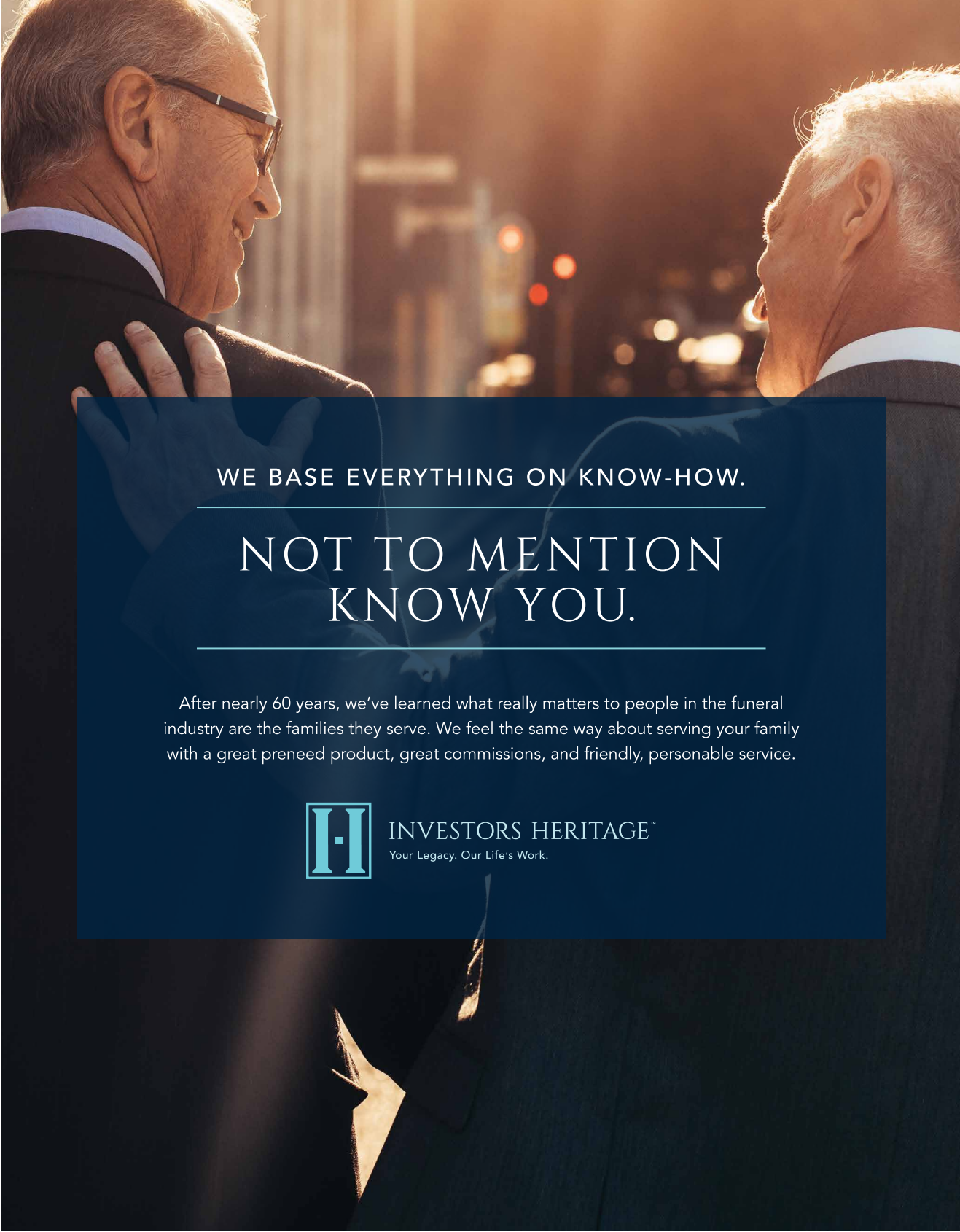
While nothing can take the place of a loved one, there is comfort in knowing that as one life ends, a new one is just beginning. Since 1976, the Living Memorial has helped re-establish thousands of acres in national forests and woodlands destroyed by fire, blight and other natural disasters.

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Mike & Reda's Journey

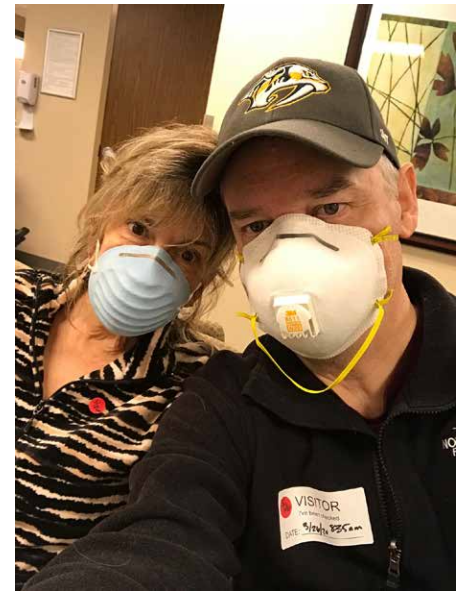
TFDA/TFSSC family, Reda and I wanted to share a little more of our story/journey with you. During these difficult times and uncharted waters we find ourselves in with COVID-19, we have a warm story to share with you. With your prayers and Gods plan this is our journey from Reda being diagnosed with Kidney failure to her kidney transplant on our anniversary March 9 2020.

Our journey began last June with her feeling terrible, not hardly being able to get out of bed. This was the beginning of our one of the worst time in our lives. Over the July 4 holiday Reda was in the hospital with all kinds of tests and Drs. searching for terrible diseases and many different kinds of cancer. All test were pointing towards kidney failure but this was unexplained so they hydrated her up and set her home with instructions to see many doctors over the next six months who again were sure they were searching for some dreaded disease. This was a very difficult time for us because we didn't want to alarm our families so the answer was always "we are good" while we were actually terrified. As we prepared for dialysis in the near future our prayers were always to get her on the transplant list ASAP. Though the entire journey I knew my love and commitment to her and if God wanted it to be our story, he would make me a match for her. We finally got her accepted to the national transplant list one week before Christmas. Talk about a Christmas gift, WOW! We were so excited! Now its time for me to get tested so I filled out my paper work for St Thomas Jan 2. and few days passed we got the call, rejected. We were devastated and frustrated knowing it usually takes 5-7 years to get a cadaver kidney which would mean dialysis. In the U.S. there are approximately 95,000 people needing a kidney transplant. My St Thomas donor advocate called me to say, you can't donate a kidney taking multiple blood pressure medication. My call immediately was to my family doctor to get me on 1 medication. He said we can try but that it usually takes time to show the transplant team the new BP meds are working and have some history to verify its under control. Time wasn't on our side and Reda's blood count was becoming more toxic each passing week. We needed God and prayers to move us forward. After keeping a detailed BP log, I was ask in late January to come in to get tested. Early February we received the call from St Thomas saying, PERFECT MATCH. I always new that I was a match because God put me on this earth and married me to my best friend to be a match. Statistics for a husband/wife match are 100,000 to 1 or in or situation 100% match. Many more test on both of us to prove the match was true, we were ask to think about setting a date for transplant. We went home knowing Reda was feeling worse by the day and now every test being run and rerun had the potential to stop the transplant. We ask St Thomas for a transplant date, our 35th wedding anniversary March 9th. This day was so special because it is about commitment and vows before God to say in sickness and in health until death do us part. St Thomas said what a great story but we don't do transplants on Mondays but that they would try to accommodate us. Each week we called, they kept explaining how its just not that simple to book two OR rooms side by side and two surgery teams on non-transplant days. About three weeks went by, we finally got the call that all had been confirmed and we were a GO for transplant. St Thomas West is the worlds best hospital with the most caring people we've ever know.

March 9 at 7 a.m. I had my kidney removed and about four hours later Reda had her new kidney installed. I'm not sure words can begin to describe the physical and emotional roller coaster we've been on since all this began but our goal and prayer is that we somehow touch, encourage and offer hope to everyone who might have kidney disease and to ask each and everyone we come in contact with to become an organ donor to help save someone's life.

We are locked down and so careful now because Reda is immunosuppressed to keep her body from rejecting the kidney. Keep us in your prayers during these challenging times and I promise we will be praying for you.

With our love,
Mike and Reda



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