

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT
 Melanie Heath Posey

Look beyond the vital stats



My grandmother-in-law died in July. In the past year that I knew Joan, we had gotten quite close. She reminded me of my grandfather who had died in 2005. Joan Hubertine Farley was a remarkable woman who deserved a remarkable funeral. That is exactly what she got thanks to McNabb Funeral Home in Pocahontas and Father John Marconi at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church. With the exception of my father's funeral, it was the most personal and meaningful service I had ever been to.

They incorporated every aspect of Joan. On the pall, Father John laid several symbols of her Christianity, which was her life. Father John laid her prayer journal, rosary, holy card of Her Lady of Perpetual Help and, last but not least, her car keys.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

AFDA
Mission Statement

Inspiring
 excellence
 in service for
 funeral
 professionals

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Little Rock, AR 72201
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FAX: 501-372-4505

Viva Las Vegas..... *and so much more*



From the Strip to Hoover Dam,
 site of 2007 Convention & Expo
 offers something for everyone



Attendees to the 2007 NFDA Convention & Expo in Las Vegas Oct. 7-10 will have plenty of chances to "live it up" aside from strolling the famed Vegas Strip. A trip to Red Rock Canyon is scheduled for October 6 and 7. Just 15 miles from the Vegas Strip,

Red Rock Canyon is so named because of its striking red sandstone formations. Once inhabited by Paiute Indians, it is home to herds of wild horses, burros and bighorn sheep. After touring the visitor center, attendees will hike through the canyon.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

In the News

NFDA offers executive roundtables

NFDA is partnering with The Family Business Institute to provide "Executive Roundtables" for NFDA members.

The roundtables represent the first fully managed and facilitated program of its kind in funeral service. The program will match funeral home CEOs into groups of seven to 10 leaders. With assistance from professional facilitators, these non-competing executives can openly review their companies and share information in a focused effort to build success.

The Family Business Institute has extensive experience in professionally managing executive roundtables, with emphasis on consulting for family and closely held businesses. Approximately 98 percent of NFDA member firms are family or closely held companies.

For more information, contact NFDA Executive Roundtable Coordinator Ashley Pharr at 877-326-2493, ext. 231, or at Ashley@familybusinessinstitute.com.

At-large reps elected to board

R. Bryant Hightower, Jr., CFSP, of Carrollton, Ga, and Robert T. "Bob" Rosson, CFSP, CPC, of Oxford, Miss., were elected to two new at-large positions on NFDA's Executive Board.

The two were elected by the NFDA's Policy Board at its July meeting in Lake Geneva, Wisc. They will begin their two-year terms of service immediately following the 2007 NFDA International Convention & Expo set for Oct. 7-10 in Las Vegas.

Hightower represents Martin & Hightower Funeral Home of Carrollton, Ga., while Rosson represents Waller Funeral Home of Oxford, Miss.

The new representatives replace outgoing at-large representatives Patrick Lanigan of Patrick T. Lanigan Funeral Home in East Pittsburgh, Tenn., and Patrick Lynch of Lynch & Sons Funeral Directors in Clawson, Mich.

Union bill dead — for now

The controversial Employee Free Choice Act (H.R. 800, S. 1041), a bill that would abolish secret-ballot elections for workers in deciding whether or not to unionize, was "killed" in the U.S. Senate over the summer.

But the "union bill" likely will be brought back up for consideration next year. The Senate version was effectively killed when a cloture vote failed 51-48. Passage requires 60 votes, and would have required the bill to be brought to immediate vote. Defeat of the cloture vote tables the issue for further debate.

Help Line has new number

NFDA's Funeral Service Consumer Assistance Program (FSCAP) has been renamed "Funeral Service Help Line" and has a new telephone number.

The new hotline number is 800-228-6332.

The help line gives consumers information they need to make educated decisions about planning a funeral or preplanning their own funeral.

The Funeral Service Help Line will continue to provide the same help and assistance to consumers that the FSCAP hotline offered.

Wreaths Across America goal is ceremony at each statehouse

Wreaths Across America, a non-profit project that aims to have wreath-laying ceremonies at each of the country's 50 state capitols, has set Monday, Dec. 10, 2007, as its target date.

Wreaths will be provided by Worcester Wreath Co. For more information on participation in this event, contact Celi Clark of NFDA at 800-228-6332 or cclark@nfda.org.

Controversial Carville adds spice to NFDA's 2008 Advocacy Summit

Some spice has been added to the recipe for NFDA's 2008 Advocacy Summit.

Controversial Democrat political pundit James Carville, the "Ragin' Cajun," will appear at the Summit, set for March 10-12 at the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. For more information, contact Lesley Witter at 202-547-0877 or lwitter@nfda.org.

Bi-state beach meeting a blast

The Arkansas/Louisiana Bi-State Convention was held June 24-26 in Orange Beach, Alabama. Those unable to attend missed a wonderful time at a beautiful beach.

This year's convention offered eight hours of continuing education on a variety of topics. Approximately 100 people were in attendance. Members arriving early got in on a great round of golf on Sunday. Monday kicked off the convention with the first day of speakers and informative presentations. The day concluded with dinner and a live band, while Tuesday ended with an impressive fireworks display on the beach. Wednesday concluded the convention with the eight continuing-education hours being offered and a social dinner, at which the new AFDA officers were inducted by the NFDA 2006-2007 President Elect, Michael St. Pierre. [See page 5 for a complete list of new board members.]

A special presentation was made to Renata Jenkins Byler for her outstanding service as the 2006-2007 AFDA Past President.

AFDA would like to thank its many sponsors for their support. Without them, these important conventions and continuing-education opportunities would not be possible. Sponsors are:

Silver Sponsors -- Aurora Southern/Melton Company, Batesville Casket Company, The Dodge Company, National Pre-arranged, Southland National Insurance Corporation;

Bronze Sponsors -- Bourgeois Casket Company, Limousines Limited, Limousines Unlimited of North Louisiana, Inc., Milso Industries, Security National Life Insurance Company, Selected Funeral and Life Insurance Company, Southwest District – Louisiana Funeral Directors Association, and Unity Financial Life Insurance Company.

Activities abound for convention-goers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Convention-goers can experience Hoover Dam — inside and out — as they learn the history of the dam and the Boulder City area on October 6 and 7. After exploring the towering 725-foot dam, attendees will travel to the Ethel M Chocolate Factory to learn how the Mars family creates and manufactures its famous handmade, gourmet candy and chocolates.

On Sunday afternoon, Oct. 7, attendees can take part in an exclusive, behind-the-scenes look at the famous Jubilee show at Bally's Hotel. Other activities include the "Rev It Up" free president-elect's party, at which guests can compete in the "NFDA 500" with remote-control race cars.

The Funeral Directors Under 40 Pub Crawl will kick off Tuesday. The action begins at the Harley-Davidson Café and continues at Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville. Guests will cap off the evening at the celebrated Ghost Bar atop the Palms Casino.

The NFDA All-Star Reception is set for Oct. 9 where Pursuit of Excellence award winners and the winner of the 2007 NFDA Initiative Award will be recognized.

The convention will wrap up Oct. 10 with the Annual Banquet, featuring tribute artists of yesterday's and today's biggest stars

For more information on the full workshop schedule and tour information, visit www.nfda.org/vegas2007.php.

An Exit Strategy Requires Making Smart Moves Early in the Game

You worked hard to create your business. How you plan potential exit strategies will ultimately help determine your financial success.

Many professionals suggest putting a succession plan in place at least five years before you intend to retire...ten years may even be better. In fact, some advisors recommend that an exit strategy be built right into an initial business plan.

Other Considerations...

- ✓ Retirement Income
- ✓ Leaving a stable, vibrant business
- ✓ Disability of owner
- ✓ Departure of a business partner

Avoid a future stalemate...
make the first move now.

Your local Federated representative can tell you more about how Federated's Financial Protection Services for association members can help assure financial security for you, your family, and your business.

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to Protect Yours.®*

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Send in your notices

AFDA members are encouraged to send death notices of anyone involved in the funeral industry in Arkansas to AFDA as quickly as possible, so that we can share the information with AFDA members.

E-mail notices are preferred. Please send such notices via e-mail to afda@brentstevensonassociates.com; via regular mail to AFDA at 1401 W. Sixth St., Little Rock 72201, or fax them to us at 501-372-4505.

For more information, contact us at 501-687-9860.

Calendar of Events

October 7

Funeral Service Foundation
7th-annual Golf Classic
Las Vegas, NV
877-402-5900

October 7-10

2007 NFDA Convention & Expo
Las Vegas, NV
800-228-6332 or nfdanet.org/events

Dec. 2-3

2007 AFDA Mid-Winter Meeting
Embassy Suites
Hot Springs
501-687-9860

March 10-12, 2008

2008 NFDA Advocacy Summit
Renaissance Mayflower Hotel
Washington, DC
800-228-6332 or nfdanet.org/events

2007-08 AFDA Board of Directors

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Funeral-industry workers protected

Funeral-industry workers have received some protection when assisting in emergency situations.

The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL) recently passed two reserved Sections 11 (liability protection) and 12 (workers compensation) of the Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioner Act (UEVHPA).

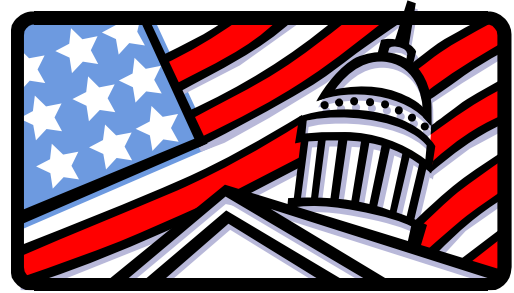
Passage enables much-needed state law protections for health-care practitioners who provide voluntary assistance during emergency situations.

A copy of the act is available at www.nccusl.org.

2007 NFDA Advocacy Summit

REPORT FROM D.C.

By Bill Booker, AFDA



I was honored to represent Arkansas funeral directors in Washington this past spring at the 2007 NFDA Advocacy Summit. Joining me were President-elect Melanie Heath Bryant Posey, Policy Board Member Lynda Heath White, her grandson Bradley, former NFDA President Sumner Brashears, and Courtney Crouch.

This was the 17th consecutive year that funeral directors from all across America made this trip to our nations' Capital to express concerns to our elected representatives. I'd estimate that at least 300 funeral directors were in attendance. Our group met with every member of our congressional delegation in person, except Rep. Vic Snyder of Little Rock who was out of town.

The issues we presented to each member and their respective staff were centered around small business concerns:

Affordable, meaningful health insurance

We discussed how difficult it is to secure health-insurance coverage at any reasonable price. Funeral directors are struggling with this issue not only in Arkansas but nationwide. Health-insurance premiums are sky-rocketing while co-pays and deductibles are increasing as well. In effect, we are paying more for less. This trend cannot continue without significant impact on peoples' lives and the financial integrity of small businesses.

Estate Tax Relief

The current estate-tax situation makes it increasingly difficult for family-owned businesses to pass their business to future generations. This has been particularly hard for funeral businesses that have a long and proud history of family ownership. We expressed our frustration with a system that supposedly expresses support for family-owned businesses, but has a tax policy that in effect tries to penalize it.

Codification of the Exclusion of Irrevocable Prepaid Funerals

This issue is unique to funeral service. As you may be aware, the Social Security Administration currently has a rule that exempts the money a person sets aside into an irrevocable prepaid funeral contract from the asset test to be qualified for SSI assistance. While we agree with this treatment and support it entirely, we believe Congress should pass a law to make certain this exclusion is permanent and not subject to change by someone at the Social Security Administration. This would also make it very clear what the intent of Congress is in this matter.

I am pleased to report that we received a warm reception in all of our meetings and a promise of support on our issues. The weather was nice in Washington but a little warm. Everyone had an enjoyable trip, including Bradley who became a pro at finding his way around the Capitol building itself.

Don't wish you had asked

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Father John gave a story related to each item that was placed on the pall. When I saw him lay the car keys on the pall, I thought; "Car keys, what is spiritual about that?" I soon received my answer. Joan used her car keys to visit the numerous people she prayed with, family, deliver Meals on Wheels, and she loved to listen to Christian music and sing at the top of her lungs. You see, Joan was very hard of hearing and couldn't hold a tune very well, but in her car, no one could hear her and she could sing as loud as she wanted.

She wrote about this in her prayer journal. When Father John started his homily, he said, "I am not going to tell you about the fruits of the spirit, I am going to let Joan tell you." And he read excerpts from her prayer journal.

I know, I know, you are thinking, "Where is she going with this?"

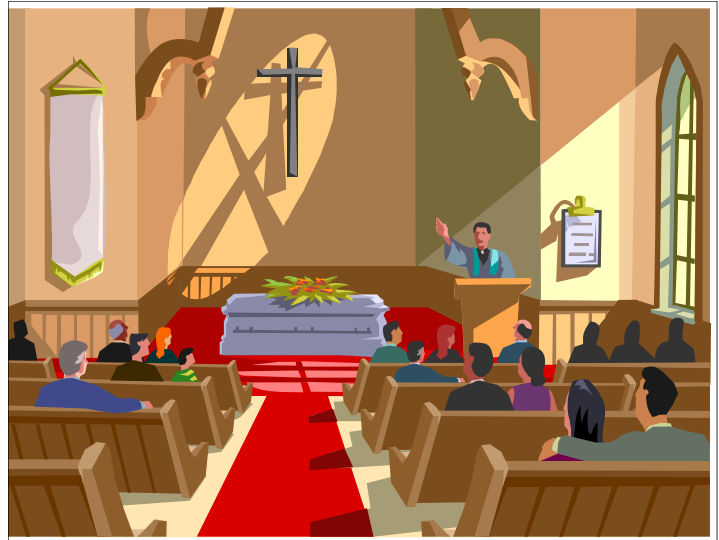
I believe that we as funeral directors have a legacy of caring. We have an obligation to do our best to make every funeral experience about the deceased. Even if we have to prod the family until we find something. It not only makes the funeral experience better for the family, it makes everyone who attended the funeral say, "I want a funeral like that." Everyone who attended Joan's funeral — and the church was full — walked away with a sense of satisfaction and a sense that they knew a little bit more about her than they did before.

Even her family.

I realize that we have been preached to about personalization at every continuing-education seminar we've attended in the past 10 years. However, while all of these are great and useful aides for personalization (and my firm uses every one of them), personalization is more than a neat cap panel, a picture board or a video. Personalization is about the heart and soul of the individual. It requires us to look beyond the vital statistics and ask the family some questions about their loved one that they haven't thought about telling us.

I find that, a lot of times after waiting on a family, they come back in the next week talking about a hobby or love that their loved one had. I would think, "If I had only known." Well, it's time to think, "If I had only asked."

This will not only make the experience better for the family, but it will make the experience better for your business.



Melanie Heath Posey
AFDA President



MEMORIALS

If you would like to honor or remember a funeral director, colleague, family member or friend, please consider the Verlyn L. Heath Scholarship Fund. Contributions can be mailed to AFDA at 1401 W. Sixth St., Little Rock 72201.

*Thank you for
your contributions*



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