By MARGARET MILLER

Funerals are for the living.
That's the conviction of a man who has made it his business to help those who deal with death do it in a way to assist those who are still alive.

assist those who are still alive.
"There is absolutely only one reason
for a funeral, and that is if somebody
gets helped," said Bill Bates, who was
brought from Oregon by Livonia funeral director Leonard Turowski to lead a
seminar at the Mayflower Hotel in
Plumouth

al director Leonard Turowski to lead a seminar at the Mayflower Hotel in Plymouth.

Bates, who used to own a funeral home and went into his present work because "people weren't being helped," sees the funeral and its cast of characters in a light quite different from that of many-of his counterparts.

Our society, he explained, has "taught us to avoid our feelings and escape them through Vallum, alcohol and cigarettes." So when we meet death, he added, we deny the anger we feel and prepare for a funeral with the determination to keep up a front and get it over with quickly.

The funeral directors need to recog-

"The funeral directors need to recog-nize this anger." Bates said. "Instead, they buy into it and nobody gets helped."

BATES FOUR-DAY sessions form a "Life Appreciation Series," designed to help funeral directors understand grief,

its processes and the need to help peo-ple accept and work through their indi-vidual responses. The program is based on research he did in cooperation with the University of Oregon. The research 'addresses itself, he said, to the question of 'how a funeral can address itself directly to what has happened." In the sessions, Bates spends time on

what has happened."
In the sessions, Bates spends time on understanding grief, preparing a "Life-line" which takes each participant back over the times in his own life he has known and reacted to grief, and finally a "Death Lab," which the leader described as "a very intense confrontation with our feelings about our own death."
It is a configuration of the property of the propert

"But you get a more compassionate human being, and that's the bottom

"But you get a more compassionate human being, and that's the bottom line."

A by-product of a different way of looking at funerals may bring some changes in the way they are conducted.

Ritual can make sense out of chaos," Bates said, "but if the ritual is not in keeping with my value system it does not do that for me. The funeral does not do that for me. The funeral service needs to be meaningful to the individual, and the aim is to modify but not revolutionize."

TUROWSKI, A PARTNER in

Maney, Burrell and Turowski Funeral Directors of Livonia, said he had gone through Bates' workshop and was anz-ious for his associates to do so. Funeral directors from several neighboring areas also were participating in the sessions.

"Bill's program makes us much more aware," he said. "We change, not only professionally but personally.

"My wife noticed a real change in

"My wife noticed a real change in me" noted that he was seeing differences in his work. He had just completed a funeral for the father of a priest and included several innovations that seemed natural to the people involved.

The priest wrote his own service," said Turowski," and that is quite unusual. He also brought in a family photo album full of pictures of his father, and that was very meaningful to triend and relatives as well as to him." "That's the kind of helpful thing I am talking about," Bates said.

The visiting educator also noted that there is "no economic incentive" for

The visiting educator also noted that there is "no economic incentive" for participation in his workshop.

"We don't come cheap, and those who get this training can't charge any more for their services," he said. "They just are better equipped to do their jobs, and funeral directors talk to more hurting people than any professional group in the world."

BETTER UNDERSTANDING of grief, death and life are the foundations of the workshop Bates leads. "Grief is like no other emotion," he said. "We can choose to become angry or happy, or happy, or depressed. But grief is something that happens to us. It's the healing process which makes us well." Grief's components, he added, are shock, denial, bargaining, anger and the feeling of being cheated. "We get those factors all once in an overpowering load."
"Some react to loss with the feeling that they're going crazy," he noted.

some react to loss with the feeling that they're going crazy," he noted.

The purpose for pushing participants to think intensively about their own death is to help them appreciate life, Bates said.

death is to help them appreciate life, Bates said.

"The truth I'm trying to bring them is that we all are dying, even though we don't accept it intellectually." he add-the them we accept the fact that death will come, then we appreciate life in a new way and we are more-aware of other people."

Bates' workshops have in recent years taken him to 150 cities in the United States, Canada and Australia. They are open to all who deal with people who face death — social workers, psychologists and clergymen as well as funeral directors.

Those interested in learning more about his program may call Turowski, 427-3400.

ments. Pioneers inevitably have a cer-tain percentage of failures. Skylabs have come because of many false starts along the way. Mothering isn't going to be changed in every case no matter what the investment. But the chances for improvement are almost guaranteed.



Bill Bates leads a workshop for funeral direc-tors. (Staff photo by Gary Caskey)

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THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT has led some people to list the skills a mother acquires. Some want to put a cost on the work of a homemaker and mother for tax or retirement program purposes. Reda abilities ought not to be dismissed because of awareness of imperfection. Who rears children as well as they wish? Most people behave as parents according to the way their parents functioned. Sadly, we often subconsciously remember and carry on the pooreside the control observing our parents. A mother who had weak or extremely poor care in childhood needs models, visions and suggestions. It is exciting to exaggerate a bit and think of someone having received such poor parenting that, with reinforcement, he or she re-

REV. CHARLES ERICKSON



ally functions as a first generation par-ent. The odds in favor of progress are fantastic.

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