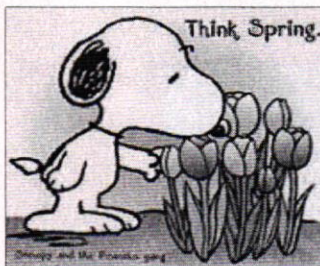


NEWSLETTER

MEMORIAL SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND
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FUTURE OF THE MEMORIAL SOCIETY OF RHODE ISLAND

Comment by Polly Barnett-Birdsall, President

Now that the Funeral Practices Rule is a reality, is the work of memorial societies over? People who should know better (like me) have been wondering out loud if memorial societies have outlived their usefulness, now that the long-awaited FTC rule has been in effect for two years. What made me change my opinion about the need for memorial societies was a growing awareness that Rhode Island funeral directors are not complying with the Rule in some instances. That means that the Rule isn't working as it should. The FTC is depending on memorial societies to provide monitoring and to furnish them with data on compliance or non-compliance. So the job falls to us.

The MSRI performs two separate but connected functions: one political and the other educational. Politically we have been active, through our lobbyist and board vice-president Bill Grande, in pushing for the passage of Living Will or Durable Power of Attorney legislation in Rhode Island. We have been active as well in monitoring compliance with the Funeral Practices Rule. Board members and members at large have worked hard at gathering data on compliance by the state's funeral directors with the FTC Rule. That effort included an extensive telephone effort by several MSRI members to Rhode Island funeral directors to ask them to furnish prices for goods and services over the telephone as required by law. A report on the results of that survey appears elsewhere in this newsletter.

So, is the MSRI out of business? No, it's not. Our watchdog function is critical to determine compliance (or lack of it) with the Funeral Practices Rule. Our educational function will continue as long as persons need information and encouragement to plan their funerals in advance of need.

