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A Tribute to Our Veterans

Anderson Funeral Home
Alexandria, MN

We can all agree that COVID-19 made 2020, and the first half of 2021, extremely difficult and that it directly affected each and every one of us. Being in the funeral industry during the pandemic came with its own challenges. The staff of Anderson Funeral Home found that families not being able to properly honor the lives of their loved ones was heart wrenching and very unsatisfying. We believe honoring the life is truly the first step for beginning a healthy grief journey. This step also leads to proper support for the family. Because we were unable to serve our families, during the pandemic, in the way we desperately wanted to, the staff at Anderson Funeral Home felt compelled to bring our community together and make a difference.

After discussing ways to bring our community together, all our staff agreed on two things; we are passionate about caring for the families in our community and showing appreciation to those who serve in the armed services, past and present. Alexandria, MN recently built a beautiful and emotionally moving Veterans Memorial Park. As it was completed shortly before the pandemic, we had not been able to utilize this beautiful gift to our city. This led to an open dialogue among the funeral home staff and the local veteran groups. Our focus was to provide a meaningful service for the families who were not able to witness military honors for loved ones who had honorably served our country due to COVID-19 restrictions. We are truly grateful to all the men and women who have served and are currently serving our country. We know this sentiment is strong throughout our community and gave us good reason to invite our entire community to an event at the Veteran's Memorial Park which we named "A Tribute to Our Veterans".

Our staff worked hard to organize the event in a way that we hoped would truly move the community. We worked with the city officials and police to have the streets adjacent to the park closed for the event. Invitations went out through the veteran organizations, local radio, our local newspapers, and through community event display screens. The Navy was contacted to provide personnel for the event. Media personnel were contacted to be on hand for recording the service. The service would be recorded digitally using several cameras and drone

photography. Our plan was to live stream the event for those not able to attend. A large screen was planned to be set up in the park to provide a video and music presentation as part of the service. We asked the local Vietnam Veterans of America Post 235 Rifle Squad to perform a rifle salute and they were honored to assist in this event. A local pilot volunteered a "fly-over" of his P-51 Mustang plane to open the service. To make the tribute even more meaningful, we asked a family we recently served, and could not provide military honors for, if we could honor their brother and uncle. Joseph Hanson, a former Navy SEAL (Ret.), who was born and raised in Alexandria, would receive the honors due to him that evening. Others who we planned to ask to participate in the event were Angie Reichmann as a soloist and Pastor Mike Bartolomeo, a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, to give the community a message of hope. Tom Anderson, an owner of Anderson Funeral Home who is a retired funeral director, also was asked to speak at this event.

This special event to honor and remember all veterans in Douglas County began with the aircraft fly-over and Tom Anderson giving the opening remarks. Tom is a lifelong member of the community and was able to tie in some fascinating history about many of our veterans. The family of Joseph Hanson was presented with an American Flag by two members of the United States Navy, Petty Officer 1st Class Brandon Ericson and Petty Officer 2nd Class Richard Walz. Community member, Angie Riechmann sang the National Anthem and God Bless America, and Pastor Mike Bartolomeo from Church for the Harvest, a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, provided a message and prayer. Steve Pederson played Taps and the Vietnam Veterans of America Post 235 Rifle Squad performed a rifle salute. We also put in great effort to make sure the event was live-streamed for those unable to attend in person.

The event was well promoted and over 300 people attended in person. Approximately 90 additional people attended via livestream. Media coverage inviting the community to this event and during the event included area newspapers, radio stations and mentions on a variety of social media. This community wide event is still spoken of months later.

This event gave members of our community an opportunity to show support to our veterans and men and women in our armed forces and a chance to visit the new Veterans Memorial Park in a unique way. It also gave the community an opportunity to experience the

powerful ceremony of a veteran receiving the burial honors, a moving ceremony for anyone who has never seen this before. We were also able to offer community members an organized event at a safe, large, outdoor venue when almost everything had been cancelled over the last year. Many people thanked us and asked if this was going to be an annual event.

“A Tribute to Our Veterans” gave our funeral home and staff the opportunity to make an impact and care for families we had served during COVID-19. Each one of us at Anderson Funeral Home deeply cares about our community and we felt truly honored to make an impact especially because we felt “our hands were tied” in the months prior.

We created a brief version of the event that can be viewed on our website, at the link below, or by searching “A Tribute to our veterans Anderson Funeral Home Alexandria MN” on youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUR6YM3BFxU>

Voice of Alexandria, our radio station, also created a recap video which can be viewed at the link below or by searching “A Tribute to Our Veterans Sept 23 2020” on youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R-w7MjZ65s>

Brunswick Memorial Home, East Brunswick, NJ

2021 Best of the Best POE

“Untold Stories”

The Brunswick Memorial Home dedicated 2020-2021 to honoring and memorializing the stories of US Veterans of WWII, the Korean Conflict, Vietnam and Afghanistan. Veterans from Vietnam through WWII currently range in age from their 60's through their 90's and unfortunately, their stories are rapidly being lost. This year alone, over 200 Veterans residing in NJ Veterans homes lost their lives due to Covid; this doesn't include those that died in other locations or due to other causes.

We wanted to preserve Veteran stories. Our Care Team came up with a list of general questions to ask Veterans. Their answers would be compiled and then displayed nicely in a binder, so that their story could be shared with their family. The interviews at times became emotional. While our time with each Veteran allowed us to discuss the basic questions about enlistment dates, training, places stationed, what their jobs were...we also got to discuss the personal side of it, like who they were leaving behind when deployed, did they carry mementos, did they make life-long friends, did they experience much loss, who was waiting for them when they returned home, and what advice they would pass on to future generations.

Our first meeting with a Veteran was a WWII Vet. The interview was conducted in his home because he is 94 and no longer drives. We bought lunch for him, sat down around his kitchen table, and listened. Follow up meetings were scheduled to ensure he got to tell his whole story. He looked forward to our visits and even more so to sharing his finished story with his family over Thanksgiving.

We have been meeting with Veterans at local VFWs several times a month. We have found that interviewing them at the VFW has worked well as their stories often feed off of one another. They feel more comfortable telling their story with others that have similar experiences. They often brought in photos of their time in the service to go along with their stories.

During one interview of a Vietnam Veteran, he told a story of how about fifteen years after he returned from Vietnam; he received an official government envelope in the mail. His initial thought was “they can't want me back now” but it was a letter informing him that he was eligible for Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm Unit Citation Badge. Because the award is a foreign award, the US Department of the Army does not issue it. We researched, found, and purchased the Badge for the veteran and presented it to him at the VFW.

During another Vietnam Veteran's interview, he stated that he didn't have immediate family to share his story with and wasn't sure if he should participate. We encouraged him to share anyway; his story should still be heard. Not only did he share his story, but he felt we should have one of his “cruise books” (the “yearbook” of his time at sea on that particular

deployment). We were honored to have it. When his book was completed he was in tears and said he was going to place it in his safe. Two weeks later this veteran was sent to the hospital with Covid19 and never recovered. However, he was able to tell his story for the world to hear before he passed away.

During the course of our time at the VFWs we have learned how entertainment and music played such a big role in the lives of the service men. What a thrill it was to have Bob Hope come onto their ships! Even our interview questionnaire has changed as a result of this. We've now added a section that asks what brings them back to those days for good or bad reasons. This came about as juke box selections were played and how some of them wouldn't leave the room when "their" song came on. They remember what ship they were on or what their job was as soon as the music starts!

These veteran stories remind us "Freedom is not free". Some of these stories are not easy to tell. It is our duty to listen. It is our duty to thank them. It is our duty to get help for those who battle with limbs lost or PTSD. This project may have been done to thank, memorialize, and honor Veterans but the true honor was ours. This project was the most interesting and thought provoking history lesson one could ever have and we will continue listening and recording these stories as long as there are Veterans that wish to tell them.

Honoring Those Who Served Us: Veteran Hospice Patients

By Bruce Buchanan, Flanner Buchanan

At Flanner Buchanan, honoring veterans has always been one of our highest priorities and greatest privileges. These selfless men and women sacrificed everything to protect our country and defend our freedom. Their tenacious spirit reminds us that with courage, anything is possible. And, most importantly, that we are truly stronger together.

That's what inspired us to start an outreach program designed to connect with, uplift and honor local veterans undergoing hospice care.

Rationale Behind Our Veteran Coin Program

Oftentimes, service members do not know how much they are respected and valued within their very own communities. Additionally, facing the end of life is extremely difficult for anyone, including these seemingly fearless warriors. The fact there are people who want to sit, chat and hear their stories helps them realize the incredible impact of their heroic efforts. This brings a sense of peace, comfort and accomplishment to veterans as well as their families.

To highlight the achievements of our local heroes, we enlisted J. Stewart Goodwin, a Brigadier General, USAF, (Ret) with 37 years of service in all three components of the Air Force, Active, Guard, and Reserve. Today, he serves as the Executive Director of the Indiana War Memorials Commission, overseeing 25 acres of properties in downtown Indianapolis.

We selected General Goodwin because he not only understands the importance of our military personnel—but also the power of outreach. His father was a WWII Veteran, Captain, who served as an Army Combat Engineer in Europe, was injured and spent almost two years in VA Hospitals at the end of the war.

Veteran Coin Program Description

To identify veterans, the Flanner Buchanan staff works with local hospices to obtain military papers specifically the DD 214. The veterans and their families are then invited to attend a ceremony to present the veteran with a certificate of service and a challenge coin, a tradition dating back to WWI. During the ceremony, General Goodwin sits down with each veteran and thanks them profoundly for their service. After receiving this acknowledgement many open up and share their most memorable experiences.

Benefits Provided to Family & Community

"The biggest and best surprise of meeting with these veterans is the reactions from the families," recounted General Goodwin. "Following the ceremony, a family member or two will approach me and tell me they heard things today that the service member had never revealed."

He went on to explain: "For example, one of my favorite stories came from the wife of almost 70 years whose husband, who was 96 years old, earned the Purple Heart in WWII and she never knew where on his body he was shot. During the ceremony, I was trying to determine what battle he was in when he received the injury. So, I asked him, 'Where did you get it?' He spent some time thinking about it and replied: 'In the butt.' There were probably 25 family members and friends present from four generations that were laughing so hard, some of them ended up on the floor."

Benefits Provided to the Funeral Home & Staff

I am grateful for the efforts the Flanner Buchanan team has made to make this program possible. We may be in the funeral business—but life is what matters most to us. Every day, our dedicated staff works with families to help create custom-tailored tributes to honor and remember their loved ones' lives.

This program gives us the opportunity to celebrate life in a whole new way. Through these ceremonies, veterans and their families learn, laugh and create cherished memories with one another that they will never forget. And all of us here at Flanner Buchanan are honored to be a part of that.



Bruce W. Buchanan
Fourth-Generation Owner

James Funeral Home and Northlake Memorial Gardens, Huntersville, NC

Essay



We were so honored this year to lay to rest a World War II veteran at Arlington National Cemetery. We typically do not use this essay to write about a special funeral but this one was indeed over the top. Most funeral directors have been to Arlington and know what a special place it is. This funeral was months in the works as it was a full honors service with a funeral in the Old Post Chapel at Arlington National. We were in constant communication with the family in the 10 months between the death and the funeral day. His wife was elderly and very feeble. His children were so dear. The funeral was a morning service so we drove up the night before and in the months leading up planned a special surprise. Our staff has a good relationship with Gawler's, the funeral home of the presidents. They are the funeral home that takes care of America's most famous in and around D.C. Gawler's of course served the family of George Bush. We

arranged with Gawler's to leave his body at their funeral home over night and the next day we arrived in an extra special hearse—their hearse. Of



course, the family did not know the difference between our coach and their coach. But we did! Gawler's allowed us to use the hearse that



carried to body of George Bush to carry the body of Col. Harrison to Arlington. We told the family this

when we arrived and they were amazed that we arranged this. They were also delighted. Our local paper did a story on Col. Harrison going to Arlington in the coach used for President Bush. Gawler's was so kind and warm to us and gracious to allow this special surprise for a dear family. The family recently, several months later sent a special gift to the funeral home to thank the staff for how we had gone above and beyond at his funeral. We took four staff members to Arlington including one intern. It was a first for many and everyone was excited to share in this opportunity. We also toured Gawler's—which is a museum in and of itself. There are special things a funeral director can do to go above and beyond and I feel like the funeral director that served this family went the extra mile and then some!



Best of the Best Award: The Ultimate Honor

One of the most popular and longest practiced forms of disposition is burial. Many families bury both their loved ones' caskets and urns in cemeteries across the world. Specialty cemeteries, such as Veteran Cemeteries, are a great way to honor a loved one's brave service and sacrifice to their country. Across the United States, there are over 155 national cemeteries where veterans, their spouses, and dependents laid to rest in-ground burials and columbariums. Western New York is the proud holder of two of the eight Veterans or National Cemeteries in New York State. These two cemeteries include Bath National Cemetery in Bath, NY, and the newly opened Western New York National Cemetery in Corfu, New York, which was delayed in opening due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Lakeside Memorial team kept a close eye on the opening of the WNY National Cemetery. Many of our families were holding off the burial and inurnment of their loved ones' cremated remains until the opening. When the cemetery's dedication ceremony was completed in November 2020, the community was thrilled. Services began quickly. However, while this cemetery was the first of its kind for the Buffalo-Niagara area, something more could be done to make this even more special. Prior to May 2021, only two national cemeteries in the United States held the special designation of having an Avenue of Flags. An Avenue of Flags consists of interment/burial flags flanking each side of the road, typically the cemetery's main entrance. Interment or burial flags are specific flags given to deceased veterans' families during military honors or other funeral services. When the WNY Memorial Council formed in December 2020, Lakeside Memorial Funeral Home, Inc. was eager to work with them to create this honor for Western New York's new national cemetery.

With the rationale of the idea to create a beautiful tribute to our veterans as well as further decorate and commemorate Western New York's new national cemetery,

Lakeside Memorial Funeral Home, Inc., Hamburg, NY

Lakeside Memorial's Mark Janik joined the WNY Memorial Council and became the chair for the Avenue of Flags project. He quickly organized our team to assist the cause. After educating the staff on what an Avenue of Flags was and why it was a special designation, we got to work. To create an Avenue of Flags, one needs interment flags. The problem with this aspect is that one cannot just go out and buy these flags. To obtain a single interment flag, one needs a DD214 Form or Certificate of Honorable Discharge from the United States military. Once a flag is received for a veteran, another cannot be requested. Therefore, Avenue of Flags typically consists of flags donated by families of past veterans. While Lakeside Memorial Funeral Home has been collecting general flags for our Retire A Flag program to honor veterans we serve, they would not suffice. However, we had seen countless interment flags donated with damages from families unsure of what they were as well as improper storage. Our team decided to ask families for donations, explaining the importance and significance of the Avenue of Flags as well as telling the stories of damaged flags. We got to work with various Facebook posts, meetings with the American Legions and other veteran organizations in the area, requesting flags from at-need families, past families, and spreading the word to groups such as the Gold Star Mothers of WNY. Before long, we had collected multiple interment flags. For each flag that was donated, we took note of the late veteran's name, their military branch and dates, and the name and relationship of the person donating the flag. After Mark Janik and the rest of the Lakeside Memorial team helped procure the materials for the 25ft flag poles, the Avenue of Flags was finally erected on May 8, 2021. The Avenue of Flags at the WNY National Cemetery consists of 26 5x9ft interment flags, with 16 of the original 26 collected by Lakeside Memorial Funeral Home. The raising ceremony was completed with some of our staff, the other memorial council members, and the Pembroke Central School District Veterans Club members. The flags lining the entrance

Lakeside Memorial Funeral Home, Inc., Hamburg, NY

hold identifiers for each honored veteran. Due to weather concerns, the Avenue of Flags will fly from Armed Forces Day or the third Saturday in May to the Saturday after November 11th of Veterans Day. Since the original raising ceremony, our staff has been back out to replace worn flags with new donations multiple times and to teach individuals how to lower the flags properly. The cemetery now has a unique feature, and the veterans who are laid to rest there have another final honor.

The Avenue of Flags program has been incredibly beneficial to both our funeral home and the community. The experience was inspiring for our staff. As the only funeral home in Western New York that belongs to Veterans Funeral Care, we will always work towards any opportunity to further honor veterans in our community. Collecting interment flag donations has now become a regular part of our veteran programs. The discussions with our families and other community members have also offered the opportunity to educate the public on the difference between interment flags and general flags and the sacred nature of the Avenue of Flags. Lastly, our staff truly benefited from working closely with the Memorial Council and the staff of the new national cemetery. The opportunity to work together created a familiar relationship and got both parties accustomed to working together for the first time. A solid sense of communication will prove to be beneficial for funeral services in the future. The Avenue of Flags also benefited our families and the community. Not only did it create media attention for the new national cemetery and ignite interest in burying loved ones there, but it allowed veterans' families another way to honor their loved ones. The military honors ceremony of presenting the flag is a beautiful experience for many families. However, after the ceremony, many families place the flag in storage. In storage, the flag can become forgotten and damaged. As generations age, the flag may not hold the special attachment it once did. By donating the flag, families were

Lakeside Memorial Funeral Home, Inc., Hamburg, NY

able to find a specific place to donate the flags for the special use of honoring their loved ones, and all the other veterans laid to rest at the cemetery. While not a permanent form of memorialization as most flags only fly a season, the thought of the flag giving one last honor instead of sitting in storage can be incredibly comforting.

Overall, the experience was beneficial for all parties involved. The Western New York National Cemetery received well-deserved media attention, veterans and veterans' families received an ultimate honor, and beautiful display of patriotism, and the Lakeside Memorial Funeral Home team was able to further our goals of always putting our veterans at the forefront of our community involvement. We hope to continue to collect flags well into the future to fly valiantly over the national cemetery.



2021 NFDA Pursuit of Excellence Category 1, Criterion F

Submit an essay describing an innovative program, service, or activity executed by your funeral home. (Participants are encouraged to describe a program/service other than personalized funeral service.) The essay must be a minimum of **400 words in length**. Please address the following in your essay:

- The rationale behind the idea.
- A detailed description of the program, service or activity.
- Benefits provided to families and/or the community at large.
- Benefits provided to funeral homes and staff.
- If applicable, list any community organizations (e.g., church, hospice) that were involved with the development and/or implementation of the idea; describe the role the organization played.

1. The rationale behind the idea:

In the fall of 2018, owner, Adam Martin, was invited by the Michigan Funeral Directors Association to fill a vacant position on the board of the Great Lakes National Cemetery Advisory Council. Great Lakes National Cemetery is located in Holly, Michigan, about 6.5 miles from our funeral home in Grand Blanc, Michigan, and about 25 miles from our funeral home in Mt. Morris, Michigan. The national cemetery's reach covers some 20 counties in Southeast and Mid-Michigan, serving hundreds of thousands of veterans and their families.

The Advisory Council has members from nearly every veteran's organization within its area of coverage. Many VFW and American Legion posts, auxiliary posts, DAV, county government VA offices, Patriot Riders and of course the national cemetery director. The council supports the cemetery in a myriad of ways and it was during Mr. Martin's initial meetings with the group that he was able to ascertain a need within the communities where we have funeral homes and serve veterans and military families.

As many are aware, there is a high percentage of veterans that live below the poverty line or that are homeless. They have a variety of needs throughout the year, but this is more prevalent during the holiday season.

It was during this time frame that Mr. Martin was still serving as the president of the International Order of the Golden Rule (OGR) and learned of a fellow member funeral firm in Clearwater, Florida, Veterans Funeral Care, and a program their owner, Jim Rudolph, had developed entitled "Operation Toy Soldier" that specifically address the needs to veterans and military families during the holiday season.

One of the great benefits of “Operation Toy Soldier” is that Jim and his team worked directly with us, to develop and implement a program that was truly unique to Martin Funeral Home and the military families and veterans we’re honored to serve in Mid-Michigan.

The mission that was developed and its results are detailed as follows.

2. A detailed description of the program, service or activity:

The easiest way to describe “Operation Toy Soldier (OTS)” is that it works in a similar way to “Toys for Tots.” The basic mission of OTS is to collect new unwrapped toys and monetary donations and distribute them to less fortunate military families during the holidays.

The goal, through the gift of a toy or gift card, is to help bring the joy of the holiday season to less fortunate military families. OTS is an IRS recognized 501(c)(3) not-for-profit charity.

Perhaps one of the most appealing aspects of OTS is that we are in control of the toys and monetary distributions and we, along with our OTS “allies” can know that we are truly supporting local military families and veterans.

For the 2020 OTS mission, each of our three Martin Funeral Home locations, located in Mid-Michigan, were going to participate and our goal was to involve local veterans groups and our communities and local businesses.

Our “Allies” during the months of October through early December, where we had OTS Toy collection barrels out at the following locations:

- Martin Funeral Home - Grand Blanc
- Martin Funeral Home - Mt. Morris
- Martin Funeral Home - Vassar
- Genesee County Dept. of Veterans Affairs
- Grand Blanc VFW Post #822
- Grand Blanc City Offices
- Grand Blanc Township Offices
- Mt. Morris City Offices
- Vassar City Offices
- Vassar Eagles Aerie #2380
- Bullard Sanford Memorial Library
- Mt. Morris Library
- Flint Elks Lodge
- St. Mary Catholic Church of Mt. Morris
- St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Catholic Church of Vassar
- First Baptist Church of Mt. Morris
- Cooks GM Chevrolet
- Vassar Building Center
- Fox 103.9 Flint’s Classic Rock Station
- 98 KCQ Country
- Family Hair Salon

- June's Florist
- B's Flowers Plus
- The Oaks at Woodfield
- Grand Blanc Outdoors
- Abbey Park Assisted Living
- Los Cabos Bar & Grill

In addition to our barrels out at so many places, we partnered with two local radio stations to promote OTS. Fox 103.9 covered our funeral home in Genesee County, while 98 KCQ covered our funeral home in Tuscola County. Our commercials (which are included in our video for this event that is being sent to NFDA) were uniquely produced and have voice actors playing the parts of members of the military helping us with "Mission Operation Toy Soldier." These commercials ran during the months of October through December 2020.

While the radio spots were beneficial to getting our message out, we also used our many social media accounts, speaking engagements and local newspapers to promote OTS in other ways.

The nearly three month mission concluded with two events that took place at our funeral homes in Grand Blanc and in Vassar.

On Tuesday, December 1, 2020, from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm, we hosted a live broadcast from our funeral home in Grand Blanc with one of our allies, Fox 103.9. Three times an hour, we were interviewed live during our event to continue to invite generous individuals to drop off toys.

Earlier in the day, the Director of Genesee County Veteran's Affairs, William Pallmer, and several of his staff and our team, joined together for a shopping excursion at Meijer's (which is similar to Wal-Mart in Michigan) to purchase over \$1,500.00 worth of toys that the Genesee County Board of Supervisors voted to allot to OTS.

A local bakery, Great Harvest Bread Company, dropped off muffins and assorted pastries so each person stopping by to drop off a gift also received a gift.

On Wednesday, December 2, 2020, from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm, we again hosted a live broadcast, this time from our funeral home in Vassar with our other radio ally, 98 KCQ. The Yellow Ribbon Guard of Tuscola County and the 919th Army Reserve were both on hand and they brought military vehicles to display for the day and enjoyed the day playing yard games and assisting in loading and unloading toys. At 2:00 pm, Cooks GM Chevrolet drove to us in two new cars filled with toys to be donated. We were honored as we watched our 919th reservists carry all of those toys to our barrels.

3. Benefits provided to families and/or the community at large:

The outpouring of generosity from the communities was tremendous. We already felt blessed to have so many supporting the collection of toys and we were stunned by our mission's results this year:

- Just over 1,500 new toys were donated, ranging from bicycles and video game systems to huge lego kits and barbie dolls - and everything in between
- Several hundreds of dollars in gifts cards
- Over \$1,500.00 donated to new toys purchased at the direction of the Genesee County of Veteran's Affairs Office Director, William Pallmer
- Over \$5,000.00 in monetary donations which includes donations from:
 - Cook GM Chevrolet: \$2,500.00
 - Tim & Carmen Corcoran: \$1,000.00
- Numerous hours of time
- A tremendous amount of goodwill was done for military families in Mid-Michigan.

4. Benefits provided to the funeral home and staff:

We are involved and care deeply for our communities and are willing to put in the hard work and the time to show those in the community that we care. This has been an ongoing commitment by the Martin family for nearly 100 years.

5. List any community organizations that were involved with the development and/or implementation of the idea; describe the role the organization played:

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- First Baptist Church of Mt. Morris
- Cooks GM Chevrolet
- Vassar Building Center
- Fox 103.9 Flint's Classic Rock Station
- 98 KCQ Country
- Family Hair Salon
- June's Florist
- B's Flowers Plus
- The Oaks at Woodfield

Martin Funeral, Cremation & Tribute Services, Mount Morris, MI

- Grand Blanc Outdoors
- Abbey Park Assisted Living
- Los Cabos Bar & Grill

Special thank you to Jim Rudolph and Nancy Weil for development, training and hours of guidance.

Director of Marketing at Martin Funeral, Cremation & Tribute Services, Richard Whallon, for many hours on the road and phone and juggling everything.

This link provides a detailed video of our 2021 Operation Toy Soldier Mission:

<https://www.tributeslides.com/tributes/show/D7YQNB6XLTRCJYTQ>

All of us at Moments Funeral Home are extremely honored to live where we do and have the freedoms that we have. We are proud US Citizens and try hard to not take these freedoms for granted. We are honored to serve military families during their time of grief and give back to Veteran programs as much as possible. We are humbled to arrange military honors at services and have a hard time not tearing up during the playing of Taps. We assist military families with ordering markers through the Department of Veteran Affairs. We allow those markers to be delivered to our facility and set them at no charge to the families. We have also hosted various events focused on military families in the past. This year, we thought we would add another layer to our service to the country. We hosted a Flag Retirement Ceremony. The United States Flag Code, Title 4, Section 8k states- "The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem of display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning."

No, this is nothing new. However, this is new in our area and new for a funeral home such as ours in the area. We provided drop boxes at both of our locations, Lucedale and Leakesville. We promoted to donation of flags through social media, or radio program and the local newspaper for a few months. We purchased elephant trunk drop boxes at Home Depot and had a local print shop wrap those for us. See the photo below. We received sever inquires about the boxes. Other organizations such as the local VA and others were interested in offering the same. We received several flags and had to empty the boxes on several occasions. We solicited the help of local Veterans to make sure our program was done properly and with the utmost respect. Hammer Fallon is the current JROTC instructor at George County High School. Mr. Fallon retired from the United States Army after several years serving domestic and abroad. Mr. Michael Walker served in the United States Marine. We also took care of services for his wife, Mrs. Vickie Walker, when she passed away some time ago. We keep in contact with many of our families, and have become good friends with Mr. Walker. These two gentlemen assisted us in preparing the flags for retirement. We gathered all the donations and carefully went through each one. We did, of course, receive some flags that did not qualify for the program. We received state specific flags and military branch specific decorative flags. We also received many flags that were decorations in nature only. The American Flags were each folded and made ready.

Our event was hosted late one evening so the sun was low and the temperature was not so hot. Bro. Stephen, from our staff, was our host and kept the ceremony moving. The veterans who participated lowered the flag from in front of our building and raised a new one. We had the performance of Taps and all recited the Pledge of Allegiance. We offered bottled water and a variety of tea. Everyone in attendance was encouraged to participate in the burning of the flags.

We had a wonderful Flag Retirement Ceremony. We received positive feedback from the community and will host this event again in the future.



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The Missing Man Table

Throughout the day to day activities of life, Funeral Directors draw inspiration from various places and entities. While on vacation in 2018, Dr. Camelia L. Clarke and Marcel A. Clarke walked into a Georgia Chic Fil A restaurant. While in the restaurant, they stumbled upon a table set up with military décor and a flag. Immediately, Camelia was drawn to the table and read the inscription on the table. The words and sentiments brought tears to her eyes and she took a photo of the table. While exiting the restaurant, she decided to take several more photos and slowly proceeded to the exit.

Once in the car, Marcel asked Camelia what was on the table? She replied “it was a missing soldier table”. During the car ride the two talked and discussed starting something similar at the funeral home. In the month on November 2019, Marcel and Camelia officially set up the missing Man Table at Paradise Memorial Funeral and Cremation Services to display and pay homage to soldiers during November which is the month Veterans Day falls in.

“The Missing Man Table, also known as the *Fallen Comrade Table* but commonly known the *POW/MIA Table*, is a semi-official place of honor in some dining facilities of the US armed forces in memory of fallen, missing in action, or prisoner of war military service-members. The table serves as the focal point of ceremonial remembrance, originally growing out of US concern of the Vietnam War POW/MIAs. This is an important part of many military banquets and ceremonies to remind them that the strength of those who fight for our country often rests in the traditions that are upheld today” (Military Museum 2021).

Beyond permanent displays in dining facilities, the missing man table is traditionally part of military dining-in ceremonies, service balls, and at events held by a military veteran’s association. When presented in a dining-in or service ball, a narration given to the audience explains the symbolism of each item. The practice of the missing man table has evolved over time and is not currently governed by any US Department of Defense or service-specific guidance.

The table at Paradise Memorial Funeral and Cremation Services was square in shape and was displayed in the lobby of the funeral home to the left of the main chapel. The table was dawned with a white table cloth and had one single place setting. You could find one singular candle, a poem, and a thank you note that was hand written by the staff.

Since 2019, this table has been set up during the month of November at the funeral home and remains a talking point and positive display of love to those soldiers who have served this great Country.

<https://museumofmilitaryhistory.oncelf.com/en/site-15-the-missing-man-table-195205.html>



How do you want to be remembered?



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Pursuit of Excellence

2021

Essay

Robinson Funeral Home – Downtown
305 West Main Street
Easley, SC 29640
864-859-4001

Robinson Funeral Home – Powdersville Rd.
1425 Powdersville Road
Easley, SC 29642
864-442-1800

Duckett - Robinson Funeral Home
108 Cross Creek Road
Central, SC 29630
864-639-2411

I. Basic Requirements

F. Essay

Throughout the year of 2020, many of the usual events held by Robinson Funeral Homes had to be canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, we were still able to hold one very important event because it is always held outside and by the time the event was coming close, some regulations have changed and we were able to make it work.

The event was The American Legion Post 52's and Robinson Funeral Homes' annual event to honor all the veterans that we have served throughout the year. This event is held on Veterans Day and usually takes place in the Veterans Section of Robinson Memorial Gardens. However, the weather for the day was not agreeable and we were worried that it was going to be canceled too.

We start planning the ceremony in early September. Letters are mailed out to all the families that we have served during the last year that has lost a veteran inviting them to attend. The families are asked to RSVP so that we can better plan the event. It was clear that everyone was ready to get out of their homes because we had several people reserve spots in the event. Because of this outpouring and anticipation from the families, we decided that we could not cancel the event, but we also could not have it inside the funeral home or mausoleum because of the regulations we were following. Early that morning we decided to have the event under the covered car port area at the Robinson Funeral Home-Powdersville Road location, which is next to Robinson Memorial Gardens. So, on November 11, 2020, at 11:00 AM, the event was still taking place with no worries.

Because of the change in location, we had to put out several folding chairs properly spaced for social distancing. We also made sure that anyone who had to stand, was secured with an umbrella in case they were not able to stand under the covered area. Everyone was required to wear face masks and hand sanitizer was supplied to anyone needing it. We had a few staff members positioned at the cemetery to guide folks to the new location.

The event started with the American Legion Post 52 Color Guard posting the colors. The Sergeant of Arms then lead everyone with the Pledge of Allegiance. The Men's Quartet from Easley First Baptist Church followed with the National Anthem. The pastor from Easley First Baptist Church then provided the invocation. The service continued with the MIA/POW Empty Chair Ceremony followed by the guest speaker. After the speaker, all the veterans' names that we have served in the past year were read to honor each one individually. The service was concluded with the 21 Gun Salute and TAPS.

This annual event was important, not only to the company, but to the community as well. The year was difficult for everyone. All events were being canceled for all companies and whenever we were finally able to hold a ceremony, the community was just as excited about being a part


of something as we were. The benefits this annual event has for the company is the exposure of, not only the funeral home, but also the cemetery and the Coffee Corner. Refreshments were provided by the Coffee Corner, which is the coffee shop located in Robinson Funeral Homes- Downtown.

*I am grateful as can be
that I live in the land of the free.
And so this day and every day
I thank God for the USA.*

Special Thanks To:
Coffee Corner for Refreshments

*The American Legion
Post 52*

VETERANS DAY
*November 11, 2020
11:00 AM*



ROBINSON MEMORIAL GARDENS
1425 POWDERSVILLE ROAD
EASLEY, SOUTH CAROLINA

RobinsonFuneralHomes.com

Chaplain (LTC) Timothy E. Wilson

CH (LTC) Timothy E. Wilson was born on 5 April 1973 in Easley, South Carolina. He is a 1991 graduate of Easley High School.

CH Wilson is a graduate of Anderson University, Anderson, South Carolina (B.A., 1995); Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M. Div., 1999); Erskine Theological Seminary (DMIN, 2010) and the Command and General Staff Officer's College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (2015). He also completed four units of Clinical Pastoral Education. Before the chaplaincy, he pastored churches in Texas and South Carolina.

CH Wilson commissioned as a Chaplain in the United States Army and entered active duty on 7 January 2003. Since then, he served as Battalion Chaplain for 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, Washington; CPE Resident, Madigan Army Medical Center, Fort Lewis, Washington; Hospital Chaplain, Tripler Army Medical Center, Honolulu, Hawaii; Tri-Services Addiction Recovery Facility Chaplain, Tripler Army Medical Center, Honolulu, Hawaii; the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force Afghanistan Command Chaplain, Bagram Afghanistan; the United States Army Chaplain Center and School CH-BOLC Course Manager; the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) Group Chaplain; and the 82nd Airborne Division Deputy Chaplain. He currently serves as the Joint Special Operations Command Deputy Command Chaplain, Plans and Operations.

CH Wilson deployed four times in support of the Global War on Terrorism. The deployments include Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, and Turkey, totaling 30 months.

CH Wilson's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal (1OLC), the Meritorious Service Medal (2OLC), the Army Commendation Medal (3OLC), the Army Achievement Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal with Campaign Star, the Iraqi Campaign Medal with Campaign Star, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon, the NATO Medal, the Combat Action Badge, and the Parachutist Badge.

CH Wilson is married to the former Beeky Miller of Greenville, South Carolina. The Wilsons have three children: Meg, Miller, and Matt.

2020 Veterans Day Program

*Post The Colors
Post 52 Color Guard*

*Pledge of Allegiance
Tom Williamson - American Legion Post 52
Sergeant of Arms*

*National Anthem
Men's Quartet - Easley First Baptist Church*

*Invocation
Dr. John Adams
Pastor, Easley First Baptist Church*

*Mia/Pow Empty Chair Ceremony
Bones Wilson, Commander
Jim Ruud, 1st Vice Commander
American Legion Post 52*

*Welcome
and
Introduction of Special Guest and Speaker
Bones Wilson, Commander American Legion Post 52*

*Guest Speaker
Lt Col Timothy Wilson, Deputy Battalion Chaplain*

*Placement of Wreath
USAF (RET) Chief Master Sergeant Katie Reacine*

*Deceased Veterans of 2019-2020
Robinson Memorial Gardens - Dianne Robinson*

*21 Gun Salute
Post 52 Rifle Team*

*Taps
Sam Gillespie, Bugler, American Legion Post 52*

*Benediction
Bob Helms, Chaplain, Post 52*

Pursuit of Excellence 2021



Every Detail Remembered™

Dignity®

Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park and Mortuary, Salt Lake City, UT

Category 1: Criterion F

We are honored to support our public servants, veterans and military service men and women who protect our freedom and sacrifice so much in the line of duty. Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park and Mortuary, Valley View Memorial Park and Funeral Home and Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park South Valley understands the unique needs of America's veterans and their families. As a Level Three Founding Community Partner with We Honor Veterans, our staff is knowledgeable in the benefits available to veterans and their families. With respect, integrity and dignity, we walk our families through the steps of creating a veteran's memorial service that truly honors the life and sacrifice of their loved one. We participate in the Homeless Veterans Burial Program, founded in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, local medical examiners, coroners, veterans advocates, and veterans organizations on the belief that every veteran deserves a dignified and honorable burial. Through the program, homeless and indigent veterans who have no family to claim them are identified and provided with proper military burials.

We count ourselves privileged to work with Judy Daybell at the Utah Veterans Affairs Volunteer Department. For the past four years, we have supported the Valentines For Veterans Project. This year alone, our three locations received 1,440 valentines from four elementary schools, three high schools and from countless members of the community. Each valentine was beautifully handmade out of construction paper, using paints, stickers, heart shaped doilies, glitter, ribbons, some even had feathers! They all had kind, heartfelt, handwritten messages, written in crayon or marker. The words of encouragement, support and mostly, thanks for time served protecting our freedoms are touching and mean a lot to the veteran who received the valentine. Once collected, the valentines were given to Judy to distribute to veterans from border to border in the state of Utah to veterans who are living in care centers, assisted living facilities, Veterans Affairs doctors' offices, hospitals and other offices veterans frequently visit.

The staff at Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park and Mortuary, Valley View Memorial Park and Funeral Home and Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park South Valley are proud to be a part of this meaningful event each year; it gives each one of us great pride knowing our local heroes are remembered on Valentine's Day with heartfelt thanks for their service. We look forward to participating in this event every year.