

COLLEAGUE WISDOM

Given present circumstances and information, what is your reasoning for (or not) joining state and national funeral service associations?

Professional associations are necessary to promote education, comradeship, lobbying efforts and to be responsive to the membership on various applicable issues. We have been members of national associations as well as state associations. Presently, we are only members of our state association and a small group of independent funeral homes that meet once a year for educational purposes.

North Carolina FDA and our study group are valuable resources. For many years we were members of NFDA, but for the first time we have elected to discontinue our membership. NFDA became unresponsive to numerous inquiries, and their efforts to level the playing field nationwide on preneed are nonexistent.

Beacham McDougald – McDougald Funeral Home & Crematory – Laurinburg, North Carolina (125 calls)

I was for many years a member of both the NFDA and the state association. As time moved on, I made the decision to remove myself from both organizations, having determined that return on investment did not warrant such memberships.

My geographic area (western part of the state) organized a regional association (in which I was a founding member and board of director) which ultimately died a slow death unto itself due to a lack of leadership and direction. It is my opinion that there are other venues (such as your publications and annual seminars) in which to engage in an exchange of healthy discussions of the true topics that govern the future of funeral service.

Kudos to you for providing those of us in funeral service a forum or platform to do so among colleagues who are interested in such issues, as opposed to those who only wish to participate in rumor-mongering about their competitors.

John Davis – McCarthy Funeral Homes – Greenfield, Massachusetts (125 calls – 2 locations)

I am a member of both the state and national associations. I have chosen to be a member not because I participate much, if any, in their programs but to be apprised of current information. Also, some of the legal advice that we as members are afforded is valuable. The national association does have some very good forms that are at our disposal. Music licensing fees appear to be more reasonable than others. Whatever knowledge gained is a value, positive or negative.

Michael Gladfelter – Diehl Funeral Home & Cremation Center – Mount Wolf, Pennsylvania (90 calls – 1 location)

I have not joined nor have I have missed belonging to NFDA. It is my perception that their staff and much of its leadership is “out of tune” with the demographics and changing traditions and customs of Southern California, which is the market in which I live and operate.

I do belong to CFDA, because I think the Association does an excellent job in legislative advocacy and professional education and development for funeral home staff training, and through its for-profit subsidiary, members have access to a preneed trust without having administrative responsibilities. I also enjoy very much the situational friendships, information and networking exchanges with suppliers at conventions.

On the other hand, I believe our most recent leadership has not held accountable the Association’s for-profit subsidiary to have a three- to five-year business plan pro forma, nor was it willing to deal with or develop a plan for the Association’s continuing annual deficits. Further, I believe the Association’s dues structure discriminates against independent small- to medium-size members while disproportionately favoring large corporate ownership. It is for these reasons that I recently chose not to seek reelection to the CFDA Board.

Bill Hawkins – Angeleno Funeral Homes – North Hollywood, California (600 calls – 2 locations)

I have not been a member of the Pennsylvania Funeral Directors Association for quite a few years. My reason for dropping my membership was when I saw the "association" going from a support source to business that often competes with its membership.

The sponsorship of profit-making ventures such as preneed programs, telemarketing scams and the like caused me to question the executives/administration of the association and the amount of profits they seem to need. When a group no longer has more things in common, and there are more activities causing controversy and competition, then it no longer represents the goal defined as an association.

Again, may I point out preneed as the greedy monster that has intoxicated our industry and caused associations to see dollar signs rather than performing as a tool for bettering our profession. I am a member of the NFDA, although I am seriously questioning it more and more. My reasoning to continue membership would certainly not be the leadership *The Director* magazine or the "forward thinking" (tongue in cheek) direction offered.

Operational benefits would have to be the overwhelming reasons to stay in the fold — credit card processing, music licensing, legal forms/information and an occasional interest-

ing convention location at a member-priced registration fee. The looming increase in airfares and costs of traveling in our unstable economy will most certainly weaken the weight of the latter.

Honestly, anyone who has attended any of the ceremonious convention meetings would see what a self-stroking organization it tends to be. Then again, how can you get anyone to volunteer time, ideas and monies in today's world without stroking something? Take the ego out of volunteerism and you won't have too many individuals left with genuine altruism as a motivation.

**Michael Tod Good, F.D. – Good Funeral Home & Cremation Centre – Reamstown, Pennsylvania
(70 calls – 1 location)**

It is of course, a matter of weighing the costs vs. the benefits. Is the current paradigm of belonging to an association and attending an annual meeting every year still a good one? Is there a better one? Are all trades/professions facing similar questions? Conclusively, I have membership in our state association and do not belong to NFDA.

Ted Wigger – Treadway & Wigger Funeral Chapel & Crematory – Napa, California (250 calls – 1 location)

For nearly a half century, Bradford has created handcrafted wood products from the finest materials.

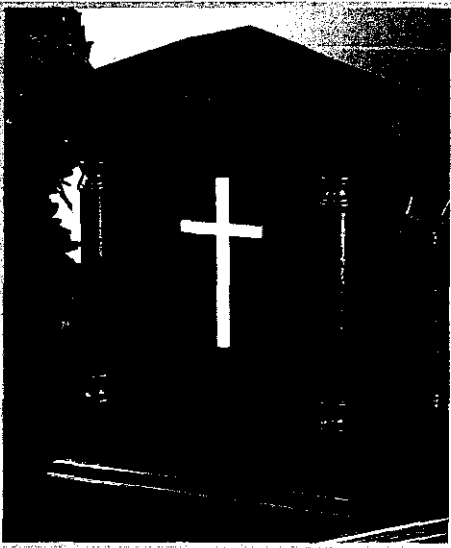
Now your funeral home can make that same quality available at factory-direct prices.

With free second-day shipping to many locations and a 30-day money-back guarantee, you can offer Bradford quality at attractive prices and with no risk.

Bradford Memorials proudly presents its newest cremation urns.

The Georgetown

The Georgetown, part of our Eternity series, features a solid mahogany cabinet, a front panel with burl accents, and a solid wood relief cross. This cathedral-inspired case includes steps, sculptured molding, and Tuscan pillars. Also available with a laser-engraved panel.



BT Ltd.™ **BRADFORD**

www.bradfordmemorials.com Orders/Information: 800.772.0178

