

NEWSLETTER

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

884-5933

NO. 4

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: *Carolyn Goldman**, President; *Polly Harrison*, Vice-President, *Shirlee Jacob*, Corr. Secretary; *George Felbeck*, Recording Secretary; *Muriel Flood**, Treasurer; *Emily McAllister**, *Anne Wise**, *Dorothy Williams*, *Arthur Fleisig*.
(*Terms end in June)

ANNUAL MEETING

June 7, 1984

7:30 p.m.

Westminster Unitarian Fellowship
Hall
119 Kenyon Avenue
East Greenwich, Rhode Island

PROGRAM

"All You Wanted To Know About The
Funeral Industry Practices Rule
But Didn't Know What to Ask"

Funeral Industry Practices:
Trade Regulation Rule

Mr. Joseph Sica
Federal Trade Commission
Boston

Mr. Michael Caparco
Hill Funeral Home
East Greenwich

"The Whys and Hows of Organ Donation"

Dr. Robert Hopkins
Miriam Hospital

Business Meeting and Election of
Directors

Refreshments

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
AND ALL ARE WELCOME.

PUBLICITY WORKS

Board members have been active in a campaign to publicize the MSRI and its message. On February 25th, Ted Felbeck and Polly Harrison were Guests on Mort White's radio talk show Morning Magazine on WHJJ-FM. Carolyn Goldman was interviewed on March 26th on the Chris Vancour Show, televised on the Rhode Island Cable System.

A recent article on the MSRI in the Action Line column of the Providence Sunday Journal drew an impressive response from readers. As a result of the article, the office received 51 requests for information, 41 new members, and two transfers, bringing the total Society membership to about 300.

A Speaker's Bureau outreach is being planned for the coming year. The Society is in process of contacting some 20 state and community agencies and organizations, offering them the services of our Speaker's Bureau to publicize the MSRI message. Carolyn Goldman will be speaking at the Tiverton Senior Center on Thursday, May 10th as part of the educational outreach.

We welcome suggestions from members about opportunities for publicity. If you know of a group or agency that might welcome a speaker from the Society, please let one of the Board members know or call the office.

You're invited...



IN MEMORIAM

Fred Jacob, husband of Board member Shirlee Jacob died on March 29, 1984. The Society expresses its sympathy to Shirlee on her loss.

NEW FUNERAL PRACTICES RULE

The Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Industry Practices Rule went into effect on April 30, 1984. This Rule will require Funeral Directors to give price lists and costs of services over the phone and in person to the consumer. It also prohibits certain deceptive practices.

In December, 1972, the FTC directed its Bureau of Consumer Protection to investigate practices of the Funeral Industry. Hearings, testimonies, interviews, visits to funeral homes led to recommendations that more detailed examination of the industry was required. A report of the industry-wide investigation was published in August, 1975.

The lengthy process thus began. In the intervening years, rule-making meetings, revisions, submission of proposals to the Office of Management and the Budget, Congressional Reviews, and court opinions have all occurred.

Some of the main points are:

Certain representations are prohibited:

1. Funeral directors may not tell consumers that embalming is required under the following circumstances, unless state or local law requires it:
 - a. when the consumer wishes to have a direct cremation;
 - b. when the consumer wishes to have an immediate burial;
 - c. when the remains are placed in a sealed casket;
 - d. if refrigeration is available and there is to be a funeral with no viewing or visitation and there is to be a closed casket.
2. Funeral directors may not tell consumers that state or local law require the purchase of a casket for a direct cremation.
3. Funeral directors may not tell the consumer that law requires the purchase of outer burial containers if that is not true. A cemetery may, however, require them.
4. Funeral directors may not tell the consumer that any funeral goods or services will delay the natural decomposition of the deceased for a long-term or indefinite time.

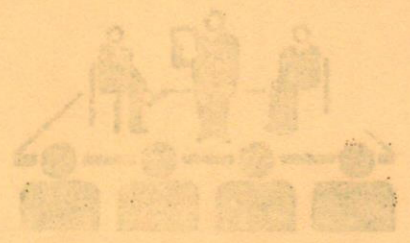
5. Funeral directors may not tell the consumer that the price they charge for a cash advance item is the same price as they paid for them if such is not the case. These items can include cemetery or crematory services, pallbearers, clergy honoraria, musicians, obituary notices, gratuities, death certificates, flowers.

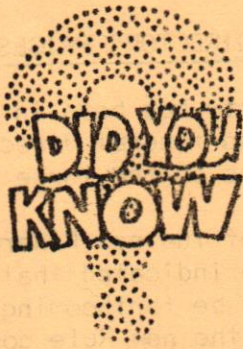
Itemizing the costs of funeral goods and services and provision of price lists for general services and goods, caskets, and outer burial containers are main requirements of the Rule. At the conclusion of the discussion of arrangements for a funeral, an itemized, written statement shall be given to the consumer.

The Rule also states that price lists and a copy of each statement of funeral goods and services selected by a consumer must be retained by funeral providers and be available for inspection by Commission officials. These must be available for at least one year after the date of distribution.

No later than four years after effective date, the Commission will initiate a rulemaking amendment to see whether this Rule should be amended or terminated. The decision will be made no later than 18 months after the start of the review.

Initially, some funeral directors are saying that this Rule will cost the consumer more. The Society believes monitoring the implementation and compliance with the Rule by its members will be very important.





FUNERAL FACTS - It's the Law

Did you know . . .

- . . . that cemetery owners cannot by law, own or operate a funeral home? That's what it says in the RI General Laws as amended in 1983.
- . . . that RI Funeral and Embalming Regulations state that all funerals conducted in this state must be conducted under the personal supervision of a licensed funeral director or licensed embalmer? But, the regulations of Vital Statistics require - in case of death in a hospital - that the hospital issue the death certificate to any authorized person or family member, not just to a funeral director. So, that means that a family member can remove the body from the place of death, but cannot perform the funeral without the supervision of a funeral director.
- . . . that most funeral homes in this state are not equipped with refrigeration facilities for storage of bodies? However, hospitals in which most deaths occur do have cold storage facilities.
- . . . that Catholics no longer need to obtain the permission of their bishop or parish priest to be cremated? A recent update of the Roman Catholic Code of Laws leaves the decision about cremation up to the family of the deceased.

BOARD MEMBER RESIGNS

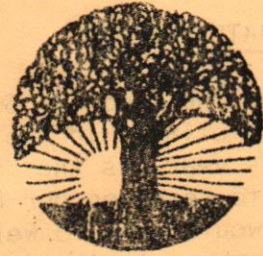
Arthur Fleisig, elected to the Board in 1983, has resigned because of health reasons. It was with regret that the Board received his letter. The Board wishes to express its appreciation to Arthur for his work with and his support of the Society.

CEMETERY SURVEY RESULTS

The survey of cemetery prices and regulations is nearly complete. This information will be sent to members along with the new price lists from cooperating Funeral Directors.

The questionnaire sent to 23 cemeteries includes such items as cost of plots, opening and closing costs, number of burials allowed per plot, grave liner regulations, and other rules of the cemeteries.

Members are reminded that these costs are in addition to all those incurred for the funeral itself.



DUES POLICY CLARIFIED

There has been some confusion about the membership policy as a result of the April 1 article in the Providence Journal, "Action Line" column.

The one-time, lifetime fee for the Society is \$12.50 per adult. For each additional adult, an additional \$12.50 is required. A husband and wife membership would be \$25.00

If there is a single, adult or a couple membership, all minor children (under the age of 18) are included.

ORGAN DONATION INFORMATION

Enclosed in this newsletter is a brochure on organ donation for your information.

What is not made clear in this brochure is that the family of the deceased must agree to the removal of any organ before a doctor or hospital will do it. The donor sticker on the RI driver's license is not sufficient legal grounds for such removal.

As with funeral or memorial service plans, The Society urges its members to discuss these matters with their family to obtain their understanding and cooperation.



FUNERAL DIRECTORS PRICES UPDATE

The Society has been in the process of contacting funeral directors for their new prices on the three basic plans.

Because of the new Funeral Industry Rule, some have indicated that their prices would not be forthcoming until April 30, the date the new Rule goes into effect.

If any member has information on how this new pricing rule is working or can share experiences, the Society would appreciate hearing from him or her. As this new Rule goes into practice, the Society wishes to be informed and helpful to its members.

BOARD CANDIDATES NEEDED

Membership in the Memorial Society has increased dramatically in the past several months. This year, as the Society seeks two members to serve on our Board of Directors, we would like to welcome some of our new members to the Board.

Two positions are open this June: one is a two-year term and the other is a one year term. The Board meets about six times a year, usually on Saturday mornings in East Greenwich, to conduct its business and design projects to further the aims of the Society. The work isn't hard and we have fun at our meetings.

If you are interested in volunteering to serve on our Board, or if you seek further information, call the MSRI at 884-5933 and leave a message. The chair of the Nominating Committee will be glad to return your call.

Let us hear from you soon!

