



San Diego Hosts FCA CA Annual Conference

Fall, 2007 Newsletter

Inside this issue:

- Maggie's Message 2
- New Developments 2
- Warning! Humor Below 4

Special points of interest:

- Robert Humphrey will keynote the FCA CA Annual Conference
- Many members stay with Humphrey Mortuary
- Potential problem getting pre-need trust refunds
- View our new website: www.sdmsonline.com
- Publication of price survey is postponed
- The number of SDMS volunteers is expanding
- Send email to: john@sdmsonline.com

You Are Invited!

The San Diego Memorial Society is hosting the Funeral Consumer Alliance (FCA) of California (CA) conference beginning on the evening of Friday, October 5, 2007, through early afternoon on Sunday, October 7, 2007. The conference will take place at the Holiday Inn on Hotel Circle South in Mission Valley.

Members of the San Diego Memorial Society are invited to attend the special banquet on Saturday evening, October 6. This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy an elegant dinner, hear an entertaining keynote presentation from one of San Diego County's most respected funeral directors and socialize with delegates from FCA affiliates who have traveled from locations throughout the state.

Please complete the registration form enclosed to make your reservation for this special event. You can also register online at www.sdmsonline.com/FCACA.

Conference delegates will attend education

Current Status Report

Our participating mortuaries are now Community Mortuary, Featheringill Mortuary, Oceanside Mortuary, Thresholds Home and Family-Directed Funerals, Preferred Cremation and Burial, and American Cremation Service.

We also continue to monitor the service provided to members by the mortuary that had an exclusive relationship with the San Diego Memorial Society for many

years, Humphrey Mortuary (please note—Community Mortuary is owned by Robert Humphrey and Humphrey Mortuary is owned by Service Corporation International).

Many of the San Diego Memorial Society members that filed service instructions with Humphrey Mortuary prior to May 25, 2007, are deciding to stay with

(Continued on page 3)

workshops and business meetings over the weekend. Topics will include reports by affiliates; an update on refrigeration issues; home funerals; pre-paid trusts; funeral insurance; organ, tissue and whole body donations; and legislative updates, bylaw amendments, elections, budgeting and new business during the annual FCA CA Board of Trustees meeting.

San Diego Memorial Society has transformed in many ways recently. Hosting the FCA CA conference shows again how active your Board of Directors are to more fully realize the mission of the Society.

We will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Society's 1958 formation next year. We are moving toward this milestone with passion and excellence in the way we serve our members and the public.

Be a part of this exciting time. Get involved. Feel the energy. Join us on October 6!



**FCA CA Annual Conference October 5, 6 and 7—
Plan to Attend the Banquet**



**San Diego Memorial
Society President**

Board Members:

- Maggie Moody, President
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- Gerry Newall, Secretary
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- Paul Marsh, Director
- Clancy Finley, Director
- Phyllis McGrath, Director
- Ken Barnett, Director
- "Louise" Peacock, Director
- "Kitty" Clinton, Director



**Find copies of our material
at the new SDMS website:
sdmsonline.com/publications**

Maggie's Message

Friends,

Have you ever been in a whirlwind? Sand and dust swirling around you as you squint your eyes to protect them from the spinning debris. And then it's gone and you stand in relative calm watching the funnel twist along to find someone or something new to capture for a moment.

Well, welcome to my world. Since the prior newsletter your Board of Directors has been enmeshed in a whirlwind of activity. We

created a Mortuary Relations Committee staffed by a number of board members and new volunteers. This group is nurturing the relationships we have started with new participating mortuaries. The committee's work only recently began in earnest, but the structure is in place and the task is underway.

The financial burden that befell the Society over the past six months caused the board to lease a number of sophisticated machines and bring the task of publishing booklets, brochures, instruc-

tions, donation envelopes and other material in-house. The change will save the Society money and will provide a number of other advantages, but the work that must now be done by the Executive Director and volunteers is much greater.

And then there is the FCA CA Annual Conference, problems for members requesting refund of pre-need trust assets from Humphrey Mortuary,... When will this whirlwind end?

Maggie Moody

New Developments

A number of changes and decisions have been made recently:

- First, the full-service participating mortuaries that had agreed to provide the Plan I cremation service no longer offer this plan. Only American Cremation Service now offers Plan I.
- American Cremation Service no longer includes permit and license fees, taxes and a death certificate in the price of Plan I—these costs are subject to increase at any time. The government charges will be billed in addition to the plan cost at time of need.
- New members no longer file a Service Instruction Booklet at participating mortuaries when they make arrangements for service. Each mortuary

will use their own forms to obtain required signatures. New members are, instead, given a Final Planning Booklet (FPB) that contains much of the same information that was contained in the prior Service Instruction Booklet.

The new FPB is used primarily to organize and assist the new member when making arrangements at a participating mortuary. It will also be helpful to the new member's family at time of need.

We expect the FPB content will expand in coming months.

- We have a new website! Please take a look. You will now find us online at www.sdmsonline.com.
- Transition expenses

have significantly depleted our financial reserves. We have over \$10,000 less in reserve now, compared to January 1, 2007. The reserves made it possible for us to weather the storm of change that surprised us, and that is exactly why financial reserves had been built up over the years.

We hope those members who are in a comfortable financial position and who believe in the mission of the San Diego Memorial Society will be generous. With your help, the reserve will be replenished over the next few years.

You will find a donor envelope enclosed with this newsletter. Your contribution of any amount will be greatly appreciated.

- Pre-need trust assets

(Continued on page 3)

Current Status Report

(Continued from page 1)

Humphrey Mortuary at this point. This is especially true for members that joined the San Diego Memorial Society prior to April, 1989.

The contract with Humphrey Mortuary in those days locked the price when the member joined the Society. These members have a financial incentive to maintain the relationship with Humphrey Mortuary. Members that filed their service instructions with Humphrey Mortuary after April, 1989, will pay the same

price today as they would pay at any of the new participating mortuaries.

If you are a member of the Society, the date you joined is printed above and to the right of your name and mailing address on the back page of this newsletter.

We are monitoring the service provided to families of Society members at Humphrey Mortuary. We have seen no diminishment of the fine service and compassionate professional attitude of the staff. We ask families if

they felt any pressure to purchase additional products or services and we see no evidence that this is occurring. So, we believe that members are justified in staying.

A few members that had pre-need trust assets to pre-pay for services at Humphrey Mortuary have suffered a penalty fee deducted from the proceeds when they requested a refund. This is contrary to promises made by Humphrey Mortuary. We are working to rectify this situation and will keep you informed about our progress.



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New Developments, continued

(Continued from page 2)

have been returned to members without penalty by Humphrey Mortuary in the past. When the mortuary terminated the agreement with the Society we were assured, in writing, that this would continue. Our agreement with Humphrey Mortuary required that any change to pre-need trust agreements be approved in advance by the Society.

Nevertheless, we have learned that at least a few members who requested return of their pre-need trust assets were charged a penalty fee that was deducted from the proceeds when the funds were returned. Details about how the penalty was calculated are a bit sketchy at this point.

We are examining the facts, talking with folks at the California Cemetery and Funeral Bureau, legal experts here in California and at the Funeral Consumers Alliance and will be speaking to representatives of Humphrey Mortuary about the matter soon.

It may be premature to alert you about this situation, but we felt it was inappropriate to keep this matter under wraps when we know these facts are not as we communicated them to you in the newsletter last spring.

We hope this situation can be rectified easily. We will let you know how it goes.

- It is time to publish our price survey for

all mortuaries in San Diego County, but we have postponed this project. The information has been gathered and we are ready to publish. But, our financial situation has deteriorated and we have been too busy with other priorities to think about how we might alter the publication to better fit within our available resources.

The survey has been highlighted by the San Diego Union Tribune in the past, and it proved to be valued by many people in the county. We may find that attention by the media can be generated without printing the survey and distributing it to our members and other recipients on our mailing list.

The Internet may be the best way for us to get the word out. We will let you know how we proceed on this matter.

"You will find a donor envelope enclosed in this newsletter. Your contribution of any amount will be greatly appreciated."



Questions? We are returning phone calls, but it can take 5 business days at the current call volume.



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San Diego Memorial Society is a nonprofit, nonsectarian association dedicated to a consumer's right to choose meaningful after-death arrangements without emotional or financial exploitation.



**"Make an ash of yourself."
 Mabel Lepper**

Warning! Humor Below

- A caller asked about one of our cremation plans. He wanted to know what was included and not included with the plan. I answered his questions and then told him the price we had negotiated for the plan with our participating mortuaries. He asked; "Does the price include the cost of the urinal?"
- Joan Rivers was telling a friend about the horrible experience she had when she took her mother-in-law to the crematory. "It sounds

like you had a really rough day" said her empathetic friend." "Yeah," Joan replied. "She didn't want to go."

- The chief problem about death is that there may be no afterlife—a depressing thought, especially for those who bothered to shave. Also, there is the fear that there is an afterlife, but no one will know where it is being held.

—Woody Allen

- I asked a new member why she decided to be cremated even though she could be buried at less cost in a national cemetery with her veteran husband who had died a few years before. She did not hesitate with her answer. "I want to go out in a blaze of glory!"
- An actual sign found in a Pennsylvania cemetery: "Persons are prohibited from picking flowers from any but their own grave."