Transforming Death Care Education

The nation’s premier death care education and profession e-newsletter!

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DID YOU KNOW?
The Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science Bachelor of Mortuary Science degree program is a regionally and professionally accredited four semester program consisting of sixty-two credit hours.
Message from the President
CCMS President & CEO Jack E. Lechner, Jr.

We’re looking forward to a Fall Semester start on August 23d. We re-arranged our first week of the semester so we could allow our students to attend the OFDA convention. Thanks to Dave Kolbe for making the bus arrangements and Clinical Instructor LaToya Henderson for stepping up to the challenge of chaperoning 100 students. Looks like our incoming fall class will be at full capacity of 60 students.

We’ve closed on the financing for the Educational Cremation Center (ECC). This state-of-the-art facility will cost approximately $3.5M and will house the FT-III cremator, hydraulic loader, and dustless processing station. All provided at no cost by Facultative Technologies. Additionally, we will conduct alkaline hydrolysis training using the P-400. This will allow us to enhance our pet loss curriculum while teaching the science and art of alkaline hydrolysis to dispose of pets. There are currently 20 States where human alkaline hydrolysis is legal, but Ohio is not one of them – yet! Please see the re-print of the article from the July issue of ICCFA Magazine “Memento Mori”.

Frank Rosenacker was inducted into the CCMS Hall of Fame this past May as he finished his multiple terms on the Board of Trustees of the College. Frank, a 1973 Alumnus, was not only a graduate, but an instructor and valued board member. His strong guiding hand will be missed by the College and the Board. We all wish Frank the best!

CCMS is hosting the 1st Annual CCMS Golf Classic presented by Dignity Memorial Sept. 15, 2021 - 12:00 pm 6:00 pm. We are inviting you to be a sponsor and get in on the fun! Individual golfers are welcome too! See the brochure for details on sponsorship levels. Lunch, dinner, and drink tickets are included. We need items for our auction baskets. See the brochure for details. We hope to see you there! Location: The Mill Course, 1515 W. Sharon Rd.

This year we were fortunate to bring two new members onto the CCMS Team. Leigh Combs is a graduate who had been serving as an adjunct embalming instructor and is now a full-time member of the faculty. Leigh is US Army veteran who deployed as a combat medic. We are proud to have her on the faculty.

We also hired a recent graduate and newly licensed Ohio Embalmer and Funeral Director, Samantha Legendre as the Admissions Director. Sam2 (Sam1 is the administrative assistant) is a US Air Force veteran. Sam served as a fuel system mechanic Sergeant for the F-16 fighter jet and is a tremendous asset to the team.

We are beginning a campaign to raise funds to support the Educational Cremation Center (ECC) by asking crematories to donate their recycle funds to the ECC. What better way to demonstrate your support than by providing those tax-deductible funds to help support keeping tuition down and operating costs lower. CCMS is a non-profit, 501(c)(3). If you would like to talk about donating, please call me or Ken Coggeshall. I would like the opportunity to speak with any crematory operator and I offer this challenge “if I can improve the average recycle return at your crematory – would you be willing to assign the increase to CCMS?” Give me a call and let’s talk.

We just finished a two-day Board of Trustee meeting. Thanks to Brian Dershaw at Taft Law for allowing us to meet in the Taft Law Center conference room. We spent the two days developing “Ends” and “Executive Limitations” policies. It was time well spent under the direction of Dr. John Bohley an expert coach on Carver’s Governance Policy for Non-Profits.

My primary objective during this pandemic is to reduce risk of infection to our students, faculty, visitors, and staff. Due to the increasing infection rates from the Delta variant of Covid, CDC guidance for indoor mask wearing and other factors, I decided that we will return to school next semester wearing masks on campus indoors. Instructors and visiting speakers may present without masks if they can remain socially distanced. We will return to the one-way traffic pattern as posted in the hallways and continue to disinfect after each cohort is finished for the day. We will socially distance in the classroom setting as much as practical. I appreciate your support and continued compliance with the changes to the masking policy.

Thanks for all your continued support of CCMS and the students. Local funeral homes are still housing and employing students, many funeral homes across the Tri-State are participating in the Co-Op program (a great way to get to see if a student is a good fit for your organization) and supporting with cash and in-kind donations. Best wishes for a great summer and fall.

Respectfully,
Cremation throughout the world, and even more so in North America, continues to grow. It is now the preferred method of disposition in North America. The partnership between Facultative Technologies (FT) and Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science (CCMS) will be setting the standard and leading the way for required certification or licensing of properly trained operators.

The opinion of both CCMS and FT is that the methods currently used to certify crematory operators are just not good enough. The goal is to raise the bar and bring the crematory operator up to the level of a specialist, going beyond the current operator training programs to become certified or licensed as a cremationist. CCMS and FT, with the assistance of ICCFA’s educational program, will provide a complete platform that is based not only on classroom instruction but hands-on proper operation of all phases of the cremation process utilizing the latest technologies being offered in modern-day cremation system equipment.

“I am so proud that our board of trustees had the vision to direct CCMS to build an Educational Cremation Center (ECC) and develop an advanced curriculum to address those evolving needs of client families,” says Jack Lechner, president and CEO of Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science. The ECC will provide detailed hands-on cremation training, alkaline hydrolysis, pet loss, and hospitality training.

Partnering with ICCFA

CCMS is on a firm financial footing and successfully implementing an initiative to transform deathcare education. To accomplish that, CCMS is partnering with ICCFA to deliver an Advanced Crematory Operator Program that will integrate hands-on training with best management practices for those already in the cremation or funeral profession. ICCFA believes in the programs so strongly that the partnership revenues will heavily favor CCMS.

President & CEO Jack Lechner and the Board of Trustees at the ceremonial ground breaking for the Educational Cremation

“IT is great to have the endorsement from such a great professional and progressive association,” says Jack. “Some other associations were not interested, but ICCFA jumped at the chance to partner in this effort to provide advanced training. This endorsement speaks to the progressive nature of ICCFA and the commitment to providing expert advanced training opportunities.”

A Curriculum Change

The American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) prescribes a curriculum that all accredited mortuary programs

Cont. =>>
must deliver for graduates to take the Na-
tional Board Examination (NBE). The crema-
tion outline is only five pages, while the
embalming outline is 29 pages. Curricula are
updated on a recurring basis, yet the crema-
tion outline was last approved back in 2015.
This outline makes up one of the three ele-
ments that the International Conference of
Funeral Service Examining Boards (ICFSEB)
will use to create cremation questions for
the NBE.

The curriculum outline addresses cremation
as a form of disposition; and in the strictest sense, it is a form of disposition. But with
56.1% of the client families being served by funeral homes, it’s time to consider crema-
tion as more than just a form of disposition. Understanding aspects of cremation’s his-
tory, identification, forms, FTC compliance, etc., are all important to know. Cremation is
woven into different parts of the ABFSE curriculum but not in enough detail, given the fact
that the majority of client families served today are opting for cremation — and cremation
continues to increase.

“The best way to predict the future is to build it.” —Peter Drucker

It takes most mortuary programs about one year or three semesters to deliver the ABFSE
curriculum, making it difficult to add too much to their programs outside the ABFSE curricu-
ulum. CCMS offers a Bachelor of Mortuary Science, which gives the school the luxury of de-
voping its own curriculum for the fourth semester. The Educational Cremation Center will
be built around a curriculum that provides the technical and ethical foundation for
deathcare professionals. Its program will focus on including family, friends, and ceremony.
Cremation is not just another form of final disposition selected based on price point alone.

“Transformation is a process, not an event.” —John P. Kotter, Harvard Business
School

A Unique Initiative

“Our Educational Cremation Center will be the first of its kind,” says Jack. “CCMS will become the nation’s premier provider of enhanced,
hands-on, cremation education training. Work has already begun to build this $3.5
million state of the art facility, which serves as the center piece of our
‘Transforming Deathcare Education’ initiative.” It will house a cremator for hands-
on cremation training, a family viewing room with a slumber bed, a Pet-400 pet
alkaline hydrolysis unit, hospitality training, and expanded pet loss training. All
offerings will be available to entry-level students as well as advanced courses for
licensed practitioners.

Facultative Technologies, which manufactures the most advanced cremation sys-
tem in the world, has contributed the FT-III cremator, hydraulic loader, and dustless
processing station valued at $280,000. By combining pet loss bereavement training with pet dispo-
sition, the ECC will be able to teach the science of alkaline hydrolysis while expanding CCMS’s pet loss curriculum. With alkaline hydrolysis
legal in 20 states and more pending, it is only a matter of time until every funeral profession will need to be familiar with alkaline hydrolysis.

Becoming Future Forward

“As I began reading the current copy of The Cremationist of North America, the first thing that jumped out at me was the ‘CANA Annual Statistics Report’ where the data for 2020 revealed a national cremation rate of 56.1%,” says Jack. “When I entered the deathcare profession in
1973, the national cremation rate was 5.69% and it has been growing steadily over the past 48 years. In 2019, it was 54.6%.” Cont. =>>
The CCMS campus that Jack heads is single purpose. Students and licensed professionals attend CCMS for entry-level education and continuing education after licensure. The students already perform over 500 embalmings per year, so there are plenty of hands-on opportunities for students to embalm in the school’s modern seven-embalming station lab. Students practice dressing, casketing, cosmetizing, arranging visitations, conducting visitations, and conducting funeral services.

Cremation training classes offered by associations are very informative and packed with detailed technical aspects of cremation. But six to eight hours of PowerPoint, with no hands-on experience, may satisfy regulatory requirements to obtain a certificate but no one leaves one of those sessions fully prepared to run a crematory—let alone satisfy the cremation needs of a family.

At CCMS, every BMS graduate leaves with credentials as an InSight ™ Certified Celebrant, a Certified Crematory Operator and Arranger, and certified to assist in Disaster Management. They also conduct a total dissection of a human cadaver in the school’s gross anatomy lab. The addition of the Educational Cremation Center will enhance all courses being taught and include continuing educational opportunities for licensed professionals.

**A Worthy Endeavor with Financing Needs**

In addition to the partnerships forged between FT-USA, CCMS, and ICCFA, the school has raised over $625,000 in cash and in-kind donations to support the ECC. CCMS has partnered with Welton Hong and Ring-Ring Marketing, which provides marketing efforts pro bono. In addition, Passare is being implemented on campus, pro bono, too. Passare’s web-based platform is included in the school’s preparation room to aid in chain of custody, capture embalming reports, and generate invoices. Passare is also part of CCMS’s Capstone program.

There are still plenty of opportunities to be part of the future of deathcare education. CCMS is accepting cash and in-kind donations of equipment and services. There are still some room-naming rights opportunities available, including the naming rights to the ECC itself. “We are planning on opening the lobby space in the ECC for vendors to purchase the rights to install permanent displays of cremation-related items, including niches, jewelry, and other items that might normally be seen at a trade show or convention,” Jack adds. “This would give the vendor full-time exposure to the students and practitioners moving through the building all year.”

If you are a CCMS alumni or a member of the deathcare profession who believes in the project and are interested in sponsoring a fundraising event in your city or state, please reach out and CCMS will guide you through the process. This project is a bold move to transform deathcare education to prepare more professionals to serve in the 21st century.

“CCMS is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) and profit making is not our objective,” Jack says. “Our mission is to make better entry-level practitioners and provide quality educational opportunities to licensed practitioners. We are 85% tuition supported. Join us to help improve the quality of cremation education while keeping tuition costs down. Consider donating your recyclable income to CCMS. You can help create the future. Now is the time to become a zealot or martyr!”

Jack E. Lechner Jr., CFSP, a certified thanatologist, was appointed president and CEO of Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science in January 2016.

*Reprinted from *Memento Mori*—July 2021
Don't miss this!

1st Annual
CCMS Golf Classic
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September 15, 2021
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Cincinnati, Ohio

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CCMS President and CEO Jack E. Lechner Jr. was one of several mortuary school executives interviewed by American Funeral Director magazine for its May 2021 issue. The article, “Learning during Covid-19” sought to discover how mortuary education was effected by the pandemic over the past year. The following is excerpted from that article.

**AFD: What has the past year been like for your school?**

**Lechner:** It felt like all well-coordinated and comprehensive plans had to be put on hold while we figured out what to do and how to do it daily. Information kept changing, guidelines kept changing, so we had to monitor every credible source we could to make informed decisions to protect the health and safety of our students and faculty.

**AFD: When was the decision made to go to all-remote learning? How difficult was that decision?**

**Lechner:** Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine made the announcement on a Thursday that K-12 would be closed indefinitely in the state. We made the announcement on Friday during classes and began distance learning on Monday. I was incredibly impressed with how quickly the students and faculty adapted to distance learning. Everyone literally had only one weekend to adapt to the new teaching environment. We shifted our budget plans from classroom centric to remote learning centric, i.e., we began updating computers and installing new technology that better enabled distance learning.

**AFD: What are the biggest challenges with remote learning for mortuary colleges?**

**Lechner:** The largest demographic of students is those who are entering the profession without any experience. One of the major benefits of the cohort model we employ is that our students get to spend 16 months in a crucible with other mortuary students, mortuary science instructors and a mortuary-oriented staff daily. When students are limited to distance learning, they do not get the same intangible benefits that come from spending so much time with their peers in person.

**AFD: What does your pathway forward look like?**

**Lechner:** We are exploring adding distance learning to our educational offerings, but we are really focused on our Educational Cremation Center, which will allow us to teach “hands-on” cremation training, alkaline hydrolysis, enhanced pet loss and hospitality. Our board of trustees sees how the public’s needs are evolving and it has challenged us to find ways of fulfilling those evolving needs.

**AFD: Will the pandemic alter the way you operate in the future?**

**Lechner:** The pandemic will cause us to be more vigilant and to always have a contingency plan for the education of aspiring death-care professionals. We prefer to be in the classroom and in the lab with our students, but we will now remain vigilant and ready to shift to distance learning or a hybrid model if required.

Our students adapted perfectly to the distance learning environment – although they expressed a feeling of loss at not being able to see, talk and travel with each other. They have my sincere gratitude for adhering to the rules we had to put into place to protect everyone, including social distancing and constant wearing of face masks.
Passare Incorporated into CCMS Curriculum

As part of its continuing effort to work with community partners, CCMS has had the good fortune to collaborate with Passare. A cutting-edge online platform, Passare tracks custody, transfer and disposition in real time across multiple locations. It also allows funeral homes to communicate directly with families to create a rich story of their family member’s life. Last year, Don Strickland from Passare reached out to CCMS in an effort to find ways that his company could assist in training students. Along with Mr. Strickland, Faculty members Latoya Henderson and John Vinnedge have been leading this collaboration with promising initial results.

Ms. Henderson and Mr. Vinnedge have created a curriculum whereby the students and faculty can track a hypothetical decedent in the clinical lab setting and work the case as a part of the Capstone course. This course provides students with hands-on experience from the first call through disposition. Included are embalming, cosmetic application, dressing and casketing, arranging, funeral directing and preparing the forms and permits involved in burial and cremation. The course also includes computer applications in funeral service. Students work in groups to complete four components; a fifth component includes individual professional portfolios. All five components are considered for a final grade and are to be completed by the end of the quarter.

It took about five months to develop a system that would work for CCMS students. Although the Passare platform was already well-established, it needed to be customized to suit the needs of students. Many CCMS-specific documents had to be created. The initial concept was to use Passare as a “one-stop-shop” where students could find all the resources they needed within the platform. For example, remains could be transitioned from one location to another via the Passare mobile app and QR codes, students could complete the embalming case report, or personal items could be tracked. “For chain-of-custody purposes,” said Mr. Vinnedge, “Passare has been an excellent addition to existing lab procedures.”

The students went through an orientation and then inserted all the necessary information into Passare to create their scenario. Once this was completed, students were given a fictitious deceased person at the beginning of the Capstone course. They then brought this person “to life” during the class by creating a family, hobbies, interests etc. This information was graded and added to the overall grade given for Capstone.

According to Ms. Henderson, “Thus far the pilot group has knocked it out of park. There have been no hiccups on the Capstone piece at all. Historically the students here at CCMS had to do everything on paper and turn in a folder of paperwork. Passare changed that for the college.”

In the funeral home setting, a funeral director needs to stay organized before, during and after the arrangement conference and funeral. Often funeral directors are juggling several families at once. A tool like Passare helps funeral directors stay organized. This tool, which has been generously donated by Passare, has tremendously added to the overall learning experience for the students at CCMS.

Wanda Lee Co-authors Article

Wanda Lee, Faculty member and Clinical Director, has co-authored an article with Dr. Joy Y. Batta (The Ohio State University), among others, that appears in the European Journal of Anatomy. “Building Bridges with Anatomy: Can Continuing Education in Mortuary Sciences Transform the Profession?” is published in the April 2021 edition of the journal.

View the article here >>>
Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 Graduation

In April we were thrilled to congratulate and confer degrees upon both our Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 classes. Due to an uptick in coronavirus cases in December, we chose to postpone the commencement that would normally take place at that time. However, we chose not to combine the ceremonies of two classes but rather hold two separate events on the same day. The result was a great success as graduates, family, friends, faculty and staff all gathered the stunning new Summitt Hotel for a celebration worthy of these students’ achievements.

CCMS President Jack Lechner served as Master of Ceremonies for both commencements. William Wapner, owner of Wapner Funeral Directors and Crematory delivered the keynote address for the Fall 2020 class while Ryan Thogmartin, CEO of Disrupt Media did the same for the Spring 2021 class.

Congratulations to all our graduates. We wish you the best of luck as you embark on your careers!

**Fall 2020**

**Summa Cum Laude (GPA 4.0—3.85)**

Olivia Rose Iginia Alaniz  
Laura Cox  
Matthew Dooley  
Amanda Godsey  
Paige Elizabeth Greenlee  
Katie Jackson  
Lexi King  
Teresa Payton  
Rebecca Anne Schnauber  
Paige Victoria Shafer  
Amanda R. Shaffner  
Cassie Wheeler  
Katherine Woerter

**Magna Cum Laude (GPA 3.84-3.70)**

Alicia Burns  
Brittany Davenport  
Whitney Demarais  
Paiten Dulaney  
Gracie Furbee  
Juna Beth Grier  
Megan Riley Johansen  
Hannah Rostorfer  
Sarah Schuyler Ross  
Roxanna Seta

**Cum Laude (GPA 3.69-3.5)**

Anastasi Elwing  
Erica Green  
Kaitlyn Hathaway  
Steven C. Mounts Jr.  
Tameska Newtown  
Becca Marie Renzulli  
Sierra B. Richmond
Spring 2021

Summa Cum Laude (GPA 4.0—3.85)

Benjamin P. Brandt
Zachary R. Brauman
Betsy Clark
Christina Eckard
Andrea O. Espinosa
Jeffrey T. Keller
Bertha D. Lopez
Emily Corrine McAlister
Marissa L. Nemeth
Emma Jane Pertuset
Janessa Laurette Potter
Victoria Marie Scheiderer
Lauren F. Searcy
Isaac L. Stroud
Josie Elaine Toller

Magna Cum Laude (GPA 3.84-3.70)

Grayson Taylor Sency
Emily Grace Walker

Cum Laude (GPA 3.69-3.5)

Kathryn Marie Dobbins
MaCauley Slone
Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 Graduation

continued...
Q&A with Maggie White

In 2017 CCMS Clinical Director Wanda Lee received an email from Dr. Karen Looman, Forensic Pathologist and Chief Deputy Coroner at the Hamilton County Coroner’s Office (HCCO). She asked if CCMS would consider creating a volunteer work-study cooperative, in which our students would assist in the morgue. She anticipated a mutually beneficial relationship through which CCMS students could help the community by providing support to a local agency that was overtaxed, largely due to the opioid crisis. In return the student volunteer would gain knowledge and experience, and a unique feature for their resume.

Maggie White is a Spring 2020 graduate of CCMS. As part of her education in death care, she was one of the CCMS who has volunteered at HCCO, providing 60 hours of service. At the commencement ceremony of her class, Maggie was recognized and awarded a citation for outstanding community service. She has been gracious enough to talk to us about her experience at HCCO and CCMS.

The following has been edited for length and clarity.

What inspired you to volunteer at the Hamilton County Coroner’s Office?

When I was in my first semester, I overheard a fourth semester student talking about her volunteer experience there. I was very enthusiastic about learning more on the forensic side of death care so even though the opportunity was not yet being offered to me or my class, I immediately went to Mrs. (CCMS Clinical Director Wanda) Lee to express my interest and get more information.

Is there a difference in the skill sets you had to employ at HCCO as compared to a traditional funeral home?

HCCO demands a strong knowledge application of anatomy & physiology and medical terminology. It will be hard to make accurate documentation of findings and follow instruction if you don’t have this in your skill set already. In my opinion, students who have previously worked in clinical healthcare will excel. This is different from an embalmers job which narrows in on select arteries/veins and anatomical landmarks.

Were there legal aspects you had to be aware of at HCCO that might not be as relevant in private sector death care? Say, in dealing with homicides for example.

There was one case that was a homicide staged to look like a suicide. A rape kit was performed prior to autopsy. The detectives/investigators were present alongside multiple pathologists the entire time. The collaboration between different departments was impressive and unique to the case. The amount of photography in homicide cases is much more extensive too. Every inch of the body is captured from multiple angles, flash/no flash, etc. These were all things I had no experience with, but was welcomed to participate in.

Continued =>>
Q&A with Maggie White (cont.)

What surprised you most about working for HCCO?
How many women there were! The team was comprised of 4 female forensic pathologists and 3 female techs (plus me) who assisted them. There was the occasional male medical student doing some shadowing, and one male pathologist who stood in to fill scheduling gaps, but it was truly a shock and also a joy to see all these women doing such physically demanding, “dirty” work!

You mentioned that on your first day at HCCO you did multiple autopsies with a team of “incredibly smart, strong women.” Do you think that women are underrepresented in the death care profession? If so, do you see how that might change?

Women are underrepresented but that is changing! Mortuary programs today are enrolling more females than males, and the funeral home where I am serving my apprenticeship has more women employed than men.

How did your experience at CCMS prepare you to enter the profession? How did your time at HCCO do the same?

Building an entirely new skill set and knowledge base is not easy and truthfully I knew little to nothing about the profession prior to starting at CCMS. The educators at this school are phenomenal! I can’t thank them enough for their investment in my success. Also the amount of friends you make in school, the amount of big name guest speakers that present to us that we are given the opportunity to network with, definitely makes it easier to enter the profession with some contacts in your back pocket.

HCCO prepared my heart, mind, nose and stomach for the worst of the worst. You see and smell it all - things you definitely won’t see at CCMS, and so it is a special learning opportunity. It’s certainly harder to take me by surprise now at the funeral home.

What would be your advice to current CCMS students as they prepare to enter the death care profession?

Work at a funeral home while you’re in school! It’s not hard to find those jobs around CCMS and they provide invaluable instruction which is a supplement to your academic studies. It’s a mini apprenticeship!

Also learn as much as you can about other avenues of death care such as organ/tissue procurement and autopsy. It will make you a better embalmer. Definitely pursue the HCCO co-op if you qualify! I promise it’s worth the 5am wake up call.

What is something that would surprise most people about you? (Personal or professional)

People would be surprised to know that I am a huge germaphobe! It’s a blessing and a curse. I like to joke that I might have the cleanest prep room in northeast Ohio.
CCMS thanks these valued alumni for their support in 2020

President’s Circle
Frank Rosenacker
   Rob Rue
   Mark Schneider

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Seth T. Coughlin
   Ron Gard
   Brian R. James
   William C. Peoples
   Erin Schwanitz-Vogt
   Ralph F. Scott III
   Dwanye R. Spence
   Jacob L. Wittrock

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   Michael Pierson
   Timothy Schmidt
   Richard G. Snider

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   Louis Crow
   Robert S. Lovein
   Robert Mayhew
   Michael T. Neeld
   Kimberly Ogle
   David E. Small
   Gina Lee Terry
Frank Rosenacker Inducted into CCMS Hall of Fame

On May 25th, 2021, the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science was thrilled to induct long-serving Board President and alumnus Frank B. Rosenacker into the CCMS Hall of Fame. The surprise ceremony took place at the CCMS Top Golf fundraising event and was attended by Frank’s family, members of the Board of Trustees and death care professionals from around the country. CCMS President and CEO Jack E. Lechner, Jr. bestowed the honor.

“I think you’d be hard-pressed to find anyone who has been more dedicated to his profession and this school,” said Mr. Lechner. “Frank’s commitment and generosity to CCMS over the years has been truly remarkable.”

Frank’s career covers both funeral service and law. He grew up in a family-owned funeral home and became a licensed funeral director/embalmer in 1974. He was admitted to the Ohio Bar in 1983. Educationally, he graduated from Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science in 1973 and from Northern Kentucky University Chase College of Law in 1983.

He has been involved in all aspects of funeral service including managing a family business; teaching mortuary science; working for other funeral directors; researching the legal liabilities affecting funeral directors/embalmers; rewriting Mortuary Law - the leading textbook used in colleges of mortuary science; speaking at local, state and national association seminars on numerous topics; serving as the general counsel of an international company networking independently owned and operated funeral homes; owning and operating a consulting business exclusively serving funeral directors, funeral homes and cemeteries; and representing numerous funeral director/funeral home/cemetery clients on various legal, financial and managerial topics, including preparing month-to-month accounting, tax and related business services, appraising and evaluating the business net worth of both funeral homes and cemeteries, assisting both cemeterians and funeral directors in the formation of mortuary cemetery combinations and helping funeral directors/cemeterians buy and sell funeral homes and cemeteries, as well as assisting them in an orderly fashion to pass their businesses down to the next generation. Additionally, he served in the Judge Advocate Corp of the United States Air Force where he litigated over 500 cases.
CCMS Says Goodbye to Elizabeth Smiley

Long-serving receptionist was at the heart of the College

It is with great sadness that CCMS announces the death of long-time administrative assistant, Elizabeth Smiley. Mrs. Smiley worked at the college from 1991-2007, when she retired to Ringgold, GA. For over 15 years, her bright smile and kind voice welcomed students, staff and visitors to campus – first at Cohen Center (Xavier University) and later at our current location on North Bend Road. In many ways, she was the face of the college during that period.

Former President Dan Flory, who hired Elizabeth in 1991, described her as a “sweetheart” and excellent receptionist. During her last few years with the college, Elizabeth was instrumental in organizing three alumni homecoming weekends in 2004, 2005 and 2007. She was thrilled to welcome alumni -- some she had known as students and meeting others for the first time -- back to campus. During the 2007 event, Elizabeth’s service to the college was honored.

In an online tribute, former dean Dave Tackett wrote: “I always appreciated her kindness and gracious spirit. She was a gem and I am privileged to have known her.” Elizabeth’s warmth and caring extended beyond those directly involved with CCMS. Former faculty member David Hicks recalls how much his oldest son, Andrew (now in his 20’s), would look forward to seeing Mrs. Smiley when he visited the college with his mother. She became known as simply “Smiley” to him and many others. Current faculty and Clinical Director, Wanda Lee, fondly recalls their bond over a shared birthday and love of tea cups and saucers.

“I can personally attest to Elizabeth’s impact on the CCMS family,” says current Academic Chair Teresa Dutko. “Former students, faculty and staff have often asked about Mrs. Smiley. I’ve been glad to share about her post-CCMS life, enjoying retirement next door to daughter (Jayne) and her family. My last conversation with Elizabeth was on her most recent birthday, August 2, 2020. We spoke about challenges of the last year – her regimen of chemotherapy and the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite some of our topics, the conversation was anything but depressing. Elizabeth was the positive and upbeat person many of us had grown to love. As was typical, attitude and faith were sustaining her.”
#ccmsfamily  continued...

In Memory of

Lowell King

Lowell Edward King of Loveland, OH. Born on November 20, 1940 in Rawhide, VA. Went home to be with the Lord on Monday, January 18, 2021 at the age of 80.

He was the father of CCMS Board member Tim King.

Lowell graduated from Loveland High School in 1959. He worked for United Dairy Farmers for 13 years in the milk department in Norwood, OH. After leaving UDF Lowell became a self-employed entrepreneur. He owned a Sawmill business, owned and operated King Trucking Company, was part owner of a truck stop/gas station and restaurant and later in life owned and operated Cylinder Processors Inc. where he recycled acetylene gas cylinders. Lowell retired in 2010 from his business adventures and found peace working part-time at Tufts Schildmeyer Funeral Home with Tim. He enjoyed his retirement by becoming a snow bird for 10 years, spending winters in Estero, Florida with his wife, Gale.

Lowell was known for his work ethic and his desire to be successful. He never met a stranger. He instilled confidence in anyone he came into contact with and would always put a smile on their faces. He taught his family and many others that one can do anything in life if one can dream it or imagine it.

In addition to Tim, Lowell is also survived by his beloved wife of 60 years, Gale “Gail” Ann (nee Huff) King; his four sons, Tony (Mitza Costantini) King of Loveland, OH, Tom (Meg) King of Newport, KY and Terry (Laurie) King of Nashville, TN.; 16 grandchildren, Jesse (Jackie) King, Travis (Laura) King, Lindsay (Michael) Keogh, Heather (Matthew) Combs, Kristin (Nate Christensen) King, Alexis (Danny) Rosenbaum, Kelsey King, Tyler (Mary) King, Hannah (Sam Wilder) King, Sidney Ashmore, Cole Ashmore, Taylor King, Caitlin King, Grant King, Lauren King and Caroline King; 11 great-grandchildren, Paxton King, Austin King, Thatcher, Riggsbee and Oakley Keogh, Layla King, River Maupin, Katherine, Josephine and Claire King and Bear Wilder; brothers, Jim King and Bill King; sister, Judy Purkiser. Also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, relatives and many dear friends.

Lowell is preceded in death by his parents, Ed and Helen (nee Flanary) King.

Our warmest sympathies to Tim and his family.

Ardella Smith


Ardella was the mother-in-law of CCMS Board Chair Frank Rosenacker.

Ardella was the loving wife of the late Carl “O.C.” Smith for 69 years. She was also the devoted mother of Michael (Nancy) Smith, Mary (Bill) Ginn, Elizabeth Rosenacker and the late Joseph (Pat) Smith. Beloved grandmother of 22, great-grandmother of 45, great-great-grandmother of 15, dear cousin of Ray Herzog, and simply Granny to countless others. Preceded in death by her parents, Ted and Clara Wiesman, and her siblings, Wilbur (Loretta and Ruth) Wiesman, Joseph (Ethlyn) Wiesman, Thelma (Walt) Shroyer, and Esther (John) Grimm.
In Memory of (cont.)

Ardella, one of 5 children, was born and raised in the Northside neighborhood of Cincinnati. When she was eight years old, her sisters took her to the Northside Playground, which was the center of activity at that time and entered her in a dance contest. She won. This initiated a love for dancing that would last her entire life. In fact, she was dancing at her great granddaughters wedding at the age of 97.

During World War II, Ardella raised two young boys and an infant daughter for while her husband Carl (a Marine) fought in the South Pacific. Later, she coached softball, ran game booths for church festivals and worked school functions whenever needed. And eventually got a job at Procter & Gamble, where she worked for 30 years.

After retiring, Carl and Ardella bought a farm in Indiana where they spent much of there time enjoying the simple life. Ardella enjoyed raising and canning tomatoes and other vegetables they grew there in addition to cross-stitching and quilting.

Family was always Ardella’s number one priority. Whether it was her children, grandchildren or great grandchildren, she was there. And whether it was sports, theater, music, dance or just day-to-day life, Ardella was always there, cheering them on.

Daniel Mark Kellough

Daniel Mark Kellough 53, of South Bloomfield, Ohio, formerly of Bainbridge, Ohio, died Monday, August 16, 2021, at Mount Carmel Grove City Hospital after a brief illness. He was born May 3, 1968, in Chillicothe the son of the late David Michael and Donna (Mark) Kellough.

Dan is survived by his fiancé Kyna McKimson; children, Lindsey (Josh) Burgett and David (Mindy) Kellough; 5 grandchildren Kamryn, Karlie, Kennedy, Kylee, and Kaci Burgett; sisters Debbie (Dave) Nakano of Trumbull, CT, Diane (Chris) Crabtree of Waverly and Denise (John) Peters of Leesburg; 7 nieces and nephews Jessica and Matthew Nakano, Colton and Kendi Branscomb and Sarah, Wyatt, and Morgan Crabtree and his fur babies Rocky and Lilly.

In addition to his parents Dan was preceded in death by a brother, Davey Kellough, and his grandparents Luther and Helen Kellough and George and Blanche Mark.

Dan was a 1986 Graduate of Paint Valley High School and a 1993 Graduate of Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science. Dan was an honorably discharged Army veteran, and he was a member of the Bainbridge Lodge 196 F&AM. In his free time, he enjoyed hunting, fishing, riding his motorcycle and being a part of the Patriot Guard. He was also an avid Ohio State Buckeye Football Fan.
It's late, Why is the light on?

IT'S LATE, WHY IS THE LIGHT ON AT THE FUNERAL HOME?

TODAY, THERE WAS A FUNERAL. PEOPLE CRIED. TISSUES WERE CRUMPLED AND LEFT ON THE TABLES. FLOWER PETALS FELL TO THE FLOOR. NOW, THE CLEANING STAFF IS MAKING THINGS TIDY FOR THE FAMILY WHO WILL BE HERE TOMORROW.

IT'S LATE, WHY IS THE LIGHT ON AT THE FUNERAL HOME?

SOMEONE IN OUR TOWN DIED AWAY FROM HOME, THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR IS TRAVELING MANY MILES TO BRING HIM HOME AND INTO THE FUNERAL HOME’S CARE. THE LIGHT IS ON IN ANTICIPATION OF HIS SAFE RETURN.

IT'S LATE, WHY IS THE LIGHT ON AT THE FUNERAL HOME?

HOSPICE CALLED. THE TEACHER WHO TAUGHT THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR -- AND YOU -- IN THE THIRD GRADE ISN’T EXPECTED TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE NIGHT. SOON SHE’LL BE CALLED TO THE HOME AND IT WILL BE HER TURN TO TAKE CARE OF THE TEACHER.

IT'S LATE, WHY IS THE LIGHT ON AT THE FUNERAL HOME?

WE'RE REVIEWING ALL OF THE DETAILS FOR TOMORROW'S SERVICE.

IT'S LATE, WHY IS THE LIGHT ON AT THE FUNERAL HOME?

THE LIGHT IS ON BECAUSE YOUR NEIGHBOR, THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR, IS PACING THE FLOOR. SHE CAN'T SLEEP. TOMORROW, SHE WILL OVERSEE A SERVICE.
Welcome New Faculty Member Leigh Combs

This spring, CCMS was pleased to add Leigh Combs to the ranks of its already esteemed faculty.

Leigh is a licensed funeral director and embalmer in the State of Kentucky. She graduated Summa Cum Laude from CCMS in 2016 with her Bachelor’s Degree. She is also an active duty veteran of the United States Army having served and deployed as a medic with 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, NC.

After graduating, Leigh has worked in various roles in death care, including recovery for the Lions Eye Bank of West Central Ohio and contracting in restoration for a NKY funeral home. She returned to CCMS in October 2018 as an Adjunct Clinical Instructor and was hired as a faculty member in May 2021.

In September 2020, Leigh married fellow CCMS graduate, John Combs, and both reside in Burlington, Kentucky with their goofy goldendoodle, Zeus, and independent feline, Odin.

Leigh was featured in the May 2021 issue of American Funeral Director in the article “Journey to Serve.”

The following is excerpted from that article:

For Leigh Matchison Combs, three profound experiences combined to lead her to a career into funeral service.

The first was the 2001 murder of her 22-year-old brother, Ryan Matchison.

The second occurred five years later when her twin brother, Sgt. Brent Matchison, who had deployed to Ramadi, Iraq, with the U.S. Army’s 1st Armored Division was shot in the head during the Battle of Ramadi in December 2006.

The third was in May 2007 when a then 22-year-old Leigh Matchison enlisted in the U.S. Army as a medic.

“It really was a culmination of life experiences that led me to where I am today,” said Combs, who is an adjunct clinical instructor at Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science and also works part time at Linnemann Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Center in Erlanger, Kentucky.

Combs was 17 when her older brother was murdered. “Ryan’s was the first funeral I attended,” she said.

“What I remember most was how good my brother looked; he was really well laid out; the funeral director did a really good job preparing him.”

(Editor’s note: Three men were convicted in 2002 of murdering Matchison and Adam C. Harvey and sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole for 25 years.)

Although Combs attended an open house at CCMS following her high school graduation, she opted instead to attend Northern Kentucky University to explore other options.

The decision to enlist in the Army came nearly six months after her brother, Brent, had been seriously injured.

“There was a medic who helped him, who helped him survive,” Combs said. “I knew I had the ability to be in the military and be that medic for someone else.”

After medic training, Combs attended Airborne school in Fort Benning, Georgia, and was assigned to 3rd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. In December 2008, she deployed to Baghdad in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. There, she spent much of her deployment with the 3rd Brigade Special Troops Battalion Military Police.

Continued ===>
Leaving the Army after her four-year commitment, Combs briefly considered a career in nursing before deciding to enroll in CCMS. "I don't know what compelled me to go to mortuary school ... I guess I had a deep-seeded need," Combs said. "I kept going back to my brother’s funeral. My father and I were the first to see him (after he had been embalmed). I was terrified about how my mother would react when she saw him, but when she walked into the room, she said he looked 'so good.' That sat in the back of my mind for years."

In 2016, Combs graduated from CCMS with a bachelor’s degree in mortuary science, and began working in various roles in death care, including cornea recovery for the Lions Eye Bank of West Central Ohio and contracting in restoration for Linne mann Funeral Homes. In 2018, she returned to CCMS as an adjunct clinical instructor.

"I think I'm doing what I was meant to do," said the 36-year-old Combs, who married CCMS classmate (and Linne mann funeral director) John Combs in September.

Life in the military teaches order, discipline, commitment and attention to detail, all qualities that translate well for funeral service, Combs said.

"In the military you are taught combat lifesaving, and the key is to control the bleeding ... in many ways you find similar things in teaching embalming. You have to be proficient in finding arteries, first and foremost," she said. "In each area, there are protocols you have to follow ... you have to be vigilant, follow procedures. There is a structure that has to be followed each and every time."

For Combs, the discipline stands out.

"When you live with the discipline that comes with enlistment, it leaves something with you," she said. "As a medic, you have one chance to get it right ... the same can be said for funeral service, you only have one chance to get it right."

And that’s why Combs feels most comfortable in the embalming room, using her skills to help give a grieving family the best possible outcome.

“Embalming is very detail oriented ... every step in the process matters and no steps can be skipped,” she said. “There are no shortcuts because what you do as a funeral professional is the last thing a family remembers about their loved one. It’s been years, but I still remember my brother and the attention he was given after he was murdered.”

While she has found her purpose as a funeral director and teacher, Combs pointed out that the profession offers a variety of opportunities for veterans: crematory operator, driving a hearse, working as a funeral attendant.

“I think there are spaces for veterans in every profession, but I think funeral service is particularly attractive for veterans,” she said. “They have served their country, why not serve their community? The utmost service is the final goodbye.”
MUGSHOT MONDAYS

#CCMSMUGSHOTMONDAY
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