



2007-2008 Pursuit of Excellence Award Broadway Mortuary – Wichita, KS
Innovative Program Essay
by W. Ashley Cozine, *CFSP, CPC*

Presidential Funeral Memorabilia Collection

“Show me the manner in which a nation or community cares for its dead, and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals.” - Gladstone

The future of our profession rests on the ability of funeral directors to demonstrate the value and importance of funeral service to the families we serve and to our communities at large. As we look to offer creative and meaningful options that are unique, personal and have value to families, we also need to consider the past and learn from our experiences.

Many of us can recall where we were during times of national tragedy. The assassination of John F. Kennedy, the attacks on September 11, 2001 and the Space Shuttle *Challenger* and *Columbia* disasters, all evoke strong emotional responses. These tragedies brought us together as a nation and made us proud to be Americans.

We can also remember how our nation has paid honor and tribute to our past U.S. Presidents at their state funerals. While these funerals were certainly full of pomp and circumstance, they provided a way for ordinary citizens to



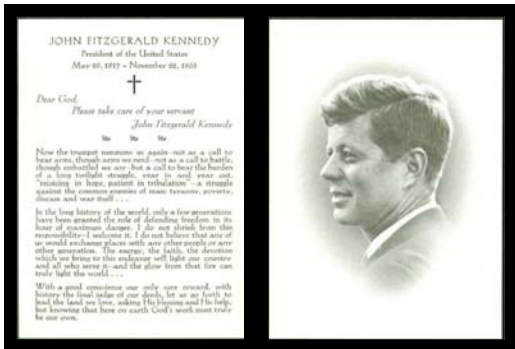
President Ford's Funeral Service at the Washington National Cathedral

remember...to say “thank you”...and to grieve in a collective, as well as a personal way. People stopped what they were doing and took time out of their busy schedules to pay honor and respect to these leaders. Each funeral played an important role in the healing process and had an impact on our nation. This is the very essence of

funeral service and it is why we, as funeral directors, do what we do.

Our desire was to visually display the value of funeral service to the families of our community. We wanted to convey the importance of honoring and celebrating the lives of those who are significant to us and to those we love.

What began as a personal collection of memorabilia from President Ronald Reagan's funeral, soon turned into a collection of other presidential funerals as well. While we did not want to dwell on tragedy, we did want to emphasize the importance and impact that these funerals had on our nation, as well as the memory of these men's lives. We have collected original funeral service programs from both President Reagan and President Ford, as well as original memorial cards from the U.S. Capitol, where these two men laid in state. We also have secured a rare prayer card from the funeral mass of President Kennedy (1/1,000



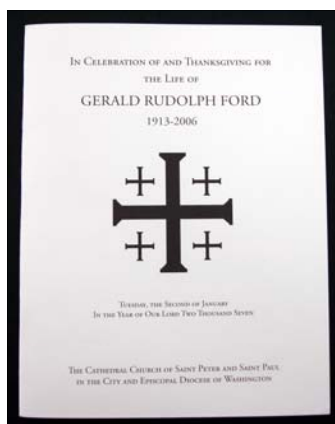
Prayer Card from President Kennedy's Funeral Mass

that were printed for his service). Our collection includes a 1963 LIFE Magazine JFK Memorial Edition, official White House portraits, as well as images taken at the funerals of these three presidents.

We have assembled these keepsakes in a museum quality presentation with captions depicting the various items and events. Thus far, the response has been outstanding. The collection is appreciated for its historical content and significance, as well as its patriotism. We believe it will be of interest to future generations of visitors to come. We have been encouraged to collect memorabilia from other presidential funerals as well. We are currently procuring items from President Lincoln and President Eisenhower (a fellow native Kansan).



Service Programs from President Reagan's Funeral



Service Program from President Ford's Funeral

We are currently procuring items from President Lincoln and President Eisenhower (a fellow native Kansan).

We believe that this visual collection will help to instill in others the importance of honoring relationships and heritage...be it a president or a loved one. It has proven to be a unique way to elevate the value of our profession.