

Funeral directors discuss their profession

Editor:

This letter is written in response to the unsigned article which appeared in the April 23 edition of your newspaper having to do with funerals, funeral director and the consumer.

Our family owns and operates three funeral homes in Oakland County and has served this area a little over 30 years.

The point of your article is that consumers are in a bad bargaining position when they seek the services of a funeral director and further that the funeral director takes advantage of this situation by subtly or obviously pressuring the consumer to purchase goods and services beyond their ability to pay or beyond their needs and desires.

This scenario of the funeral director preying on the grief stricken has been played over and over in the media and while it apparently makes for good copy, it has little to do with the day to day reality of funeral arrangements. There are many reasons why the funeral director does not and cannot take advantage of the people he serves.

FIRST IS THE fact that rarely are funeral arrangements made by the primary mourners — the immediate family of the deceased. Most are accompanied by good friends, clergy or relatives less emotionally involved in the death and better able to offer sound advice to the bereaved about the kinds of services that will have meaning and value to them as well as protect them from overspending.

Secondly, to take advantage of the family of the deceased, he must be grieved or indifferent, is wrong. What we mean to say here is that among funeral directors, as among the rest of the population, you will find that a fair majority have high moral consciences.

For those unable to believe in this basic decency there is a third reason why funeral directors cannot take advantage of the people they serve. It is not good business to do so. Like most funeral firms, this one depends on the trust of families we have served in the past to account for the business we will do in the future.

In any given year, over 80 percent of the families with which we deal are

those who are calling on us for a second or third time.

To jeopardize this confidence for the sake of an extra hundred or an extra thousand dollars simply does not make good business sense. If a family leaves feeling taken advantage of, ripped off, or pressured, it is certain they will never call us again.

In losing their trust we will have lost the greatest and most valuable asset any funeral director can have — the trust of the community we serve. To say that we are proud or our reputations, that we guard and covet our good name is an understatement. That is why you will find our name on the signs in front of our facilities and you will also find this letter signed.

Your article suggests that the selection of a funeral and a funeral director

is an event similar in importance to that of buying a car. Tell that to the family whose eight year old son just dies of leukemia or the widow who must live without her husband after 50 years of marriage, or the teenager whose father just died.

We daresay, there is little in their experience that is like buying a car. The decisions they make at the time of such deaths are of high emotional import, the hurt they feel is devastating, the funeral is there to provide a vehicle to express that hurt in meaningful and manageable ways, not to cure it, but to care for it. It is somehow less enviable and far more important than air-conditioning, power steering or white-wall-tires.

Perhaps it is time we started treating funeral regulation as a consumer

product, one for which we pay over-early. If we kick the tires and check the warranty on such regulations, we may find it is indeed the ultimate rip-off and that the best protection we can get is the protection of each other — people who care about one another ei-

ther because it's good business or simply because it's good.

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SAT. 8-12

Exhibit traces history of Polish poster art

From the world's first museum devoted exclusively to poster art, "Polish Posters 1899-1978" are on exhibit at the Detroit Institute of Arts through Sunday, May 13.

Loaned by the Poster Museum in Wilanow (a suburb of Warsaw), all 180 examples document development of the poster from the turn of the century to the present in Poland.

On subjects from "Canterbury Tales" to "Calvary," and from the circus to the Chopin Piano Competition, the poster imagery makes innovative graphic statements on a variety of themes. National celebrations, theater performances, music, art exhibitions, sports events, education, films and the circus.

Polish posters have very little to do with advertising in the Western sense, because business competition has no part in the economy.

These colorful posters are exhibited in the main building — ground floor galleries of the Detroit Institute of Arts adjacent to Kresge Court.

Artists represented include Jerzy Czerwinski, Jan Lenica, Jan Sawka, Waldemar Sierzycki, Henryk Tomaszewski, Maciej Urbaniec.

On Saturday, May 5, the public is invited to a free 7 p.m. reception and 8 p.m. lecture sponsored by the museum's Founders Society and the Friends of Polish Art, Detroit. Guest speaker Danuta Boczar, Wayne State University instructor in art and art history, will discuss "The History and Significance of the Polish Poster," in the Art Institute lecture/recital hall.

"Polish Posters" will also be the subject of free midday gallery talks Wednesday, May 9, and Friday, May 11, at 1:30 p.m. by Christine Schneider of the museum's education department. The exhibition is circulated by Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition service (SITE). It was organized by the Maryland Institute, College of Art, in cooperation with the Polish Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the National Museum, Warsaw, and funded by a grant from the Smithsonian Institution Foreign Currency Program.

The exhibition of Polish Posters is open to the public without charge during regular museum hours 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. The exhibition catalog, \$7.50, and reproductions of some of the posters, \$1.50, are available in the museum shop, Ford Wing Lobby.

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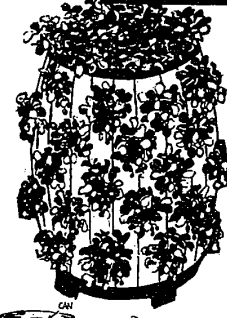
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You can even grow a crop on a small apartment terrace, provided you have plenty of sun and water. These are some fine new varieties of repeat-cropping strawberries that give more than one harvest a season. Strawberries are perennial plants, so they will last for years. And you can root baby plants that drop from runners, using them to replace old plants when fruiting declines in a few years. Further, even between harvests, strawberry planters are decorative assets to your garden.

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