

# NEWSLETTER

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## THE YEAR AHEAD: PREVIEW

I trust this letter finds you in good health and high spirits as we embark on a new and promising year. As we look back on our collective achievements and growth over the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the unwavering support and dedication each of you has shown to your community.

Your active participation and commitment have been instrumental in making these accomplishments possible. Together, we have built a vibrant and supportive association that continues to thrive and make a positive impact.

## LOOKING FORWARD

As we step into 2024, the possibilities are endless. We have exciting plans and initiatives lined up to enhance your membership experience, foster collaboration, and address your needs more effectively. Your feedback is invaluable, and we encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas with us.

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Scan to learn more.

Source: Batesville 2023



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*Adapted from an article that originally appeared on the Homesteaders Blog ([homesteaderslife.com/blog](http://homesteaderslife.com/blog)).*

*Homesteaders Life Company provides products and services to promote and support the funding of advance funeral planning and end-of-life expenses. Visit [homesteaderslife.com](http://homesteaderslife.com) or call 800-477-3633 to learn more.*



## **5 Ways to Help Families Honor a Loved One on Valentine's Day**

### **By Nicole Eilers**

For those who have lost a loved one, Valentine’s Day can be a very difficult and emotional time. It serves as a heart wrenching landmark on the long path of grief, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t meaningful ways to cherish the love that was once celebrated.

It’s important for them to remember that the love for those who have passed away doesn’t just disappear after they’re gone; it can, and should, still be celebrated, and you can be there with them each step of the way. Providing families with the opportunity for remembrance is an integral part of your aftercare program, and is a great way to build brand loyalty, express your dedication and ongoing value to them, which helps set your firm apart from others.

Here are some special ways that you can help families honor and remember their loved ones this Valentine’s Day:

#### **1. Create a Memorial Donation Campaign**

Invite families to partner with your funeral home to generate donations for their favorite nonprofit or charity in honor of their loved ones through Treasured Memories® Community Funding. Funds are collected online through a safe and secure platform that is completely free\* to you and your families. Families can share why they are passionate about a particular nonprofit or cause and how it impacts their loved ones and encourage their friends and family to donate.

\*Standard transaction fees apply to credit and debit card transactions.

#### **2. Spread the Love in Your Community**

Order flowers to be delivered to each family you’ve served recently or send out sweet Valentine’s cards to your client families. Place a memory tree or wreath in your lobby and invite families to write fond memories on paper hearts that serve as decorations. Another way to share the love is to visit the residents at a local nursing home or care facility and deliver cards or sweet treats. Putting smiles on their faces is a surefire way to brighten their day *and* yours. Doing nice things for people is good for the soul, and it’s a wonderful way for your business to spread goodwill and get more involved in your

community.

### **3. Encourage Families to Write a Love Letter or Poem to Their Loved Ones**

Provide nice stationary for families to put together a short poem or letter to their loved ones. Journaling is a healthy way for those grieving to express emotions – it can be funny, sad, romantic or a little bit of everything. They can even take it one step further by leaving their note at their gravesite in a nice envelope. If they'd like to save it, encourage them to store it in a nice memento box with other small things that remind them of their loved one. Or, if they're looking for something more cathartic; they can rip it up, burn it or bury it. Gently remind them they should do whatever feels right for them in the moment.

### **4. Let Families Know You're Thinking of Them**

If you don't already have an active aftercare program, consider implementing small changes to stay connected with your client families. Something as simple as a quick text to let families know you're thinking of them can go a long way and have a lasting impact. It helps for people grieving the recent loss of their loved one to know that they're not forgotten, and that people care about how they're doing. Texts are a more personalized and effective form of communication, and with our text-based aftercare program, it allows you to continue a nurturing relationship with your families without having to spend hours managing it.

### **5. Host a Valentine's Dinner**

Provide a simple meal and invite your client families to join you. Encourage guests to share memories about their loved ones throughout the meal, give a toast in their honor, or simply designate a time for everyone to quietly reflect. For those newly widowed, it provides the opportunity to have dinner plans that are not solely focused on romance. Not only does sharing a meal with others significantly boost happiness and mental wellbeing, it also strengthens relationships and is a great way to reconnect with your client families through meaningful community outreach.

Whichever way you choose to help your client families celebrate Valentine's Day, providing touchpoints and opportunities to honor their loved ones is an important part of an effective aftercare program and can help grow your business and generate positive reviews and referrals.

What are some ways you've helped families celebrate Valentine's Day? Do you typically plan something special to honor your families' loved ones on non-memorial type holidays?

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### High-Touch Aftercare

IFPA Elite aftercare builds on the success of MyLeadLink's fully automated marketing sequences. In addition to this, IFPA Elite offers industry-leading text-based aftercare.



### eFuneral Integration

Our integration with eFuneral unlocks consumer and agent-driven online sales tools and provides high-quality, quick-converting preneed leads.

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Departure 5-24-2024



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### **A Funeral Director's Prayer**

*Dear Lord, give me the patience  
needed to serve everyone as my own;  
the wisdom to understand others feelings;  
the knowledge to learn as well as to instruct;  
the kindness to treat everyone equally at all times;  
the strength to endure long hours and hard work;  
the desire to serve others as I would my own family;  
the compassion to be able to touch another's soul;  
the pride and the right to smile when  
I have served a family well;  
and, Lord, most importantly, the right to shed  
an honest tear when my heart is touched.*



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# BONNIE MOHR

where art meets soul and inspires life | STUDIO

The artwork of Bonnie Mohr speaks for itself - with a passion for living life to the fullest and a love for the country life that surrounds her. Bonnie's oil paintings, steeped in rich earthy colors and a charming realism style, are a true reflection of this artist's heart.

It is from her second floor farmhouse studio, in the early morning hours, that Bonnie creates these labors of love. Bonnie finds inspiration from her earlier childhood years and revealing tributes of her full life today as a dairy farmer wife and mother of five. It is from these life experiences that she paints who she is, and what she lives – engaging and inspiring her audience, capturing the genuine beauty of everyday life and reminding us to savor the “now.”



Oversized Memorial Register Book  
Closed: 8.25" x 11.5"

- Oversized memorial register book
- Original artwork by Bonnie Mohr
- Cover features embossed details and foil stamped verse
- Features three full color gallery pages with poems
- Coordinated stationery

Box Set  
Featuring Tribute Box

Coordinated envelopes with  
deluxe correspondence set



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# Pyreside Chats

By Christi Moon Robbins  
FD/EMB/CCO

## Do you know how to turn off your main gas line should there be a “catastrophic” event?

We have all seen in the media or read about fires at crematories. It’s something we all hope we never experience for everyone’s safety and property loss, but when pumping massive amounts natural gas into your building, working together with a fire source like that of a cremation unit, it’s often terrifying to think about. When having our cremation unit installed and our natural gas hooked up, we had our gas company come in and show us where to cut the main gas line off from our building in case of, what they called, a “catastrophic” event. (Full Disclosure: I have never performed a cremation using propane, only natural gas. If propane is your fuel source, you would need to speak to a propane specialist about the main cutoff.)



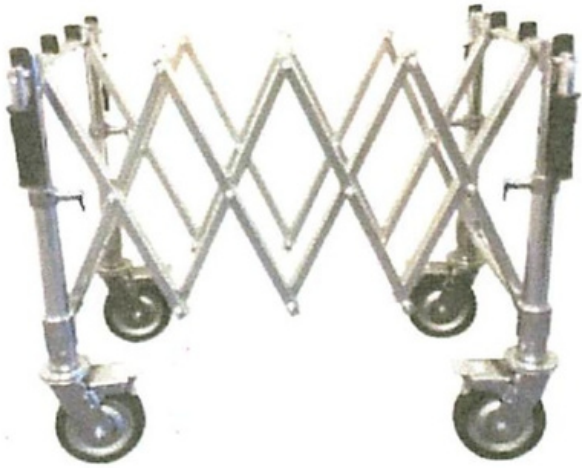
The gas company showed us exactly where the cutoff is located on the exterior of the building. As you can see, it is hard to figure out or see where it is even when there isn’t an emergency. We had it marked with tape, so everyone knows why it’s there and exactly what to look for. We were shown that the rectangular bolt is to be turned counterclockwise from 9 o’clock to 6 o’clock. When the two holes line up, then we’re assured that the gas is completely shut off to our building and can be locked out until everything is deemed safe by the gas company before turning it back on.

Sounds simple enough, right? But how are you going to turn that bolt if you don't have a wrench in your hand at that exact moment? They recommended having a wrench attached to or hanging nearby, pre-fitted, easily accessible and that visibly draws your attention to it. With the flick of a thumb and one swift pull, the wrench will easily slide off the orange string and is always accessible for the sole purpose of turning that one bolt. Contacting your gas company to walk you through and identify the shutoffs for your cremation unit is the safest bet. They will be able to create a safety program or tips to ensure an emergency plan is in place. Once a plan is in place, each employee can then be walked through the safety protocols for shutting off the gas.



Cremation safety isn't the coolest or most glamorous topics to discuss. And while we never believe or think anything bad is going to happen at our locations, it's important to collectively share what we know to keep each other and our communities safe from that one event that may be deemed "catastrophic."

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## Meet the Member Firm

### Middendorf-Bullock Erlanger Location

3614 Dixie Highway  
Erlanger, KY 41018

Phone: 1-859-431-1718

### Middendorf-Bullock Hebron Location

1833 Petersburg Rd  
Hebron, KY 41048

Phone: 1-859-431-1718

### Middendorf-Bullock Ludlow Location

461 Elm St  
Ludlow, KY 41016

Phone: 1-859-431-1718



### THE MIDDENDORF FUNERAL HOME

Nearly 150 years ago, Wilhelm Middendorf began a livery service. As was customary of the times, since services were held in the deceased's home, church, or at the cemetery, the funeral director, in lieu of having a funeral facility, would come to the home of the family to make all arrangements and preparations.

The original Middendorf Funeral Home was located on 12th and Madison Avenues in Covington. In 1929, John N. Middendorf (Wilhelm's son) purchased the current location at 917 Main Street in Covington. After John N.'s passing, his sons, Charles and John W. Middendorf, continued operating the business. Eventually, James "Jim" Middendorf (Charles' son) ran the family business until he sold the funeral home in 1988 to Muehlenkamp and Erschell Funeral Homes of Campbell County, Kentucky. Jim remained employed under the ownership of Muehlenkamp and Erschell Funeral Homes as the General Manager of Middendorf-Bullock Funeral Home until his retirement in 1999.

### THE BULLOCK FUNERAL HOMES

Similarly, to Wilhelm Middendorf, W. A. Bullock established a funeral service in Boone County in 1902. W. A. was investigating the purchase of the current Hebron location at the time of his death in 1933.

Upon his father's death, Dan Bullock entered the funeral business in Ludlow, partnering with Ray Catherman. The funeral home was known as Catherman and Bullock Funeral Home. Just a few short years later, Dan died and with no planned succession, the Bullock name was dropped from Catherman Funeral Home.



Upon his return from World War II, Wilfred E. “Shorty” Bullock (W.A.’s son, Dan’s brother) decided to build a funeral home in Ludlow. In 1949, Bullock Funeral Home was opened at its current location at 461 Elm Street.

In 1953, Shorty brought to fruition his father’s desire for a funeral home in Hebron and purchased the current location at 1833 Petersburg Road.

In 1980, Shorty and his son, W. Daniel Bullock, began operating the Bullock Funeral Home in Erlanger at its present location of 3614 Dixie Highway.

In 1988, the Bullock’s sold the three locations, Ludlow, Hebron, and Erlanger, to Muehlenkamp and Erschell Funeral Homes of Campbell County, Kentucky. This acquisition, which included the Middendorf Funeral Home in Covington, merged the two individual businesses and they became known as Middendorf-Bullock Funeral Homes.

### **MIDDENDORF-BULLOCK FUNERAL HOMES**

From 1988 until 2007, Middendorf-Bullock Funeral Homes was under the ownership of Muehlenkamp and Erschell Funeral Homes.

In 2007, fulfilling a career desire and returning to “local” ownership, the Middendorf-Bullock Funeral Homes were purchased by Pendleton County natives, William “Bill” and Nancy Deaton Mullins. Bill had been an employee of Middendorf-Bullock Funeral Homes, having lived over the Ludlow location since 1999.

Each succession and owner transition has proceeded smoothly with no disruption to the families we serve. Bill and Nancy have a longtime staff that excels at what they do. Serving the members of the communities where they live, work, and volunteer, they strive to offer caring, compassionate, and dignified services to each family. Everyone is committed to honoring the legacies that were established well over 100 years ago.

The staff takes great pride in caring for our families and has made a commitment to provide them with a beautiful, and lasting tribute for their loved one. Honoring loved ones is our top priority, and part of that is assisting our families in dealing with grief during difficult times. Everyone’s needs are different, and for that reason, families can entrust their loved one’s wishes to our staff. We have a wide range of resources to support our families not only today but in the weeks and months to come.

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## WILLIAM M. MULLINS

President/Owner

Born in 1963 to Gene and Doris Jean (Morgan) Mullins, Bill grew up in Pendleton County, Kentucky the youngest of five children (brothers, Gene, Jr. and Daryl and sisters, Regina Gregg and the late Renee Brown). He graduated from Pendleton County Memorial High School in 1981. He began his career in funeral service in 1983 in Falmouth, Kentucky, with Woodhead Funeral Home and continued his apprenticeship with Peoples Funeral Home.

After graduating from the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science, Bill moved to Winchester, Virginia, to continue his funeral service career. He returned to Northern Kentucky in 1999 and began working at Middendorf-Bullock Funeral Homes. In March, 2007, Bill fulfilled a career-long ambition of ownership when he purchased the four Middendorf-Bullock locations.

Bill lives above the Ludlow funeral home and has been married to his wife Nancy (Deaton) for 39 years. They have one daughter, Donna. Bill is the former Chair for the Wreaths for Kentucky Veterans Cemetery North (KVCN), Past President of the Hebron Lions Club, is a member of the Covington Moose Lodge, Newport Elks and is a Kentucky Colonel.

Bill's professional memberships include the Funeral Directors Association of Kentucky where he serves as the immediate past President and the Northern District Funeral Directors Association (past President). As an additional service for the families he serves, Bill also holds a life insurance license for the purpose of pre-funding funerals.



## NANCY DEATON MULLINS

Funeral Director, Certified Funeral Celebrant

Born in 1964 to the late Johnny and Donna "Susy" (Yelton) Deaton, Nancy grew up on a small farm outside of Butler, Kentucky. The oldest of two daughters (sister--Karen Deaton Shoemaker), she graduated from Pendleton County Memorial High School in 1982 and attended Northern Kentucky University.

After moving to Virginia, Nancy attended Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and graduated Magna Cum Laude with a degree in Political Science and a minor in History. While in college, she was active in the Commuter Forum (a group designed to foster awareness of the needs of non-traditional students) and wrote a regular guest column for the college newspaper. Nancy is a member of the Political Science and History Academic Societies as well as the Shepherd University Alumni Association.

Married to William "Bill" Mullins, Nancy lives above the funeral home in Ludlow. They have one child, a daughter, Donna.

A former substitute teacher with the Ludlow Independent School District, Nancy is the former Treasurer of Wreaths for Kentucky Veterans Cemetery North (KVCN), First Vice President of the Hebron Lions Club where she was presented with the LCIF's highest honor of the Melvin Jones Fellowship, along with her daughter, Donna, she was inducted into the Boone County Chapter of the DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution), and she is a member of the Newport Elks and the Newport Elks Ladies Auxillary where she serves on the entertainment committee. She is a licensed Funeral Director in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, a licensed Pre-Need Insurance Agent, and a Certified Funeral Celebrant by the InSight Institute.

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We are committed to providing the tools and training to help funeral professionals educate families about all of their choices for cremation. Our industry-leading cremation program, I'll Remember You®, has proven success growing cremation revenue by promoting the value of funeral service along with a flexible, wide-ranging merchandise selection to build a memorable farewell. Contact us today to learn how I'll Remember You® can help grow your business while better serving your families.

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## Meet the Member Firm



Chambers Funeral Home's story starts in the early 1900s, when a young couple from Uniontown, Alabama, decided to relocate within the state and settled seventy-three miles south in a small city within Jefferson County called Bessemer. In an effort to establish themselves, Charlie J. and Laura Chambers became barbers, and together they cut hair to earn a living.

With a passion for underprivileged children, Mrs. Chambers became principal of the Tuggle Institute in 1931. Under her leadership, this state-operated school became known for its service to disadvantaged children. Unfortunately, after several years of operation, educational funds were no longer available, and the school ultimately closed.

Mrs. Chambers continued her service by opening her home and establishing residence for three of the children she taught. Sadly, she had become a widow raising two children on her own, so in an effort to support her family, she began to write insurance policies for the Smith and Gaston Insurance Company and worked with them for several years.

In April 1935, Laura Chambers and her son, Augustus C. Chambers Sr., partnered and created a funeral home to operate in the downstairs portion of their two-story home. Mrs. Chambers named it "Laura Chambers Funeral Home." She and Augustus, also known as "Gus," worked diligently in serving their client families and made a lasting impression on everyone.

Laura Chambers' vision for serving families was shared by two of her dear friends, Catherine Malone and Minnie Lee Edwards. These two women contributed much to Chambers Funeral Home from its inception. Ms. Malone was there when the business opened and served as the firm's first cosmetologist, taking great pride in making sure client families were pleased with the appearance of their loved ones. Minnie Lee Edwards, one of the first African American women to own a vehicle in Bessemer, often used her car to transport families during funeral services. Together they worked with Laura Chambers and Augustus Sr. to lay the foundation for the legacy to come.

In 1959, Laura Chambers passed away, leaving her son Gus to operate the funeral business on his own. His resilience after his mother's death proved to be rewarding as the business continued to thrive under his direction. Gus was a distinctive and compassionate funeral director and businessman. He was a skilled and sought after embalmer for his unparalleled embalming technique. On April 23, 1969, he was called from labor to reward.

The legacy was continued by his son and daughter; Augustus C. Chambers Jr. and Augusta Ellen Chambers. They were also known to many by their nicknames, "Little Gus" and "Sister." Together the Chambers children carried on their father's vision by incorporating the business on October 1, 1969, and building a new facility, the present location of the funeral home, in 1971. Many believed "Little Gus" and "Sister" had a sibling bond that went beyond words, and for the next four years they operated the business together.

But on August 27, 1975, tragedy struck. Augusta and her husband, Bryant Jr., were suddenly killed in an automobile accident involving a train. Due to this misfortune, the family business was left to Augustus Jr., and he continued to provide the same level of service that the community was accustomed to receiving. In addition to his commitment to the funeral home, Augustus Jr. was an active member in several community organizations and funeral service associations, including the 33rd Degree Mason, the Boy Scouts of America, the A.G. Gaston Boys Club, the Sgt. Roosevelt Police Dept., the Fraternal Order of Police, the Ram Rod Motorcycle Club, the Allen Temple A.M.E Church's Board of Trustees, and the State and National Board of Funeral Directors and Morticians Association.

Augustus Jr. set new standards of professionalism in the funeral industry. He made Chambers Funeral Home, Inc. the first firm to offer limousines services in Jefferson County and had staff members wear uniforms during funeral services. On August 12, 1988, Augustus Jr. passed away and the leadership within the funeral home transferred to three of his family members: his wife, Jacqueline Chambers, his son, Augustus C. Chambers III, and his niece, Augusta D. Chambers. Together they revamped the office procedures and implemented techniques to make day to day operations more efficient and to better serve families.



A.C. Chambers III  
President

✉ [acc@chambersfuneralhome.com](mailto:acc@chambersfuneralhome.com)

Presently, Chambers Funeral Home, Inc. is operated by President Augustus III and Vice-President BryOnda Williams Collins, daughter of Augusta Chambers Williams and Bryant Williams. BryOnda is a member of the Alabama Funeral Directors & Morticians Association, Inc., the Alabama Funeral Directors Association, the National Funeral Directors Association, and the National Funeral

Directors & Morticians Association. In addition to her many roles, she serves on the Board of Directors for the Bessemer Area Chamber of Commerce.

As a team, Augustus III and BryOnda have not just continued the legacy; they have expanded its vision with a central focus on excellence in funeral service and a passion for serving the community while educating the public about funeral service.

The facility has undergone a complete renovation to better serve the families they are so privileged and honored to serve in the Bessemer area and surrounding communities. "Golden Rule Service" has always been and continues to be the Chambers Funeral Home motto. Chambers Funeral Home is a name people trust and depend on when the need arises.



BryOnda A. Collins, CFSP

Vice President, Licensed Funeral Director, & Embalmer

✉ [bryonda@chambersfuneralhome.net](mailto:bryonda@chambersfuneralhome.net)

BryOnda A. Collins currently serves as the Vice President at Chambers Funeral Home, Inc. where she is part of the fifth generation of her family's legacy in funeral service. She has been working in funeral service since the young age of fifteen and is as passionate and dedicated to servicing the community as the generations that preceded her.

Mrs. Collins graduated from the Funeral Service Education Program with an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Funeral Service Education in 1997 and is a licensed funeral director and embalmer. She has a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Alabama at Birmingham in Operations Management.

She is active in her state funeral service association, Alabama Funeral Directors & Morticians Association, Inc., where she has served as Assistant Recording Secretary, and on several committees, such as Chairperson of the Time & Place Committee and Uniform Committee. BryOnda served as an adjunct professor at Jefferson State Community College in the Funeral Service Education Program and currently serves on the board with the Bessemer Chamber of Commerce.

BryOnda is happily married to Zachary T. Collins Sr. and is the proud parent of one son, Rickney Bryonne, and one daughter, Courtney Briabrielle. She is a member of New Bethlehem Baptist Church in Bessemer, Alabama, under the leadership of Reverend William H. Walker Sr.



# East Tennessee Cremation Company announces the opening of their Family Cremation Center



East Tennessee Cremation Company is proud to announce the opening of their third-party Family Cremation Center on January 2nd, 2024. Renovations on an existing building, located on the same property, began in January of 2022. This facility serves as both the East Tennessee Cremation Company Family Cremation Center and offices The Independent Funeral Group.

The goal was to create an intimate, warm, and welcoming place for families who choose cremation and want to view prior to or participate in the cremation itself. This option was unavailable at our location during the pandemic, but now allows funeral homes and families the ability to have a dedicated private space to suit their needs and wishes.

When explaining to people that families can have a “witness cremation,” most people cringe thinking that a family will be witnessing some kind of fire. This is totally not the case. The family is asked each step through this process if they are comfortable proceeding to the next step and each step explained so they are prepared. There really is no difference in having a casket on a setting at a cemetery and preparing to lower it and bringing someone up to the cremation unit and preparing to be placed in it. We are responsible for showing reverence, while being transparent about cremation, so our families better understand the processes of cremation instead of what they have heard or what they have been told.



The facility was upgraded with a state-of-the-art cremation unit with the capability for the family to start the cremation from the cremation unit or in the family room by controlling a touchscreen tablet. Families also can help assist with the placement of their loved one in the unit prior to the machine being turned on. When asked if they want to raise and lower the door to the unit, most of them always say “Yes.”



The facility is also equipped with the same amenities as most funeral establishments. Multi-room sound system for instrumental music or playlist, projector and screen for photos or videos to be displayed and coffee, hot tea, and beverage station. Coming Spring 2024, our outdoor patio will be complete for those families who may choose to have a ceremony before cremation in an outdoor setting. Cremation is here to stay, and we’re always trying to evolve and progress to better serve the needs of our funeral homes and their families.





# Death & Faxes

by Alex Lewis

*Office insights on paperwork and procedures*

## Out of State, Out of Mind

Death certificates. Cremation permits. Burial-Transit forms. Disposition permits. The paperwork that makes up our day-to-day is so familiar, it tends to show up even in our sleep. We fill the forms and submit them— the fax numbers are saved, the email addresses memorized. If we don't get them back, we know exactly who to call. But who do you call when the forms *aren't* familiar?

An out-of-state call can throw a wrench into even a well-oiled office's operations. Whether you plan it out consciously or not, you probably have an instinct for how long your daily tasks will take you— and finding out what sort of permits are required for transit and cremation by the state of California, and how to complete them, and where to send them to get them signed, and where to send them afterwards, will take much longer than emailing Kim a form you've filled out two hundred times. Where do you start? Who do you call first, and what's your backup plan? Your lunch break rapidly becomes a distant dream— you already had other things to do this afternoon.

Like every interruption to a smoothly-running office, it's easiest to handle the unusual when it isn't unexpected. Knowing how you'll proceed in advance can go a long way to ease the process and reduce delays. Every state has its own laws, forms, and offices surrounding transport and disposition— unless your region has additional requirements for receiving from out of state, all permits and certificates for both will come through the state where the death occurred. What do they require? For a cremation, the state of Tennessee requires a specialized permit signed by the Medical Examiner in the county of death. In North Carolina, on the other hand, a draft Death Certificate, with the right boxes completed, functions in itself a permit for burial or cremation. In Virginia, cremation requires a certificate for Cremation or Burial at Sea. California's permit is a broad-scope disposition permit overall, permitting burial, cremation, donation, or transit out of state, depending on how it's been filled. That last part was explained to me yesterday by the Deputy Coroner of a California county, over the phone—the day after having the idea for this article, I came into the office to find that we were handling cremations for both a death that occurred in California and one that occurred in Michigan, which made for a good illustration and exercise of the process.

The easiest preemptive plan for out-of-state calls and their paperwork is to have contacts at funeral homes in your surrounding states. I'm particularly lucky in that regard—in any state with member firms, I have someone I can call with my questions. Unfortunately, that doesn't always reach quite far enough, as with that California case. Usually, internet searches about transit, burial, or cremation permits will give you more results geared for families and advertising than useful information for the industry. The best, easiest, and quickest results are most often from one of three sources—a Medical Examiner or Coroner's Office, a state Funeral Board, or a local Health Department or Public Health agency. The structure of all of these varies some from state to state, but they all have some equivalent. For states in the Southeast, tfig.net has a list of links under its Resources tab to the websites of state Funeral Boards, state Health Departments, state Medical Examiner's/Coroner's Offices, state forms and Funeral Law resources—and even most state Press Associations, which can give you a list of newspapers by region with contact information, which is extremely helpful for running obituaries in an unfamiliar area. The state Funeral Board websites often have forms or guides available online, though they

aren't prioritized in search engine results—after all, the people who most often need them already know where to look—and certainly have contact information for the Boards themselves. State Health Departments can often explain the processes, or at least put you in touch with the regional, county, or parish department that handles approvals or files documents, but often the shortest distance between two points is the local death investigator. It can be difficult to determine who to call, precisely, for that purpose—in California, the same county had several divisional offices, and multiple numbers listed for each— but, as was the case for my call, if you're calling the right building, someone can usually transfer you where you need to go. The final hurdle is usually the most unexpected, and most difficult to surmount. Like a non-native speaker of a language, your questions themselves may not make full sense to someone unfamiliar with your version of the process. I asked the Deputy Coroner in California if I needed to send the form I had back to anyone when it was completed— their Public Health agency office, possibly, or the Coroner's office itself— because at a Tennessee establishment, I'm used to returning the completed permits our crematory has signed back to our local Health Departments. The Michigan permit we received was also, per their policy, sent back to their Health Department when completed by us. The California department found my question to be one step away from nonsense. She asked me what I meant, and if the permit I had was not signed already by the registrar. I had to clarify by explaining the processes I was used to, and asking instead if the permit was complete as I had received it, and if anything needed to be done with it now that I had it, short of keeping it on file. In this particular case, the type of permit didn't require any input from us at all, and she, understandably, had no idea why we would be sending copies of a document back to the place it came from, when they had already signed it and sent it to us.

Having a place to start and a method in mind beforehand can make all the difference with unusual calls. If you have an idea of who to ask, and how to ask it, you can keep your day running smoothly—and hopefully even make it to lunch.



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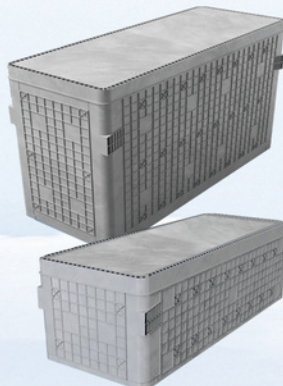


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