

Morticians talk about the reality of death and burial

By Diane Gale
staff writer

Caskets and embalming are subjects which most persons would rather avoid talking about, but funerals and body preparation are important for families to understand in accepting a relative's death, according to two local funeral directors.

"I feel it's important that the family views the body, but each case is different," says Bob Rock, director and owner of the Thayer-Rock Funeral Home in Farmington. "It helps people psychologically with accepting death. Because it ends a lot of questions, like what the person looked like, and seeing helps the person with the sadness."

The average cost of a funeral is between \$2,500 and \$3,500, according to David McCabe, owner of McCabe Funeral Home in Farmington Hills. But

the arrangements could go as high as \$20,000, depending on the type of casket. Among the options offered families are various kinds of wood or metal caskets, and different types of vaults.

"No one has ever been turned down for lack of funds," McCabe said.

A vault, which is a concrete container that the casket is put into before it is placed in the ground, is required by the cemetery because it supports the dirt around the casket that erodes with time, McCabe said.

An important factor in the funeral process is embalming. Contrary to popular misconception the procedure isn't mandated by state law.

THE EMBALMING involves removing all the blood from the body and injecting preservative and disinfective fluids. Formaldehyde and other germicidal and wetting agents are injected in a neck artery. A draining tube is inserted in the jugular vein. A machine, which pulsates in a similar fashion to the heart, causes pressure that forces the blood out of the body.

The blood flows into a drain that dispenses it into the sewer system. However, a disinfectant is added, Rock said.

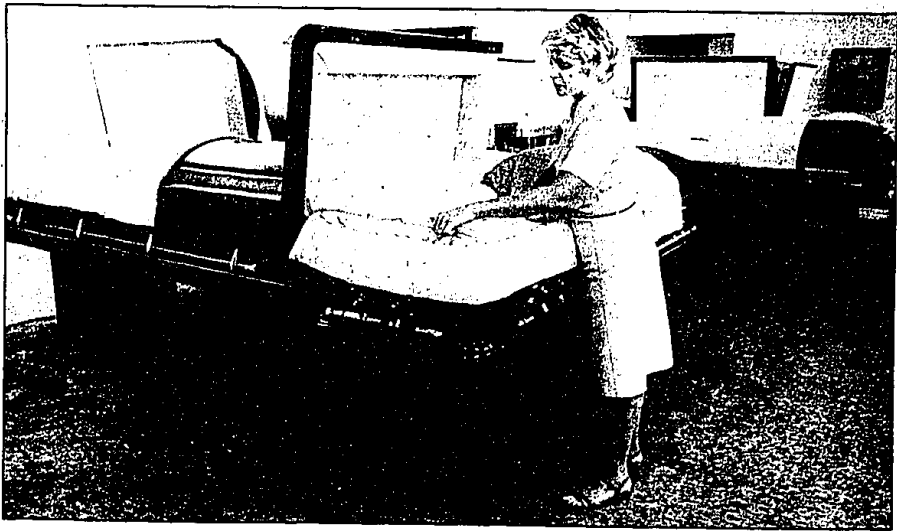
"By embalming, you're trying to preserve what the people looked like just before they died, so it's not a compulsion when someone says, 'They look like they did 20 years ago,'" McCabe said.

The director of the funeral home, who is licensed by the state and must graduate in mortuary science from an accredited college, is trained to embalm bodies. The preparation process, including the application of cosmetics and embalming, can take up to two-and-a-half hours to perform.

The organs are left in the body, but the excess moisture is sometimes removed.

Dye is added to give color back to the tissue, but most often cosmetics also are used. The embalming fluid often plumps the tissues. In some cases the embalmer has to "sculpture" disfigured facial features.

"In embalming, preservation isn't as important as the disinfection, so that the body can be viewed at a public funeral," Rock said.



Sus Gray, a secretary at Thayer-Rock Funeral Home, straightens the caskets in the showroom.

Staff photos by RANDY BORSI/staff photographer

While many persons believe embalming to be a gruesome process, Rock and McCabe disagree, saying it is simply part of their profession.

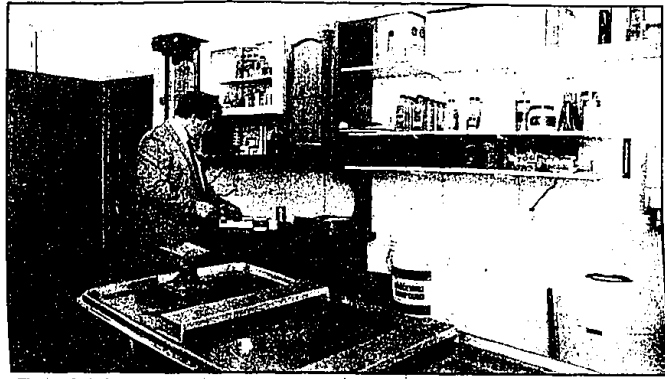
"I WOULD assume it would be the same type of mind set that a surgeon would have, because you're operating on a human body, except that the body is dead," McCabe said. "The instruments are the same used in surgery."

"If the embalming is done wrong, it's like a broken spoke in a wheel," McCabe said. "But, it's not that big a part of the whole picture of all the arrangements."

McCabe and Rock both said the embalmer usually prepares the man's hair, but hire professional beauticians for the women.

Rock said that if the person isn't embalmed or cremated the body has to be buried within 48 hours after death, according to state law.

More people than ever before are opting for cremations which is done in crematories that have a crematorium. It is against the law for a funeral home to perform one.



The embalming process is performed in this room at Thayer-Rock. Bob Rock, director of the establishment, looks over the tools that he uses in his work.

Please turn to Page 4



David McCabe

memory lane

Memories, memories . . . have we got the memories. And we'd like to share them with you. Using local newspaper files, we're dishing up generous slices of life in the Farmington area from 40, 30, 20 and 10 years ago.

AUGUST 26, 1943

GEORGE A. DONDERO, U.S. Congressman from the 17th District, was to speak at an upcoming Kiwanis Club meeting in the Community Hall of the Methodist Church in Farmington. Dondero was to have talked on "An Appraisal of the War Today."

ROBERT HUTTON, Farmington High School's football coach, announced that practices would begin Sept. 1. The 1943 team had 14 returning lettermen and planned a seven-game schedule.

A MICHIGAN BELL Telephone ad read: "When the long-distance operator says 'Please limit your call to five minutes,' there's a good reason why! She knows the line is heavily loaded and other calls are waiting."

PROPERTY FOR SALE was listed in a classified: "Twelve Mile Road, two acres, rolling elevation, strawberry and raspberry bushes, six-room house, good condition. \$3,300 cash."

AUGUST 27, 1953

BIDS ARE BEING secured for the extension of Osmus Street from Junction south to the new Westbrook Elementary School, according to Farmington Township Supervisor Ernest Blanchard. Westbrook, part of the Clareville school district, was not ready for use by Sept. 10, the first day of classes.

AN EDITORIAL stated a case for more police officers in Farmington Township. "Additional police protection . . . is becoming an ever-increasing necessity. Growth in population, increase in total property value and emphasis on more strict law enforcement demands more policemen."

"This is not just another scheme to spend tax dollars but rather an attempt to provide badly needed service. At the present time, the township has one police officer for an estimated 15,000 population."

CLASSIFIED AD read: "Found - Hound, owner must identify, pay for ad and keep. 38855 Grand River."

AN ADVERTISEMENT for Farmington Cleaners read: "Teach your children the right way while

they're young! Teach them good grooming by insisting that their clothes be kept in top shape by us."

AUGUST 29, 1963

NORTH FARMINGTON High School will start printing its own student newspaper this fall. Type will be set by the Farmington Enterprise but the actual printing will be done by the students at the school. An expenditure of \$375 for a small printing press was approved at a recent board of education meeting.

SCHOOL BELLS will be calling 16,500 Farmington area boys and girls back to their classrooms for another school year. The Farmington area includes two public and two parochial systems, but the bulk of enrollment will be in the Farmington Public Schools where 11,500 students are expected.

THE FARMINGTON Bike Shop on Orchard Lake Road advertised a 26-inch, fully assembled Rollfast bicycle for \$29.95.

FEATURES AT the Civic Theater in downtown Farmington: "King Kong vs. Godzilla" and "Duel of the Titans."

AUGUST 25, 1973

FARMINGTON WAS a welcome sight after a 1,400-mile bicycle trip by Joe Hanson, Steve Chabala, Terry Crawford and Richard Liley. All are seniors at Farmington High School. Their trip nearly encircled Lake Michigan.

FARMINGTON'S SCHOOL Board set the 1973-74 millage rate at 37.53, an increase of 0.7 mills over last year.

DECREASES IN serious crime during July was reported by the Farmington Police Department. Serious crimes (including burglary, robbery and larceny) dropped 15 percent. However, narcotics violations and drunk driving jumped dramatically. Narcotics violations nearly doubled, from 31 to 60. Drunk driving jumped from 87 to 104.

"NIGHT WATCH," the attraction at the Old Orchard Theater in Farmington Hills, was reviewed in a local newspaper.

"Elizabeth Taylor . . . has again proved that she is a versatile and genuinely talented actress . . . Though not of the Oscar award caliber, this movie is worth seeing in light of Miss Taylor's performance."

sale 29.99
40% off leather slip-ons...Freeman classics



Reg. \$50 and they're far from ordinary. They're Freeman's. With leather uppers that make all the difference in the world. And man-made soles you can count on for a lot of service. As for style, it's the American classic moc slip-on ready to take you just about anywhere in style...and comfort. Choose yours in black or brown. Sizes 8 to 12 M. 2400* in Men's Shoes at Hudson's, Northland, Eastland, Westland, Oakland, Southland, Panlanc, Fairlane, Twelve Oaks and Lakeside.

*Total units of all Hudson's stores listed while quantities last.

HUDSON'S men's store
ORDER BY PHONE: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In Metro Detroit, call 569-2454. Elsewhere, order toll-free 1-800-233-2000.