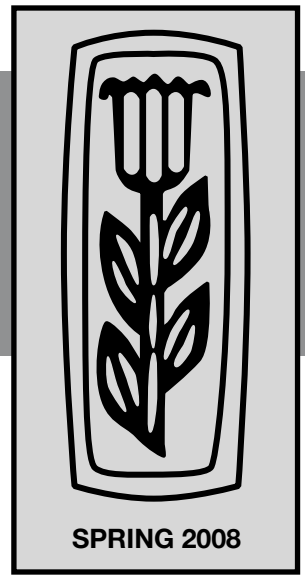


FCA REPORT

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FCA-GKC



Big operators boost prices most

Possible because we don't shop around

by Steve Nicely

In a reversal of normal economic and business practices, the largest funeral service providers in the Kansas City area raised their prices far more during the last three years than smaller, locally owned mortuaries, a survey by the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City reveals.

Nineteen of 74 funeral parlors in the metropolitan area are owned by two national chains. Service Corporation International, the nation's largest owner of funeral homes and cemeteries, raised the average prices of its 11 McGilley and Mount Moriah locations 25.7 % for nine basic items since the FCA's last survey in 2004. SCI promotes its funeral properties under the Dignity Memorial label and does not mention its corporate ownership in its local advertising or website.

The area's eight D.W. Newcomers locations are holdings of Stewart Enterprises, the nation's second-largest funeral industry operator. Doing



D.W. Newcomer's - 112th & Metcalf

business under the Newcomer's name, the eight facilities raised average prices 27.9 % between the 2004 to 2007 surveys. And in January, 2008, after the 2007 survey's end, the Newcomer's group posted another price increase of 30 %. Between 2004 and the prices in effect as of January 2008, the Newcomer's average prices increased 58 %. The latest boost was not included in the 2007 FCA survey calculations on pages 4 & 5 because it didn't happen in 2007.

Over all, funeral prices in the Kansas City Metropolitan Area went up 19.6 % on average since 2004, more than double the area's Consumer Price Index increase of 8.5% during the same 3-year period. FCA tallied the prices of nine basic funeral items obtained from the General Price Lists the Federal Trade Commission requires that all local funeral homes provide to consumers.

The two national chains, which acquired their major area holdings since 1983, account for all of the top-10, most-expensive funeral homes in the KC metro area based on costs for the nine basic items. Those prices include lowest-priced caskets and grave liners available and for embalming, transporting the body,

visitation and funeral service and use of a hearse and limousine. The chains' average total charges were \$6,903 compared with the metro-wide average of \$5,449. Burial costs are not included.

Survey on pages 4 & 5

"The very groups that could benefit from economies of scale by buying in bulk, and then passing the savings on to the consumer, aren't doing it," said Mercedes Bern-Klug, a former FCA board member who assisted in compiling the data from both surveys. "Because most people don't ever compare prices, there is no real incentive for funeral homes to compete on the basis of price."

Bern-Klug, now an assistant professor in the Aging Studies Program and the School of Social Work at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, said there is a reason why national chains buy local funeral parlors, but leave the names and often the management unchanged. Consumers are less likely to realize they are doing business with someone from out of town.

The Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Rule requires funeral homes to provide their general price lists to anyone who requests one in person. The list must include prices for individual services that families can decline and a price for "basic services" that consumers cannot decline.

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City, a local affiliate

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Price survey a long time coming

By *Bev McGill, FCA-GKC President*

Good News! At long last, after hours and hours of outstanding dedication, we have a new Funeral Home Price Survey. Here's what our unpaid, volunteer board members have done to bring the survey to completion.

Our wonderful newsletter editor, Steve Nicely, has been the motivating force behind it. He was the coordinator, cheerleader, "whip cracker." I shudder to think of the hours he has spent on it.

When our initial mailing went out to the funeral homes in 2007, we received many, but not all of their General Price Lists (GPLs). We followed with a call to the funeral homes that had not responded. Lastly, various board members requested GPLs from the holdouts in person. One board member drove from Olathe to Blue Springs in a snow storm to collect a GPL. That's what I mean by dedication!

We next called on a former board

member, Mercedes Bern Klug, now living in Iowa City, to enter all the information from the GPLs on a grid she still had on her computer from our last survey in 2004. That was no small job! It seems the GPLs are becoming more and more elaborate making it difficult to get down to the basic charges even for people who are accustomed to reading them.

Another board member, Nancy Petersen, used her computer to put the survey information in a printable format. Her time-consuming endeavor was squeezed in between working two jobs and dealing with two young children.

Now that I've told you how hard our board members worked on the survey let me tell you about our organization. The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City is a not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) organization, and all donations are tax deductible. We have no office or paid staff. An area church, All Souls Unitarian Universalist

Church, generously allows us to have our voice mail in their facility at no charge and we also have our mailing address at their facility. Our major expenses are printing and mailing.

From the calls I've received from people requesting new price surveys, I know they are widely used. We'd greatly appreciate your donations so we can continue furnishing this important information. Our only means of support comes from your donations. And for the professionals who use the survey in your work with clients, hopefully your employer will consider a generous donation.



*Bev McGill
FCA-GKC President*

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Big operators boost prices most (Continued from Page 1)

of the national FCA based in South Burlington, Vermont, collected the price lists for mortuaries appearing in the 2007 SBC Yellow Pages. Most cooperated by mailing their lists.

Mark McGillley, market director of the area's 11 SCI facilities and a fourth-generation McGillley in the business, said the company now places more emphasis on services and less on merchandise. Based on consumer survey results, he said SCI has reduced prices on caskets 50 % and increased them for services valued more by consumers. For instance, the company's service guarantee refunds the price of any part of funeral services that a family isn't happy with. It also offers bereavement travel discounts on air fairs, rental cars and hotels that are better than those offered by airlines.

McGilley, whose family sold the family business to SCI in 1983 but still manages it, also suggested there is no comparison in the quality of SCI facilities here and other lower-cost mortuaries in the area.

"It's like the difference between a full-service Marriott and a Fairfield Inn," he said. "I don't have any problem being



McGilley's on State Line

the highest if I can back it up."

John Frownfelter, Newcomer's area director of operations, said Stewart Enterprises also has followed a similar policy of reducing the cost of caskets 20% to 30% in favor of offering higher quality services.

Joshua Slocum, FCA national executive director, said a price-fixing suit filed in 2005 by his organization against SCI, Stewart Enterprises and their casket supplier was the likely motivation for reduced merchandise pricing.

"About the time we filed suit, they cut their casket prices, then added the price cut and more back into their basic

services fee and their costs for body removal and embalming," Slocum said. "The basic fee is the one the customer can't say no to, and most customers will end up paying for the others anyway."

Slocum said part of the onus for hefty price boosts by the two chains related to Wall Street and their unseen customers, the stockholders.

"If people realized how outrageously and unjustifiably over priced these corporate funeral homes are, they could make a smarter economic decision and find an independently owned funeral home and get a better price," he said. "It's exactly the opposite of every other business."

Bern-Klug said the FCA encourages people to shop around by reviewing General Price Lists before selecting a funeral home. "When consumers start paying attention to prices and value, we expect prices to come down.

"The purpose of FCA is to inform the public about local options and prices. Some people don't realize that they could save a couple thousand dollars by using a funeral home a few blocks away from the one they are used to."

Take-home messages from the price survey

After comparing more than 1,600 funeral prices in 2004 and again in 2007 for the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City, Mercedes Bern-Klug suggested several “take-home messages” of advice.



Mercedes Bern-Klug

- Any place of worship that distributes calendars advertising a funeral home should make that funeral home’s General Price List available to the congregation. The 2007 Price Survey of the Funeral Consumers Alliance also would be a valuable resource for every congregation.
- When someone dies in one city and is shipped to another city for a service and burial, two funeral homes are involved. That’s when it is especially important to check prices because some mortuaries charge \$500 to “forward” or “receive” the remains while others charge \$3,500. Since both the “forwarding” and the “receiving” funeral homes charge, the family could pay from \$1,000 to \$7,000 for the service.
- The more people compare prices, the more it will benefit all consumers. Funeral homes will realize people are shopping prices and will respond like every other industry in America. If you don’t compare and don’t shop, we will all be paying higher prices.
- The Funeral Consumers Alliance has no vested interest in which funeral homes people use, or if they use a funeral home at all. The FCA feels strongly that people should be informed. It’s not easy being informed because there is no standardized form for price lists and they are not easy to compare. Some are vague.
- Consumers would appreciate and use funeral homes that make their price lists easy to read. Funeral homes should be posting their General Price List on their websites.
- Many price lists state: “Alternative containers available for cremation only.” That should not be the mortuary’s decision. That should be a family decision. The prices of alternative containers are lower than caskets. If a family wants to use an alternative container, rather than purchasing a casket, that is their right. Price lists should not discourage consumers from purchasing what they want.
- Send neighbors and friends to collect price lists before the time of death if possible and even after death. Once the body is picked up by a funeral home, those are the prices you will pay. Although you can switch funeral homes after they pick up the body, it can add extra charges to have more than one funeral home involved.
- Ask questions about the price lists. If you are confused about an item on a price list, ask the funeral home staff person to explain.

(Mercedes Bern-Klug, Ph.D., M.S.W., M.A., is a former FCA-GKC board member who now is an assistant professor in the School of Social Work and the Aging Studies Program at the University of Iowa, Iowa City.)

Belton widow rebuffed in quest to change system

By Steve Nicely

A determined widow’s complaints against the Service Corporation International-owned McGilley & George Funeral Home in Belton got no results from the Missouri Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors and the Missouri Attorney General’s office. Now a bill that would add consumer representatives to the Board of Embalmers appears stalled in committee.

Rep. Brian Baker’s bill in the Missouri House, HB 1588, would add five consumer advocates to the Board of Embalmers, which now has five members from the funeral industry and one public member. Baker’s bill was inspired by the case of Marilyn Oehlschlaeger, who charged multiple violations of Missouri laws and the Federal Trade Commission’s Funeral Rule during the October, 2006, funeral of her husband, Kenneth Oehlschlaeger. Baker recently learned that a committee chairman plans no hearings on the bill.

The Board of Embalmers interviewed Allen Meyer, general manager of the funeral home, but did not interview Oehlschlaeger or her two daughters, who accompanied her during the funeral planning process. No hearing was conducted. She was informed by letter that the Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors found “insufficient grounds to take further action at this time.”

Oehlschlaeger, 68, said she chose McGilley & George because she

Continued on Page 7

Pre order expanded survey now

The prices on pages 4 & 5 of nine basic funeral items are part of a more comprehensive price survey of 23 categories of goods and services found on the General Price Lists of funeral homes. The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City is preparing an expanded report of all 23 items including prices for direct cremation, immediate burial, forwarding and receiving remains from one funeral home to another, alternative containers, rental caskets, highest-priced caskets, graveside services and memorial services.

The report should be available by early summer with a suggested contribution of \$15. We encourage advanced orders to help us assess how many to print, but send no money now. You will receive an invoice when the report is mailed. Send your name and address to Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City, 4501 Walnut, Kansas City, MO 64111 or email your order to Bevmcg9@aol.com.

2007 Price Survey of Greater Kansas City Funeral Homes

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O
Funeral Home	Date on Price List	Ownership	Basic Services	Embalming	Transfer Remains to FH	Visitation at FH	Funeral Service at FH	Hearse	Limo	Casket Lowest \$	Grave Liner Lowest \$	2007 Total	2004 Total	Difference	% Change
1) Advantage	April-07	Local	\$695	\$590	\$295	\$195	\$325	\$295	\$195	\$495	\$697	\$3,782	**		(1)
2) Alden-Harrington	Jan-06	Local	1,540	695	195	395	495	375	275	638	665	5,273	5,273	0	0.00% (2)
3) Amos	Nov-06	Local	2,150	695	275	425	525	375	225	549	730	5,849	5,611	238	4.24% (3)
4) Barreto	Jan-07	Local	1,795	650	225	275	345	250	250	325	250	4,365	**		(4)
5-7) Bruce	March-06	Local	1,595	580	275	350	450	195	210	750	645	5,050	4,400	650	14.77% (5-7)
8) Butler	Dec-06	Local	1,996	545	215	300	300	230	210	758	578	5,132	4,300	832	19.35% (8)
9) Cedar Crest	Nov-03	Local	1,155	400	200	250	300	195	225	1,395	585	4,705	4,705	0	0.00% (9)
10) Chapel Hill-Butler	April-07	SCI, Inc	1,445	995	495	295	495	395	295	495	380	5,290	4,220	1,070	25.36% (10)
11-14) Charter	Jan-07	Local	1,125	445	225	295	375	275	100	1,195	675	4,710	4,015	695	17.31% (11-14)
15) Church	Dec-06	Local	500	300	100	n/a	n/a	260	295	450	550	*	**		(15)
16) Cremation Society	March-06	Local	not listed	not listed	not listed	not listed	not listed	not listed	not listed	not listed	not listed	*	**		(16)
17) Cullen	Oct-07	Local	1,095	555	not listed	350	345	not listed	not listed	870	815	*	**		(17)
18) Eley and Sons	Sept-05	Local	1,350	620	210	295	295	330	275	695	625	4,695	4,150	545	13.13% (18)
19) Elite Funeral Chapel	June-07	Local	1,600	500	175	200	400	550	500	700	695	5,320	**		(19)
20) Duane E Harvey	Feb-07	Local	1,695	665	275	250	250	425	345	695	650	5,250	4,125	1,125	27.27% (20)
21-22) Heartland Cremation	April-06	Local	595	395	325	195	not listed	195	165	n/a	n/a	*	**		(21-22)
23) Highland Park	Feb-07	Local	1,405	475	175	200	300	225	225	600	600	4,205	3,940	265	6.73% (23)
24) Hixson-Klein	Jan-07	Local	895	425	200	450	600	225	100	995	645	4,535	**		(24)
25) Mrs. JW Jones	Feb-07	Local	1,500	725	200	500	600	300	325	995	750	5,895	4,760	1,135	23.84% (25)
26-27) Lawrence A Jones	March-07	Local	1,575	645	285	325	375	335	325	1,495	505	5,865	4,720	1,145	24.26% (26-27)
28) K.C. Funeral Directors	Aug-06	Local	730	215	125	400	400	275	225	595	695	3,660	3,190	470	14.73% (28)
29) Louis Memorial	Aug-07	Local	1,999	899	290	399	459	290	290	989	989	6,604	5,624	980	17.43% (29)
30) Maple Hill	May-07	Local	1,435	445	220	295	450	205	205	800	600	4,655	4,430	225	5.08% (30)
31) Marts Memorial	Jan-07	Local	695	350	175	275	350	350	250	475	295	3,215	3,075	140	4.55% (31)
32) McGillley & Frye	April-07	SCI, Inc	2,130	995	495	295	495	395	395	495	380	6,075	4,780	1,295	27.09% (32)
33-34) McGillley & George	April-07	SCI, Inc	2,130	995	495	295	495	395	395	495	380	6,075	4,780	1,295	27.09% (33-34)
35) McGillley & Hoge	April-07	SCI, Inc	2,595	995	495	345	545	395	395	495	380	6,640	5,420	1,220	22.51% (35)
36) McGillley State Line	April-07	SCI, Inc	3,095	995	495	335	695	395	395	495	380	7,280	5,840	1,440	24.66% (36)
37) McGillley-Antioch	April-07	SCI, Inc	2,595	995	495	345	545	395	395	495	380	6,640	5,420	1,220	22.51% (37)
38) McGillley Midtown	April-07	SCI, Inc	1,445	995	495	295	495	395	395	495	380	5,390	4,850	540	11.13% (38)
39) Meyers Family	Jan-07	Local	1,100	690	282	375	375	303	198	995	490	4,808	3,715	1,093	29.42% (39)
40) Meyers Funeral Chapel	Feb-07	Local	1,995	995	495	395	495	395	395	395	895	6,455	**		(40)
41) Meyers Northland Chapel	Feb-07	Local	1,995	995	495	395	495	395	395	395	895	6,455	**		(41)
42) Missouri Funeral Care	Nov-06	Local	1,695	845	395	395	not listed	275	175	1,355	795	*	**		(42)
43) LM Morris	March-07	Local	1,200	600	200	350	350	350	300	995	550	4,895	**		(43)
44) Mount Moriah & Freeman	April-07	SCI, Inc	3,095	995	495	335	695	395	395	495	380	7,280	5,840	1,440	24.66% (44)
45) Mount Moriah Terrace Pk	April-07	SCI, Inc	3,095	995	495	335	695	395	395	495	380	7,280	5,840	1,440	24.66% (45)
46) Mount Washington	Jan-07	Local	1,795	650	225	275	345	345	250	325	250	4,365	3,040	1,325	43.59% (46)
47) Muehlebach	Nov-06	Local	1,795	900	325	395	405	385	205	1,495	655	6,560	5,480	1,080	19.71% (47)
48) New Salem	Jan-07	Local	1,700	650	225	395	595	335	not listed	1,000	680	*	**		(48)
49) Newcomer's Church-Archer-Paisley	March-07	Stewart Ent.	2,695	955	375	375	395	375	295	750	780	6,995	4,955	2,040	41.17% (49)
50) Newcomer's Overland Park Chapel	March-07	Stewart Ent.	2,280	745	350	350	395	275	195	750	780	6,120	4,955	1,165	23.51% (50)
51) Newcomer's Floral Hills	March-07	Stewart Ent.	2,280	745	350	350	395	275	195	750	780	6,120	4,955	1,165	23.51% (51)

Kansas City area funeral homes

Compiled by Dane Mitchell, 16

1. Advantage, 6606 Indep. Ave., K.C. MO. 816-241-6665
2. Alden-Harrington, 214 Oak, Bonner Springs, KS 913-422-4074
3. Amos Family, 10901 Johnson Dr., Shawnee, KS 913-631-5566
4. Barreto Family, 614A Brookside, Indep., MO 816-252-5017
5. Bruce, 106 S. Center, Gardner, KS 913-856-7111
6. Bruce, 712 S. Webster, Spring Hill, KS 913-592-2244
7. Bruce, Desoto, KS 913-585-1346
8. Joseph A Butler & Son, 19th & Minn. Ave., K.C. KS 913-371-7000
9. Cedar Crest, 32665 Lexington Ave., Desoto, KS 913-583-1002
10. Chapel Hill-Butler, 701 N. 94th, K.C. KS 913-334-3366
11. Charter Blue Ridge, 5000 Blue Ridge Cutoff, K.C. MO 816-921-5555
12. Charter Kansas, 10250 Sh. Mission Pkwy., Shawnee, KS 816-921-5555
13. Charter Northland, 77 East 72nd, Gladstone, MO 816-921-5555
14. Charter Sunset, 16731 Springdale Rd., Leavenworth, KS 913-682-5400
15. Church, 5845 Horton, Mission, KS 913-789-9600
16. Cremation Soc. of Ks & Mo, 8837 Roe Ave, Prairie Village, KS 913-383-9888
17. Cullen, 612 W. Foxwood Dr., Raymore, MO 816-322-5278
18. Eley & Sons, 4707 East Truman Rd., K.C. MO 816-924-8700
19. Elite, 11525 Blue Ridge Blvd, K.C MO 816-765-0141
20. Duane E. Harvey, 9100 Blue Ridge Blvd., K.C. MO 816-763-9100
21. Heartland Cremation Soc., 6113 Blue Ridge, Raytown, MO 800-508-2088
22. Heartland Cremation Soc., 7700 Sh. Mission Pkwy., O.P. KS 800-254-7679
23. Highland Park, 41st & State Ave., K.C. KS 913-371-0699
24. Hixson-Klein, 104 W. Church, Smithville, MO 816-532-9212
25. Mrs. J. W. Jones, 703 N. 10th, K.C. KS 913-321-0253
26. Lawrence A. Jones, 1800 E. Linwood Blvd., K.C. MO, 816-921-1800
27. Lawrence A. Jones, 2065 N. 5th, K.C. KS 913-371-2823
28. K.C. Funeral Directors, 4880 Shawnee Dr, K.C. KS 913-262-6310
29. Louis Memorial, 6830 Troost, K.C. MO 816-361-5211
30. Maple Hill, 3300 Shawnee Dr., K.C. KS 913-831-3345
31. Marts Memorial, 14 Westport Rd., K.C. MO 816-561-8181
32. McGilley & Frye, 105 E. Loula, Olathe, KS 913-782-0582
33. McGilley & George, 12913 Grandview Rd., Grandview, MO 816-966-0250
34. McGilley & George, 611 Chesnut, Belton, MO 816-322-2995
35. McGilley & Hoge, 8024 Santa Fe Dr, O.P., KS 913-642-3565
36. McGilley-State Line, 12301 State Line, K.C. MO 816-942-6180
37. McGilley Antioch, 3325 N.E. Vivion Rd., K.C. MO 816-453-7700
38. McGilley Midtown, 20 West Linwood Blvd., K.C. MO 816-753-6200
39. Meyers Family, 6300 Parallel Pkwy., K.C. KS 913-334-6300
40. Meyers Funeral Ch., 1600 W. Main St., Blue Springs, MO 816-229-3276
41. Meyers Northland Ch., 401 Main, Parkville, MO 816-741-0251
42. Missouri Funeral Care, 6113 Blue Ridge Blvd., Raytown, MO 816-353-1700
43. L. M. Morris, 4316 Troost Ave., K.C. MO 816-561-4463
44. Mount Moriah & Freeman, 10507 Holmes, K.C. MO 816-942-2004
45. Mount Moriah Terrace Park, 801 NW 108th, K.C. MO 816-734-5500
46. Mt. Washington Forever, 614 Brookside, Indep., MO 816-252-4141
47. Muehlebach, 6800 Troost, K.C. MO 816-444-2060
48. New Salem, 1823 Blue Mills Rd., Indep., MO 816-796-8600
49. Newcomer's Church-Archer-Pasley, 119 E. Franklin, Liberty, MO 816-781-2000
50. Newcomer's Overland Park, 8201 Metcalf, O.P., KS 913-648-6224
51. Newcomer's Floral Hills, 7000 Blue Ridge Blvd., K.C. MO 816-353-1218
52. Newcomer's Longview, 12700 S. Raytown Rd., K.C. MO 816-761-6272
53. Newcomer's White Ch., 6600 N. Antioch Rd., Gladstone, MO 816-452-8604
54. Newcomer's Johnson County, 11200 Metcalf, O.P., KS 913-451-1860
55. Newcomer's Stine and McClure, 3235 Gilham Plaza, K.C. MO 816-931-7777
56. Newcomer's Noland Rd., 509 S. Noland Rd., Indep., MO 816-252-8900
57. Park Lawn, 8251 Hillcrest Rd., K.C. MO 816-523-1234
58. Passantino Bros., 2117 Indep. Blvd., K.C. MO 816-471-2844
59. Penwell-Gabel, 14275 Blackbob Rd., Olathe, KS 913-768-6777
60. Porter, 8535 Monrovia, Lenexa, KS 913-438-6444
61. George F. Porter & Sons, 1835 Minn. Ave., K.C. KS 913-621-6400
62. Quisenberry, 4th & Delaware, Tonganoxie, KS 913-845-2740
63. Sebbeto, 901 East 5th, K.C. MO 816-221-4400
64. Seraph's Way, Inc., 4900 E. Truman Rd., K.C. MO 816-231-2312
65. Sheil Colonial, 11924 East 47th, K.C. MO 816-353-6555
66. Simmons, 1404 South 37th, K.C. KS 913-831-1882
67. Skradski, 340 N. 6th St., K.C. KS 913-371-1404
68. Slider, 1734 Washington Blvd., K.C. KS 913-573-2020
69. Speaks Suburban, 18020 E. 39th St., Indep., MO 816-373-3600
70. Carson-Speaks Midtown, 1501 W. Lexington, Indep., MO 816-252-7900
71. Speaks Buckner, 300 Adams, Buckner, MO 816-650-5555
72. Swan Lake Ch.of Memories, 30000 Valor Dr., Grain Valley, MO 816-463-4030
73. Thatcher, 1520 North 5th, K.C. KS 913-321-1211
74. Watkins Bros., 4000 Cleaver II Blvd., K.C. MO 816-861-3030

FCA-GKC

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**To request a presentation
for your group,
call us at 816-561-6322
or email us @
Bevmcg9@aol.com.**

Belton widow rebuffed in quest (Continued from Page 3)

and her husband were fellow church members with Meyer at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Grandview where the funeral took place. "I thought I could trust my church elder," she said.

Joshua Slocum, national executive director of the Funeral Consumers Alliance, filed a complaint with the Missouri Attorney General's Office on Oehlschlaeger's behalf alleging violations of the FTC Funeral Rule and Missouri law including:

- The women were not provided a general price list of the funeral home's goods and services as required when they arrived to plan the funeral.
- They were not given an itemized statement of the goods and services they selected as required before leaving the funeral home.
- That Oehlschlaeger was double billed for services and received merchandise and services she did not order nor want.

The bill came to \$12,539, which Oehlschlaeger disputed. After the Attorney General's office also declined to act on the case, the widow offered the funeral home \$6,000 to settle the

matter, which was accepted.

Meanwhile, Slocum filed a complaint with the FTC citing the McGilley-George case and others like it involving SCI-owned mortuaries from around the nation. Slocum asked the FTC to investigate the national chain's business practices, which he believes are in violation of the Funeral Rule.

Slocum, who is headquartered in South Burlington, Vermont, said for several years the Missouri Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors has been more interested in protecting funeral directors than in pursuing its duty to protect the public.

House Bill 1588 is bogged down in the Professional Registration and Licensing Committee chaired by Rep. Jay Wasson, who informed Rep. Baker he did not intend to hold a hearing. Baker, a Republican and assistant pastor of the First Baptist Church in Belton, said he was well aware of the pressures families experience during the funeral planning process.

"My hope is that this legislation will raise awareness and challenge the industry to improve its practices to be above reproach."

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A funeral director's friendly GPL guide

The national Funeral Consumers Alliance sees thousands of funeral home General Price Lists and at least 75% of them contain one or more violations of the Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Rule, the nation's first set of regulations to protect consumers from fraud and deception. Clearly there is a lot of confusion about what the Funeral Rule requires and how to meet its mandates.

The Funeral Director's Guide to Consumer-Friendly General Price Lists is now available from Funeral Consumers Alliance, Inc., 33 Patchen Road, South Burlington, VT, 05403, or by phone at 800-765-0107. The guide gives examples of common errors and violations as well as a model general price list.

Consumers rely on funeral homes for guidance. A clear, plain-language, legally compliant price list goes a long way toward heading off confusion and hard feelings. An informed consumer is a satisfied customer.

Duhaaaaa

- Q) Does your price for cremation include the urnal?
A) No, it's extra.

Keep your box to yourself

A Texas woman called FCA headquarters to complain about a funeral director hell bent on selling her a \$3,000 pecan casket for mom when all she wanted was a direct cremation. She endured his sales pitch for more than an hour until she lost her temper. She finally got up, swung her pocketbook over her shoulder, and in the most perfect Texas twang said, "Mr., we are gonna toast-n-toss, and that's all there is to it!"

Bill will not survive without public support

Missouri Rep. Brian Baker's bill (HB 1588) adding consumer advocate members to the Missouri Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors will not have a chance unless it can be heard and approved by the House Professional Registration and Licensing Committee. Committee Chairman Jay Wasson informed Baker he did not plan to schedule a hearing.

Missouri residents may contact Wasson and the other committee members by writing them in care of the Missouri House of Representatives, 201 West Capitol Avenue, Jefferson City, MO, 65101. The House Professional Registration and Licensing Committee members and their email addresses are:

Rep. Jay Wasson of Nixa, chairman Jay.Wasson@house.mo.gov
 Rep. Marilyn Ruestman, Vice Chair . Marilyn.Ruestman@house.mo.gov
 Curt Daugherty, Independence Curt.Dougherty@house.mo.gov
 Bob Dixon Bob.Dixon@house.mo.gov
 Talibdin El-Amin td.elamin@house.mo.gov
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 Jason Smith Jason.Smith@house.mo.gov
 Don Wells don.wells@house.mo.gov
 Terry Young, Kansas City terry.young@house.mo.gov



A 64-Year time limit

When Barbara knew she was dying, her sense of humor was intact. She used to say that she wanted a parking meter on her grave that says 'Expired.' So her nephew got one on eBay! Her grave is by the road so many can see it and many have stopped to get a chuckle.



Students log public service hours galore

The Funeral Consumers Alliance of Greater Kansas City owes a debt of gratitude to three high school students for their volunteer work on the price survey and newsletter mailing. Garret Thomsen earned public service hours for the National Honor Society by typing letters and envelopes to every funeral home in the metropolitan Kansas City area requesting their General Price Lists. Dane Mitchell, grandson of FCA-GKC president Bev McGill, compiled the directory of funeral homes on page 6. Dane also teamed with Joe Nicely, newsletter editor Steve Nicely's grandson, to address the newsletter's return envelopes. Combined, the young men logged over 40 hours of public service time on behalf of this organization.

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Kansas City, MO 64111

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Email: Bevmcg9@aol.com
www.funerals.org/affiliates/kansascity

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**Funeral Consumers Alliance
of Greater Kansas City**