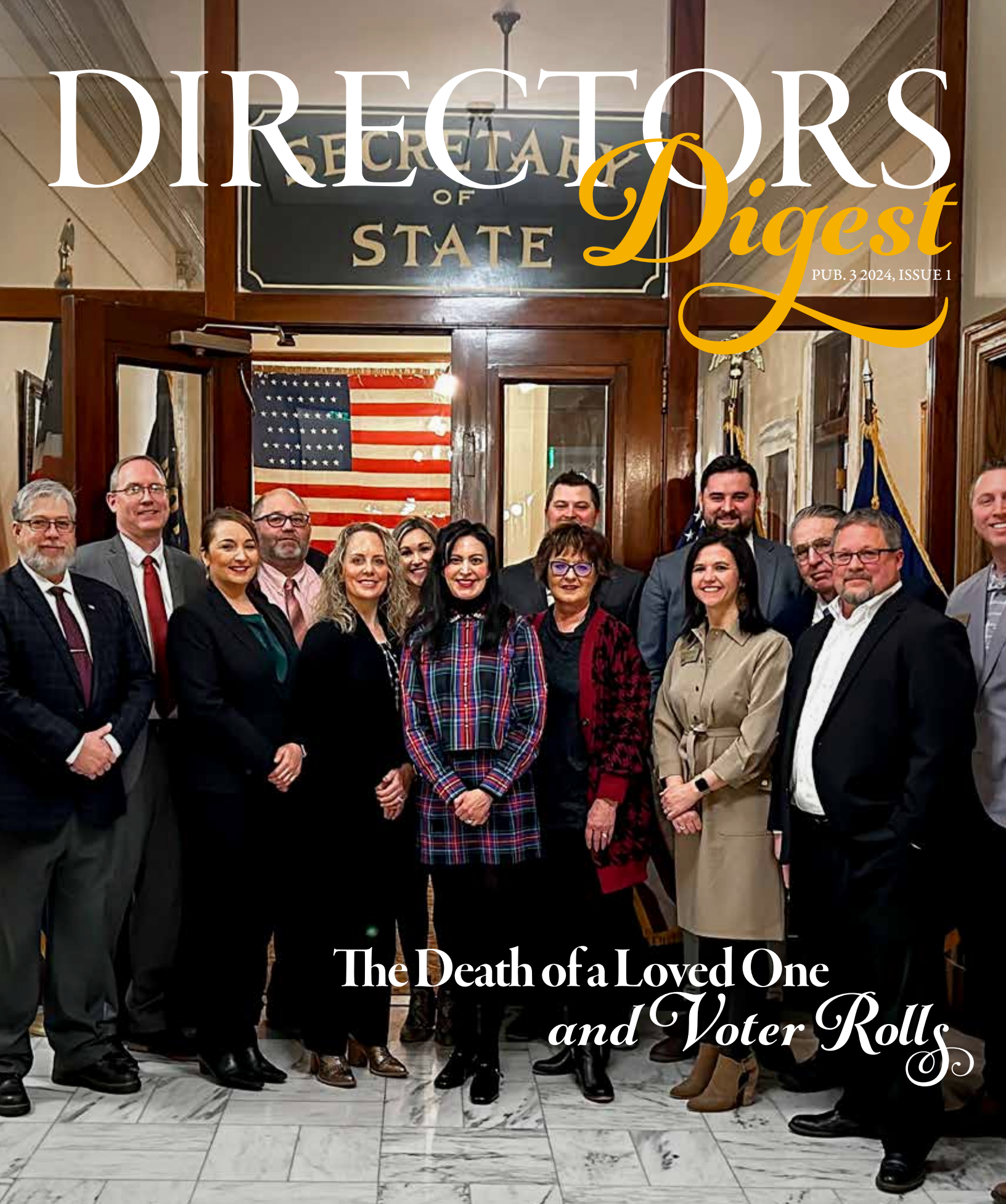


DIRECTORS

Digest

PUB. 3 2024, ISSUE 1



The Death of a Loved One *and Voter Rolls*

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Cover photo: MFDA Board with Montana Secretary of State Christi Jacobson

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Tyson Moore, President

Compassion Is the Heart of Our Community

I thought I'd share some thoughts I have recently had sitting on the "other side of the table."

My first thought is that one of the biggest strengths of our association is our relationships with each other. These are the relationships we have built as individuals, between our firms and with our vendors that support us. I have often made or received calls from members of the association asking for advice about anything from embalming to employee benefits. It has been great to be able to work together. I truly enjoy these interactions. More personally, I am humbled by your outreach after my dad passed away. Likewise, my mother was so impressed by all your support. The notes, flowers, phone calls, emails and even our friends at Davis-Whitehall, Terry and Deonne, coming to the celebration and sharing a table with my family, lead me to believe we have a really wonderful association. My mom said to me at one point, "Wow, you must be important." I told her, "No, I'm a funeral director who is supported by a group of friends who value

celebrating life." A big thanks from me and my family to all of you!

This leads me to another realization.

For years, I have had a vision of what my dad's service would look like. My family is very traditional, and I thought we would just do the typical service we had always done in our family. We'd start with viewing at the funeral home in the evening, service at the church the following morning, go to the cemetery and finish at the house with a luncheon or dinner. I was shocked to hear from my sister as we were driving from the airport, as I had gone to see Dad before he passed, that Mom and Dad wanted none of the mentioned services. My sister shared their plan with me. It involved going to the cemetery, and that was about it. The vision I had of the service was turned on its head, or was it? I expressed to my sister what I needed and began the hardest "pitch" of funeral service of my career. I made my list; I was going to see Dad, and Kim and the kids wanted to see him as well. I needed a gathering of some kind, and I needed to go to the cemetery to place Dad

in his mausoleum crypt. My sister basically told me, "Good luck. I'm not sure what Mom will say."

A couple of days later, I sat my mom down and said, "Mom, we need to talk about the funeral plans." I asked her why she didn't want a service. What she told me didn't shock me but confirmed my thoughts. She wanted a time to celebrate, not sit in a stuffy church and never talk to anyone. She told me how she didn't like the funerals she attended previously because she never had a chance to talk with the family and share memories. She was concerned that people didn't like viewings, so she didn't want to make people feel bad if they didn't want to see Dad. So, I started the "pitch" again, this time to Mom. I expressed to her how important viewing was and having a time to gather. She stopped me and said, "I have already changed my mind." My sister had told her of our conversation, and she listened. She didn't give in to my childish rant, she listened to my needs and realized if I needed those things, perhaps others did as well.

We had a viewing for those who wanted to attend. In preparation, myself, two of my brothers, my mother and my dad's youngest brother not only dressed Dad but also watched me perform some cosmetic genius. My younger brother stood at the end of the casket the entire time, telling me, "I would never do what you do, but it is fascinating." The next day, we had a graveside service that my dad planned between the conversation with my mom and his death. We ended the graveside with a family snowball fight in the cemetery, 40 or so of us doing what Dad would have done! My dad loved cemeteries. He had spent his entire career in the burial vault and granite memorial business. We concluded with a gathering of our friends and neighbors, sharing his favorite Godfather's pizza, A&W root beer floats and all his favorite treats to snack on. We shared stories, hearing

from those in the room as well as those remotely joining by Zoom. It was fantastic!

So, why do I share all the details with you all? I want to confirm to all of you that what we do is important. What we believe in is still relevant. We may get discouraged at times that society doesn't value what we do. Maybe they don't understand what we do and why. Maybe they want what we value but in a different package.

What was originally planned to be a simple cemetery-only experience of just my mom and siblings turned into events that brought many old friends and family together to celebrate the life of a remarkable man. To view my dad's obituary, please visit page 18.

Continue to do what you do. Listen, teach and adapt. ■

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

James Brown, Esq., Executive Director



MFDA's Best Year Ahead

A new year, a new edition of the Directors Digest. By the time this edition of the MFDA magazine is published, we will already be a couple of months into the new year.

As I reflect back upon this year now gone by, I am grateful for all the blessings in my life. These blessings include my long-standing good fortune to serve MFDA's members as your association executive director and, in this capacity, to run an organization dedicated to helping their local communities. Thank you for being part of the MFDA family and for placing your confidence in me.

At this time of year, I am often reminded of the wonderful story of a farmer who grew potatoes to feed both his family and his community. This farm had no horse or modern equipment to transport his potatoes to market. Thus, the farmer had to bag up his potatoes for sale, throw several bags over his shoulders and walk to town.

As the farmer was walking to the market, a neighbor with a horse and cart happened by. The neighbor kindly offered to provide the farmer with a ride. The farmer eagerly accepted, climbing into the cart. The neighbor noticed that, though the farmer sat alongside him, the farmer still had the bags of potatoes slung across his shoulders. Upon seeing this, the neighbor suggested the farmer ease his burden by setting the potatoes on the floor of the cart. "No," the farmer replied, "it would not be right to expect you to carry the weight of my potatoes as well!"

So it is with those, like you, who help Montana's grieving families and persons in need. You are like the neighbor in the just recited story who recognizes those in need of an assist and who is willing to share the burden of immeasurable loss. You have a career and occupation that is unlike most others in that you are trained to shift the weight of others onto yourselves. For this, you should be recognized and appreciated. And to this end, MFDA seeks to recognize your efforts by devising strategies to help you carry your own "potatoes."

Although 2023 has come to an end, this does not mean that things have slowed down for the association. In early December, the association sent out its 2024 membership and associate membership renewals. If you have not renewed your membership as of yet, you should resolve yourself to get that task done.

What's more, at the end of December, MFDA membership coordinator Terri James and I began to collaborate on finalizing the association's budget for this year. We know that, in this very difficult economic environment, every MFDA member is looking for ways to stretch a dollar, improve organizational efficiency, find great third-party products and partners and grow your customer relationships. Thus, in 2024, MFDA will be redoubling its efforts to assist your business in each of these areas and in maximizing the value of association membership. A great place to start those efforts is by having our membership fully engage with MFDA. The association is your one-stop place for interacting with your industry peers, receiving leadership training and development

opportunities, and meeting your continuing education obligations.

Further, in 2024, MDFA will continue to be your voice in the halls of Congress and the Montana Legislature. MFDA has developed deep relationships with key state legislative leaders and all of Montana's members of Congress. By renewing your membership with MFDA, you can be assured Montana's funeral industry's collective voice is heard both in our nation's capital and in Helena. And, of course, MFDA's annual trip to Washington, D.C., is one of the more informative member initiatives — combining a civic and history lesson with relationship building, lobbying and relationship building. As such, MFDA's Board highly encourages you to join us in D.C. in March during NFDA's annual Advocacy Summit.

If the association has learned one thing since the COVID-19 pandemic, it is that MFDA can never grow complacent in carrying out its century-long mission. While we beat back efforts during the 2023 Montana legislative session to fundamentally change the regulation of Montana's funeral industry by eliminating the Board of Funeral Service, much work still needs to be done in terms of having the Montana Department of Labor serve as a helpful partner in administering the board moving forward. The fact that the board isn't meeting on a quarterly basis is problematic both for the industry and the public.

I have already received a bucket full of positive feedback from our members and guests regarding the venue for the 2024 state convention. Again, the venue will be the Holiday Inn Missoula Downtown. The association is currently putting together the

guest speakers, activities and agenda for this year's event. I can make and keep a New Year's promise that the annual convention and tradeshow will be another great happening with great opportunities for both fun and professional development.

For our vendors and associate members, if you have not received the key registration information for the exhibitor and sponsorship kits, please let us know so. Feel free to reach out to me or Terri to reserve your booth before the trade show space fills up. The vendor spaces filled up early last year, so get your place reserved now.

We trust that 2024 will be the best year yet for you. We also hope you will keep that resolution you made, which only an estimated 8% of you will keep.

I look forward to seeing you in person in 2024! ■



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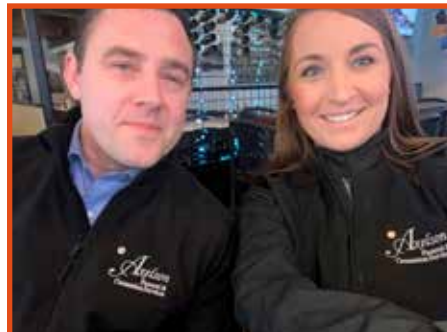
Meet the 2023-2024 MFDA Board of Directors



STEVE KIRKEGARD

Steve Kirkegard recently had the honor of becoming a team member and owner of the Bullis Mortuary in Hardin. He understands the importance of community values and service to those needing assistance in their greatest time of need. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Great Falls and a science degree from the prestigious Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science in Pittsburgh, PA.

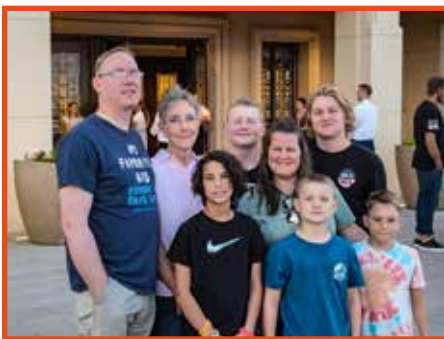
Steve and his wife, Valarie, have worked in the funeral industry in Billings and with the Fort Peck Tribe in Roosevelt County, Fort Belknap Tribe and Northern Cheyenne Tribe. They now serve the Crow Nation and communities of Hardin and Billings as well. When they are not working, they love visiting the Pacific Ocean, spending time with family and friends, their pup Buddy and serving others in this profession, which isn't a job but a calling.



BRI MULVANEY

Bri Mulvaney grew up in a small town in California called Yucaipa but has been in Montana for almost 20 years. She attended Montana State University (MSU), where she studied Elementary Education. After MSU, she began working for the Anderson Stevenson Wilke Funeral Home.

She works at and is one of the owners of Axelson Funeral and Cremation Services in Butte and Longfellow



TYSON MOORE

Tyson Moore is a licensed funeral director and general manager at Garden City Funeral Home and Crematory. He also oversees the day-to-day operations of five Western Montana firms. Tyson has been serving the Missoula community for over 10 years. Before moving to Montana, he lived in Colorado, where he and his family owned and operated a monument sales and manufacturing company serving Colorado, Nebraska and Wyoming families. He has also worked on memorial projects throughout the United States. His largest project to date is the Korean War Memorial for the state of New Jersey, located on the boardwalk in Atlantic City.

His time away from the funeral home is spent with his wife and five children, along with Frasier, the therapy dog he brings to the funeral home. He is also quite active with his church community.

Finnegan Riddle Funeral Home and Cremation Services in Anaconda. One of her favorite parts of managing and being an owner of a funeral home is setting a pace and standard for those who work for them and for the community.

Bri has been married to Nick Mulvaney since Aug. 8, 2015. They deeply enjoy sharing work life and the connection they have built because of that. Outside of her professional life, Bri enjoys spending time with family and friends, axe throwing on occasion, playing golf with Nick, yoga and watching live comedy shows.



RICK WALTER

Rick Walter was born and raised in Butte, Montana. He graduated from the University of Montana Western with a bachelor's degree in secondary education. In 1998, Rick joined the staff at a local Butte funeral home. In 2001, he received his Mortuary Science Degree from Mt. Hood Community College in Portland, Oregon.

Rick moved to Great Falls and worked at Schnider and O'Connor Funeral Homes until 2010 when he moved to Missoula and worked at Sunset Memorial Gardens and Garden City Funeral Homes. In 2017, he moved back to Great Falls to be closer to his children and grandchildren. He works at Schnider Funeral Home. In his spare time, Rick enjoys reading and collecting books, as well as camping and kayaking. He is also a fan of the Green Bay Packers in football and the Atlanta Braves in baseball.



CHRIS HOLT

Chris Holt was born in Helena, Montana, and graduated high school in Oregon. He began working part-time as a funeral assistant in Great Falls, Montana, in 2000 and decided to serve families full-time in funeral service. He enrolled at the Mt. Hood Community College in Portland, Oregon, where he graduated from Funeral Service in 2007.

Chris and his family moved to Helena and have been serving the Helena community and surrounding areas since 2007. He currently has been working for Anderson Stevenson Wilke Funeral Home since 2010.

Chris is married to his wife, Kelly, and they have five children: Justine, Joey, Tristen, Armanie and Madison. Chris is a member of the Helena Lions Club, a Master Mason of Helena Lodge #3, a member of the Montana Funeral Directors Association — in which he currently serves as the Montana Representative to the NFDA — and a member of the National Funeral Directors Association.



MATT COON

Matt Coon was raised in Miles City, Montana, and began his career, like many, by working at the funeral home washing cars, mowing lawns and general maintenance. That expanded into working visitations, watching phones (before cell phones) and helping with services. He was convinced to go into funeral service after high school and graduated from Mt. Hood Community College in

1994. Matt returned to Miles City, where he worked with Stevenson & Sons for many years.

In 2009, he married Michelle and moved to Billings. He worked for Batesville for two years before their son, Alex, was born. After 18 months of being a stay-at-home dad, he was excited to get back to work and joined Medallion Vault & Casket in 2013, where he has remained ever since. Matt's family enjoys traveling and attending Alex's sporting events throughout the year.



FRED NELSON

Fred Nelson was born and raised in Southern Idaho. In high school, he lost three very good friends in a very tragic car accident. This event, along with a family friend who was the local funeral director, prompted him to pursue a career in funeral service. After graduating high school, he started an internship in Boise, Idaho, and graduated from San Francisco College of Mortuary Science in 1965.

After receiving his Idaho Mortuary license, Fred worked for a brief time in Moscow, Idaho. He then moved to Missoula, where he worked for several years. He then moved to Polson, where he has worked for the last 25 years at Grogan Funeral Home, which is now the Lake Funeral Home.

Fred has been married 52 years to his wife, Sherry, and together, they have two daughters, four grandsons and a great-granddaughter. He enjoys spending time with his family and on Flathead Lake in the summer.



JESSIE BILLQUIST

Jessie Billquist is a Montana native, born and raised in Anaconda, Montana. After graduating from Montana Tech with a bachelor's degree in occupational safety and the University of Montana with a master's degree in physical therapy, she began her professional career as a pediatric physical therapist. She enjoyed working in that field for over 20 years.

In 2011, Jessie joined the Anaconda-Deer Lodge County Coroner's Office as a deputy coroner, and in 2018, she was appointed as the coroner. Jessie saw firsthand the impact that caring and empathetic funeral directors had on the families they assisted. She returned to school to pursue her goal of becoming a funeral director/mortician. She earned her Mortuary Science Degree in 2021 from Arapahoe Community College and began her career. She currently works at Longfellow Finnegan Riddle Funeral Home and Cremation Service, where she is the manager and funeral director/mortician.

Outside of work, Jessie loves spending time with her husband, Doug, and their six children.



SCOTT STEVENSON

Scott Stevenson was born and raised in Miles City, Montana. He graduated from Custer County District High School in 2002 and then went to Dickinson State University, where he got his degree in business management. Scott then attended Mt. Hood Mortuary School, where he graduated in the summer

of 2007. He is currently a director at Stevenson & Sons Funeral Homes.

Scott and his wife, Andrea, have two children, Landon and Emerson. Scott is a member of the Grace Bible Church, The Miles City Club, the Town and Country Club, the Montana Funeral Directors Association and the National Funeral Directors Association. Like others in his family, he enjoys Montana's outdoor life, including hunting, fishing, golfing and watching football whenever he can find some time for relaxing.



AUSTIN ASPER

Austin Asper started working in the death care industry at 16 years old when his father decided to take over the funeral homes in Shelby and Cut Bank. He started by washing cars, mowing lawns and handing out pamphlets at funerals. When he graduated high school in 2015, he went off to college to pursue a degree in psychology. After a semester, Austin moved to Argentina for two years, where he met his wife, Molly.

Austin moved back to Utah after returning from Argentina and changed his major from psychology to mortuary science. While he went to school, he worked an apprenticeship at Larkin Mortuary in Salt Lake City. In 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Austin cut his apprenticeship in Utah short and returned home to assist the family business. He has been here ever since.

Austin currently resides with his wife, dog and son in Shelby, Montana. He hopes to be able to take over the family business and continue to serve families in North Montana for years to come.



KATIE BACA

Katie Baca grew up in New Mexico and moved to Montana for graduate school. She became interested in becoming a funeral director after working as a crematory technician for a couple of years. She decided to get her associate's online while she finished her Ph.D. at the University of Montana. She's worked as a director at Garden City Funeral Home and Just Cremation Montana ever since.

Katie and her husband just had their first child in January, so they have been very focused on him this year! They also have two dogs and two horses and enjoy getting outside to appreciate the beautiful Montana scenery anytime they can.



T.J. STEVENSON

From the day he was born, T.J. Stevenson has been part of a funeral service family. His grandfather, Dale Stevenson, started Stevenson & Sons Funeral Home in Miles City in 1962. Since then, his father, Todd, and uncles Joe and Jon — along with their respective spouses — have spread their wings into serving communities in Montana and North Dakota.

What T.J. enjoys most about funeral service is meeting and helping families during their most difficult times. He finds it quite rewarding to be able to hold a person's hand and help walk them through hard decisions, be able to cross paths with families he might never have met otherwise and be able to forge long-time friendships. ■



NFDA Update

By Chris Holt, NFDA State Association Representative



I hope everyone is doing well. We have been extremely busy since the beginning of the year, and there are no signs of a let-up.

Just a quick update for everyone. We are preparing for the D.C. fly-in in March, and it seems the usual issues are on the table. The Environmental Protection Agency's review of formaldehyde under the Toxic Substance Control Act is still under review. Also in the works is the Consensual Donation & Research Integrity Act (S. 2191/H.R. 4275), a bill that would protect the dignity of those who donate their bodies for research or education and create standards for oversight, including registration, inspection, a chain of custody, labeling and packaging, and proper disposition.

The FTC is still reviewing the Funeral Rule, and we are expecting some changes to that, which leads us to the big story of the FTC phone call sting. I believe the Bureau of Consumer Protection's Division of Marketing Practices placed undercover calls to more than 250 funeral homes from across the country to try to obtain price information. From this investigation, FTC staff determined that 39 of the more than 250 funeral homes violated the Funeral Rule on these calls.

As we all know, the Funeral Rule requires that funeral providers tell persons who inquire by telephone accurate information about their offerings or prices from their price lists and any other readily available information that reasonably answers their questions. Funeral providers may ask callers to identify themselves, but they cannot require callers to give their names, addresses, or phone numbers and must provide them with the required information, regardless.

Per NFDA, the FTC also advises that funeral providers should not highlight only package prices and must include itemized and minimal services. Sending them price information via other means doesn't meet the obligation under the Funeral Rule. *Further, it is a violation of the Rule to misrepresent state or local laws or make other deceptive statements, such as falsely claiming that the law*

requires embalming when that isn't the case. The Funeral Rule prohibits misrepresentations about state or local laws or regulations at any time.

Keep all of this in mind. Thank you to all of you and all you do for your families and your communities. God Bless, and hope to see you in D.C. ■

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The Death of a Loved One and Voter Rolls

Voting is an essential part of any democracy, and part of the voting process is ensuring that voter rolls are accurate. Voter rolls are constantly changing for many reasons — as new voters register, existing registrants move, change their name, pass away or, for some other reason, become ineligible.

Voter rolls are maintained by local and state governments. Currently in Montana, only obituaries in newspapers can be used to change a voter record.

Recently, Montana Secretary of State Christi Jacobsen and Elections Director/Chief Legal Counsel Austin James invited the MFDA Board to the Capitol to discuss and brainstorm ways to improve the state’s legal process for administering deceased voters.

The secretary hopes to add obituaries published by a Montana funeral home to the list of ways that can be used to change voter records. Additionally, MFDA members and the secretary explored ways to improve the data process involving the states’ vital statistics.

It was a fantastic meeting, and we look forward to future discussions with the partnership. ■



Samm Powers

MFDA's Dennis Schoepp Memorial Scholarship Winner

I am what they have termed a “non-traditional student” due to the fact I took the long road to complete my education. I set off to college after my senior year of high school, as I was taught is the natural next step. Honestly, I was really there to play soccer and wasn't entirely sure what I wanted to pursue. I had always wanted to go into medicine, but I knew I was not ready for that. Shortly after starting my sophomore year, I discovered I was pregnant with my daughter, Giana. Naturally, this altered the path I was on. I stuck with school for a bit and began working as a restaurant server. Ultimately, I made the decision to focus on work and my daughter, putting my education on the back burner.

When Giana was in the fifth grade, I reenrolled at a university and began my pursuit of becoming a physician. I was mentally and financially more prepared for the demands of a pre-medical program. Initially, I declared a Biomedical Science major with an Anthropology and Chemistry minor. I genuinely enjoyed my courses and was excelling, especially in Anatomy and Physiology. As I worked closer with the faculty, I learned that most of them held a Ph.D. in Anthropology. I was thrilled to discover a way to combine my love for both Anthropology and the Biomedical Sciences. I decided to add Anthropology as a second bachelor's degree rather than a minor. It was during a bioarcheological dig in Ukraine that I decided to fully commit to a path geared towards Anthropology and decline my medical school acceptance.

In the fall of 2020, my long-term boyfriend and I moved to Missoula, Montana, so I could begin a Master of Arts program. There, I had an instructor, Dr. Katie Baca, who is also a Funeral Director. Shortly after receiving my M.A., she informed me of an opening on the removal staff with the funeral homes of Missoula. This opportunity came at a perfect time. I had fallen in love with the area and agreed to remain at the University of Montana to complete my Ph.D. and teach Anatomy and Physiology. I recall during



my interview, the manager, Tyson Moore, informed me of the path to becoming a funeral director and the many opportunities and growth within the field. I thanked him for the information and chuckled to myself, thinking I had changed my path enough times and, after all, becoming a funeral director was my sister's passion. I was grateful for the employment and the flexibility it provided. Intending my new position to simply be just that, a flexible job during grad school.

I quickly realized that the funeral industry just felt like the right fit. I knew there were Mortuary Science programs available online and began considering enrolling along with my Ph.D. I knew the combination of this dual enrollment would be challenging. Still, I couldn't imagine not pursuing a career in the funeral industry. I discussed these plans with family members, including my sister. She found it humorous that she was in nursing school, and I was considering enrolling in a Mortuary Science program. I believe her exact words were, “Why are you living my dream?” to which I replied, “Why aren't you?” We are both currently enrolled in the online Mortuary Science program at Arapahoe Community College in Littleton, Colorado.

The challenges of teaching A&P labs at U of M, working on my Ph.D. in Forensic and Molecular Anthropology,

the Mortuary Science program and my employment at The Missoula Funeral Homes can only be described as a beautiful chaos.

I sometimes have to remind myself that this life is real — that I have found a way to do all the things I love in a state that truly feels like home. I believe it is essential that you stay open to new possibilities and never close the door to an opportunity simply because it seems complicated or goes against societal expectations of what paths you should take. Had I not lived by these philosophies, I may have never discovered that a career as a funeral director and embalmer seems to be my true calling.

I cannot go without mentioning the phenomenal group of directors I have the opportunity to learn from in Missoula. All of my coworkers at Just Cremation Montana, Garden City Funeral Home and Sunset Memorial Gardens have grown to feel like family. The support and encouragement I feel on a daily basis are often the boost I need to keep following my dreams.

Being the recipient of the Dennis Schoepp Memorial Scholarship will be a tremendous help in reaching my educational goals. It is such an honor to receive the support from the MFDA. I look forward to becoming a funeral director and continuing the exceptional standard of care that past and present directors in Montana demonstrate daily. ■

Interested in applying for an academic scholarship? Submissions are open between February 15 and April 1!

Scan the QR code to learn more.



<https://www.funeralservicefoundation.org/scholarship-opportunities/>

End-of-Life Benefits

Plan Ahead Using End-of-Life Benefits Provided by VA

End-of-life planning provides surviving family members with peace of mind following their veteran's death. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a new website with a focus on funeral and burial benefits. The site offers information on what veterans can expect with end-of-life planning and links that offer assistance with:

- Benefits for your spouse, dependents and survivors.
- Advance care planning.
- Burial and memorial benefits.
- Advance directives that ensure that veterans' future care reflects their current wishes.
- End-of-life planning with the VA.

In addition, more survivors of veterans are eligible for PACT Act (toxic exposure) benefits and other valuable resources. The website also contains a Frequently Asked Questions section for further assistance. ■

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

To learn more, scan the QR code.



<https://www.va.gov/initiatives/end-of-life-benefits/>

Lions World Vision Institute

Giving the Gift of Sight



We often use the word “legacy” to describe the incredible gift of sight a person who becomes a cornea donor leaves to a grateful recipient. Through the act of cornea donation, the gift of sight is given to a perfect stranger by a donor and that impacts the recipient(s) and their community’s lives in ways the donor will never know.

Formally known as SightLife, Lions World Vision Institute (LWVI) is dedicated to serving donor families and the community through tissue and cornea donation. This nonprofit organization is committed to honoring vision as a basic human right, helping over 100 men, women and children every day gain restored eyesight through corneal transplants.

LWVI works closely with funeral professionals to facilitate the care of donor families while anticipating any difficulties that may arise for the funeral home due

to the donation process. The mission of LWVI cannot be accomplished without partnering with funeral professionals like the Montana Funeral Directors Association who work tirelessly to comfort and care for donor families.

Mike Meyer, Regional Development Manager for LWVI, is a certified eye bank technician through the Eye Bank Association of America. He has been with the LWVI nonprofit for 27 years. During this time, he has been involved in every aspect of the eye bank recovery process. His current focus is to improve the donation process in Washington, Idaho and Montana for those involved with deaths and recoveries that occur outside of the hospital setting. This includes working with coroners, medical examiners and funeral homes.

For more information about the donation process and to get involved, please call (800) 214-6356 or visit lwvi.org. ■

IN LOVING MEMORY



Randy Layne Moore

Randy Layne Moore, 72, of Beavercreek, Ohio, passed away at home on Jan. 8, 2024. Randy was born to Karl Thredgold Moore and Shirley Bjerke Hardman in Ogden, Utah, on April 18, 1951. He attended Ben Lomond High School and Weber State University. He married Emma Delores Spencer on August 10, 1973, in the Ogden Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They moved

to Cheyenne, Wyoming, shortly after and raised their family there for over 30 years. He was a stone mason and memorialist who thoroughly loved his job, helping the community memorialize their loved ones. His door was always open to family, friends and strangers alike. In the last 20 years of his life, while he battled dementia, he dedicated his life to teaching his friends and family how to receive personal revelation and to have a personal relationship with the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Preceding Randy in death are his mother and father, his brother and sister-in-law Dennis and Faye Moore, and his son Scotlyn Moore. Randy leaves behind his wife and six children: Shelby (Elaine) Moore, Brendon (Leigh) Moore, Karisa (Gordon) Walker, Tyson (Kimberly) Moore, Cameron (Kerry) Moore, Amberly (Travis) Helm and 22 grandchildren: Layne, Brandon & Collin Moore, Shayne, Grace, Aubrey & Alex Moore, Jarrett & Kaden Walker, Spencer, Caleb, Mikel, Kassie & Tanner Moore,

Natalie, William, Bryson, Makenzie & Olivia Moore, and Mackenzie, Everett & Jenna Helm. He is survived by seven siblings: Tamra (Brent) Ellis, Janelle Garner, Gregg (Denise) Moore, Brad (Patty) Moore, Melanie (Boomer) Benson, Danene (Russ) Polson and Stacy (Glen) Paskett.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Humanitarian Aid Fund of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Please make your check payable to Humanitarian Services, c/o LDS Philanthropies, 1450 N. University Ave., Provo, UT 84604. A Celebration of Life was held in Cheyenne on Jan. 20 at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at 3312 E. Lincolnway. He was laid to rest at the Lakeview Cemetery.



Donald (Don) Joseph Hoffman

Don Joseph Hoffman, 80, of Billings, Montana, passed away on Nov. 30, 2023. He was born on Dec. 9, 1942, in Denver, Colorado to James and Josephine Hoffman.

Don went to school to study mortuary science in San Francisco, California, where he met his future brother-in-law, Brent, who married Carolyn. He worked as a mortician for over 50 years. He was

previously married to Norine Hoffman, with whom they had two children, Eric and Christopher.

Don loved living in Montana with his wife, Nancy, spending time with his grandchildren, smoking his pipe, and watching old westerns. He and Nancy traveled a lot, seeing different and exciting places in New Mexico, Montana and more. He loved to hunt and fish in his earlier years. Don finished his career as a mortician at Bullis Mortuary in Hardin, Montana, serving the community with pride and dignity. He enjoyed spending

time with good friends there and having a few drinks at his favorite Hardin place, 4 Aces.

Don was preceded in death by brothers, Dewane, James and Paul, and his brother-in-law Brent Anderson.

He is survived by his wife, Nancy Newman-Hoffman; sons, Eric (Lisa) and Christopher; stepson, Judsen; sister, Carolyn Anderson; sisters-in-law, Beverly and Vicky Hoffman; grandchildren, Kari, Nickolis, and Stephen

Hoffman; great-grandchildren, Braylenn, Stella, Nixon and Cora Hoffman; nieces, Lisa, Kirsten, Michelle, and Sherry; nephew, Brandon; and many cousins.

Services are being planned for the spring of 2024 in Colorado.



Mary Jo (Mitzi) Rice

Mitzi Rice, age 68, passed away in her sleep on Nov. 25, 2023, in Fort Collins, Colorado, where she and her husband, Dixon, spent Thanksgiving with their oldest son, Devin.

She was born on Jan. 23, 1955, in Butte, Montana, the only child of Joseph and Mary Leary. She grew up in Butte, attending Catholic grade schools and graduating from Butte Central High. She then went on

to earn both bachelor's and master's degrees at Montana State University in Bozeman.

When she searched for a high school teaching position, the only opening for a business teacher in the entire state of Montana was at Columbia Falls High School, where she was hired and taught for nearly 30 years, eventually becoming department chair.

One of her best friends from college, Andy Rice, introduced her to his older brother in Moose's Saloon. On June 25, 1983, she married Dixon Rice, and they made their home in Kalispell.

Mitzi belonged to Risen Christ Catholic Church in Evergreen and was active in a number of Flathead Valley nonprofit groups. About 25 years ago, she became owner of Buffalo Hill Funeral Home and prided herself on assembling a caring and competent staff.

She was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease nearly 15 years ago and fought hard against that progressive and incurable disease, getting involved in exercise and Tai Chi classes and Rock Steady Boxing workouts. In recent years, Dixon became her full-time caregiver, so she was able to stay at home.

Mitzi is survived by her husband, Dixon, at the family home; two daughters, Shannon Wilkinson and her husband Troy in Las Vegas, NV, and Megan Hollenkamp and her husband Logan in Eagan, MN; two sons, Devin Rice and his partner Becca in Fort Collins, CO, and Jared Rice in Minneapolis MN; grandchildren Mackenzie, Kayleigh and Abigail Wilkinson in Las Vegas, and Calvin, Rose and Olive Hollenkamp in Eagan; and multitudes of cousins, friends and former students.

Visitation and viewing took place at Buffalo Hill Funeral Home in Kalispell, followed by a Rosary. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated at Risen Christ Catholic Church in Evergreen, with Fr. Stanislaw Rog officiating. Burial followed at C.E. Conrad Memorial Cemetery.

Mitzi loved children and so the family encourages contributions in her memory to an educational or youth charity of your choice. ■

2023 NFDA General Price List Study Shows Inflation Increasing Faster Than the Cost of a Funeral



In spite of concerns about inflation in the United States — and skyrocketing costs for goods and services — according to the National Funeral Directors Association’s (NFDA) “2023 Member General Price List” Study, funeral costs have not risen as fast as the rate of inflation. The overall rate of inflation over the past two years was 13.6%. According to NFDA’s study, the median cost of a funeral with casket and burial has increased only 5.8% over the past two years (from \$7,848 to \$8,300), and the median cost of a funeral with cremation, including alternative cremation casket and urn, has increased 8.1% over the past two years (from \$5,810 to \$6,280).

“Funeral homes offer a wide variety of options to meet the needs and wishes. The primary role of funeral directors remains helping families understand the many options available to help them honor the life of a loved one in a meaningful way,” said NFDA Research Manager Deana Gillespie. “Every funeral home offers unique services and pricing. Families should look for a funeral home that has a strong reputation with licensed funeral directors who understand their emotional needs and will be sensitive to their budget.”

National Median Cost of an Adult Funeral with Viewing and Burial

Since the 1960s, NFDA has calculated the national median cost of a funeral with burial by totaling the cost of the following items: basic services fee, removal/transfer of remains to funeral home, embalming and other preparation of the body (e.g., casketing, cosmetology, dressing and grooming), a metal casket, use of facilities and staff for viewing and funeral ceremony, use of a hearse, use of a service car/van and a basic memorial printed package (e.g., memorial cards, register book, etc.). The cost does not take into account interment in a cemetery, monument or grave marker costs, or cash-advance charges, such as for flowers or an obituary.

Item	2023	2021	% Change
Nondeclinable basic services fee	\$2,459	\$2,300	8.5%
Removal/transfer of remains to funeral home	\$395	\$350	12.9%
Embalming	\$845	\$775	9.0%
Other preparation of the body	\$295	\$275	7.3%
Use of facilities/staff for viewing	\$475	\$450	5.6%
Use of facilities/staff for funeral ceremony	\$550	\$515	6.8%
Hearse	\$375	\$350	7.1%
Service car/van	\$175	\$150	16.7%
Basic memorial printed package	\$195	\$183	6.8%
Metal burial casket	\$2,500	\$2,500	0.0%
Median Cost of a Funeral with Viewing and Burial	\$8,300	\$7,848	5.8%
<i>Vault</i>	<i>\$1,695</i>	<i>\$1,572</i>	<i>7.8%</i>
<i>Total with vault</i>	<i>\$9,995</i>	<i>\$9,420</i>	<i>6.1%</i>

National Median Cost of an Adult Funeral with Viewing and Cremation

NFDA calculates the national median cost of a funeral with cremation by totaling the cost of the following items: basic services fee, removal/transfer of remains to a funeral home, embalming and other preparation of the body, use of facilities and staff for viewing and a funeral ceremony, use of a service car/van, basic memorial printed package, cremation fee, alternative cremation container and urn. The median cost does not

include the price of interment in a cemetery, monument or grave marker costs, or cash advance charges.

Item	2023	2021	% Change
Nondeclinable basic services fee	\$2,495	\$2,300	8.5%
Removal/transfer of remains to funeral home	\$395	\$350	12.9%
Embalming	\$845	\$775	9.0%
Other preparation of the body	\$295	\$275	7.3%
Use of facilities/staff for viewing	\$475	\$450	5.6%
Use of facilities/staff for funeral ceremony	\$550	\$515	6.8%
Service car/van	\$175	\$150	16.7%
Basic memorial printed package	\$195	\$183	6.8%
Cremation fee	\$400	\$368	8.8%
Alternative cremation container	\$160	\$150	6.7%
Urn	\$295	\$295	0.0%
Median Cost of a Funeral with Viewing and Cremation	\$6,280	\$5,810	8.1%

Regional Costs

Costs for goods and services vary by region. Many factors contribute to the final determination of how an individual funeral home prices its goods and services, including the firm's business philosophy and the market in which it operates.

	Median Cost of an Adult Funeral with Viewing and Ceremony Followed by Burial	Median Cost of an Adult Funeral with Viewing and Cremation
New England CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT	\$8,985	\$7,023
Middle Atlantic NJ, NY, PA	\$8,573	\$6,498
South Atlantic DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, WV, VA	\$8,023	\$6,103
East South Central AL, KY, MS, TN	\$7,615	\$5,858
West South Central AR, LA, OK, TX	\$7,912	\$5,890
East North Central IL, IN, MI, OH, WI	\$8,280	\$6,120
West North Central IA, MN, KS, MO, ND, SD, NE	\$8,755	\$6,713
Mountain AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY	\$7,390	\$5,505
Pacific AK, CA, HI, OR, WA	\$7,835	\$5,812

Survey Methodology

A survey was mailed to 5,219 NFDA-member funeral homeowners on July 7, 2023, to gather the General Price List and other related data. Members also had the option of completing the survey online. A link to complete the survey was emailed to all main contacts with a valid email address, was posted three times in the NFDA Bulletin (electronic newsletter), and a reminder to complete the survey was emailed to all main contacts as well.

Of the potential respondents, 809 members anonymously completed the survey (474 mail and 335 online), which accurately reflects NFDA's total membership (with 95% confidence) within a range of +/- 3.4%. Responses also accurately reflect NFDA's membership by U.S. census district. ■

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Source: Batesville 2023

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A Letter From Longtime MFDA Member

Jered Scherer

I attended the Montana Funeral Directors Convention in Miles City last June, where I received the 60-year plaque as a licensed mortician, #262. I was deeply honored and was surprised with the video about my career.

The first funeral I attended was for a family friend at the Settergren Funeral Home in Billings. George Settergren originally started the business in Laurel in 1906 and then moved it to Billings in 1922. It ceased operating in 1980. I remember the vehicles: the pallbearers' limo was a 1947 Chrysler, and the hearse was a 1949 Cadillac Superior. The next service I attended was at the original Smith Funeral Chapel in downtown Billings. The pallbearers' limo was a 1949 Packard, and the hearse was a 1953 Cadillac Superior. I currently own a 1946 Cadillac Cathedral hearse and a 1956 Cadillac limousine-style hearse that I'm working on restoring.

I am a native of Billings and graduated from Billings Senior High School in 1957. I then attended Rocky Mountain College and Eastern Montana College, now MSU-Billings. I lived within a block of Michelotti-Sawyers Mortuary, which was started in 1956. I became acquainted with the owners, Bob Michelotti and John Sawyers, and I was able to gain employment with them to maintain the yard, clean the vehicles and perform custodial duties. At some point, they asked if I would care to drive for services and help with death calls and visitations. This is when I made my decision to become

a mortician. I attended California College of Mortuary Science and graduated in 1962. I returned to Michelotti-Sawyers and was on staff for 13 years. I considered Bob Michelotti and John Sawyers as my mentors in funeral service.

I joined in partnership with William Brown and William Bray, and we had the opportunity to purchase the Smith Funeral Chapel from second-generation owner Howard Smith in 1975. Two years later, we acquired the Terrace Gardens Cemetery and adjoining funeral chapel, the Cashmore Funeral Chapels in Laurel and Columbus, and the Olcott Funeral Chapel in Red Lodge. Later, Ronald Stene became a partner. Today, all Smith Funeral Chapels are owned and operated by myself.

I owe thanks to my family for the support I needed to be able to do all the tasks involved in funeral service, particularly when I was on a 24-hour call. Many adjustments had to be made to family schedules. Special gratitude goes to my wife, Bonnie, who passed away in 2018, and to my sons, Jim and Lew.

I've been blessed with good staff over these many years. Today, I have a mostly young staff who are very competent individuals. The licensed staff are Kassity Sorlie, Ross Halvorson, Roy Olpin, and my grandson, Jered Musso. There are also many support staff.

I've seen many changes in funeral service over the years, from the



days when there was one crematory in the state at Great Falls to now, where over 60% of mortuaries have crematories. As I look back over the years, I am honored to have been able to assist so many people in their time of losing a loved one. I hope I have been able to provide meaningful service to them and help them recover from their loss. I've recently reduced my schedule a little, but it is my desire to continue working.

Best regards,

Jered Scherer

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