

NEWSLETTER

MEMORIAL SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND
119 Kenyon Avenue
East Greenwich, RI 02818

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AUTUMN

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS Rev. Frederick Gillis, President; Anne Wise, Vice President; Carolin Goldman,*
Corr. Secretary; Winnifred Bennis, Rec. Secretary; Muriel Flood, Treasurer; Rev. Harry Hubbling*,
Dr. Nelson Marshall*, Emily McAllister, Rev. Bruce Kennedy.
(*Terms end in June.)

THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Since the Annual Meeting in June, I have spoken about the Memorial Society to three organizations - the Woonsocket Clergy Association on September 16, the Washington County Chapter of the American Association of Retired Persons on October 16, and the Women's group of the First Baptist Church in East Greenwich on October 27. Board Member Bruce Kennedy spoke to a Death and Dying class at URI Providence on October 6. In all cases the message was well received and brochures were distributed.

One of the most frequent questions that are asked at such meetings is what advantage is it to actually be a member of the Society, since much of the information work has already been done and people can make their own arrangements with funeral directors. The answers are these:

1. Being a member gives you leverage in making arrangements with certain funeral directors. As we get larger, this influence is bound to grow. In some areas of the country prices have been strongly affected by the presence of an active memorial society. Unless people actually join we cannot say that we represent a certain percentage of the population.
2. You will know the prices quoted by cooperating funeral directors. When you negotiate with these or with other funeral directors this information can be valuable. (We realize that we do not have such a list for our members yet. It has been very difficult to secure commitments, but Board members are continuing to work at it.)
3. Members' wishes will be recorded on a form kept by the Memorial Society and made available to those who need to know. Copies of this form may be Xeroxed for your next of kin and a funeral director of your choice.
4. Members are supporting an important consumer cause. They are making available information such as the newsletter and information sheets. They are making possible speakers to various groups, and they are making possible the continued monitoring of laws and practices in the funeral industry. Members also support the work of the Continental Assoc. of Funeral and Memorial Societies which through its office in Washington keeps tabs on relevant legislation and shares information gained from other memorial societies. (see article on CAFMS)

We should also make clear to people what the Memorial Society of Rhode Island does not do. We do not make funeral arrangements for you, nor can we guarantee (at least at this time) prices quoted by funeral directors. We do not arrange for prepaid funeral director's services. We are, however, working hard to make sure that our members get services they want and pay for. We are a voluntary association whose work is done entirely by its members. We do not have sufficient resources for staff. If you feel we owe you more services for your membership fee, please be patient. Our Board is working as hard as it can.

Frederick E. Gillis
President

CLERGY, PROVIDERS, LAWYERS KITS

Kits of information material for clergy, lawyers, health care workers, and social workers, who might be involved in helping people pre-plan for funeral arrangements have been developed by the Continental Association. Those who would like to have such material may get it by writing to the Memorial Society of RI.

NEED A SPEAKER?

The Memorial Society of Rhode Island has speakers available for groups and organizations. Write to the office at 119 Kenyon Avenue, East Greenwich, Rhode Island 02818.

PRICE LIST

We have had a great deal of difficulty getting many funeral directors to quote prices for basic funeral services and to sign these statements. Rather than wait any longer we will be sending out the list of those who have made such agreements, along with a list of those who seem to be cooperative, but have stopped short of a signed agreement. This list will be sent to members at the end of the month.

Members who are willing to make further interviews on behalf of the Society are asked to get in touch with the president.

ABOUT THE CONTINENTAL ASSOCIATION

The Continental Association of Funeral and Memorial Societies (CAFMS) gives a bit of its history and activities:

In 1963, the Cooperative League of the USA sponsored a meeting of the then 40 memorial societies to form the Continental Association. Before this we were a minor league curiosity that provided some persons in some areas with benefits. Since then we have become a national movement - a movement that has had a profound impact on American funeral practices. Local societies are given recognition and prestige by having a national organization provide assurances that the group meets the nonprofit, non-sectarian, democratic standards of a legitimate consumer cooperative.

All societies have benefited from the publications - developed by the volunteers on Continental's Board and Advisory Council and by the small but talented staff in Washington. Among them - available without cost to societies - are the Morticians Directory, the quarterly Bulletin, the Handbook for Funeral and Memorial Societies, and Funeral Practices, Survey of State Laws.

Continental has acted as a central voice for the movement, answering questions from media representatives and generating favorable articles and reports. Articles have appeared in almost every major newspaper in the country, including a three-part series in the New York Times, and columns by Sylvia Porter, Jane Bryant Quinn, and Arthur Rowse and other consumer reporters. Magazine coverage has been no less impressive, ranging from the Atlantic to Consumer Reports to the Reader's Digest. Radio and television coverage has been inspired by Continental's staff and volunteers. Some of this publicity has brought in as many as 25,000 inquiries. Each has been answered by CAFMS and forwarded to the appropriate local memorial society.

It is not possible to separate the work of Continental from the societies for Continental is the sum of all the societies. The board is made up of society representatives elected by the member societies to insure that the cooperative, democratic character remains and, that by working together, the local groups can give meaning to the goal of "freedom of choice." Continental is of, by, and for the societies and the nearly one million members who belong to them. Together, we make a difference.
(Excerpted from the Bulletin of CAFMS)

FTC RULES

In July of this year the Commissioners of the Federal Trade Commission voted to retain the itemization of funeral prices in spite of the efforts of the funeral industry to undermine it.

A rule requiring funeral directors to obtain advance permission from next of kin before embalming was also voted by the FTC, as was the requirement that funeral directors tell customers that caskets are not required for cremation. The Commission postponed deciding whether to require that funeral directors make alternative cremation containers available.

These rulings will require Congressional approval. Previous rulings were turned down by Congress.

DIRECTORS OF THE MEMORIAL SOCIETY OF R I

In case of emergency, or if there is no answer at the Memorial Society number. (We share a phone with the Westminster Unitarian Church), you may contact one of the following Board members:

Rev. Frederick Gillis, Pres.	384-5451
Anne Wise, Vice Pres.	295-5883
Carolyn Goldman	884-7875
Dr. Nelson Marshall	783-5312
Winnifred Bennis	539-2505
Muriel Flood	294-3789
Rev. Bruce Kennedy	751-2025
Rev. Harry Hubbling	884-2868
Emily McAllister	783-4208

HAVE YOU SENT IN YOUR FORMS ?

Members have received pink forms (Form A) on which they can provide basic information needed at the time of death and specify the type of arrangements they wish. If you are a member and have not yet filled out your forms, you are not taking full advantage of your membership.

Fill out your forms today. Put a copy in an accessible place (not a safe deposit box) give a copy to your next of kin, and send us a copy for our files. If you need additional copies of any forms, please contact the Society.

MANUAL AVAILABLE

One of the most comprehensive manuals on the topic of simple funeral arrangements in the commonsense booklet called A Manual of Death Education and Simple Burial, by Ernest Morgan. The Society has copies available to members at the discount price of \$1.50. For non-members the price is \$2.50, plus 50¢ postage and handling.

ARE YOU A MEMBER ?

Some of those receiving this newsletter have not yet taken out membership in the Memorial Society of RI. The advantages of membership are many. You may take advantage of our information and record-keeping services. You will receive updated comparisons of funeral costs. Most importantly you will be associating yourself with those of similar mind and supporting our educational endeavors throughout the state. A lifetime membership is \$15 per individual, \$20 for a family. Transfers from other memorial societies are \$8.