

MISSOURI FUNERAL DIRECTOR

FALL 2023 VOL 10



Tiffany A Smith Life Memorial Centre Reno
Importance of Veterans Day
Bill Signing Photo with Governor



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Missouri Funeral Director

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Fall 2023 Volume 10



Thanks to our contributors!

Tiffany A Smith, TJ Sampson, Don Otto, Greg Bird
and Parkway Advisors

We invite all members to submit
articles, photos, and stories to
the editor.

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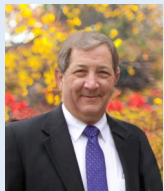
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ABOUT MFDEA

Our mission is to encourage excellence in funeral service, to provide members with exceptional resources and assistance, to represent and protect the common interest of its members, and to educate the membership and public about our profession.

All Missouri Funeral Director & Embalmer Association Members have pledged to adhere to a code of ethics that protects consumers, families, and the public. MFDEA members strive to have the highest standards in service, value and professionalism. Should you ever have any questions about funeral service practices or a concern about how any funeral home may be operating, please call our office at 573.635.1661.

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Message from President TJ Sampson



To my fellow members and colleagues,

It has been a great year for MFDEA. We have made some nice strides for our members and supporting our funeral service industry.

As we come up on the end of the year, we reflect that this year may have brought loss or misfortune for some and our prayers are with those who are struggling. We also want to take the time to be grateful for what we have and continue to serve others.

I want to extend my gratitude to our Association staff and members. I am thankful for all of you and appreciate your support and participation. It allows us as an association to stay on top of the latest in our industry which we then give back in the form of support to you.

I'm looking forward to the next year with more great things come. Our convention planning is really coming along and we are gearing up for another great one at Margaritaville Resort. Continue to stay tuned for details as we get closer to June.

Lastly, as we move into the holiday season, I would like to wish everyone a happy and healthy Thanksgiving and Merry Christmas!

Thomas "TJ" Sampson

MFDEA-President (2023-2025)

MFDEA Annual Convention

June 8—11, 2024

Lake of the Ozarks

Margaritaville Resort

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Executive Report

from Don Otto



In lieu of my usual report, I am sharing my article on the historic value of Veterans Day, and why we should acknowledging the immeasurable contributions of those who have served and continue to serve.

Honoring Our Heroes: The Evolution and Significance of Veterans Day

As November 11th approaches, the nation gears up to pay homage to the brave men and women who have selflessly served in the United States Armed Forces. Veterans Day, observed on November 11th annually, represents far more than just a date on the calendar. It embodies a legacy of sacrifice, valor, and national unity, rooted in a history rich with significance and transformation.

A Legacy Born from World War I

The origins of Veterans Day can be traced back to the conclusion of World War I. November 11, 1918, marked the signing of the armistice that ended the conflict, bringing about a profound moment of peace after years of turmoil. The war officially ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of the year. Tragically, this desire for a symbolic ending to the war resulted in more deaths, injuries and destruction as needless attacks continued even after it was known the war was about to be over. The following year, on November 11, 1919, the inaugural Armistice Day was celebrated, dedicated to honoring the veterans of the "war to end all wars."

The Evolution of a National Commemoration

As the world experienced further conflicts and the sacrifices of veterans expanded beyond the Great War, the significance of Armistice Day evolved. In 1938, Congress declared it a legal holiday, focusing primarily on commemorating the conclusion of World War I and fostering global peace.

Yet, the shifting landscape of warfare and the emergence of new conflicts led to a momentous shift. In 1954, after advocacy by veterans' organizations, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill transforming Armistice Day into Veterans Day. This change broadened the scope, recognizing and honoring the service of veterans from all wars and conflicts throughout American history.

The Symbolism and Significance

Veterans Day stands as a symbolic tribute to the millions of men and women who have donned the uniform, exemplifying unwavering dedication, courage, and sacrifice. It embodies a profound gratitude for their commitment to safeguarding the principles and freedoms that define our nation. It is a day not only to honor those who have served but also to reflect on the immeasurable debt of gratitude owed for their sacrifices, often made far from home and family, echo through generations, reminding us of the true cost of freedom.

Honoring and Remembering

Across the country, Veterans Day is commemorated through various ceremonies, parades, and solemn observances. It serves as a poignant reminder of the service and valor of veterans, encouraging communities to come together and express their gratitude for these selfless individuals. (continued on page 14)

Annual Membership Renewal

Missouri Funeral Directors and Embalmers Association annual membership is due by December 31, 2023. Keep your membership current to continue eligibility for all member benefits and access. Stay in the loop!

To pay, search your emails for 'Renew Your Membership Today' received on November 6, 2023. Thank you if you already paid.

Note: Funeral Firms must renew using their main location login email or ID number. Employees and branch location logins will not pull up the renewal rate. Need assistance? Call 573-635-1661.

2024 Membership Pricing

Funeral Firm rate - \$645 \$620 if paying by check
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Member Spotlight

SCHOLARSHIP WINNER GRADUATES

WITH HONORS

Sydney Macon, a 2023 MFDEA scholarship winner, completed the Mortuary Science program at Worsham College, Chicago, IL, in August and graduated with honors on September 8, 2023.

Macon was also the recipient of the 100 Black Women of Funeral Service Scholarship.

Tiffany Smith, Sydney's mother and President of Tiffany A. Smith Life Memorial Center in Overland, MO, stated "we are proud of her many accomplishments!"



Tiffany A. Smith Life Memorial Centre

Tiffany Smith, President, is excited to reveal renovations at the Tiffany A. Smith Life Memorial Centre, located in Overland, MO. Fifty stained glass windows were replaced with clear glass creating a brighter interior. The exterior received a complete refresh and new lighting.



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Lamcraft – 50 Years and Counting!



The Missouri-based company, well-known for its lamination supplies and services, will be celebrating its 50th anniversary next year. Lamcraft is excited to celebrate with new products, surprise announcements and upcoming sales for their customers.

Founded in 1974 by Mike O'Malley and Bob Sabin in Raytown, Missouri, Lamcraft evolved through the years to meet the ever-changing needs of its customers. Lamcraft moved its headquarters to Lee's Summit in 1997, and in 2023 its ownership changed to Tara and Erik Swanson. The Swansons are committed to keeping Lamcraft products *Made in the U.S.A.* and sourcing raw materials from American manufacturers. Nearly everything is produced on-site or through contracts with nearby manufacturing partners. Producing high quality products and putting customers first continues to be their focus and mission.

"We don't foresee any big changes in operations," Erik emphatically states. "Lamcraft is served best by its seasoned employees, many of whom have worked decades for the company. Our sales team is committed to listening to and collaborating with our funeral home customers—especially independently owned ones. Our design and production teams are talented and geared up to create exceptional, custom-made memorial products."

As Lamcraft moves toward the 50-year mark in 2024, it continues to grow by offering new items to the funeral home market. Prayer & Holy Card Clear Laminating Pouches are one of the top-sellers and to supplement them, the company soon will be releasing an expanded 8-up Micro-Perforated Prayer Card line, featuring traditional religious



Lamcraft offers a professional-grade laminator, shown with a variety of lamination products specifically designed for the funeral home industry.



designs as well as scenic landscapes, flowers, and original artwork. "We're thrilled to now offer Sun-View™ Memorials," said Erik, "a totally new product to memorialize a loved one." The small, translucent laminated card (photo to left) serves as a sun-catcher, showcasing a photo of the deceased on a vibrant background, anchored to a window with a suction cup. Unique and affordable (with minimum orders as few as fifteen per design), this colorful creation will honor the "Light of Their Lives."

Keep following Lamcraft in 2024, as it rounds the half-century mark and anticipates a promising future!

For more information, a catalog or samples, call 1-800-821-1333 or visit www.lamcraft.com.



MFDEA Districts Upcoming Events

Member Holiday Gatherings

Please join your fellow members to celebrate the holidays!

MFDEA District 6th & 7th Holiday Celebration

Tuesday, December 5, 2023

The Legends Country Club—625 Legends Parkway, Eureka, MO 63025

6 pm—Social Hour (Cash bar available)

7 pm—Dinner will be served

Cost for the evening is \$75.00 per person.

Please RSVP and pay no later than November 27, 2023.

Reply to Beth Akers at (636) 343-0400 or bakers@jaybsmith.com.

Make check payable to MFDEA Dist. 6th/7th.

Mail to Beth Akers, 777 Oakwood Dr., Fenton, MO 63026

MFDEA District 10 Holiday Celebration

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Hickory Log Restaurant—1314 W Bus US 60, Dexter MO 63841

6 pm—Social Hour (Cash bar available)

7 pm—Dinner will be served

Please RSVP no later than November 28, 2023.

Reply to Conita Falls at (573) 783-8336 or follisnsonsfh@yahoo.com

Pay at the event on the evening.



**Interested in
getting together
with fellow
members in your
district?**

If so, contact MFDEA for
district list, sources and
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(cont. from pg. 7) Additionally, the symbolism of wearing a red poppy holds deep significance. Inspired by the famous poem "In Flanders Fields" written by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae during World War I, the red poppy became a symbol of remembrance for those who served and sacrificed their lives in conflict. This tradition, popularized Moina Belle Michael, a longtime Georgia educator, was best known for her work as a World War I (1917-18) remembrance advocate, was inspired by the poem. Michael first proposed that red silk or paper flowers be worn in memory of fallen soldiers.

How the fallen were cared for in WWI

Field Burial: On the battlefield, the fallen were first attended to by their comrades or medical personnel. Swift burials were often necessary due to the constant threat of disease and the need to maintain hygiene. Soldiers were often laid to rest close to where they fell, in makeshift graves, marked by simple identification.

Temporary Burial Sites: These temporary burial sites, sometimes marked with identification tags or makeshift markers, were recorded meticulously. It was a solemn duty to ensure that these heroes' final resting places were preserved for future generations.

Reburial and Military Cemeteries: After the war, the fallen were retrieved from the battlefield for reburial in official military cemeteries. The American Graves Registration Service was responsible for this daunting task, involving meticulous documentation and, at times, exhumation for re-interment. This process ensured that the deceased soldiers found a permanent, dignified resting place.

Commemoration and Memorialization: The memory of these brave souls was not forgotten. Memorial services, gravestones, and plaques in military cemeteries served as reminders of the sacrifices made during the war. Families were informed, and they could receive medals, personal effects, and information about the location of their loved ones' final resting place.

Funerals and Embalming: Embalming was not a common practice on the battlefield during World War I. The urgency of managing the deceased and maintaining battlefield hygiene took precedence. Embalming was sometimes employed for high ranking persons who were returned home, and was sometimes employed later during exhumation and reburial, especially for transportation or identification purposes. For most, however, memorial services had to be conducted without the body present. For those that were transported home or had a funeral, World War I was a time of the expanded use of formaldehyde. For while formaldehyde was first used for embalming in the 19th century, after the development of formaldehyde-based embalming techniques by German chemist August Wilhelm von Hofmann in the 1860s, it did not become widely accepted until it was further developed by Dr. Richard Harlan, an American physician, who advocated for its use in preserving human remains. The large-scale loss of life from the war and the Spanish Influenza epidemic further accelerated its use.

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

Unfortunately, with the large number of killed and the new and devastating forms of warfare, many of the dead could not be identified. While this had always been the case to some extent in previous wars, the vast numbers of those lost and the way so many were beyond



recognition, or never even found, in the First World War was the impetus that created the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

In 1921, the United States Congress, after a similar program in England, approved the burial of an unidentified American soldier from World War I. The body was selected from four unknown soldiers exhumed from American cemeteries in France.

The selected body was placed in a casket and transported to the United States on the USS Olympia. On November 9, 1921, the casket was brought to the Capitol Rotunda, where the unknown soldier lay in state. President Warren G. Harding and other dignitaries paid their respects.

On November 11, 1921, the casket was moved to Arlington National Cemetery and interred at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The site was chosen due to its prominence and the fact that it was already a burial ground for soldiers. The interment ceremony was attended by President Harding and other officials, and it marked the beginning of perpetual military honors and round-the-clock guard by the United States Army.

The American Battle Monuments Commission: Honoring the Heroes

In the wake of the devastation of World War I, the United States sought to honor and commemorate the service and sacrifice of its fallen soldiers. The American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) emerged as a pivotal organization in preserving the memory of those who bravely served their country. Established by the U.S. Congress in 1923, the ABMC took on the responsibility of creating and maintaining military cemeteries and memorials to honor American soldiers who perished in the conflict.

The ABMC's work spanned not only within the United States but also across the theaters of war in Europe. The commission's efforts resulted in the establishment of numerous cemeteries and monuments in various countries, including France, Belgium, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

Architectural Marvels and Commemorative Design: The cemeteries and monuments created by the ABMC were architectural and artistic marvels, designed by renowned architects and artists. They stand as serene, meticulously maintained spaces that serve as a poignant tribute to the fallen soldiers. The design of these sites was carefully crafted to evoke a sense of reverence and honor, offering visitors a place for reflection and remembrance.

The ABMC's work extended to not only cemeteries but also memorials that paid tribute to the valor of the American soldiers. One of the most iconic examples is the World War I Memorial in Washington, D.C., originally known as Pershing Park and later redesignated as the National World War I Memorial. This solemn structure serves as a national tribute to the bravery and sacrifice of the soldiers who served in the Great War.

Ongoing Maintenance and Educational Initiatives: Beyond the establishment of these sites, the ABMC remains dedicated to their ongoing maintenance. They endeavor to create educational programs, materials, and digital resources that recount the stories of these soldiers. By doing so, they keep the flame of remembrance alive for future generations.

Legacy and Endurance: Over a century after the end of World War I, the ABMC's legacy endures. These cemeteries and monuments serve as a reminder of the cost of freedom and the immeasurable debt owed to those who laid down their lives in service to their country.

A Timeless Gratitude

As the years pass, the importance of Veterans Day only grows, carrying with it an enduring message of appreciation and respect for those who have defended the nation. It serves as a reminder of the debt owed to those who have safeguarded the liberties and values cherished by all Americans.

In honoring our veterans, we express our profound gratitude for their service, commitment, and the freedoms they have fiercely defended. Their legacy lives on in the gratitude of a nation indebted to their unwavering valor.

By Don Otto, Executive Director of MFDEA



MISSOURI FUNERAL DIRECTORS & EMBALMERS ASSOCIATION

THANK YOU TO ALL WHO SUPPORTED BILL 116!



September 6, 2023: MFDEA President T.J. Sampson, Past Presidents Greg Bird and John More, Board Member Kyle Trimble and Executive Director Don Otto joined bill sponsors and Governor Parsons for the bill signing ceremony for SB 116 that modernized Missouri's death care statutes.



Economic & Market Commentary

November 2023

Following a stellar first half of the year in equity markets, Q3 took a bit of a breather to reassess the current economic conditions and outlook moving forward. While broad equity markets pulled back, rates in the fixed income markets continued to climb across the curve. As uncertainty of economic conditions mounts, all eyes remain on the Fed and what their next steps are as they continue to combat inflation while striving for a “soft landing” outcome.

The yield curve hit its deepest inversion since 1981 in early July, with the 2-year Treasury yielding 109.5 basis points more than the 10-year. However, longer duration yields are potentially becoming more attractive as expectations of the end of the hiking cycle nears, followed by subsequent cuts, which are being priced in futures markets to occur in the second half of 2024. We also have begun to witness initial indications of the shift in the credit cycle as downgrades outpace upgrades and defaults increase. Throughout the quarter, we noted an impressive 75 basis point move from July 3 at 3.86% to the quarter high, September 27 at 4.61% on the 10-year Treasury. Another notable move came after positive June CPI numbers, causing the 2-year to fall 29 basis points in just two days before rallying back to end the quarter at 5.03%. While we have seen large step-ups in yields, spreads are held in check due to the decline of issuance as the effects of the restrictive monetary policy are being felt. While the rally in rates has exerted pressure on previously purchased fixed income positions, the current market remains attractive for putting new money to work being at the highest yields seen in 16 years.

Equity markets showed a strong first half of 2023, heavily led by information technology, communication services, and consumer discretionary sectors. July continued the upward trend of gains across the market, before an additional Fed rate hike caused by an unfavorable uptick in CPI numbers brought the bulls back to bay. Along with continuing “sticky inflation”, durable labor markets and stronger than expected GDP support the notion of restrictive monetary policy remaining for longer. Equities objected to the idea of “higher for longer” and as investors have capitalized on favorable cash rates, we have seen a pullback in equity markets through August and September of Q3. As a result of the decline in August and September, the S&P 500 and Nasdaq posted quarterly returns of -3.27% and -2.86%. The Russell 2000, which is commonly considered a better economic indicator due to its focus on smaller companies that primarily do business within the US, returned -5.14% over the quarter. Overall, nine of the eleven sectors finished the quarter negative, with real estate and utilities being the worst performing.

Following one of the most aggressive credit tightening cycles in US history throughout 2022, the Fed has continued its increasingly restrictive policy but at a slower rate thus far in 2023. While being cautious of over restrictive policy that could potentially send the US into a deeper recession, the Fed continues to work towards taming balky inflation. Treading carefully, the Fed opted to make an additional 25 basis point hike in July but chose to hold rates where they were during the September meeting. The .25% hike in July brought the Fed Funds Rate to 5.25%-5.50%. Following months of declining inflation, CPI increased from 3.0% to 3.2% in July, then to 3.7% in August. Although CPI did increase, the main contributor was a more than 10% recent surge in gas prices. The futures market is predicting that Fed Funds rate will remain at the current level through 2023 and halfway into 2024 with the first cut expected in July 2024. The Fed looks to continue the fight against inflation while preventing a “hard landing” scenario. Healthy labor markets and strong consumer spending have largely contributed to the economic resilience up to this point, but with credit card balances crossing over a trillion dollars for the first time in history and student loan payments resuming, the average consumer may be getting closer to being “tapped out.”

As the futures market is under the impression that rate hikes are over, the question remains of the duration of these higher rates. How long will labor markets, and a potentially weakening consumer, be able to hold up the economy until the reprieve of lower rates occurs? Will inflation continue to trend higher as indicated by the last two months? What are the Fed’s next moves? Now that investors have viable options outside of equities with meaningful returns on cash and fixed income, will we see additional rotation across asset classes? These are some of the questions that will drive additional volatility throughout the coming quarters.

Disclosures

Parkway Advisors, L.P. is an investment advisor registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission and provides investment management for the Missouri Funeral Trust. The opinions expressed are our opinions only. Past performance is no guarantee of future performance and no guarantee is made by this document.

For More Information

We welcome your inquiry and can be reached by mail at Parkway Advisors, L.P., P.O. Box 5225, Abilene, Texas 79608 or by phone at (800) 692-5123 or by fax at (325) 795-8521. A copy of our Form ADV, Part II is available upon request.

For more information, please email info@parkwayadvisors.com or visit parkwayadvisors.com.





MFT St Louis Office

Victoria Gwin
Senior Trust Administrator

P: 314-612-8497

E: victoria.gwin@umb.com

Please contact Vicki Gwin for difficult
issues and complaints.

MFT Update

The following changes at MFT have been put in place to
improve service and response time.

Payment, contracts, claims, and inquiries should all be
directed to the Kansas City UMB Trust office. The fax is
still operational but the preferred method for submitting
a claim is by email to mft@umb.com

Vicki Gwin is still the Senior Trust Administrator and
works from the St. Louis UMB Trust office. Staff has been
added in Kansas City to accommodate the workload.

MFT Kansas City Office

Inquiries on contracts, payments and claims should be
directed to the following:

Tiffany Freeman

Associate Relations Manager

P: 816-860-7366

Darian Carter

Relations Mgr./ Trust Administrator

P: 816-860-7027

MFT fax remains the same: 314-968-2266

Mail all paperwork directly to:

UMB Bank Corporate Trust

PO BOX 414647

Kansas City, MO 64141

If Shipping Requires Physical Address Mail to:

UMB Bank Corporate Trust
928 Grand Blvd, 12th Floor
Kansas City MO 64106

IN MEMORIAM



Caren Jaye (Wright) Bittiker, age 68 of Carrollton, Missouri, was called to her eternal resting place on Sunday, October 8, 2023.

She was the daughter of J.V. and Anna Lou (Settle) Wright, born April 13, 1955, in Marshall, Missouri. Caren attended grade school and high school in Bosworth, graduating in 1973. While there, Caren participated in cheerleading, basketball and held many different positions within Student Council. On September 14, 1974, Caren married Steven W. Bittiker, and they shared nearly fifty years of wonderful memories.

During her professional career, she held a clerical position at Banquet Foods, sold Mary Kay and was the proud owner of Caren's Cakes and Catering for over thirty five years. Caren served as Treasurer and Chairman on the Board for the Carroll County Ambulance District for thirty years. She was also the only board member that was a licensed EMT. She and her husband purchased the former Freeman Furniture Building and transformed it into the business it is today, where she became a licensed Funeral Director, licensed Funeral Officiant, and certified Crematory Operator. While working at the funeral home and serving families, she dedicated endless hours to making sure all of the family's needs were met, she always went above and beyond, and poured her heart into making sure every single detail was accounted for. She always put everyone else's needs first.

Caren cherished the moments that she spent with her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Caren leaves her family to sadly mourn her loss; her husband Steve, of the home; her son Steven Bittiker II, of Carrollton, Missouri; her daughter, Carissa Hoover and Daniel Jackson, of Raymore, Missouri; her granddaughter Lauren Bittiker and Bailey Hatcher, of Carrollton, Missouri; one grandson, Steven Bittiker III, of Kansas City, Missouri; granddaughter Kendin Bittiker, of Columbia, Missouri; two great-grandsons, Theo and Brooks, of Carrollton, Missouri; one great-nephew, Avry Wilson, of Sedalia, Missouri; and numerous cousins, co-workers and her beloved dog, Shay.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Jay and Ann Wright; her beloved sister, Carol Ann Grisolano; brother-in law, Rick Grisolano; two nephews, Jeffery and Brett Wilson; great-nephew, Brett Wilson II; grandparents, and many beloved aunts, uncles, cousins and friends.

Visitation is from 5:00 pm until 7:00 pm, on Saturday October 14, 2023, at the Bittiker Funeral Home, 1201 N. 65 Highway, Carrollton, Missouri. Funeral services will be held at 2:00 pm, on Sunday, October 15, 2023, at Bittiker Funeral Home, with Reverend Cheryl Sanders, and with Pastor Jeremy Payne officiating. Caren will be buried in Evergreen Cemetery in DeWitt, Missouri.

Austin Augustus Layne, Jr. was born by midwife on July 12, 1936, to the late Honorable Bishop Austin Augustus, Sr. and First Lady Selena Alberta Layne in St. Louis, Missouri. He was the youngest of eight children who all preceded him in death. Educated in the St. Louis Public School system, Austin was a product of Carver Elementary School and Vashon High School, class of 1954. He attended Stowe Teachers College. With a heart for our country, in 1959 he joined the U.S. Army where he became an army medic and later was trained to work on computers. Upon his honorable discharge in 1961, he was employed at the Government center as a computer specialist for the U.S Government where he worked until 1974. In 1960, Austin was married to Winona Jackson and to this union was born one daughter, Ingrid Selena Layne.

Austin professed his hope in Christ at an early age and received Jesus as his Lord and Savior. He was a lifelong member of Temple Church of Christ of the Apostolic Faith where his father, the Honorable, Bishop Austin A. Layne, Sr. was the founder and Pastor. Austin remained at TCOC after his father's death and under the leadership of his brother Bishop Samuel Austin Layne, Sr. He was loyal, dedicated and committed to the work of the Lord and the household of faith. For a short period of time, he found it necessary to step in at the church as Overseer until a vacancy was filled. He asked Bishop James A. Johnson if he could borrow Elder Ronald E. Stephens and the answer was, "You don't have to borrow him, you can keep him." Under Bishop Ronald E. Stephens' leadership, the church still stands and thrives. Austin never forgot the precepts and example his father instilled in him through the preached word of God, how his father treated mankind, and father to son lessons taught and learned. Faith in Christ was Austin's foundation. On November 5, 2011, Austin joined in Holy Matrimony to Eneazer Blissett-Moore.

On July 20, 2023, Austin was awarded the Presiders Award for exemplary and visionary Leadership, sacrifice of time, and dedication in service to the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World Incorporated and the Kingdom of God for 75 years. This award was presented by the Presiding Bishop, Theodore L. Brooks. His musical mentor, Bishop Charles Watkins, gave him the opportunity to play for the National Young People's Convention for the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World. He was the national organist from 1953 to 1961. He served in the national music department under the leadership of Bishop James A. Johnson and Bishop Paul A. Bowers. In 2002, he was appointed as board member of the PAW International Music Department of Sacred Arts by Bishop Norman Wagner and subsequently under the leadership of Bishop Horace Smith until 2010. His style of playing was inspired by the late Mother Rose Golder-Morris.

In 1969, Austin found his true purpose in life, and the profession he loved after accepting a job opportunity at Wade Funeral Home under the tutelage of his mentor, Mr. Gilbert Wade Granberry. Granberry later charged Austin to get his Associate Degree in Applied Science from the School of Mortuary Science, St Louis Community College at Forest Park. His additional studies were in Business Administration at Washington University and Webster University.

After working for Wade Funeral Home for ten years, he embraced his destiny and in November 1979, established ownership of the Austin A. Layne Mortuary, Inc. (The Historic Chapel). As Austin acquired employees to work at his establishment, he didn't take on the role of a boss, he was a servant leader who trained them to serve with excellence and professionalism. Being the visionary leader he was, Austin acquired a building that was once a car dealership and insisted it would be his second funeral home. Even other visionary leaders could not see what he saw, but with his tenacity, determination, grit, and persistence, Layne Renaissance Chapel became a reality and opened for business in 2004.

Austin A. Layne, Jr. was a pillar in the St. Louis Community. He was known for his service to all people, no matter their status or rank. His integrity, care, work ethic, and heart to serve became an exemplary standard in the profession of mortuary science, and in the community. As he was mentored by Mr. Granberry, so has he mentored many in his profession.

Music was an intricate part of the Layne household. He began playing the piano at the tender age of 6 years old (81 years). Austin A. Layne, Jr. was revered as "The Man with The Velvet Voice." He was a celebrated national gospel recording artist of sacred music and his signature song, "Holy Dove" written by Austin and his mother mirrors his musical gifts. Austin shared his "Velvet Voice" freely locally and extensively throughout the United States singing in concerts, at conventions, funerals, musicals, and as a featured musical guest. He did this openheartedly, never asking for compensation. His music augmented the realization of the true meaning of the human spirit. He had his audiences listen by not playing and singing loud.

In 1967, Austin released his first sound recording "Austin Layne Sings and Plays -Gospel '67" accompanied by the late incomparable L.G. Scott. The late Reverend James Cleveland recognized Austin's musical talent and was instrumental in him being signed with Savoy records. Two albums were produced under Savoy's label; "Austin Layne and the Layne Ensemble" which was comprised of his family members in 1970, and "Shadows" in 1973. In 1996, he independently released "Keep On Believing" and in 1999, "I Opened My Mouth to the Lord," both produced by the late renowned Walter Artis with full orchestra scored and conducted by the late Bob Krogstad with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. On May 2, 2023, Austin A. Layne was recognized and inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame at the Missouri State Capital in Jefferson City, Missouri.

Religiously and spiritually, Austin was not bound by denomination. He accepted and respected people's beliefs and often quoted his father, "Shun... (British West Indies accent) we don't have it all." He was a man for all people, and forged lasting relationships with men and women with different beliefs. Because of this, he was a catalyst for his best friend of 67 years giving his life to Christ; Reverend Donald Hunter; Pastor Emeritus, New Sunny Mount Missionary Baptist Church. Austin was a man of character, wit, and charm. He loved to laugh and was touched to tears by the human condition. He was always true to himself and loyal to friends. His heart was as big as life. He never met a stranger and rarely turned anyone away. He would freely give of his finances, resources, guidance, and advice. He loved the finer things in life and his signature style was always donning a suit, tie, shirt with French cuffs, fashionable cufflinks, and shined shoes. Austin had a love for electric trains and cars. His height was all of 5 feet 5 inches, but his statue was 10 feet tall. He was a giant of a man and was Beloved by many. After an arduous fight with illness Austin Augustus Layne, Jr. yielded his will to the will of God on Sunday evening, October 1, 2023.

He leaves to cherish his memory his wife (Bae-Bae), Lady Eneazer Layne, his daughter: Ingrid Selena Layne, grandson: Austin Parker Washington, nieces: Martyl Webster (James Michael), A`ngela Winbush-Polk (Timothy), nephews: Simeon A. Layne, Jr., Samuel A. Layne, III, John Cotten, bonus son: Andrae Blissett, Sr., bonus grandsons: Joshua and Jerimiah Moore, Andrae Jr. (A.J.), Austin, and Aidan Blissett, sisters-in-love: Doristein Parker (Harold), Frieda Goodwin, a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins (Layne, U.S. and Barbados, British West Indies, Jackson & Blissett family), altar God daughters: Tara Mastin, and Winona (Tootie) Ridley, his best friend of 67 years: Reverend Donald Hunter (Arthurine), Temple Church of Christ family, and last but not least, the entire staff and family of Austin A. Layne Mortuary, Inc.

DeLores M. (Montgomery) Shadel, the youngest of five children born to Hershel and Retha (Hawkins) Montgomery, finished her life's work and accomplished her ultimate goal on September 2, 2023. DeLores met Jesus.

DeLores was born August 14th, 1930, in Phillipsburg, Missouri. On that day ninety-three years ago, the Lord decided the world needed a lady of integrity and grace, a lady with unwavering faith, who could not only play the piano beautifully, but with those very same hands make the best fried chicken, and mashed potatoes and gravy anyone ever tasted. A lady whose appearance was flawless, even though her devotion to the families of our community was an emotional drain. A lady who would be irreplaceable and forever admired.

DeLores made a profession of faith in Christ as a young girl and was baptized. She and her family were charter members of Tabernacle Baptist Church. As an adult, in 1973, DeLores transferred her membership to First Baptist Church, where she remained an active and faithful member. She attended as long as her health allowed.

DeLores attended school in Lebanon and graduated with the class of 1948. She then went to college for a period of time, two weeks to be exact. She loved to tell the story of how she became homesick and called her dad. He said, "well come home." Her response was "Daddy I already have the car loaded." She quickly returned back "home" to Lebanon and never left. Her dedication to our community was unmatched. She made lifelong friends and adored each of them, as they did her. In 1949, Lebanon awarded her with the nomination and title of Centennial Queen. She wore the title well and was honored.

DeLores, the beauty queen from Lebanon, met a handsome young man from Competition, T.J. Shadel, she was smitten, and he was intrigued. After some persistence, perseverance and a period of courting, his determination paid off. The

two were wed on October 10, 1950, and the rest is history. They were more than just husband and wife they were partners in all things. They weathered life's storms together, side by side. Prior to T.J.'s passing on October 4, 2010, they had shared nearly sixty years together, while raising their two boys, Rusty and Rick.

DeLores was incredibly talented and used her gift of song to glorify the Lord and testify to those around her. On July 4th, 1948, the first broadcasting day of KLWT Radio Station, she sang and played live, "Amazing Grace." She continued that for many years at 6:00 A.M. every morning with the Gospel of Grace Program from Tabernacle Baptist Church. She also played the piano for countless families during funerals over the years. Even as her memory failed her in recent years, she could still sit down and play the piano.

T.J. and DeLores founded Colonial Funeral Chapel (now Shadel's Colonial Chapel) in 1957, and this began her devotion to serving the families of Lebanon and the surrounding counties. DeLores nurtured families during their loss, as if she were caring for her own. She comforted them on a level of understanding that can only be described as personal. She gave them the ability to grieve and gave freely of her testimony and strong faith. Families saw Jesus through her and what a wonderful gift to share. DeLores remained at the chapel until 2019, when her health began to fail.

DeLores leaves to continue her legacy, two sons, Rusty Shadel and his wife Marcia of Lebanon, Missouri and Rick Shadel and his wife Mary Jo of Osage Beach, Missouri; four grandchildren, Justin Shadel and his wife Heather, Casey Shadel and his wife Angela, J.D. Shadel and his wife Becka and Kayla Farner and her husband Brett; ten great-grandchildren, Drew and Elsie Shadel, Beau, Nash and Claire Shadel, Jake and Luke Shadel, and Jace, Lilli Ann and Robert Farner; several nieces and nephews, who fondly remember her as "Aunt Dosh"; other relatives, church family and many dear friends.

DeLores was also preceded in death by her parents; three brothers, Norris, Elbert "Ebb" and H.P. "Jude" Montgomery and by her sister, Bernice Johnson.

DeLores was many things to many people. She was a God fearing and devoted Christian servant. She wasn't a superhuman, she wasn't perfect, none of us are, but she was intentional. She lived every day with the intention of meeting Jesus. She lived everyday with the intention of bringing others to Jesus. She prayed for all of us intentionally every single day. We have so many things to thank her for, her grace, her strength, her determination, her love, her intent. DeLores met Jesus today. Her Earthly journey is over. Her life's work is complete and aren't we so fortunate to have that comfort.



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Job listing? Contact bobbi@mofuneral.org.

Licensed Funeral Director & Embalmer or Apprentice Funeral Director/Embalmer

Ledford Family Funeral Homes has two locations east of Kansas City, Missouri. Ralph O. Jones Funeral Home in Odessa, MO and Walker-Nadler-Fuller Funeral Home in Lexington, MO. We have an open position for a licensed Funeral Director & Embalmer or Apprentice Funeral Director & Embalmer.

The ideal candidate is enthusiastic, with a leadership mindset, detail-oriented, adaptable, and passionate for providing exceptional service. Preference will be given to Missouri Funeral Director & Embalmer Licensed candidates. We offer excellent pay, benefits, paid-time off, retirement plan, and a balanced on-call/weekend schedule. Work/Life balance is a foundational principle for our family, and we make that a priority for all team members.

Ledford Family Funeral Homes currently serve around 210 families a year. Being a family-owned funeral home, personal service is our priority. The position responsibilities include meeting with families, directing services, embalming, on-call, and removals. This position is a great opportunity for expanding your experience and knowledge in all aspects of the industry. Our locations are 20 miles east of Kansas City. Both towns are two great places to raise a family, live in a small town, and enjoy all the conveniences the metropolitan area has to offer. If you feel you are the right candidate for our family, and are looking to join a passionate, fun-loving, team environment, send your resume. We look forward to hearing from you!

Salary will vary depending on experience. Benefits include 3 Weeks Paid Vacation, Retirement after 90 days, and Health Insurance.

Please contact Austin Ledford at 816-263-7577.

Posted October 12, 2023.

Clarke and Sons Funeral Home LLC is Seeking Funeral Director

We are seeking a Funeral Director to join our team and provide compassionate care to families. The ideal candidate will have excellent interpersonal skills, a strong attention to detail.

Apply in person.

Clarke & Sons Funeral Home, 3449 Indiana Ave, Kansas City, MO 64128.

Phone: (816) 800-4148

Posted August 23, 2023

CLASSIFIEDS

Purchasing Funeral Homes

St. Louis Owner/Funeral Director Looking to Expand Family Business

Hello fellow MFDEA members. My name is Mark Hutchens and I am looking to expand my funeral home business through acquisitions, partnerships, or other strategies with people just like you. If you are thinking of retirement, selling or looking for a strategic business partner, please read on to learn more about who I am and how we may be able to help each other.

I grew up in Florissant, MO and spent much of my childhood around my family's funeral home. I knew from an early age that I wanted to be a funeral director. In fact, recently I found a project from when I was in 4th grade where I said that I would one day own a funeral home in Atlanta, GA (I chose Atlanta because I loved the Braves). While I may not have made it to Atlanta, I did fulfill a dream of owning my own funeral home. As of March of 2023, I am the proud owner of [Shepard Funeral Chapel](#) in St. Louis County.

I have extensive experience from my time with my family's funeral homes in managing and growing multiple high-volume locations with many employees. On the contrary, I also have experience in owning a smaller volume firm and understand the challenges and rewards each type of business brings. Additionally, I have been a part of two acquisition processes, and while there are many common factors in acquisitions, I also recognize that there are just as many unique circumstances that must be navigated with care and understanding. After all, this isn't just a business for us... it's our life, and I completely understand the emotional connections we have to our funeral home businesses. For these reasons, along with my forward thinking mindset and drive to serve families with the absolute best in funeral service, I believe that I am the right person who can offer you, your business, your families and your firm's reputation the proper care and management that will allow you to sleep comfortably at night and confidently walk into your church, the supermarket or anywhere else around town knowing that your business is in good hands moving forward.

If you would like to talk, please feel free to call me. I would be honored to get to know you and your business. No business is too small, too big, or too far to at least have a chat. Confidentiality is guaranteed. Thank you for taking the time to read and getting to know me.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Hutchens

314-680-4158 – cell / MarkHutchens87@gmail.com – personal email

NFDA Convention Recap

NFDA International Annual Convention

Past President Greg Bird rocks out on the drums with Mark Schulman in Las Vegas at the NFDA convention in September.

Mark Schulman is a musician and corporate speaker. He performed with Pink, Cher, and Foreigner on tour for more than 20 years.

Schulman is also a virtual and on-stage motivational speaker and published author.

Greg looks like a natural!



Missouri MFDEA members and families remembered during the Memorial Ceremony at the 2023 NFDA Convention in Las Vegas.



MFDEA MINUTE

We appreciate all MFDEA members.

Thank you for the calls, emails, questions, and comments.

We appreciate your participation and feedback.

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Take advantage of our services.

Our Executive Director is a wealth of knowledge on most topics regarding funeral homes. If he doesn't know the answer he will find it.

Our Membership Coordinator is quick to respond to your emails, assist you on our website, and process death certificate corrections for members.

Our Office Manager answers your incoming calls, handles MFT correspondence, and manages law class and convention registration.

Our office hours are Monday thru Friday, 8am to 5 pm.

Contact us at 573-635-1661.

For after hour emergencies, request a page for Don Otto.

Our mission is to encourage excellence in funeral service, to provide members with exceptional resources and assistance, to represent and protect the common interest of its members, and to educate the membership and the public about our profession.

