

30 Years of Public Advocacy

As the Memorial Society of Northern Ontario celebrates its 30th anniversary we thought it might be of interest to look back at what has happened over the last 30 years. This article draws on a similar one in the 25th anniversary newsletter, but with some changes and additions that will bring the reader up to date with the current situation.

1979

This was the year in which MSNO was founded because of concerns about the inadequacy of Ontario's then funeral legislation.

1980-1990

Societies similar to MSNO, under the umbrella of the provincial association of memorial societies (FOOMS), worked tirelessly to lobby the government, the media, MPPs and the funeral industry to support changes that would benefit the consumer. Some of these initiatives are outlined below.

Embalming

This used to be done routinely and the cost was added to the funeral price. In 1980, local funeral directors advised the Society that if its members did not wish embalming, they should indicate that fact when the funeral was arranged. Today, thanks to memorial societies, embalming cannot take place without written permission.

Low-cost caskets

Memorial societies lobbied successfully for the provision of low-cost caskets that must be on display at funeral homes. Today, the price of each casket must be clearly visible to the purchaser. Consumers may provide their own caskets without penalty.

Excess funds

Funds left in prepaid trust accounts after the funeral is paid must be returned to the beneficiary. Prior to 1990 prepaid contracts carried no such stipulation. Ontario is only of few provinces in which excess funds must be returned.

Price list

Every funeral director is required to provide a price list for all services and merchandise.

Signed contract

Every funeral arrangement requires a signed contract that sets out the price of each included item. Prior to 1990 it was required only to provide unit (bottom-line) prices for the funeral.

Business, not health

Memorial Societies convinced the government

that funerals were a business and not a health issue. Funeral services were transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Consumer and Corporate Relations.

Advertising

The ban on advertising by funeral homes was lifted. Memorial Societies fought for this because they believed that it would give consumers pricing information and allow for comparative shopping.

1992

In 1992, the then Minister of Consumer and Corporate relations, in response to a letter from our Society, wrote: FOOMS has played a major role for many years in bringing the need for improvements in the funeral industry to the attention of government--and much of the increased consumer protection in the new legislation is a direct result of the involvement of your representatives during the consultative process.

2001

When the new Bereavement Act was introduced in 2001, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs actually quoted the then president of FOOMS when he emphasized the importance of consumer participation in determining the new legislation.

Since 2002

In 2002 a Funeral, Burials and Cremation Services Act was developed to replace previous legislation but has yet to be enacted. The responsibility for this file has changed twice in this time from the Ministry of Government Services to the Ministry of Small Business and Consumer Services. Because of the changes in ministries and ministers much of the legislation for which Memorial Societies have advocated has been stalled. Despite this, regular meetings occur between representatives of government and FOOMS.

FOOMS has also had requests from the Consumers Council of Canada to update them on bereavement legislation.

We are still awaiting proclamation of the Funerals, Burials and Cremation Services Act 2008, but as you can see from this brief retrospective, this society, through its provincial organization, continues to advocate actively on your behalf for consumer protection.

We are proud of this 30-year tradition and hope that you are, too.



"It's our newest cremation model.
Tank sold separately."

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

When: Wednesday, May 20, 2009

Where: St. Andrew's Place
111 Larch Street, Sudbury

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Guest Speaker
Leo Therrien

Leo Therrien is the Executive Director of the new Maison Vale INCO Hospice, previously known as Maison La Paix in Sudbury. Opened in late 2008, this hospice provides palliative care for those who are approaching the end of life's journey. It seems appropriate that the Memorial Society should hear from Leo about the hospice and how it helps those nearing their end and how it all came to be a reality. Leo graduated in 2004 with a B.A. in social work from Laurentian University. He is currently working towards his M.A. Since his graduation Leo has worked with the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace, taught at College Boreal, worked as part-time coordinator for Contact Interculteral Sudbury and founded Village International, a fair-trade craft store.

A man of passion and determination, Leo is looking forward to sharing with us the work of Maison Vale INCO Hospice and will be giving us a "virtual" tour of this beautiful facility on the shores of Bethel Lake in Sudbury.

Bring friends and introduce them to the benefits of the Memorial Society

**Join us for refreshments
after the meeting.**

Board of Directors

President & Board Chair

Dr. Robin Bolton

Vice-President

Gaetanne Piette

Secretary

Nancy Thurston

Treasurer (deceased January, 2009)

Judy Quiring

Treasurer (from March, 2009)

Claire Lecoupe

Directors

Lynn Rector, Valda (Penny) Schaff,
Sally Spence, Keith Godin

Board Volunteers

Chair, Membership & Nominating Committees

Sarah Walker

Membership Coordinator

Carol Champagne

Assistant to Membership Coordinator

David Gamble

Mail Coordinator (to March 2009)

Penny Schaff

Mail Coordinator (from March 2009)

David Walker

Telephone Coordinator

Millie Facca

Assistant to Telephone Coordinator

Cec Cook

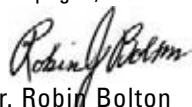
In Memoriam

Judith Quiring, Treasurer and Board Member 2007 – 2009
Ove Hansen, Society President 1996 – 1997

Board Activities

2009 marks another milestone in the history of MSNO as we celebrate 30 years of service and advocacy in Northeastern Ontario. Our newsletter this year incorporates and updates some key information pieces from past editions to give a little retrospective.

This past year has seen an increase in activity since launching our Speakers Bureau. With the aid of a Power Point presentation developed by our webmaster, several board members have made presentations to five different groups, with more invitations anticipated. Our membership has continued to increase, with eighty (80) new members in 2008. Last year we welcomed Judy Quiring as our treasurer but we are saddened to say that Judy passed away suddenly in January 2009. Judy was a conscientious and dedicated treasurer and board member and will be sadly missed. We have been fortunate to secure the services of Claire Lecoupe, who will be officially nominated at the Annual Meeting. We also welcome on board Cec Cook who has agreed to help Millie Facca with the arduous job of Telephone Coordinator for one week each month. We also welcome the help of David Gamble who will be assisting Carol Champagne in the busy role of Membership Coordinator. Once again I would like to sincerely acknowledge the dedicated behind-the-scenes support of our three long-time committed volunteers, Millie Facca, Sarah Walker and Carol Champagne, without whom we could not possibly continue to function.



Dr. Robin Bolton
President and Board Chair

Nominees Board of Directors 2009 – 2010

Lorne Chuipka (new)
Claire Lecoupe (re-election)
Sally Spence (re-election)
Nancy Thurston (re-election)

Members may also nominate candidates to the board up to 7 days before the Annual General Meeting.

We couldn't do without you

The 55 generous members who gave donations. Those who gave us permission to use their names are:

Tom & Colleen Ableson, Margaret G Barlow, William & Ora Bellrose, Daniel & Louse Besserer, Bruce & Rita Bigelow, Robin & Barbara Bolton, Bill & Mable Dopson, Robert Dubreuil, Paul H. Ellis, Alton & Vivian Evens, Betty & William Gorham, Elizabeth Holmes, Nick Jarmovitch, Mary Kozak, John Lindsay, Aline Martin, Georgette Menard, Wolfgang Peschke, Eleonore & Karl Vlach, George & Gillian Watier

and our other supporters:

Bank of Montreal, Sudbury Public Library and Marguerite Lougheed Centre for the use of meeting rooms, Linda Whitman (Bank of Montreal) for arranging board meetings, Northern Communications (for their excellent answering service), Jim Sheppard (web master), Financial Decisions (investment management), CIBC (banking services) and Club 111 Seniors Club (for the Annual Meeting venue)

Other volunteers for various aspects of the Annual Meeting preparations:
Sarah Walker, Carol Champagne, Millie Facca, Rosalie & Joseph Beauchamp, Gerry Felice, Lynn Rector, Marg Kennelly, Emily McLaren, Penny Schaff and Ian McPhee



Tips for a Frugal Farewell

In the Fall 2008 Newsletter, "Funeral Consumers Alliance, a Federation of Non-Profit Funeral Information Societies", an informative article outlined ideas on how to make your very **last** purchase both satisfying and affordable. What follows is a slightly abridged version.

- **Talk about funerals** with family members ahead of time so they all know your wishes and you will know theirs.
- **Price Shop** – The funeral in your home neighbourhood may be more expensive than another local one.
- **Only buy what you want** – Don't buy more than what you intended out of guilt.
- **Make your own or buy online** – You can find caskets or kits online for a fraction of the retail price.
- **Consider direct cremation or immediate burial** – These plans do not necessitate buying grand caskets, embalming, makeup or processions.
- **Have a going- away party** – A memorial service without the body present can be intimate and meaningful, as well as affordable.
- **Don't fall for the box for the box racket** – Ask for a grave liner rather than a vault for a fraction of the price.
- **Do it yourself** – "A Family Undertaking" which we outlined in last year's newsletter, follows the stories of several families who handled the death of a family member without the use of a funeral home.
- **Remember** – Funeral Directors are business people who deserve to be paid for what they do. It is your job, however, as a funeral consumer, to be well educated about your funeral choices and to make your selections based on your personal needs.

On the Dead Beat

The article "Deaddiction; Confessions of an Obituarist" by Sandra Martin, appeared in the December 27, 2008, Globe and Mail newspaper. Ms. Martin's "beat" at the Globe and Mail is the dead. She has been fortunate to chronicle a myriad of deaths of fascinating people, but Ms. Martin fears that cutbacks to the newspaper industry threaten to endanger the obituary page.

Modern technology and the internet are having a radical impact on newspaper obituaries. This is confirmed by Ms. Martin's description of the face of a well known American humourist, that appeared on her computer screen in January 2007, speaking the punch line "I'm Art Buchwald, and I just died." Just as living wills have gained popularity, Ms. Martin believes that living obituaries may be the wave of the future.

Modern obituaries are mini biographies that describe the life, successes, failures and flaws of the departed. It is not uncommon for the media to prepare obituaries of the rich and famous well in advance of their deaths. As in all publications, it is important to get the facts straight, including making sure the person is really dead before issuing their obituary. According to Ms. Martin, the media have proclaimed numerous deaths before their time, including those of Alfred Nobel, Bob Hope, the Queen Mother, Pope Jean Paul II, and, of course, Mark Twain.

A good obituary writer, while always truthful, invokes in their columns a special code of tactful, more sensitive descriptors. We'll leave you with Ms. Martin's sensitive obituary code:

Obituary Code Words	Actual Meaning
Utterly Carefree	Senile
Died Suddenly	Committed Suicide
Vivacious	Drunk (female)
Convivial	Drunk (male)
Confirmed Bachelor	Gay
Bosom Friends	Lesbian Couple
Inveterate Traveler	Vagabond

Volunteers Still Needed

The main reason people say they haven't volunteered is that they have never been asked. We're asking you now. In 2005, 350 people joined the Society because of the hard work of 10 volunteers.

Our volunteers serve on the board, help with the telephone and mail services, make public presentations, assist in web-site upkeep, help with board committees and with the Annual Meeting and in many other ways. We need your help if the Society is to continue its valuable public service. Consider giving a few hours of your time this year. We look forward to hearing from you. Give us a call or e-mail us.



Gifts Much Appreciated

You may not realize that the money we receive through new memberships does not cover administrative costs. That is why we sincerely appreciate those members who help the Society by making periodic donations.

To show our appreciation we would like to recognize your contributions by acknowledging your names (no mention of dollar amounts) in our annual newsletter. We need your permission to do this. Please check the appropriate box on the donation form. Every gift counts.

Speakers Bureau

Do you know of a group who might be interested in having an information session on the Memorial Society? Our speakers would be happy to make presentations. For more information or to make a request please call or e-mail the society.

Moving or Have Moved?

Every year when we send out the newsletter and notice of the Annual Meeting we get a substantial number of letters returned as undeliverable. As in past years we ask you to please let us know when you are moving either by mail, telephone or e-mail.

Finished Reading Newsletter?

When you have finished reading this newsletter, please share it with others.

Cremation FAQ

This article is reproduced in part from a previous newsletter article and expanded on (with some additions from London Memorial Society)

Q. What is cremation?

A. Cremation is a process by which fire reduces the body to a residue of ash.

Q. Is a casket required by law for cremation?

A. No. However, if a casket is not used, crematoria require that the body be enclosed in a rigid container of combustible material.

Q. Do I have to buy an urn?

A. No. The ashes are returned to you in a small plastic box.

Q. What can be done with cremated remains (cremains)?

- A. Several options are available:
- scattering in cemetery, garden or special designated place
 - interment (burial) in a cemetery
 - scattering on public waterway
 - scattering on private property with permission
 - reefing at sea
 - making into fireworks
 - making into jewellery
 - using in artist's palette for painting

Updated Funeral Prices – as of January 2008

The price range of Type "A" and Type "B" funerals is updated every two years. The detail of what is provided with each of the two types is in your Membership Kit and in the MSNO brochure. It is also provided on the web site www.memorialsociety.ca. For details of the prices for individual participating funeral homes/services you should consult the provider that you have selected or plan to select.

Participating Funeral Homes and Transfer Services

Type A price range: \$711 to \$1,625 + GST

Type B price range: \$1,090 to \$3,500 + GST

(Price survey January 2008 excludes cremation and burial).

Elliot Lake

- Alternative Funeral Services (Transfer Service)
- Elliot Lake Funeral Chapel and Cremation Centre Ltd.

Manitoulin Island

- Island Funeral Home Ltd.

Sault Ste. Marie

- O'Sullivan Donnelly Funeral Home

Sturgeon Falls

- Theoret-Bourgeois Funeral Home

Sudbury

- Co-opérative Funéraire/Funeral Home
- Jackson & Barnard Funeral Home
- Lougheed Funeral Home

Timmins

- Lessard-Stephens Funeral Home Inc.
- Stinson Funeral Home

Crematoria

Located in Barrie, Massey, Matheson, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, and Sudbury

We would like to thank the participating funeral directors who helped us this year. We received calls from members and the public throughout our service area, requesting help with some aspect of funerals and funeral costs. In each case, we received timely and generous assistance from the funeral provider.

Financial Summary

Balance Sheet	2008	2007
Total assets	\$21,468	\$20,465
Total liabilities and members' equity	\$21,468	\$20,465

Income Statement

Income		
Memberships	\$3,180	\$2,600
Donations and other	2,170	2,565
Total income	5,350	5,165
Expenses		
Membership expense	1,858	1,017
Public awareness	778	637
Newsletter	1,446	1,470
Administration	560	599
Other (FOOMS, AGM, Board)	541	748
Total expenses	5,183	4,471
Net income	\$167	\$694

Assets include maintenance investment of \$8,816, available only upon dissolution, and operating investment of \$7,636 (\$7,488 in 2006).

Included in membership expense and public awareness is approximately \$700 related to the cost of the new Funeral Planning Kit and the cost of including the new brochure with the 2008 newsletter.

The review of the Society's financial statements and the related books and records was carried out by Greg Steinke, Chartered Accountant.

Financial statements are available upon request.

On the Lighter Side – Funeral "Hits"

(from Globe and Mail)

Hymns are being replaced at funerals in Adelaide, Australia by rock classics such as *Stairway to Heaven* and *Highway to Hell*, the Associated Press reports. At Centennial Park, the largest cemetery and crematorium in the city, only *Amazing Grace* and *Abide With Me* still rank on its top 10 most popular funeral songs. Leading the chart is *My Way*, followed by *What a Wonderful World*. "Some of the more unusual songs we hear actually work very well within the service because they represent the person's character" said Bryan Elliott, Centennial Park's chief executive. Among the uncommon choices were: *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life*, *Ding Dong the Witch is Dead*, *Hit the Road Jack*, *Another One Bites the Dust* and *I'll Sleep When I'm Dead*.

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MEMORIAL SOCIETY OF
NORTHERN ONTARIO