JOURNAL OF

Funeral Service

Education

Contents

Capital Punishment as a Moral Imperative for a Just Society [1]

Jacqueline Anglin

Donyelle Moore

Rhonda A. Morris

Paula Perry

Capital punishment is defined as the penalty of death for the commission of a crime (American Heritage, 1996). The death penalty is controversial, irrevocable and extreme. Historically, we have seen different types of societal and political movements, and the utilization of a wide range of punishments when a crime is committed. Has a just and moral society been shaped from any of these movements? Each of us makes many moral judgments every day. Seldom, however, do we pause to inquire into the principles that are operative in those moral judgments. Such an inquiry cannot be avoided if we want to examine our reasoning and decide if our actions are just. When we seek such knowledge, we are engaging in the branch of philosophy called ethics. Our ethical examination of capital punishment begins with ancient Egypt and brings us forward, through history. Our philosophical discussion of the morality of the death penalty and its role in creating a just society had led us to the conclusion that capital punishment is not a moral imperative for a just society.

The death penalty has an extensive history that reverts as far back as ancient Egypt. Egyptian civilization began in the fourth millennium BC and ended in the fourth century AD. Crimes such as; murder, theft, sacrilege, attempts on Pharao and spying, warranted the death penalty. The methods used were; sacrificing, beheading, or drowning in the Nile in a closed sack (Lorenzo & Paolo, 2000). The first death recorded in history occurred in 16th century BC Egypt, where the wrongdoer, a member of nobility, was accused of magic and ordered to take his own life. During this period non-nobility was usually killed with an axe (Reggio, 1999).

In 18th century BC (1792-1750 BC), the Code of King Hammurabi of Babylon codified the death penalty for twenty-five different crimes. Murder was not included. On the other hand, a crime of theft subjected a person to the death penalty. If a child was kidnapped, the kidnapper was put to death. The action of putting a kidnapper to death was a moral right, supported by the bible in Exodus 21:10. In 14th century BC, the Hittites ruled over what is presently known as Turkey. The Hittite Code assigned the death penalty to various crimes, homicide not being among them. But if a bull repeatedly gored a person to death and the owner of the bull refused to take precautions, the owner could be sentenced to death (Faehnle, 2000). Again, this action was supported by the biblical text of Exodus 21:28-29.

The 7th century BC Draconian Code of Athens assigned a death sentence for every crime committed. In the 5th century BC, Roman Law of the Twelve Tablets codified the death penalty. Nobility, freeman, and slaves were sentenced

to death for crimes such as; the publication of libels and insulting songs, the cutting or grazing of crops planted by a farmer, the burning of a house or a stack of corn near a house, cheating a client, perjury, causing disturbances at night, willful murder of a freeman or a parent, or theft by a slave. Death was often cruel. Some of the methods were; crucifixion, impalement, being drowned at sea, buried alive and beaten to death. The Romans had a particular punishment for the murder of a parent: the murderer was submersed in water in a sack, which also contained a dog, a rooster, a viper and an ape. One of the most notorious executions in Roman history was around 399 BC, when the Greek philosopher Socrates was required to drink poison for heresy and corruption of youth (Reggio, 1999).

Readings from the Bible list over 30 crimes for which executions are utilized. Amongst a few are; kidnapping (Deut. 24:7), murder (Ex. 21:16), disrespecting your parents (Ex. 21:15&17) and adultery and other sexual relationships (Lev. 20:10-16). Mosaic Law codified many capital crimes. In fact, there is evidence that Jews used many different techniques including; stoning, hanging, beheading, crucifixion, throwing the criminal from a rock, and sawing asunder (Reggio, 1999). The Hebrew culture used the death penalty as a means of retaliation, and it was intended to be proportional to the crime. Later in Hebrew history, during the time of the New Testament, the mood of capital punishment shifted. The New Testament taught people to forgive those who wronged them and to not be quick to judge others (Death Penalty Info. Center, 2000). The most infamous execution of history occurred outside of Jerusalem, in approximately

29AD, with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. About 300 years later, Christians abolished crucifixion and other cruel death penalties in the Roman Empire (Reggio, 1999).

Meanwhile, as Vlad Dracul, better known as Dracula, ruled southern Romania, capital punishment was still being used for several crimes. From 1431 to 1476, impaling the guilty was his favorite method. The victims were placed on large sharpened stakes, the ends piercing their internal organs, and would slowly, slide down the stakes until they died. Vlad was hedonistic and at times, when watching mass executions, he would have a banquet set up in front of the dying victims (Death Penalty Info. Center, 2000).

In 16th Century AD Britain, under the reign of Henry VIII, executions escalated to what was estimated to be 72,000 deaths. The number of crimes worthy of the death penalty continued to rise throughout the next two centuries. By the 18th Century, 222 crimes were punishable by death in Britain including; stealing, cutting down a tree and robbing a rabbit warren. When Europeans settled to the New World, they continued the practice of capital punishment. The first recorded execution in the new colonies was that of Captain George Kendall, in the Jamestown colony of Virginia in 1608. Kendall was sentenced to death for spying for Spain. In 1612, Virginia governor Sir Thomas Dale enacted the Divine, Moral and Martial Laws, which provided the death penalty for even minor offenses such as stealing grapes, killing chickens, and trading with the Indians.

In 1622, the first legal execution took place in Virginia. Daniel Frank was executed for the crime of theft (Aaker, Nyhaugt & Wheeler, 2000). Each colony in

the US, had their own laws for the usage of the death penalty. By 1636 under the Capital Laws of New-England (1636-1647), the death penalty was carried out for crimes of; pre-meditated murder, sodomy, witchcraft, adultery, idolatry, blasphemy, assault in anger, rape, statutory rape, stealing, perjury in a capital trial, rebellion, manslaughter, poisoning and bestiality. The usual method of death was by hanging. In addition to the statutes of death given by the New England colonies, some southern states, like North Carolina, sentenced death for stealing bank notes, castration, dueling resulting in death, hiding a slave with intent to free him, bigamy, and circulating seditious literature among slaves (Reggio, 1999).

In early to mid 19th Century America, a reform was on its way for the death penalty. More Americans were looking to abolish or stricken the sentencing of death in the northeast. In the U.S., public executions were attacked and deemed as cruel so many states reduced the number of their capital crimes and built state prisons. Then, in 1834, Pennsylvania became the first state to privatize executions. New methods of execution developed after the war and the idea of an electric chair emerged. Death by cyanide gas was introduced in 1924, when Nevada searched for a more humane way of executing its inmates. This promoted the construction of the gas chamber. In 1977, death by lethal injection was selected as an option because it was more humane and less expensive. Lethal injection has become the most exercised method for the death penalty and is used by 29 states in the US. (Aaker, Nyhaugt & Wheeler, 2000).

Recently, we are becoming more and more concerned with the ethical issues of capital punishment and the problems associated with sentencing a

person to death. Sometimes our practices conflict with what we feel is morally appropriate. In these cases, we have to analyze our actions and take the proper steps toward achieving a just society.

A just society is defined by the interoperation of what is just, right, good or moral. If we look into moral theory, we find that different philosophers have defined morality, or the beliefs about good and evil by means of which we guide our behavior, by using applied theories (Hinman, 2000). Some of these theories are relativism, subjectivism, nihilism and utilitarianism.

Relativism consists of two categories, descriptive ethical relativism and normative ethical relativism. Descriptive ethical relativism claims, because of different moral belief systems, there can be no stand on which one is valid or invalid. Whereas normative ethical relativism claims, different cultures have different beliefs and each is correct according to that culture (Hinman, 2000). Using this theory would ultimately lead us to a discussion of situational ethics where the moral imperative is different for each society.

Subjectivism states that each person's beliefs are relative to that person and therefore should not be judged by anyone other than oneself (Hinman, 2000). Using this theory, there could never be agreement on one single idea of morality or a just society.

Nihilism is the belief that there are no moral values (Hinman, 2000). Without moral values, there can be no definition of a just society; much less an idea of what is right and wrong.

Utilitarianism claims that the moral right is whatever produces the most pleasure for the most people (Hinman, 2000). Utilitarianism is one theory that defines the framework of our discussion.

These theories will provide us with an explanation of how one derives at their own set of morals and values. However, we first need to agree on a definition of what a just society is. Ayn Rand says, "moral justification does not lie in the altruist claim that it represents the best way to achieve 'the common good.' Moral justification lies in the fact that there is only one system consonant with man's rational nature, that it protect man's survival and that its ruling principle is justice" (**Error! Bookmark not defined.**). This system is not merely the practical, but the only moral system in history.

In the Elements of Moral Philosophy by James Rachels, he argues that there is a core set of values that are common across all societies and it is this core set of values that are necessary for a society to exist. A just society insists that it is imperative to ensure human survival.

Some basic value choices are already made for us by legal and political systems. Our criminal justice system makes it difficult to convict a criminal because it is assumed that it is morally better for a guilty person to go free than for an innocent person to be convicted. Our political and economic system differs from others by placing greater value on individualism. Our present problem is not which particular act or institution or law is right or wrong. The question is: on what principle do we judge these things to be right or wrong?

There are two moral philosophers from the eighteenth century, who provide very different views. William Paley argues that right means "according to the will of God" (Beck, 1949). Immanuel Kant claims that right means "according to reason" (Infield, 1930). From the nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill contends that right means "maximization of happiness of humankind" (Bentham, 1970).

One question that is often directed at any human act is whether it is right or wrong. Implicit in any answer to this question is a moral principle. Many base their moral judgments upon what they consider to be the will of God. William Paley argued this view. Paley's formulation of the principle or morality is simple: "right is that which agrees with the will of God; wrong is that which does not" (Beck, 1949). "As the will of God is our rule, to inquire what is our duty, is to inquire the will of God in that instance" (Beck, 1949). Paley explains that humankind can know the will of God through his word recorded in the scriptures and through his works performed in nature. Where the scriptures are silent, we determine the rightness of an act by the fact that it produces more happiness than any other act possible at the time.

This raises more questions than it settles. Does Paley mean that an act is right because it agrees with God's will or that it agrees with God's will because it is right? According to Paley's view, "it is consistent with the will of God to punish murder with death" (Beck, 1949). Capital punishment is an instrument of torture and execution. This goes against the assumption that human happiness is God's primary concern, furthermore, nothing of this sort is found in the works of nature. "We never discover a train of contrivance to bring about an evil purpose" (Infield,

1930). There is also the problem connected with inferring God's will from the Scriptures. Why the Scriptures? Which parts of the Scriptures? The part that commands "an eye for an eye" or "thou shalt not kill"? One final problem is, some argue that in order to find morality, we must first know God. This would mean that any person in any nation without a conception of God would in turn have no conception of morality or duty. Since this is not so, morality must therefore be derived from some other source.

At the same time Paley was arguing that morality has its roots in theology, Immanuel Kant was engaged in showing that this was not the case. Kant began by assuming that "morality is universally binding on all rational minds and comparable to science." He states, "morality is binding on all rational creatures, in and of itself, without any reference to why it is true, without reference to consequences and holds true for all periods in time" (Abbott, 1949). Here we ask what principle must run through all the cases of morality and be absent from all cases of immorality. Kant's answer is simple. "An act is moral if and only if the principle that it embodies is capable of universalization without self-contradiction" (Abbott, 1949).

According to Kant, "morality is categorical – not dependent upon anything and a priori - valid for all persons at all times and in all cases" (Beck, 1949). Some feel that the morality of an act resides in the feeling that one has about the act. Kant believes this could not be true for two reasons: "(1) if morality is a matter of someone's feelings, then it is not categorical and would depend upon a

fact external to the act itself – someone's feelings; (2) if morality is a matter of feeling, then it is not universally binding and valid for all persons" (Beck, 1949).

One mainstream view of morality assumes that "an act is right because of the nature of its consequences" (Infield, 1930). It is right because of the results that follow from it. Kant has two objections: (1) "This denies the categorical nature of an act and makes it depend on something other than the act itself; (2) This deprives morality of it's a priori nature because you can never know the consequences of an act until after the act is committed. This would reduce morality to a matter of probability" (Beck, 1949).

The essence of morality is that our actions are motivated by a general rule. "If the principle of the action can, without self-contradiction, be universalized, it is moral. If it cannot, it is immoral. The action is immoral whose principle cancels and destroys itself when it is made a universal rule" (Beck, 1949). If we were to commit an act that strayed from our principle and duty, and later examined our transgression, we would most likely realize that the principle of our action was not one that we would wish to become a universal law. We would realize that an exception was made to suit our purpose at that particular time. This cannot be justified as morality. "If I commit an act because it is commanded, or because it brings advantage, my action is not moral. But if I commit an act because it is absolutely right in itself, my disposition is a moral one" (Infield, 1930).

Based on these ideas, the principle of capital punishment could not become a universal law of nature. "The principle of capital punishment is to shorten life when its longer duration is likely to bring more dissatisfaction than

satisfaction" (Infield, 1930). This principle cannot be considered moral or just in everyday, life situations. Consider suicide, physical handicaps, chronic illnesses or mental disorders. In these instances, living often becomes less desirable than death, but it is not acceptable to give up on these lives. Employing a system which makes it law to destroy life would contradict the principle of a just society – to insure survival and advancement.

Paley attempted to ground morality in theology, whereas Kant argued that morality is not grounded in anything. John Stuart Mill criticized both these positions and argued that the rightness of an act must not be divorced from its consequences. Mill founded his thought on Utilitarian theory. "Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness. Happiness is intended to provide pleasure and the absence of pain. Utilitarianism does not define morality to be the self-interest of the agent, but the greatest happiness of mankind" (Bentham, 1970). Take murder for example. There are many people for whom killing would be to remove men who are a cause of no good to any human being, who are a cause of cruel, physical and moral suffering to several, and whose whole influence tends to increase the mass of unhappiness. Were such a man to be murdered, the balance of consequences would be greatly in favor of the act. But, the counter consideration, still on the principle of utility, is that unless people are punished for killing, and taught not to kill nobody's life would be sacred (Bentham, 1970).

In contemporary times, the ethical issue of capital punishment involves determining whether the execution of criminals is ever justified and the

circumstances are permissible. The issue of justice in philosophy distinguishes between two theories of punishment: retributive or utilitarianism.

Retributive analysis focuses on the intent of the action and is examined in terms of ethical principles. This theory defines punishment as a means of repairing an injustice. It is responding to the moral failure of the offender. Retributivists believe that punishment should be equal to the harm done. They believe in forcing the offender to take responsibility for suffering or loss inflicted, by repairing the injustice to society and the victim. The retributivist view on the degree of punishment is that it must fit the nature of the offense, but must also respect the dignity of the offender.

The history of the retributive view of punishment begins with biblical and legal ideas and can be followed from Hegel, who believed it necessary to annul the wrong done by the criminal because it upsets the balance of the moral order, to contemporary retributivists such as Jeffrie G. Murphy. According to Jeffrie Murphy, the retributive theory applies that punishment is justified but must be based on moral principles and responsibility and justice.

Utilitarianism analysis focuses on the consequences of an action. Philosophers who take this approach believe that the end justifies the means. According to this theory, conduct, under any given circumstance, is objectively right if it produces the greatest amount of happiness while taking into account all whose happiness is affected by the conduct (Brody, 1970). It also advocates maintaining a system of law and order. "The utilitarian point of view rests on the belief that human acts, rules of actions and systems of such rules which make up

institutions are to be judged by their consequences." (Primoratz, 1989). The utilitarian theory defines punishment as a means for the prevention or deterrence of crime. Punishment is morally justified only if beneficial consequences outweigh the infliction of suffering on humans. The basic characteristic of the utilitarian theory of punishment is its orientation toward the future. In the aspect of capital punishment, utilitarians believe it is justifiable when it deters crime and discourages would be offenders. "Promoting the general welfare is morality's fundamental requirement; reducing crime promotes the general welfare; crime can be reduced by credibly threatening potential wrongdoers with punishment; and credibility of such threats is established by actually punishing those who ignore them" (Montague, 1995). Deterrence sways the offender not to repeat the offense and serves as a frightening tactic.

The problem with the death penalty is, the burden of proof to show that the same effects could not be accomplished with less severe punishment. The death penalty is only justified when it defends the social contract and ensures that everyone will be motivated to abide by it.

Cesare Beccaria believed in long-term imprisonment for a crime because capital punishment does not deter criminals from committing crimes.

Jeremy Bentham denounced capital punishment because it is not remissible and labor is more profitable and has more lasting, deterrent effects.

TLS Sprigge believes the death penalty punishes the innocent.

Stanley Benn believes it is wrong to deliberately inflict suffering or deprivation on any human.

In many societies, the death penalty has been abandoned because it is considered uncivilized in theory, unfair, unequal in practice and ineffective as a deterrent. Utilitarians ask of any law, custom or institution, "what is the utility, what is its use" (Montague, 1995). Punishment is used to achieve one of 3 different goals: to rehabilitate, to serve as an example and for vengeance. Today, the use of capital punishment is not the solution. The death penalty eliminates any chance of rehabilitation. Furthermore, it fails to deter others because the real consequence is not visible to society. The media masks death with pictures of heated rallies and protests, and criminals sitting in prison for years awaiting new trials and fairer verdicts. As a result, the punishment of death is not feared. Finally, using death for vengeance is hedonistic and could never become a universal principle without contradiction.

The first principle of any society is the protection, enjoyment, peace and fulfillment of the social contract of life. Ethics entail the lifelong struggle to postulate how you would react in certain situations. Based on this principle, murder is never the moral imperative.

[1] *Paper submitted to the Forensic Investigation Program, Department of Mortuary Science, Wayne State University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the post bachelor* **Forensic Investigation Certificate**.

References

Aaker, Ben, Nyhaug, Adams, and Wheeler, David. A Brief History of Capital Punishment.
    http://usd.edu/honors/The%20House%20the%20West%20Built/
    1999/1999e/history.htm. (October 17, 2000)

Abbott, Thomas K. (1949). Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals.
    Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co.

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 3rd edition. (1996).
    Houghton Mifflin Company.

Baird, Robert M., Rosenbaum, Stuart. (1988). Philosophy of Punishment. New
    York: Prometheus Books.

Beck, Lewis. (1949). Critique of Practical Reason. Chicago: University of
    Chicago Press.

Bentham, Jeremy. (1970). Principles of Morals and Legislation. Darien,CT:
    Hafner Publishing Co.

Brody, Baruch A. (1970). Moral Rules and Particular Circumstances. New
    Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

http://www.capitalism.org/

Death Penalty Information Center (1997). History of the Death Penalty.
    Error! Bookmark not defined.. (October 25, 2000)

Faehnle, Cathy. Torah Law. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
    issue4/torahlaw.htm. (November 18, 2000)

Hart, Harold H. (1971). Punishment: For and Against. New York: Hart
    Publishing Company.

Hinman, Lawrence M. (2000). Ethics Updates Glossary . Michigan: Wayne
    State University.

Hook, Donald D., Kahn, Lothar. (1989). Death in the Balance. Massachusetts:
    Lexington Books.

Infield, Louis. (1930). Lectures on Ethics. New York: Century.

Johnson, Robert. (1998). Death Work. California: Wadsworth Publishing
    Company.

Lorenzo and Paolo, (2000). <u>Death penalty.</u> **Error! Bookmark not defined.** /data/ ancegypt.html.(October 27, 2000)

Moberly, Walter. (1968). <u>The Ethics of Punishment</u>. Connecticut: Archon Books.

Montague, Phillip. (1995). <u>Punishment As Societal -Defense</u>. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Murphy, Jeffrie G. (1973). <u>An Introduction to Moral and Social Philosophy</u>. California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Primoratz, Igor. (1989). <u>Justifying Legal Punishment</u>. New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc.

Reggio, Michael H. (1999). <u>History of the Death Penalty</u>. http://**Error! Bookmark not defined.**.(October 25, 2000)

CALL FOR THE MASTER'S DEGREE IN MORTUARY SCIENCE
-Dan Flory, Ph.D.
President, Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science

Modern funeral service education began to develop after the Civil War in the United States. For many years it progressed, added quality and quantity to its offerings, and then, in the 1960's and 1970's, it rushed toward professionalism and credentialism.

After May 1, 1979, the American Board of Funeral Service Education, the accrediting body for mortuary education programs in the United States, required that newly-appointed full-time faculty members have a master's degree or else earn one within five years of initial appointment in a mortuary science college or program. The difficulty is that there is no formal master's degree in mortuary science program (MMS) available. Thus, faculty members earn degrees in any number of academic fields and generally teach outside of discipline. The history major who completed mortuary college and funeral service licensure may well find himself teaching everything from mortuary management to medical terminology and embalming. While this writer has not conducted a survey of current mortuary college faculty, it is his long-term perception that few mortuary science faculty have had training in education. This is one of the fundamental and unspoken weaknesses of teaching in colleges and universities in the United States. How does a college instructor learn how to construct exams, assign grades, understand grade curves, and analyze such things as means and standard deviation if he or she has never studied teaching methods? Where does one learn how to discipline students or achieve desired outcomes in a course? If one scans university master's and doctoral curricula across the board, one finds almost no teaching component in the advanced degree program. The unfounded assumption is that a good student should be a good teacher.

If funeral service has value and if mortuary science education is to begin to overcome this weakness, it should be developed into a formal academic discipline that results in at least a master's degree in mortuary science at a regionally-accredited institution. The degree would be designed for mortuary science teaching faculty. The very nature of the degree would suggest that the offering institution be a college or university that has a significant library, a college of education, and a college of arts and science and possibly a medical school that contains those natural sciences required at the master's degree level.

A typical master's degree consists of one year of study involving at least 30 semester or 45 quarter credit hours. Following are *suggestions* for the types of courses that could form the basis of a master's in mortuary science degree:

I.   Pedagogy
        A. Evaluation of student performance
        B. Discipline
        C. Curriculum development
        D. Testing procedures and grade analysis

II.   Natural Sciences
        A. Occupational health and diseases
        B. Disaster and emergency response
        C. Cremation
        D. Principles of forensics
        E. Clinical lab management
        F. Special topics in surgical anatomy and embalming
        G. Special topics in chemistry
        H. Hazardous waste management
        I. Ventilation systems
        J. Organ and tissue procurement and transplant procedures

III.   Social Sciences
        A. Psychology of grief, loss, terminal illness
        B. Support groups
        C. Funeral aftercare
        D. Basics of pastoral counseling
        E. Alternative funerals

IV.   Legal
        A. Environmental law
        B. Educational law

V.   Research Project

While this list is not exhaustive, it provides a basis for discussion. It also provides the kinds of courses that would offer a research component valid for the master's degree thesis. Research is very important, because research helps expand and define academic fields of study.

The proposal for a master's degree in mortuary science seems legitimate. It would offer instructors a valid, accredited degree. Gaining acceptance and the implementation of it, however, is a different matter. Many would argue that it is not needed: "why is a new degree needed when there are hundreds of other master's degree programs available that already address specific areas of mortuary science education: public health; business; and social sciences?" Others would say there are not enough students to make it financially worthwhile.

Potential answers might be the following. First, mortuary science education is different from other types of education and needs its own identity and its own research. Any person who has worked in mortuary science and funeral service soon realizes that the medical and health education professionals are recovery-oriented and consider death a failure. They consider "mortuary science" an unwanted stepchild. With regard to business, the typical business faculty member has little understanding of funeral service business/computer applications and may well carry a bias against death and funerals. The social scientist, like the clergy, often sees death in theoretical terms but has no interest in the reality of death. It follows, then, that a mortuary science faculty member with his or her own acceptance of death and funerals and with a proprietary training in that field can best serve students.

Second, today's universities can offer a variety of degree packages that involve some distance learning and an on-campus component that helps reduce the time and expense of college degrees. One could well imagine a large university offering a master's degree in mortuary science that entails one summer term in residency and the remainder of the program through distance learning.

One might assume an interest from universities that contain mortuary science programs. If funeral service education (educators, the American Board of Funeral Service Education, the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards, and national associations) could garner support, perhaps there could be an approach to Wayne State in Michigan or to the University of Minnesota to establish the MMS degree that could be delivered in a traditional or in a distance-learning format. Whether the degree is an MMS or perhaps a M.Ed. with a mortuary teaching specialty is a matter for discussion.

Lastly, the major question arises, "Is there enough value in mortuary science to warrant academic attention and research in a time of social decline and loss of traditional values?" This writer's answer is a qualified "yes," with the understanding that the MMS degree would only be for a limited and targeted audience: mortuary science faculty members and potentially a few other individuals who might work in the larger, death-related fields of study. The reason for

a degree is the need to establish, define, and research an area that relates to the basic meaning of human life in the context of physical death. If one thinks about it, one understands that one of the major themes of all history, art, and literature is death. It represents the central question of human existence and is that standard against which all is measured. A teaching faculty of persons who have studied death both in theory and reality is the faculty best prepared to explain it to students, to other professionals, and to the public. After all, if mortuary education and funeral service are not valid as professions, perhaps funeral education and funeral service traditionally have emphasized the wrong things and have suffered from poor teaching. New ideas, research, and a thorough understanding of the field could help remedy problem areas for the future.

LAST CALL FOR THE MASTER'S DEGREE IN MORTUARY SCIENCE?
-David Tackett, M.Div., CFSP
Academic Dean, Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science

Rather than "degrees," this writer believes the greatest challenge facing mortuary education is keeping abreast of the changing "death care" preferences of the American people. Funeral directors have tended to comfort themselves with the idea that change will occur very slowly in this field and there will be plenty of lead time to prepare for it. Changes are occurring much more rapidly today and, arguably, mortuary education is already behind the curve. How many academic programs still do not address cremation in a significant way? It is certainly mentioned in various American Board of Funeral Service outlines, but are most schools doing much with it? The same question can be asked regarding funeral personalization and alternative rituals--faculty may touch on these topics--and then retreat to discussing the safe and comfortable world of the traditional funeral. This is completely understandable since faculty have based their professional lives on valuing and teaching traditional funeral practices. Increasingly, however, the public is opting for non-traditional services or funeral avoidance altogether. Graduates are going to be faced with requests from families they (and faculty) cannot imagine right now. This writer hears regularly from practitioners about how demanding and difficult many families are becoming during the arrangement conference. Add to this the dysfunctional relationships present in many families, the incredible social changes in this country over the last 30 years, as well as a significant increase in funeral price sensitivity, and it is a volatile mix for those not prepared to handle it. Increasingly, there appears to be an undercurrent of confrontation and suspicion present in business interactions with a growing number of savvy consumers who are challenging the very essence of what funeral directors do. Is it possible to even recognize what a "traditional funeral service" looks like within 15-20 years?

While some of these changes were probably inevitable regardless of anything funeral practitioners did, they all share some responsibility. Who encouraged people to adopt these skeptical and defensive attitudes? Funeral directors did (albeit unintentionally) by being paternalistic towards consumers and arrogantly assuming the traditional funeral business would always be there. Now funeral service is desperately trying to win people back to the "traditions'

that many never embraced in the first place. Pleasant or not, it must be acknowledged that Jessica Mitford echoed the sentiments of many Americans when she wrote that the modern American way of death was essentially designed by those in the funeral industry. Is the average elderly person truly interested in all the funerary processes funeral homes put them through? Or do many go along with it simply because they think they are supposed to, or because of social convention? Either way, the majority of Baby Boomers appear not to be buying it. Additionally, the perceived greed of many in funeral service (both independents and the public corporations) coupled with the growing sense that people are not receiving value for dollars spent must be addressed. Many people are examining their $6-, 7-, 8-, or even $9,000 dollar funeral bill and really questioning whether they received commensurate value in return. Even if everything went well: the staff was courteous; the casket looked nice; the appearance of the body was good; the flowers were pretty, etc., the question is still raised by an increasing number of critical consumers, "Was it worth it?'" How often does one hear people (while attending a visitation for a loved one) say that, personally, they just want to be cremated and scattered? This writer hears that statement regularly. In short, many people are demanding simplicity in funeral service and are less willing to pay traditional fees. Mortuary education isn't prepared for this new reality.

Among the issues which will emerge in the near future if the above observations are valid:

1) Funeral directors will increasingly be viewed as functionaries charged with carrying out instructions rather than valued professionals who offer trusted counsel.

2) As a result, funeral service will come to be viewed as just another commodity, resulting in price being the determining factor in the selection of services and merchandise. Funeral directors will then be compensated at a lower level than is currently the norm since they are perceived primarily as merchants rather than professionals. Funeral service has never been a particularly well-paid field for line-level staff historically; it could become less so. It will still be possible to make a living, but not in the style that many aspiring funeral directors are seeking. Quality people will likely seek career satisfaction elsewhere (as many already do).

3) All the education, degrees, accreditation, and licensure standards in the world won't affect these social and cultural changes.

The academic credentialing of mortuary science educators is a worthy topic of discussion. But it pales in comparison to the market realities facing this field and driving contemporary funeral behavior. Better that funeral service educators work more closely with practitioners to understand and adapt to these myriad of changes than to pursue another piece of paper to hang on the office wall. Mortuary science students need and deserve relevant instruction in practical funeral service reality. Their future, the educator's future, and the future of funeral service depend upon it.

Advanced degrees in Mortuary Science
Why Not?

E. David Ladd, JD

Several accredited Mortuary Science programs are affiliated with academic institutions that provide the student with a baccalaureate degree in Mortuary Science at the conclusion of their studies. Of these facilities, Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan is prominent and is in the process of developing a practical and industry-responsive graduate level program together with an Institute for mortuary science studies and research.

Whenever the topic of a graduate degree program in mortuary science is discussed, the first and obvious question is – why? Surveys taken of practicing funeral directors do not support the effort or need to provide advanced studies in the science. Carpe diem – *seize the day* – let tomorrow fend for itself - is the usual response for which a technical school would suffice in preparing the student for the minimum required licensure as an employee. Unfortunately, this attitude is a formula for complacency, stagnation and mediocrity for the funeral service profession and the funeral industry as a whole.

Rather than formulating admissions on the minimum required for licensing and developing a curriculum just sufficient to meet accreditation, it would strengthen the industry if the professionals – instructors and practitioners alike – strive for greater breadth and depth in the training of full service funeral service professionals and industry leaders. Our goal should be to develop well-grounded, responsive and contributing leaders of the community in addition to exceptionally qualified practicing professionals.

The separate phases of the educational process would include the review and enhancement of the admissions requirements, developing the accredited mortuary science curriculum to include varied fields of emphasis and interest and to develop an academic program suitable for the education of licensed, competent and qualified instructors for the various schools and programs and for the agency administrators charged with the overview and regulation of our profession.

The first two phases can be engaged by all mortuary science programs and should be a matter reviewed by their respective policy making boards. It is to the third phase that I direct my attention.

Mortuary science is the beneficiary of having both physical science and social science at its core. While we benefit, 'crib', and adopt the research of others in both the corporate and academic arenas, we do little to develop our own school-based directed studies and research in either of the sciences. The hallmark of an academically acceptable advanced degree program is the research, formulation and development of new and/or enhanced ideas and methods directed to further the science. Such a curriculum requires that the mortuary science program be affiliated with an accredited university with the overview necessary to ensure the academic integrity of the advanced degree program and to confer the degree accordingly. It is to such mortuary science programs that I speak.

Currently, degreed mortuary science programs offer little incentive to attract students already possessing a baccalaureate or higher degree. Such students looking for merely a change in employment are as well served by any accredited mortuary science program – often closer to home and at a cost savings. However, such students are usually better qualified to complete the program and pass licensing exams. By stint of their additional education, they are better able to assume productive roles in their communities in addition to the duties of the practicing funeral director. An institution having the academic depth to offer advanced degrees in mortuary science would be attractive to such applicants. Their sense of the value of a quality education in preparation for a career would draw them to an institution with the same sense of value. Such students would better serve the funeral service profession and the funeral industry in whatever role their careers may take.

Most university and college accreditation standards require that instruction be given by persons having the same or better (with emphasis on 'better') academic credentials as the curriculum being taught. A licensed funeral director with an advanced degree is

ideally suited to enhance any accredited mortuary science program or to elevate any non-accredited program to achieve its accreditation. The availability of a quality advanced degree program in mortuary science would serve as the genesis of an instructional corps to the industry.

Administrative rules and regulation of the various jurisdictions are often imposed and implemented by those having neither experience nor education in the industry or profession being regulated. Such agencies – and thus, the industry – would be better served by utilizing individuals having the background of a professional education from an accredited mortuary science program and the academic regimen required by an advanced degree in the field. This issue should not be taken lightly as each of us as professionals serving the public needs and the industry are impacted daily by such rules and regulations. Our professional associations – state and national - can not and should not be tasked with other than oversight and input to the legislative efforts in addition to serving the specific needs of the practitioners – not the administrative efforts in the regulation of our industry.

A curriculum developed and accredited for an advanced degree (MS or PhD) in Mortuary Science should involve a multidisciplinary approach. The curriculum should and must be in addition to the current accreditation requirements for a mortuary science program. This could involve the law and business programs through the education and psychology departments to the basic sciences. The curriculum would allow for various fields of emphasis as desired by the student and deemed relevant to the chosen career path. The advanced degree would involve appropriate original research and an accepted thesis in support.

It is suggested that a curriculum could be developed requiring 36 semester hours post graduate level studies of which 15 hours would be the research and thesis requirement and completion of the basic accredited mortuary science program. Courses currently being offered may be reviewed to determine if content is such that they may be re-designated as post-graduate level offerings.

Students entering the basic mortuary science program in possession of a baccalaureate degree may be admitted directly into the graduate program. In addition to completing the basic program, they would be required to maintain a GPA of >3.0 and during such coursework, they would be encouraged to formulate the research aspect of the advanced degree. Upon completion of the basic program, they would have the remaining post-graduate hours to complete to qualify for the advance degree. While it may not be necessary that a graduate applicant have an undergraduate degree in Mortuary Science, all such applicants would have to complete an accredited mortuary science program in addition to the graduate studies solely excepted such graduate level designated courses taken within a university affiliated mortuary science program.

Students matriculating into the baccalaureate program would continue with the GPA >2.5 requirement and complete the basic mortuary science program. Such students desiring to continue their education would be required to complete the additional 36 hours of study as no credit could be given for any baccalaureate coursework even though the individual course may be re-designated as post-graduate as such courses would apply to the baccalaureate degree. The commingling (cross-pollination, if you would) of the student body would enhance any mortuary science program.

The writer believe that a robust graduate program in Mortuary Science as an expansion of a university affiliated baccalaureate curriculum in Mortuary Science is desirable, needed and would lead to greater professionalism within the ranks of the funeral service providers and within the industry as a whole.

Will the Demand for Qualified Teachers Increase as the ABFSE Accredits More
Funeral Service Education Programs?

By

John Kroshus

Back in the 1983, the late Bill Pierce wrote an article in the **YB News** entitled, *The Future of Funeral Service Education.*[1] In that article Mr. Pierce warned that the rapid expansion of funeral service education programs among community colleges was not in the best interest of funeral service education.

I was teaching at a community college at the time, and have to say that I felt very threatened by the thoughts and opinions that Mr. Pierce offered.

Mr. Pierce argued that the proliferation of community college programs was little more than an attempt by the community colleges to increase enrollment. Mr. Pierce was disturbed by the intrusion of public education into an arena that had been well served by private institutions. He warned that the community college growth was driven not by a commitment to funeral service, but by a need to attract the additional revenue that funeral service students would provide. Mr. Pierce feared that community colleges would not adequately support their programs beyond providing start-up money. He also realized that new community college programs would draw students away from established private school programs. It was logical for him to speculate that lower enrollment in proprietary schools would create a drop in revenue, which would weaken the private schools. Mr. Pierce felt that the combination of under-funded community college programs and weakened proprietary programs would erode the overall quality of funeral service education.

I do not raise this issue to criticize, or in any way offend my colleagues in American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) schools around the country. So please, smooth down the hair on the back of your neck, and give me a shot at making my point.

It seems to me that there is a certain logic to Mr. Pierce's warning. Given the somewhat finite population of prospective students available to funeral service education, any increase in the number of schools would have the likely effect of decreasing the enrollment of each school. As more schools became accredited there would be, quite simply, more schools competing for a somewhat stable number of students.

In 1975 there were 35 ABFSE accredited schools. In 1985, which would be close to the time Mr. Pierce's article appeared, there were 39 ABFSE accredited schools. That number grew to 41 ABFSE accredited schools in 1992, and there are 52 ABFSE

---

[1] W.H. Pierce. "The Future of Funeral Service Education." Y.B. News, Nomis Publications, Inc., December 1983.

accredited schools on the 2001 roster.[2] This is about a 48.5% increase in the number of schools from the year 1975 to the year 2001.

We have seen some fluctuations in the number of students attending ABFSE schools over the years. Records of the ABFSE report the total number of students in accredited schools by adding the number of new students enrolled at member schools to the number of students who graduate from member schools. In the decade of the 1980's, enrollment in ABFSE accredited schools ranged from a high of 4,058 students in 1988 to a low of 3,552 students in 1980. The average for the years 1980 through 1989 was about 3,785 students. For the sake of discussion, if we use the number of accredited schools for 1985 (which was 39 accredited school), this would average out to 97 students for each ABFSE accredited school.[3]

By comparison, during the decade of the 1990's, enrollment in ABFSE accredited schools ranged from a high of 5,357 in 1996 to a low of 4,465 in 1999. The average enrollment for all ABFSE accredited schools for the decade of the 1990's was about 4,930 students.[4] In spite of the increase in the overall average number of students we also had more schools competing for those students. For the sake of discussion, if we use the number of accredited schools for 2001 (which was 52), this would average out to about 95 students for each ABFSE accredited school.[5] This is about a 24% increase in overall student population from the 1980's to the 1990's.

What does any of this have to do with teachers? It just seems to me that it's hard to talk about teachers without first talking about one of the major factors driving the need for teachers. Fluctuations in the student population will have an impact on the need for teachers.

As we consider how the increasing number of ABFSE accredited schools affects the need for qualified instructors, we must also consider how student numbers influence the need for teachers. And, we must consider where those students are attending school. Students have a lot more choices than they had twenty years ago. Therefore, the number and location of accredited schools has an effect on the distribution of students. The distribution of students impacts the distribution of teachers because, in order to teach 'em, you've got to be where they are.

It stands to reason that the ABFSE would experience an increase in revenue by increasing the number of schools that it accredits. It also appears that adding to the number of accredited schools has the potential of decreasing enrollment at individual existing schools. Decreasing enrollment means decreasing revenue for the school. I think we should examine the wisdom of continued proliferation. It appears that what is good for

---

[2] According to figures of the American Board of Funeral Service Education.
[3] My calculation based on information from the ABFSE, and the ICFSEB.
[4] Culbreth, Corrine. "From the President. . ." The Conference Report, Volume 11, Issue II, Second Trimester, 2000.
[5] My calculation based on information from the ABFSE and the ICFSEB.

the ABFSE may not be as good for its members individually. I make no value judgement on what that means. I'm just pointing that out.

Decreasing enrollment usually means less revenue. A drop in enrollment and a drop in revenue force schools to either take action, or suffer. Assuming that schools want to avoid suffering, they will take action to remedy the situation.

What actions do they usually take? They compete more vigorously for students, they raise tuition, fees, etc, reallocate resources, implement expense reduction policies, and make budget cuts. They may, for example, cut things like teaching positions.

As the cost of going to school goes up, student interest tends to go down. Students have to weigh the opportunity costs as they make decisions about whether to attend school. For example, is it realistic for a student to assume a debt of $30,000 or $40,000 in order to get a job that has entry level pay of about $25,000? How many years will it take to pay off the school debt? Is the sacrifice worth it? I don't presume to answer on behalf of prospective students, but my experience has been that students consider such questions as they decide where to go to school, or if they will go at all.

Having said all this, I would also like to say that I have come to the conclusion that **maybe the ABFSE should consider discussing a moratorium on the accreditation of additional schools.**

In the 1990's we saw an increase in the total number of students enrolling in accredited programs across the country, but that increase was spread out over more schools. Consequently, some individual schools actually experienced a drop in enrollment. It's not rocket science to think that there is a relationship between the drop in enrollment at individual schools and the increase in the number of ABFSE accredited schools.

If there is truly going to be a shortage of funeral directors, it is likely that there will be an increased interest in funeral service as a career. If there is increased interest, there is also likely to be an overall increase in enrollment among the ABFSE accredited schools. It might be wise to consider how the current ABFSE members can turn the (labor shortage) negative into a (enrollment increase) positive, by positioning themselves to receive more students.   The labor shortage is not a reason to accredit more schools. It may be wiser to develop a strategy that will allow the ABFSE to use the labor shortage as a means of getting the existing schools healthier.

By now I'm beginning to feel that the title of this article is a "loss leader." So, I want to try to offer some observations about funeral service education and the need for teachers.

No, I don't think that the increase in the number of schools will create a shortage of qualified teachers for ABFSE accredited schools. There appears to be ample interest among funeral service professionals to make the transition from practice to education.

I do think that the ABFSE should consider careful examination of how schools are using part-time faculty members. Take note of the criteria listed in Standard 7 of the ABFSE Accreditation Manual. One provision states that, "All full-or part-time faculty, initially appointed after September 1, 1969 as funeral service educators, shall have a bachelors or higher degree from a regionally accredited college or university.[6] A second provision in the Accreditation Manual states, "After May 1, 1979, all newly appointed full-time faculty shall achieve a masters degree within five years of their appointment...."[7]

An administrator looking to cut expenses, reallocate resources, or make budget cuts might come to the conclusion that hiring part-time faculty would offer the means to a desired end, but create no obligation from accreditation standards to insist that the faculty had, or pursued a degree beyond a bachelor's degree. It can be an administrative strategy to eliminate expenses by avoiding the salary and fringe benefit packages that are commonly given to full-time faculty members.

If this notion is tied back to decreasing enrollment per institution, it becomes possible that we may face a future of drop around, part-time faculty. We must ask ourselves how this might effect the overall quality of funeral service education?

If schools make a commitment to hiring full-time faculty, and insist that new faculty have or pursue a graduate degree, it is my observation that the schools encourage (if not insist) that graduate degrees be in education. We need professional educators in the classroom. We weaken ourselves and erode or own efforts if we merely put funeral professionals in the classroom. In addition to knowing how to embalm and how to be funeral directors, our faculty must know about learning theory, lesson preparation, classroom management, and test and measurement. The Conference should not have to explain to professional educators the difference between mean, median, and mode. Professional educators should be able to interpret National Board statistics without a primer from Dr. Hatfield.

Any college or university that has a reputable department or school of education can provide the type of graduate work that we need to turn funeral practitioners into funeral service educators.

---

[6] American Board of Funeral Service Education, Inc. Accreditation Manual, October 2000, page 9-5.
[7] Ibid., page 9-5.

Enrollment in Funeral Service Education

1975--2000

by

George P. Connick

Executive Director

American Board of Funeral Service Education

PREFACE

The American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE) is the professional organization for funeral service educators. All funeral service programs and institutions [hereafter, all funeral service programs within multi-purpose institutions as well as stand-alone funeral service institutions are referred to as programs] accredited by ABFSE are members of the American Board as are representatives from the public (2), the National Funeral Directors Association (3) and the International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards (3). ABFSE was formed over 40 years ago and it functions through a committee structure with all major issues voted upon by all of the members at the annual meeting in April each year.

All decisions regarding accreditation of programs are the responsibility of the Committee on Accreditation (COA). The COA is an autonomous committee within the American Board. It is

recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) as the only accrediting body for funeral service education.

For the past 25 years, the Committee on Accreditation has been collecting and assessing various enrollment trends in funeral service education. The enrollment information is collected annually from each of the accredited programs and distributed to all ABFSE members. It provides an invaluable historical profile of the trends in funeral service over many years.

Following the collection of the statistics for the year 2000, the Executive Director decided to provide a 25-year retrospective of the enrollments. It has provided some very interesting information about trends and growth patterns in funeral service education.

This article will highlight several of the most interesting trends.

1. Number of Accredited Programs

Chart #1 demonstrates the dramatic recent growth in the number of accredited programs since 1975. During the 17-year period from 1975 to 1992, only six new programs were accredited. In the eight years since 1992, 11 programs have been accredited. In addition, the number of public institutions inquiring about accreditation, with the intent of offering a program, has grown rapidly in the past three years. Although there were only two institutions which had applied for candidacy in 2000, there are three others which have indicated they plan to apply within the next year.

Chart #1
Accredited Programs

	1975	1992	1996	1999	2000	Increase 75-01
Accredited:	35	41	42	50	52	+ 49 %
Candidates:				4	2	

2. Number of States with Accredited Programs

The 52 accredited programs are located in 30 states and the District of Columbia. New York has the greatest number of accredited programs with five and Illinois, Mississippi and Texas are close behind with four programs each.

The 20 states without programs are generally across the northern tier of states from Washington in the west to Maine in the east.

3. Percentage Enrollment by States

The impact of a state having one or more funeral service programs on educational access is highlighted by Chart #2. The 30 states (plus the District of Columbia) which currently have programs enroll 91+ percent of all funeral service students. Proximity to a program clearly leads to greater access.

Chart #2

Enrollment by States

	1999		2000	
with a Program	2394	(91.6 %)	2161	(91.3 %)
without a Program	220	(8.4 %)	207	(8.7 %)

4. Accredited Programs by Type of Control and Degrees Offered

The number of public institutions has shown the greatest growth over the past 25 years. In 1975, the public and private institutions were almost equal in number. In 2000, the public programs, primarily found in community colleges, were the fastest growing sector of funeral service education. Chart #2 outlines each of the ABFSE accredited programs by their type of control.

In addition, the associate degree or diploma was offered by 47 programs and made up 90% of the degrees awarded.

Chart #3

Accredited Programs by Type of Control

Public

Associate (CC's & Universities)	33	(63%)
Baccalaureate	4	(8%)
TOTAL	37	(71%)

Private

Associate & Diploma (Single-Purpose)	11	(23%)
Associate (Multi-Purpose)	3	(6%)
Baccalaureate	1	(2%)
TOTAL	15	(29%)

5. Associate and Bachelor's Degrees Awarded as a Percentage of Total Degrees

Chart #3 demonstrates clearly the impact of the newly implemented 1996 minimum degree requirement of an associate degree, or its equivalent, for all programs. In the last year for students graduating under the old requirement (i.e., 1996), 45 percent of the students received a diploma or a certificate. Two years later, in 1998, only 15 percent received a degree other than an associate or baccalaureate.

Chart #4

Degrees Awarded, 1996-2000

Year	Associate/Bachelor	Diploma or Other
1996	1178 (55%)	984 (45%)
1998	1569 (85%)	277 (15%)
1999	1624 (83%)	279 (17%)
2000	1471 (84%)	274 (16%)

6. Distance Learning Offered

One of the recent phenomenons in higher education is the expansion of educational access through distance learning. As chart #4 indicates, 44 percent of ABFSE accredited programs offer a portion of their program at a distance.

Chart #5

Distance Learning Offered

	Public	Private
Associate	16 (31%)	5 (10%)
Baccalaureate	2 (4%)	—
SUBTOTAL	18 of 37 (49%)	5 of 15 (33%)
TOTAL	23 of 52 (44%)	

7. New Student Enrollment

In order to provide a clearer focus on enrollment trends, new student enrollments are shown below in five-year increments. In addition, enrollment for 1996 (the highest in the 25-year period) is highlighted.

The 25-year enrollment history indicates that the dramatic enrollment increase and subsequent decrease appears tied directly to the 1996 implementation of the associate degree as the minimum ABFSE educational standard. Apparently, many students flocked to ABFSE programs in order to complete their funeral service education before the associate degree requirement became effective.

A review of enrollments over 25 years (1975-2000) shows that new student enrollment in the year 2000 appears to be leveling off at its historic level of approximately 2200 to 2400 students.

It is interesting that enrollments in 2000 are higher than any year from 1977 to 1990 and 155 students (7.0 %) higher than they were in 1990.

It appears that the enrollment peak in 1996 was a unique blip caused by the introduction of a new requirement that many students avoided by accelerating their funeral service education before the requirement went into effect.

Chart #6
"New" Student Enrollment

1975	=	2475
1980	=	2155
1985	=	2222
1990	=	2213
1995	=	3022
1996	**=**	**3213**
2000	=	2368

8. Graduates

The number of graduates over 25 years follows the same general trend as new student enrollments. One interesting trend here is that decline of graduates began in 1996. This may indicate that a larger number of students didn't complete their programs in the mid-1990's. The attrition rate for the 1990's is a topic that will need further analysis in the future.

The peak in graduates in this 25-year period was reached in 1995.

The number of graduates in 2000 is 123 students higher (7.6 %) than in 1990.

40

Chart #7

Graduates

1975	=	1852
1980	=	1397
1985	=	1509
1990	=	1622
1995	=	2221
2000	=	1745

9. Male/Female Enrollment

The number of women enrolling in funeral service education continues its past growth pattern and for the first time in history the number of female first-time students was great than the number of males. Women now represent 51% of the total enrolled first-time students.

Chart #8
Male/Female Enrollment

	Male	Female	TOTAL
1971	1762 (95%)	103 (5%)	1865
1976	2210 (87%)	343 (13%)	2553
1981	1753 (81%)	417 (19%)	2170
1986	1577 (75%)	538 (25%)	2115
1991	1873 (66%)	785 (34%)	2658
1996	1936 (60%)	1277 (40%)	3213
1999	1481 (53%)	1309 (47%)	2790
2000	1169 (49%)	1199 (51%)	2368

41

10. The Average Age of New Students

The average age of new students has remained relatively constant since 1991. Students 17-22 years old make up 43% of new students while students over 30 make up 24%.

11. Prior Education of New Students

The number of students with one or more years of college has remained in a band between 51% and 61% since 1971. In the year 2000, 45% had a high school equivalency or a high school diploma while 55% had one or more years of college. In 2000, 13% of new enrollees had a bachelors or graduate degree.

12. Ethnic Enrollment

The number of Caucasian students has declined since 1971 from 1590 to 1431 in 2000. This is a shift from 85% of total students to 60%.

African American students have increased from 235 in 1971 to 751 in 2000. This represents a growth from 12.6% of total new students in 1971 to 32% in 2000.

Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans and other ethnic groups totaled only 40 students, or 2%, in 1971. This number had grown to 186 students, or 8%, in 2000.

42

13. Passage Rate on the National Board Exam

The following figures show the success of students on the National Board Exam for the years 1996 through 2000.

Chart #9

Passage Rate on NBE

	Graduates	Took	as % of Grads	Passed	as % of Takers
1996	2168	1922	89%	1572	82%
1997	2088	1853	89%	1467	79%
1998	1848	1634	88%	1149	70%
1999	1903	1538	81%	1258	82%
2000	1745	1507	86%	1240	82%

43

CONCLUSION

As the data indicates so well, the past 25 years has seen significant growth in funeral service education. Much has been accomplished to strengthen the quality of funeral service programs, including the appointment of a full-time Executive Director in 1985, the complete revision of the accreditation standards on at least three occasions, and the establishment of the associate degree as the minimum standard for all accredited programs.

Enrollment of new students each year since 1975 has fluctuated, but, overall during that 25-year period, enrollment has remained essentially level.

The most dramatic growth has been in the area of new programs. In the past 25 years, 17 new programs were accredited which is a 50 percent increase. However, the past eight years has seen the greatest activity. Eleven new programs were accredited which represents a 27 percent increase in that short period of time.

The future appears to hold exciting promise and numerous challenges.

DO WE NEED THE OSHA ERGONOMICS STANDARD?

Mary Louise Williams, editor

Ten years ago I conducted a pilot survey designed to gather information on occupationally-related musculo-skeletal complaints of funeral service licensees. At the time the questionnaire was primarily a needs assessment as I was considering incorporating an ergonomics component into my anatomy course and needed some estimate of the importance of this topic to the profession. Two hundred and seventy-five questionnaires were mailed; 125 were returned. Individuals responding were males of varying ages with five to thirty-four years of professional experience.

My questionnaire asked recipients to report any muscular pain and/or weakness, to identify the area of the body most affected, and to estimate the frequency of these episodes. I also asked whether or not their physical complaints were responsible for lost work days and whether these complaints were less evident off the job (eg. during or after a vacation). The final two questions related to alleviation of symptoms: did practitioners utilize self-help measures such as stretching or strengthening exercises or did they rely on medical intervention?

Results were most interesting. Sixty-five percent of responding funeral directors reported muscular pain or stiffness by the end of their working day. The most frequently mentioned site of discomfort was the back (77% of persons responding) followed in decreasing order of frequency by the neck (31%), knees (24%), and shoulders (21%). Note that 52% of these individuals were experiencing pain daily or weekly and an additional 12% were in pain at least one day of each month.

Even more significant was the fact that although almost two-thirds of the persons responding were experiencing on- the- job pain on a regular basis, only 16% of them reported ever missing a day at work due to their physical complaints.

Finally, it became evident that only one-third of these funeral service professionals were exercising to relieve their symptoms and that a scant 14% had ever consulted a health care professional (medical doctor, chiropractor, or physical therapist). The sample was apparently 'toughing it out'.

While this was admittedly a small study of arguable application to the profession as a whole, I have often regretted the lack of funding that could have expanded this work for NFDA. In any event the study did result in a modification of my class and the inclusion of an exercise room, funded by our alumni, in our facility.

Why all of the reminiscing? As I type, Congress is considering revocation of the recently promulgated OSHA ergonomic standard. I expect that we will be subjected to the usual rhetoric about cost of compliance and anticipated detrimental effects on the nation's economy; but how does that balance against experience? How many of us suffer chronic back pain? How many of our professional friends and associates are similarly affected? Unfortunately there are no sources of objective information relating the occupation of funeral directing to injury at either the state or the national level. A search of the National Bureau of Labor Statistics will yield no information specific for code 7261 (funeral directors/homes) and information at the state level is almost non-existent. My own state, Michigan, has long since ceased publication of occupational injury reports but does continue to provide the National Council on Compensation Insurance with general workman's compensation data. The NCCI presently compiles information from fewer than 20 contributing

states and does not categorize by occupation. Their database is, therefore, limited although informative.

But in spite of the fact that there is a paucity of data specific to funeral service, there are a number of sources that help us to define the scope of back injury in the general population:

Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. April24, 1992
    *There are an estimated 5.2 million Americans suffering with low back pain.

National Center for Health Statistics. Series 13, no.142. 1999
    *There were 5,131,000 strains and sprains of the back reported for 1995-96.

NCHS. Series 13, no.143.1999
    *There were 15,770,000 visits to doctors for back symptoms in 1997.

National Council on Compensation Insurance, 1993
    * Eighty-three per cent of back injuries are due to sprains and strains caused by
        - lifting (52.6%)
        - slips and falls (19.4%)
        -pushing and/or pulling (11.7%)

    *In 1990, back claims comprised 31.8% of all indemnity claims (these are time
        from work claims receiving payment for injury).
        -In Michigan, the number of such claims for the years 1986-1990 was
        10,053,or 28.3% of all claims.

    *The cost for back injury exceeds the cost for other injuries by almost 65% due to
        longer duration and higher attorney involvement and is expected to
        escalate over time.
        -In Michigan (1990) the average cost per back claim was $17,890.
            (Readers, do you have more current dollar figures for your state?)

    *Back and other injury claims are more prevalent for the 21-35 age group than the
        46-60 age group and more prevalent in men than in women. This means
        that younger workers have more worker's compensation injuries than
        older workers when adjusted for work force populations.

Musculo-skeletal Conditions in the U.S. Amer. Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons.1992
    * Restricted activity days/injury due to sprains = 7
    *Bed disability days/injury due to sprains = 1.8

Although these facts and figures are blind as to occupation, they are easily related to

many job descriptions of funeral service. For example, how many funeral service personnel have jobs that require forceful exertion (heavy lifting or awkward postures caused by reaching and turning or bending)?   How many work when tired or cold or for prolonged periods of sitting or slouching? How many are overweight, lack sufficient exercise or function under high stress?   All of the above are factors contributing to back injury.

What's my point? Simply that regardless of whether or not the OSHA Ergonomics Standard persists as promulgated, we have our work cut out for us. Barring any masochistic tendencies, we should take care of ourselves; these magnificent bodies deserve tender loving care. Our students should be so instructed that they, too, are able to perform the tasks of their chosen profession for a lifetime of injury free service. And finally, our employees should be comfortable in the knowledge that their contributions are the bedrock of our economic success and that we value them enough to accommodate their physical limitations.

What's the plan? At minimum companies should:

- Identify jobs that can cause musculo-skeletal disorders. Many employers lack any
        written job descriptions let alone include consideration of physical requirements.
-Educate employees about the signs and symptoms of disorders.
-Accommodate employees experiencing pain by giving them the opportunity to perform
        lighter work while recovering from an injury, a factor of some import given the
        shortage of qualified funeral service personnel.

and employees should:
        -Get proper rest.
        -Exercise your back muscles; all it takes is 10 mins/day.
        -Warm up for work.
        -Remove obstacles from your path of movement.
        -Use the proper muscles (eg., lift with your legs).
        -Learn the early warning signs pf musculo-skeletal disorder:
                *painful joints
                *pain, tingling, burning, or numbness in the hands or feet
                *shooting or stabbing pains in the arms or legs
                *swelling or inflammation
                *back or neck pain

*stiffness

Consult the following for handy tips: http://www.nih.gov/ors/ds/ergonomics   (see samples)
The ABCs of Moving and Lifting Things Safely. Channing and Bete Inc. (good for students)
EMT/Injury Free. FERNO (especially good for equipment use in body pick-up and removal)

Division of Safety
Office of Research Services

Ergonomics Home

Ergonomics at Work
Laboratory
Computers
Industrial & Shops
Patient Care

Ergonomic Equipment
Manufacturers of:
Lab Equipment
Office Equipment
Patient Care Equipment

An **Ergonomic Chair?**

Stretches/Exercises

A Healthy Back
Work in "neutral"

Pain Evaluation

Online information

Link to:
Safety & Health Specialist
Division of Safety
ORS
NIH
Disclaimer

Last Modified: February 1901

INDUSTRIAL ERGONOMICS

Lifting Right! | Healthy Back! | Strengthen your back | Vibrations | Hand Tools

Warming Up for Work

Just as an athlete prepares before playing a sport, you too should prepare before work to help prevent back injuries. These slow stretches help prevent back injuries and make your muscles more flexible.

Hold each position for 20 seconds and repeat 3 times before work.

Ergonomics at Work
Laboratory
Computers
Industrial & Shops
Patient Care

Ergonomic Equipment
Manufacturers of:
Lab Equipment
Office Equipment
Patient Care Equipment

An **Ergonomic Chair?**

Stretches/Exercises

A Healthy Back
Work in "neutral"

Pain Evaluation

Online information

Link to:
Safety & Health Specialist
Division of Safety
ORS
NIH
Disclaimer

Last Modified: February 1901

Maintain a Healthy Back

Maintaining a Healthy Back with Exercise and Rest

It doesn't take much time to improve the strength and flexibility of your back. In just 10 minutes a day, you can perform a few exercises, which can prevent a lifetime of low back pain!

This exercise strengthens your stomach muscles:
- Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- Slowly raise your head and shoulders off the floor, keeping your hands across your chest.
- Work up to 30 repetitions.
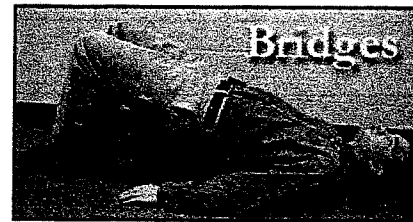
This exercise strengthens your low back:
- Lie on your back with both knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.
- With arms lying at your sides, tighten stomach muscles, squeeze buttocks, and slowly raise your hips into the air.
- Hold for 5 seconds and and then slowly bring the buttocks back to the floor.
- Repeat 20 times.

This strengthens your back and leg muscles:

- Stand with your back against a wall and your feet slightly apart.
- Slide into a half-sit.
- Hold as long as you can; slide back up.
- Repeat 5 times.

Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic exercise also stretches and strengthens the muscles that support your low back, which combined with healthy eating can also help you maintain your ideal weight. If you're overweight, the extra pounds add to the strain on your low back. Aerobic exercise like walking, can help you lose weight.
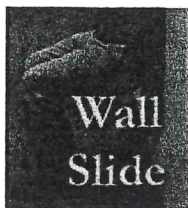
Proper Rest

The best position for resting the back muscles is lying on your back on your living room floor with a pillow under your knees and a rolled up towel under your neck. You can also lie on your side in the fetal position— bend the knees to reduce strain on the low back and put a pillow between your knees, and under your head and neck to keep them level.

JOURNAL OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION

The Journal of Funeral Service Education is published under the auspices of UMSEA (University Mortuary Science Education Association).