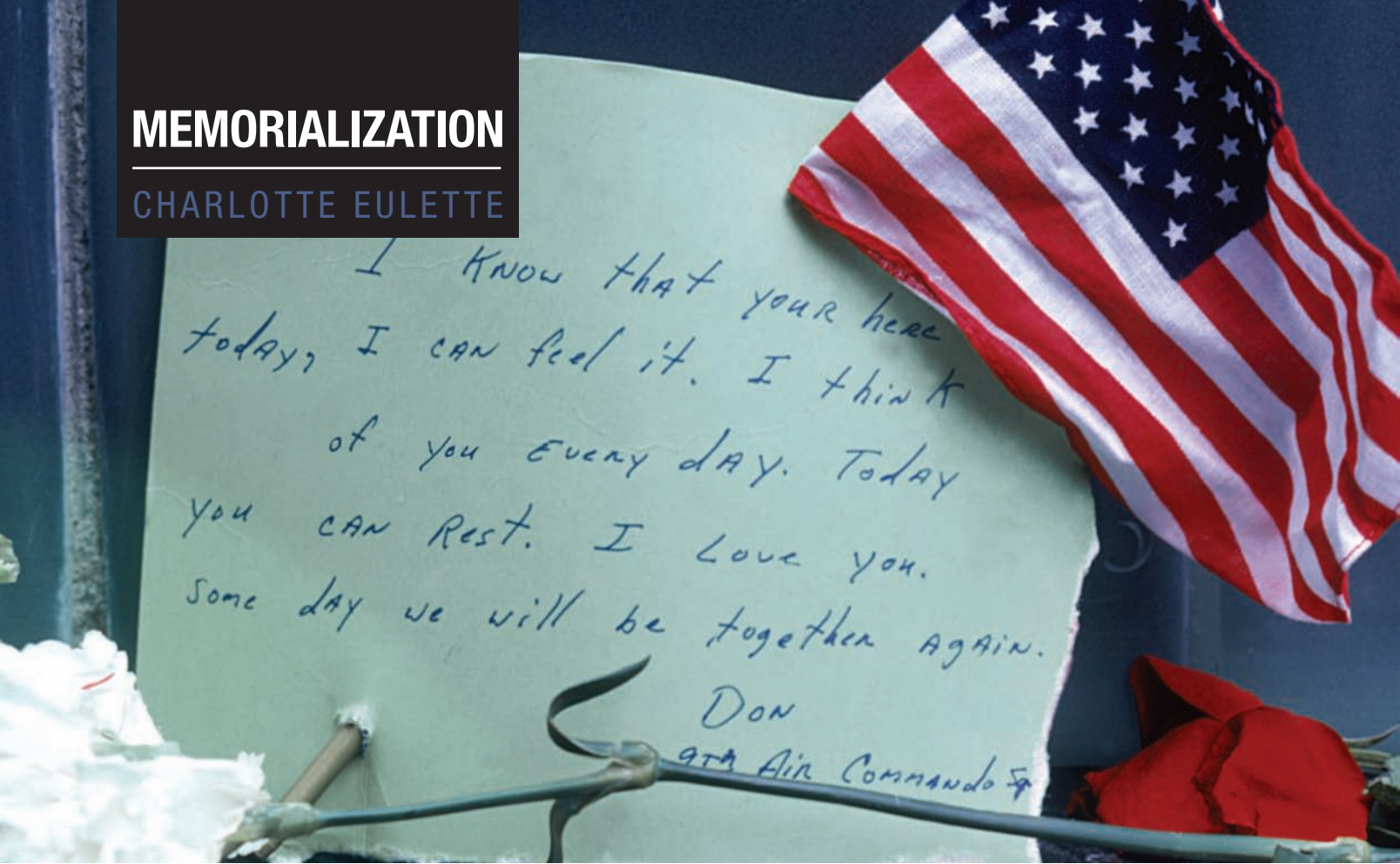


MEMORIALIZATION

CHARLOTTE EULETTE



I know that your here today, I can feel it. I think of you every day. Today you can rest. I love you. Some day we will be together again.
DON
9th Air Commando Sq

Celebrating Life

the art of creating lasting memorials for families

You are the proverbial fly on the wall, and here is what you see: A family is welcomed at the door and graciously escorted into a hall. Guests arrive and are greeted by a classical guitarist strumming the instrumental version of a beautiful Cole Porter melody. Everyone is seated, and at the sound of a chime, children enter, carrying baskets and handing out river rocks that have life-affirming wishes painted in gold ink.

A celebrant then reads a biographical story about the honoree. The honoree's brother shares a poem he has written. And throughout the service, a vibrant yellow is present in many shapes and forms: a hat, scarf, a ribbon. You might very well think you have stumbled upon a wedding ceremony. Good guess. But no, you are at a funeral.

"There is a funeral revolution-evolution going on," said the late octogenarian, Rosilyn Wilder, world-renowned drama therapist and community leader. "[Funerals] have become celebrations ... and it's about

time." While she was still alive, Wilder held a celebration-of-life ceremony that was attended by her family and friends.

This movement toward personalized and meaningful eulogies has come about because of a demand by baby boomers, those members of the "me generation" born between the late 1940s and the early '60s.

But this desire for personalization is far from new – in fact, it is a revival of the ancient custom of paying homage to ancestors and having their personal life stories told and passed down for future generations.

"This ... perspective about grieving and memorializing doesn't mean that as funeral celebrants we don't embrace traditions or religions," said Peggy Lewis, certified funeral celebrant. "On the contrary,

I interview families at length at their home and write a beautifully-crafted eulogy. The family approves every word in advance along with the correct pronunciation for the names of the people mentioned or honored in the ceremony. This is especially important for blended, bilingual families in multicultural and religious communities, like my city, Miami. A bilingual eulogy that celebrates the rich tapestry of their loved one's life is very important."

Funeral celebrants work in tandem with funeral directors to transform the common funeral into a much more

satisfying and life-affirming tribute. Especially in this great melting pot world of ours, an opportunity has risen from necessity, and we as funeral industry professionals enter into the golden age with a gold standard for funerals.

A powerful paradigm shift came into our lives after Sept. 11, 2001, when from this tragedy that shook the world a populist chant emerged to mourn the dead: "Gone but never forgotten!"

The demand for funeral celebrants has been on the rise internationally. There are a number of contributing factors to this change. According to a Baylor University Religion Survey, released Sept. 11, 2006, more than 60 percent of Americans said they are not affiliated with any specific religion, and as many as 14 percent said they are not religious.

Today, funeral celebrants are a value-added service that funeral directors offer to families. And it's not hard for them to do, especially considering the Celebrant Foundation and Institute now has over 14 state chapters and 350

certified celebrants throughout North America. Funeral directors and their client families can visit the foundation's web site to choose a celebrant.

The Celebrant Foundation and Institute, in fact, has experienced a 400 percent growth rate over the last five years.

The institute offers an eight-month certification program. Students study the history of ceremony as well as religious death and dying rituals, including the study of symbols and traditions. They also learn to observe and critique actual ceremonies; and how to interview and write funeral services, memorials and end-of-life celebrations.

The reading materials introduce students to leading world scholars such as Joseph Campbell and Arnold van Gennep.

Additional courses include ceremonial public speaking and presentation training and instruction on working with funeral industry professionals, clergy and vendors.

Typically, a funeral celebrant spends

10 hours preparing for a 45-minute eulogy. This preparation begins with a family interview.

This past year, Vicky Morrison, a funeral celebrant from Ludlow, Ontario, was asked to preside over the funeral of a 20-year-old woman, Sarah, who had died in an auto accident.

Morrison interviewed Sarah's family. During the visit, Sarah's mother pulled out her late daughter's photography portfolio. As it turned out, Sarah was an aspiring photojournalist.

Sometimes words are not adequate in expressing grief, and this is when, as Jungian psychology extols, symbols and rituals can better communicate the deep sense of loss and sorrow.

"Accompanied with live music ... the deceased's portfolio of glorious photos became the backdrop and video shrine to the ... life celebration for this beautiful and passionate young woman," said Morrison.

Symbols, indeed, can be lasting. For example, at one funeral, a young child's cremated remains were scattered over the family's favorite fishing hole. Later,



Lasting Expressions

DOES PERSONALIZING YOUR STATIONERY TAKE FOREVER?

THERE IS A BETTER SOLUTION.

Lasting Expressions Online Publisher

Hallmark Lasting Expressions is pleased to announce the funeral industry's first online stationery publishing solution. LEO gives you the ability to record statistical, survivor and service information; auto generate obituary notices; print memorial books, folders, bookmarks and access all templates 24/7 anywhere the Internet is available.

For a free demonstration or more information on how to quickly and easily customize your stationery using the LEO Publisher, visit www.lastingexpression.com or call us toll-free at 1-866-215-4410



Hallmark and Lasting Expressions are trademarks of Hallmark Canada, used with permission. Funeral Stationery, Sales and Distribution Managed by Imperial Casket Inc.

his memorial urn was transformed into a living garden sculpture and a home for birds.

Personalized services like these can also help children get to know their grandparents' histories. "Years from now, a child won't have to ask their parents who their great-grandparents were; they will know and have an accurate historical record," said Jeff Staab, a funeral celebrant from Vermont. "It's our loved ones that are the famous people in our lives; they are the ones that make a lasting imprint and whose legacy inspires us."

Four brothers asked New Jersey celebrant, Jack Cuffari, to create a memorial ceremony and interment for their parent's cremated remains. The unusual circumstance was that their parents had been divorced for more than 30 years. The family had been separated when the brothers were children, and they lived in two different states. Both parents had been cremated, their remains kept at home by the sons. That is, until they contacted Cuffari, who worked closely with the men to

create a memorial that was sensitive to address the separation and suffering that the family experienced over the years as well as expressing, through ceremony, the importance of family coming together.

At the service, they paid tribute to the father's Quaker heritage by reading an excerpt from the writings of renowned Quaker William Penn. After the memorial, Cuffari followed the Quaker custom for all to observe active silence: to share their memories and thoughts interspersed with silence. At the end of the ceremony, as a symbolic gesture, Cuffari shook the hand of a little boy who, in turn, shook the hand of the adult next to him, and a domino effect took place, marking human touch as the connection toward peace.

Many celebrants, too, handle services on the anniversaries of deaths. "As funeral professionals, we realize that at the time of death family members can be so grief stricken that it may require time to pass before they can express their grief in a conscious way," said Dan Mauk, a San Francisco-based

celebrant. "For these families, a memorial or life tribute ceremony planned for a future date may be right for them."

In many cases, the age-old custom of shrine-like funerals has become increasingly important with families. A family shrine or table is arranged with meaningful objects and mementos.

When the celebrant visits the home, family members are prompted by physical objects, and they are able to recall special moments in life that they shared with the deceased. Objects can include anything from boxing gloves to a bottle of Chanel No. 5 and beyond. The possibilities are endless.

There seems to be one common thread among successful funeral celebrants: They understand that the quality of people's relationships speak much more to one's legacy than fortune or fame. •

Charlotte Eulette is employed by the Celebrant USA Foundation & Institute. For more information, visit www.celebrantusa.org.



Look for our drivers in your neighbourhood!

High quality hand-crafted metal and wood caskets offered at competitive prices.

Call for pricing!

Going Home

- 18 or 20 Gauge Steel
- Monarch Blue Shaded
- Platinum Finish
- Blue Crepe Interior
- Sealer or Non-Sealer
- 3-way Adjustable Bedding

To locate an ACE Distributor or for more info on Exclusive Distributorship Territories call Jim toll free at **1-888-998-1888** or email sales@acecaskets.com



www.acecaskets.com