

# The TRUE Facts about Funeral Service that Every Family Should Know

Everyone should know about funerals. It is true that this is a service no one wants to buy, and one with which few people will be concerned except at infrequent intervals in a lifetime. Consequently, there is much ignorance about funeral service which tends to serve as a basis for much ill-informed criticism. This advertisement is, therefore, published to gain better public understanding of funeral service and its religious significance.

## The Modern Canadian Funeral

Comparisons are odious if this does not stop the critics from trying to compare Canadian funeral customs with those in other lands. They suggest Canadians adopt the funeral customs practiced in other countries which have little or no regard for the feelings of the bereaved or the religious rites attached to the funeral.

Canadian funeral services are not a perfect institution. No such claim has ever been made that it is. But there is much to be said for it that is not even hinted at, much less mentioned by the critics. Instead, they prefer to make fun of the ancient rites practiced in this country and give blyat to isolated, and not always completely foundationless in order to make their points.

They go beyond the limits of good taste to caricature the funeral directors as "profiteers of death" or "ghouls," suggesting that a group they should be banished. They overlook the fact that there are thousands of funeral directors throughout the country who are leaders in their communities and highly respected by their fellow citizens. An admission would be too damaging to their cases if it be mentioned!

Thousands of letters a received every year by funeral directors from bereaved families they have served expressing their gratitude for the services rendered them in the time of their grief. Fewer than 1 per cent of those received, a criticism of the services rendered, or the costs of funerals concerned.

An ostentatious funeral—a simple funeral—an open casket for viewing by the bereaved and their friends—the closed casket—all these are decisions for the family, often in consultation with their clergyman, to make—not the funeral director. A funeral director has an obligation to serve the public as they wish to be served as to type of funeral, and the price they wish to pay.

## Meaning of Funeral Service

Death in all its forms has been viewed with fear by man since time immemorial. Therefore, anything connected with death is aided by most people until circumstances force them to face its realities. Some, but only a few, among relatives and friends are able to weather the emotional crisis it creates. For most it takes time to face up to the finality of death, the acceptance of the fact that the loved one will no longer be part of family environment.

This is not a new concept. Pioneering work in this field was done by Freud in his "Mourning and Melancholia." Even more recently Dr. Erich Lindemann, a noted psychiatrist, has made further contributions to the subject as a result of work with bereaved survivors of the tragic Condit Grove fire in Boston some years ago.

The major role in easing the grief of survivors is played by their spiritual advisers. But the funeral director, no less than the clergyman or rabbi, has his role to play, too. The wisest funeral director assumes the myriad of responsibilities in setting up the necessary arrangements on behalf of the family. His counsel can be depended on to assist from the hour of passing to the final disposition. Everything he does is planned to ease the suffering and sorrow of the bereaved, and to help them pass through the difficult period during the immediate days after death strikes.

## Serving Families

Professional critics of funeral directors like to bolster their case with this charge that the bereaved are subjected to high pressure sales tactics when the time comes for them to arrange a funeral. Most families who have been served by established and reputable funeral firms know from experience that such is not the case. Instead, they have a free choice as to the kind of service they wish to select—earth burial, cremation or giving the body for medical research—at the price they wish to pay. Many firms offer a wide range of prices beginning as low as \$200, from which families can select a complete funeral service.

The fact is that in common with many other professions and businesses, funeral directors must adhere to a strict code of ethics in the conduct of their operations. They must obey the laws of the various provinces under which they operate. They must respect all creeds, religions and customs of those they serve. They must adhere to the highest standards of moral responsibility, character and business integrity in maintaining the goodwill of the families they serve, and the respect of the communities in which they live and perform their duties.

## Funeral Establishments

It would be possible for a funeral director to operate his mortuary out of a tent. BUT, no family would wish to patronize such a firm.

The Canadian public demands that facilities available to them should be properly housed in appropriate surroundings such as the churches or synagogues they attend. They want convenience, comfort and dignity. In these days when living space is less spacious than it was 50 years ago, the bereaved looks to the funeral director to provide family rooms where they can greet relatives and friends who have come to pay last respects. Private chapels maintained by funeral firms have also been developed in response to many persons who are not related to churches, or to meet the needs of those who do not choose to schedule their services in church. However, should the family wish to receive their friends at home or have the religious services conducted in the church or synagogue of their choice, this is a matter for their decision.

## Funeral Prices

No one denies that more money is being spent on funerals today. But this is because the public wants to spend more. This is the case in almost every line of service or merchandising being offered to the Canadian public today. The individual determines what he is going to spend. No one else makes this decision for him.

Surveys show that funeral sales lag behind income increases, and behind the price increases of retail and service trades. They show further that operating costs of funeral establishments have risen substantially at the same rate as the rise in costs of other businesses.

## Funeral Service

This is another myth being foisted upon the public by the professional critics who are advocating the quick disposal of the dead without benefit of religious services. Surveys show that far from making big profits, as alleged, most firms make less than \$75.00 per funeral before taxes. Few other business enterprises enjoy such a low profit margin compared with the total amount of investment required to equip, maintain and operate a modern funeral firm.

Capital investment comes high today compared with a few years ago. The funeral coach which cost \$7,500 a comparatively short while ago, today costs \$16,000. Taxes, supplies, wages, repairs and all other costs of doing business have steadily increased, yet families may still buy a funeral for about the same price they could in 1943.

Profits have not increased in that period, but the cost of doing business has multiplied many times over.

## Clergy Relations

Critics try to drive a cleavage between the funeral director and the clergyman, priest or rabbi by suggesting that the former is usurping their role as counselors in time of grief and need, and distorting the solemn religious rite. Religious leaders who accept this thesis put forward by the critic are in the minority. Experience shows there is a deep and close relationship which exists between clergy of all faiths and the funeral director. The latter recognizes his contribution is chiefly in the realm of material services for the deceased and in serving the living.

Many families arranging funeral services are found to have no church affiliation. Sometimes they ask, and sometimes it is the funeral director who makes the suggestion to put them in touch with a clergyman of their own faith.

But, no responsible funeral director would wish to assume the responsibilities of the clergyman in this important religious rite. Instead, he works with the clergyman to help and counsel the family in all possible ways. Together, they co-operate in many different ways in making the funeral a MEANINGFUL AND SIGNIFICANT RELIGIOUS RITE for the bereaved.

Thus the roles played by the clergyman and the funeral director is a blending of the practical aspects of the service, as rendered by the latter, and the religious rituals performed by the church or synagogue.

## Embalming

Much has been made of the fact that embalming is a universal practice in Canada, and as such it is not necessary. The discrediting procedure followed by the critics is simply to undermine the claims of embalming, allegedly based upon considerations of hygiene and mental health. Embalming is important, particularly if there is to be a delay between the time of death and actual interment. Medical experts will testify that embalming is a sanitary precaution not inconsistent with the rules of good health. Further, on the part of many survivors, there is a natural desire to look upon the deceased for the last time. This is not morbid curiosity. Rather, there is psychological support for the idea that it helps survivors to face the reality of their loss. In presenting the embalmed body for viewing—sometimes only in private or a family situation—the mortician must employ his skill in cosmetology. This is particularly true in instances where the deceased has suffered a violent death.

The practice of embalming is spreading and many countries, led by England, are adopting it.

## Funeral Directors

In a few short years, there will not be enough funeral directors to serve in this country. Each community, big or small, needs a mortuary. Mortuaries have to be accessible to citizens—within reasonable reach. Whether a mortuary handles a large number or just a few cases each year, the differential in cost in running operations is not so great as some might think. While the average cost per case will decline with volume—there is a point below which they will not go.

Only in some major metropolitan centres will there be found what is apparently an over-supply of mortuaries. But, it should not be forgotten that many of these are established to serve special religious or nationality groups.

## More Facts

Expensive clothing is sold to survivors to dress the person to be buried, is another of the charges made by critics of Canadian funeral customs. The truth is that more than 99.8% of the dead are buried in their own clothing. It is rare, indeed, that it is necessary to purchase special clothing to bury the deceased.

Early Canadian settlers buried their dead in a simple pine box attended by a small group of family and friends, so it has been written, in an attempt to destroy the idea of a traditional funeral service. The truth is that this may have been a frontier tradition when sometimes the dead were buried without even benefit of a pine box. But this was not true of settled sections of earlier Canadian society. Early Canadians observed some rather elaborate and expensive funeral customs, as careful research will show.

Funerals represent a new status symbol in Canada. It has been claimed, true—in some instances. Some people view the funeral as a means to gain new status among their neighbors and friends. Status conscious Canadians also find expression in other symbols as well as in funerals. Sometimes solutions may be to a funeral director's advantage, but they are not of his making. He is obligated to provide the type of funeral service demanded. On the other hand, there are many times when funeral directors counsel families against making unnecessary expenditures.

"Funeral directors provide and charge for all that the traffic will bear" is a criticism which has been repeated so often that few people heed it. Actually, most funeral firms have been in existence for several generations. Many are family owned and operated. They could not continue on a "one time" basis—and they could not attract families, time and time again, to use their services if they charged on an "all that the traffic will bear" basis.

## Freedom of Choice

It is the inalienable right of every Canadian to have freedom of choice whether it involves the election of a candidate for political office, the kind of clothes he wants to wear, the kind of school he wants to send his children to, the kind of a wedding he wants his daughter to have. So it is when it comes to the selection of a funeral. The right remains that of the individual or family to purchase a funeral service of THEIR OWN CHOICE, at the price THEY WISH TO PAY, from the funeral director of THEIR CHOICE. No reputable funeral director would presume it should be otherwise.

Reputable firms urge you to select in advance of any emergency, the funeral director in whom you can have confidence. Contact him, tell him about the kind of service you desire for yourself or your family, and the price you want to pay. He will respect your wishes and those of your loved ones. This is the wise way to handle such matters without committing yourself to paying membership fees in an organization over which you have no control or in which you are denied discretion or decision.

THIS MESSAGE SPONSORED BY THE FOLLOWING FUNERAL DIRECTORS

### COMPTON FUNERAL HOME

Carl Compton and Son, Directors  
150 Sumner St., Summerside  
Dial 436-2301

### Hamilton Funeral Home

Parker E. Hamilton, Director  
Montague 220  
Murray River 70

### GILLIS FUNERAL HOME

Eldon  
Operated by A. Risson Gillis  
Charles W. Gillis  
24 hour ambulance service

### Chisholm Funeral Home

Heath M. Chisholm, Director  
North Tryon, Phone 25-5

### BOWNES FUNERAL HOME

Dial 436-2327  
76 Canal Street, Summerside

### Monaghan Funeral Home

Kinkora, Phone 17

### JELLEYS FUNERAL HOME

Director Douglas V. Ferguson  
O'Leary, Phone 168

### ROONEY FUNERAL HOME

Alberton, Dial 103

### PERRY'S FUNERAL HOME

24 hour ambulance service  
Souris, Phone 133

### Montague Funeral Home

Montague, Dial 838-2272, 838-2482

### CROZIER FUNERAL HOME

CARLETON LOT 6 PHONE O'LEARY 36-4