

The Story of
Washburn - McReavy



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Washburn - McReavy



From the Days of
the Covered Wagon to the Modern Era
1857 to 2023

THE McREAVY FAMILY

With Jim Bruton

Legacy Pond Press
Saint Paul, Minnesota

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With 166 years of distinctive funeral service,
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—WASHBURN-MCREAVY FUNERAL CHAPELS

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Chapter One

The Story

The following is drawn from narration by William L. McReavy of a Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels video.

William P. Washburn helped shape a destiny in Southeast Minneapolis and was the founder of the Washburn Undertaking Company, with William Glessner, who was a furniture builder and built caskets.

Donald R. McReavy, William P. Washburn's nephew, joined the business and took it to new levels of community service. Washburn-McReavy was established in 1857, one year before Minnesota was declared a state. For many years, Washburn-McReavy's slogan was "Since the Days of the Covered Wagon."

Like many funeral businesses that thrived in the 1800s, Washburn-McReavy started as a furniture manufacturer. Who better to build a casket for a loved one than the local furniture manufacturer?

As time went by, horse-drawn carriages were replaced by motorized vehicles, which became the transportation used to bring the deceased to their final resting place. The Washburn Undertaking Company quickly established a reputation for quality and

service. Over time the Washburn Undertaking name evolved into Washburn Mortuary and further differentiated itself from other undertaking companies. The Washburn Undertaking Company continued to build on its outstanding reputation and expand its facility to serve the Minneapolis community.

It was a very challenging time during the 1930s, and Minneapolis was hit hard by the Depression, but Washburn Mortuary remained a very viable company. It moved across the street to a larger location, and the new name of Washburn-McReavy was added to the business in 1931, to recognize Donald R. McReavy's commitment to the firm.

In 1941, the Minnesota Funeral Directors Association held its fifty-first convention in downtown Minneapolis. Donald R. McReavy served as its chairman. William L. McReavy and William W. McReavy served as its chairman in 1970 and in 2002 respectively.

The new Washburn-McReavy Mortuary was located directly

on the streetcar line, making it accessible to everyone. The Washburn-McReavy Mortuary had a spacious main chapel with wicker chairs that were popular at that time. The casket selection room was the first in the area and offered products unavailable at any other mortuary. The office for making funeral arrangements was comfortable and homelike. These kinds of structures at most facilities were uncommon. The reception area was modern for its time with the rare luxury of air-conditioning.

Washburn-McReavy served many families and often was involved in directing military funerals during World War II. On December 19, 1949, tragedy struck when Donald R. McReavy died unexpectedly at the age of forty-three. Donald R. McReavy's wife, Lillian, and her son, William L. McReavy, who was only seventeen, were thrust into the business. In 1952, William L. McReavy graduated from the University of Minnesota with great plans to grow Washburn-McReavy in the vision of his legendary father.

One of the early, most-aggressive decisions that William L. McReavy made was to be the first of the Minnesota funeral directors to change the automobile from the traditional color of black. He selected white, and to this day, the entire fleet of Washburn-McReavy vehicles is white.

In 1954, William L. McReavy married Kathleen Hammer, and together they began their journey of developing one of the largest and most respected funeral organizations in the country. In 1963, Washburn-McReavy expanded through its first acquisition of a small funeral business, which eventually became the highly successful Northeast Chapel.

This was only the beginning. By 1966, the company expanded across the Mississippi River to North Minneapolis by acquiring the

Swanson Funeral Chapel. Due to its significant remodel, the Swanson Funeral Chapel quickly became one of the highest volume funeral chapels in the state of Minnesota.

In the early 1970s, the Saint Anthony Commercial Club was purchased and became the new location for the Southeast Chapel. This had been the dream of the late Donald R. McReavy, realized by his son some twenty years after his death.

In 1978, Washburn-McReavy acquired the Strobeck Johnson Chapel on Mainstreet in Hopkins. This was the first suburban location, and it was purchased from Ron and Art Johnson. Twenty years later, a significant remodel took place to readily serve the Hopkins community.

On May 1, 1983, Washburn-McReavy purchased its largest competitor, Welander-Quist. Almost every competitor in the Minneapolis area owned only one facility while Washburn-McReavy went from five chapels to eight chapels practically overnight, shocking the funeral service community.

On June 8, 1984, William W. McReavy graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in mortuary science and became the fourth generation of his family to join the business. He was selected from his graduating class to give the commencement speech despite almost every member of the class claiming that it was impossible to operate eight locations and that Washburn-McReavy was destined to fail. As history unfolded, the family business did not fail but succeeded and exceeded expectations.

In 1987, a significant exterior remodeling was done at the Welander-Quist Chapel to improve the new headquarters of the company. The white pillars that had become a trademark of the company were added to compliment the Northeast Chapel and

the Swanson Chapel.

The Welander-Quist acquisition in Robbinsdale was torn down in 1984 to make way for a new funeral chapel. The new Washburn-McReavy Robbinsdale Chapel was the first chapel built from the ground up specifically to be a funeral chapel. The majority of funeral chapels up until the 1980s were simply renovated from family homes.

From 1986 to 1989, the company plateaued and experienced several new competitors. Despite the significant competition, the staff at Washburn-McReavy saw the glass as half full rather than half empty. By 1989, the company had invested \$9,000 in demographic research. The research revealed that the city of Edina offered an extraordinary opportunity with four hundred resident deaths per year and no funeral chapel. On August 14, 1992, Washburn-McReavy purchased the Regis Corporation facility located at 50th Street and Highway 100 in Edina; this would become the new Washburn-McReavy Edina Chapel.

In 1990, when the family saw the need for a great deal of administrative support, they welcomed Cyndi McReavy-Seitz, daughter to Bill and Kay McReavy, to the advanced planning and financial area. With a degree from the University of Minnesota and twelve years of management experience at Republic Airlines, she became a fourth generation of family members to join the company.

The Edina Chapel, the first to be highly visible and accessible, had its opening in November of 1992. Over the next fifteen years, the Edina Chapel would become the highest volume chapel in Minnesota, serving more than six hundred families and reaching geographically far beyond the Edina city limits.

Over the years to come, Washburn-McReavy would serve many

families. When some were less fortunate, the company would absorb much of the cost. Other services would include high-profile sports figures from the Minnesota Twins, the Minnesota Timberwolves, and the Minnesota Vikings. To this day, Washburn-McReavy has a rich history serving community leaders, well-known political figures, and prominent Minnesota business entrepreneurs. Many relationships through the University of Minnesota and the Woman's Club of Minneapolis, where Kay served as president from 1987 to 1989, created name recognition and community awareness.

In 1983, Kay chaired the Ard Godfrey House restoration project. The City Council wanted to sell the property where the house was located. Twenty-five women appeared in their 1850s-styled dresses and were able to retain the house and the green space. Robert Boisclair gave the Woman's Club \$35,000 to rebuild the kitchen, which collapsed in 1908 when it was on Bank Street. Kay has also served as chairman of the community outreach committee and on many other significant community projects.

By 1997, Washburn-McReavy expanded into Anoka County by acquiring the Coon Rapids Seman Chapel. The chapel was purchased from Dan and Stacy Seman and would become Washburn-McReavy's northernmost location. In late 1997, the family would break ground for its new Washburn-McReavy Eden Prairie Chapel. This would become a significant facility built for the future as the family's southernmost location.

By May of 2001, Washburn-McReavy would establish its Columbia Heights Chapel. The building was formerly a Norwest Bank facility and was beautifully converted into a funeral chapel. Only two months later, in July of 2001, Washburn-McReavy would again purchase its largest competitor, the Peterson-Stohlberg Chapel,

and acquire the Hillside Cemetery, its first but not its last. Along with this acquisition came the Nokomis Park Chapel. This would be the closest chapel to Fort Snelling National Cemetery.

Four years later, in 2005, the McReavy family wanted to make the largest acquisition in funeral chapel history. On July 20, 2005, Washburn-McReavy purchased Werness Brothers and all its Minnesota service corporations and international properties from SCI. The legacy of George and John Werness would be carried out to the new Bloomington Chapel and two other properties would be sold as real estate. The Dawn Valley Funeral Chapel and Cemetery, which was also located in Bloomington, came as part of the acquisition.

Crystal Lake Funeral Chapel and Cemetery, a significant competitor from the 1980s, was now under Washburn-McReavy's ownership through this acquisition. A cemetery that built a funeral chapel on its grounds was no longer a competitor to Washburn-McReavy's very existence, which it had been only fourteen years earlier.

Glen Haven Memorial Gardens was the final entity of the Werness Brothers acquisition. On Memorial Day 2006, Washburn-McReavy broke ground on the new Glen Haven Funeral Chapel. On May 25, 2007, Washburn-McReavy celebrated its grand opening. Even now, this state-of-the-art facility serves as a funeral chapel, cemetery administration office, and reception center. On Memorial Day 2007, Washburn-McReavy held a dedication ceremony for a new veterans memorial. A memorial to veterans had been the vision of William L. McReavy, and it was dedicated to all the veterans who have protected freedom and served this country.

Washburn-McReavy has won many national awards for community service and funeral service excellence. It has had the privilege of giving back to its community.

Celebrating its 166th year of service to the community in 2023, Washburn-McReavy is grateful to the families it has served, and thankful for the staff who have enabled it to become a leader in funeral service on both the state and national level. As Washburn-McReavy continues beyond 166 years, it is the company's sincere desire to fulfill the vision of its founders and perpetuate the tradition of funeral service excellence.

Chapter Two

Beginning a New Era

The following is drawn from an interview of William L. McReavy.

“**W**ashburn-McReavy’s focus on providing families with compassionate service has not changed in 166 years, and it is this passion that has shaped who we are today. We have learned a lot over the years we have been in business, including how to present options without being overwhelming, how to meet the needs of caring parties, and how to assist caregivers in coming to a satisfying solution. People come to us in difficult times, and we respond with kindness, calmness, and expertise.

“Our goal is to create a beautiful occasion and make our clients feel welcome. We spend many days planning with families and stay up to date with industry developments in order to make hard times a little easier for those grieving a great loss. We treat every funeral like it is our very first. Creating a positive experience in a most difficult time is our mission.

“There are few businesses today that trace their roots to the early pioneer days. As stated previously, Minnesota was not even a state when William Glessner set up shop as a furniture-maker and

undertaker. In 1857 his shop was at the foot of the wooden suspension bridge across the Mississippi in St. Anthony Falls. It was the very first undertaking firm in the Minnesota territory. Working with his son Frank, their furniture store was likely the largest in the territory.

“In 1881 another pioneer, William P. Washburn, joined the business as a partner. It was then called Glessner and Washburn. Mr. Washburn was a cowboy and had numerous professions, but he eventually devoted himself full time to what became the Washburn Undertaking Company at 412 Central Avenue in Minneapolis.

“We are certain that he built the first funeral home in Minnesota at 316 Hennepin Avenue (which was then called 412 Central Avenue). His young nephew Donald R. McReavy managed the business. When William Washburn died in 1932 he was eulogized as the founder of the first Minnesota mortuary.

“Donald R. McReavy was dynamic, active, and involved in the community. He participated in many civic activities and was even

asked to be a candidate for mayor of Minneapolis, which he declined. Donald McReavy and William Washburn had formed a wonderful partnership, and their ideals and values are carried out every day.”

As William L. McReavy explained, “I remember as a youngster, before I was even a teenager, walking around the chapel and sort of wondering what my dad did. I knew he was in the funeral business but I never really understood the basics of his work.

“Dad told me about the job one day, and I recall sitting in the front seat of one of his funeral coaches thinking, ‘This is really something.’ I was a little kid then, but I thought I was the king of the castle. I was inspired, interested, and fascinated.

“I was fourteen when I began to actually do some work for my dad. Not very important work as far as the grieving families were concerned, but important for me. I used to take the hose and wash the sidewalk and water flowers. My job was to get the place looking great, and I think I did a pretty good job.

“I never went to any of the funerals, but early on I had some responsibilities for the flowers. It was an important job. I recall one time I spilled a bouquet of flowers, and it was a mess. I remember my dad telling me how important it was, what I was doing, and to take my time. To be sure to do everything the right way.

“My dad died rather suddenly, and it was a great surprise to us. He was in the hospital nine days after having a cerebral hemorrhage. I had been at the Fireman’s Ball in Minneapolis when I was told the news. He was taken to St. Barnabus Hospital, and he remained there until he died. His death was a monumental loss, and it was around that time that I really started to think about succeeding him in the funeral business.

“We had three men that had been running our business: Tex Ramlet, John Abramson, and Wendell Kingsley. We had one funeral home at that time: 405 Central Avenue in Minneapolis. Almost immediately after my dad passed, my mother and I went to the funeral chapel every day. I got involved right away by meeting with people and doing casket work—buying caskets and ensuring we had a good assortment on hand. It was hard for me to get too involved with the customers because I was only seventeen years old at the time.

“We were very busy doing about two hundred funerals a year, so I was studying for school and working in the business. I didn’t do much with the customers because of my age, but I was around and did what I could to keep the business going. I kept busy with many of the necessary things like straightening out the chairs, sweeping the floors, and making sure things were in order.

“While I was attending the University of Minnesota, during my sophomore year, I noticed this young, very attractive girl sitting in front of me in one of my classes. Her name was Kathleen Hammer, and the rest is history because we eventually married and had four children; we’ve now been married for sixty-nine years. Kay was as pretty as a picture, and she still is to this day. She has been an encouraging and instrumental part of the Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapel business.”

Chapter Three

Graduation and Beginning a Career

The following is drawn from an interview of William L. McReavy.

William L. McReavy explained, “I graduated from the University of Minnesota in the field of mortuary science and passed all of my board exams. I was only twenty years old at the time, so I had to wait a year to get my license as you had to be twenty-one years old to receive it. The mortuary science program took six months at the time. It eventually progressed to two years, and now it takes four years to receive a bachelor of science in mortuary science. When that license came, I felt pretty good about receiving it, but then it was time to get to work.

“Once I got out of the university, I worked full time every day. I recall one of the really difficult things we had to do was carry the caskets up and down the stairway in our building because we kept the caskets downstairs. That was tough, but I was young and strong and it was a part of our business. We had about twenty-four caskets in house for people to select from. We could

special order caskets as well.

“One of the important things I learned early on in the business was how to treat people. It was important to be respectful and let people decide what they wanted with no pressure coming from us. To be a guide, so to speak, by letting them know what is available to them and then letting them decide. Selecting a casket is a difficult time for grieving families. That’s why it is important to let them know what is available and what the price is, then leave them on their own to make that decision.

“Sometimes I would be asked, ‘Bill, what is the most popular casket that people select?’ I would show them and then, again, let them decide. No pressure at all.

“I recall one time, as I was describing what we had available, a woman said to me, ‘Now stop right there. My husband was a wonderful man who took care of me and was there for me my entire life. He was good to me, and I want to be good to him. I want the

very best you have for him. He deserves it.' It took me by surprise, but I still remember her words. We honored her wishes.

"Although I never sat in while my dad met with people, I aspire to treat people the same way. I recall my dad saying once, 'You have to be good to people because, if you are, then they will be good to you. Don't ever get into an argument with them because you are not going to win. If you are good to people, they will follow you.' I will never forget those words. They have been with me all these years.

"I remember one time I took a family downstairs when I was very young. I recall the man saying, 'Oh, we're going to have a young fellow taking care of us,' like I wasn't worthy of such an important task. And I said back to him, 'Well, if I can't take care of you to your satisfaction, I will get someone who can.' I didn't have to get someone else. I will never forget that day, and it never happened again.

"It was not a real busy time during that period. Dad worked very hard and remembered everything, especially about people. Dad could meet you on a street corner in Chicago, then run into you in Minneapolis years later and still remember your name. He had a great memory. Today I have trouble remembering the names of my kids.

"We have never paid commissions in our business, so there are no incentives to get people to buy the most expensive casket or have the most expensive funeral. Some people say, 'No, we don't want to spend that much on a funeral.' Another I recall saying, 'This is the very last thing we can do for our mother. She was always very good to us, so we want the very best for her as we lay her to rest.'

"People have very different ideas on what to do. Our role is to stay back and let the family decide. The money part will always take care of itself. If you do a really great job helping and assisting, it will always come out all right.

"What they say about you when they walk out the door is the real test of how you have done. We strive to help families and do what we can to learn their first names so that we can say, 'Bill, Stan, Emily, Carroll,' as we talk with them. This goes a long way in building trust. It makes a difference.

"When I started making decisions, one of the biggest that I ever made, as stated earlier, was changing the vehicle color from black to white. It started around 1950. I recall being at a convention, seeing a white funeral coach, and loving it. Our entire fleet has been white ever since. The reality of it is that very few other funeral homes have made the change to white because they would be seen as copying or promoting us. It's like with Target stores: Target 'owns' the color red, and Washburn-McReavy 'owns' the color white.

"Now we have between forty and forty-five vehicles, and we keep them nice. They last about five to seven years. Our funeral coaches and lead cars are always Cadillacs.

"Our family business started as furniture manufacturing. It was started by William Glessner, as stated previously, who came from Pennsylvania. He settled on the banks of the Mississippi and built a small wood structure on a dirt road. He was originally a furniture manufacturer and evolved into a casket manufacturer. I often say, 'Who better to build a casket for someone who dies than a furniture manufacturer?'

"That's how most early mortuaries started: We were called un-

dertakers, and we worked at the mortuary. Mortuaries advanced and became funeral homes. It was first called a funeral parlor, then a funeral home, and ultimately a funeral chapel. 'Undertaker' came about because someone in the mortuary had the undesirable position of caring directly for the dead. Not too many people gravitate toward this kind of a job, but the undertaker name stuck for some period of time.

“We liked the thought of being a funeral chapel instead of a funeral home. It is much more formal, light in nature, and dignified. Like with the white vehicles, we felt it would actually promote our business, and it certainly did.”

Chapter Four

Preservation of the Deceased

The following is drawn from an interview of William L. McReavy.

“Drawing in a furniture manufacturer to make caskets made a lot of sense. It is a unique niche that William P. Washburn brought to the business. Embalming is another interesting piece of our business.

“The question may be raised, ‘Why would you embalm?’ It was started because you had to preserve a soldier if they died abroad to get them back home. Without embalming that would not be possible. Shipping a body back from the war without an odor or disease would have been impossible. There are legal reasons that go along with the history, as well.

“Today, the preservation of the body allows for viewings. Without embalming, decomposition begins and you must eliminate odor and possible disease in other ways. Embalming handles that for us and the family.

“One important point to mention is that, historically, the walls of embalming areas were made of glass block in order to let the light

in while still giving privacy to the deceased. There are fascinating details of the embalming process that we will not go into here out of respect for the families to whom we provide this service.

“A reality of the embalming process is that it also makes the deceased presentable to their family. Without this process, the person does not look like themselves. We have found it is a real comfort for the family to see their loved one exactly like they looked in life. It presents a very dignified result. It is doing it right.

“We do some funerals without embalming. Although it is the prerogative of the family, embalming does improve the appearance of the loved one. We embalm like we do everything else: We try our very best to make sure the family is as comfortable and pleased as possible.”

Chapter Five

Continuing to Grow with a Lot of History Behind Us

The following is drawn from an interview of William L. McReavy.

“**W**e have put the Washburn-McReavy name on everything that we have done. Some have said that this was a bad idea, that it takes away from the original representation of the chapels that we have purchased. We don’t think so. Putting our name on the chapel gives everyone a clear understanding of who owns the chapel. If we had decided to keep the original name when we bought a chapel, it could have become very confusing to people.

“Name recognition is also important for our marketing and publicity. We hope that people understand how this gives our brand name so much more meaning. Although we understand that there are people that disagree with us, we are very comfortable with our decision.

“Another critical area for us is to be sure that veterans are recognized. There are several pieces of this recognition, but the number one thing is that the veteran has a flag on their casket. They want that. They joined the military and fought for our freedom—

some died for it—and they want the flag on their casket. They also want the military honors.

“In 1983, we bought our largest competitor: Welander Quist. Welander Quist was founded by Nels Welander and Walter Quist. The two of them were really good operators and businessmen. We could see how well they ran their business. They sold it to someone else who we eventually bought it from. This is when we went from five to eight chapels and really propelled our business forward.

“One thing interesting is that the DuSchane Chapel is the first house that was built in Robbinsdale. Many of our first funeral chapels were, at one time, family homes. Many of these were mansions, like the Swanson Chapel . There was a movie star that lived there named Herbert Dix before it eventually became a funeral chapel.

“The Edina Chapel has highway access and is extremely visible. Good access and good visibility are essential today. The Edina Chapel was formerly Cedric Adams’s restaurant. A lot of people knew him as a WCCO radio personality. Supposedly you could fly

over the Twin Cities at night when his program was over and see all the lights turn off in the Twin Cities.

“The Columbia Heights Chapel had been a Norwest Bank that was converted. So banks, restaurants, and, of course, single family homes or mansions convert well.

“A location that contains both a funeral home and a cemetery is called a funeral home combination. Hillside was our first funeral home combination, which we bought in 2001. In 2005 we bought three additional combinations from Service Corporation International, bringing us to four. There is definitely a competitive advantage to having both the funeral home and cemetery, as you can market to anyone with heritage at the cemetery.

“I’m not sure how many states in the country allow the use of a cemetery with a funeral chapel, but I know some do not. For example, Wisconsin does not allow such combinations. It was set up that way going back one hundred years or more. It’s just the way it is in a lot of states. Right now we have Hillside, Crystal Lake, Dawn Valley, and Glen Haven as our combinations.

“We have many philanthropic endeavors with institutions like the University of Minnesota, hospice organizations, and others. We serve many ethnic groups and try to accommodate as many traditions as possible. We often get referrals from churches and other organizations that believe in us. There is a lot of competition, and the only way that you get the business is if your service is better, your costs are better, your marketing is better, and you consistently show that you care more. There are people who look for the lowest cost, but that’s not who we are. We are value providers. People see the value of what we provide, and that’s why they come to us for years.”

Bill McReavy Sr. has seen a lot of changes over the years. “Today what we see are newer buildings, newer vehicles, and a lot of modern-day changes. When I started out in the business at the age of seventeen, I didn’t know anything about the funeral business. I was kind of forced into it. When my dad died, I was left to take over, and I just did it. I went to school and as I said, had to wait to get my license. But I was ready and made a career out of it.

“Probably the biggest change was the internet. Before, everything was done by personal visit, telephone, and, on occasion, a note or a letter. Now everything is done by email or other internet resources. It is a huge change for our business with this instant communication format.

“The other thing that changed is the structure of the family. It used to be that families stayed in one location, maybe about three miles in circumference around a funeral chapel, and that was it. It was easy to notify and gather everyone regardless of what arrangements were made for the funeral. Communities were small and, when there were arrangements to be made, the family would come in and make them. It was a very simple and easy process.

“Today, families are scattered all over the United States and all over the world. Funeral arrangements are made by Zoom, and everyone chimes in via group texts or emails. It is up to the funeral director to sort this all out and make the necessary plans.

“Email is the focal part of almost everything. We email everyone what the plans are for the funeral, the church or chapel, the reception, and the cemetery. It is so incredibly different from the way it was done in the past. The fact that everything related is transmitted electronically makes the arrangements so different—sometimes easier and sometimes more difficult.”

Chapter Six

Our Assistance to the Bereaved

The following is drawn from an interview of William W. McReavy, son of William L. McReavy.

“We help people a lot with their obituaries. When they come to us, most people have not started one and need our guidance regarding costs and what to include. What used to be a nominal type charge has grown considerably. A long obituary can be very expensive. We now share these costs with our customers through a brochure. Most go through the *Star Tribune*. We have nothing to do with the cost; in other words, we add no markup, and we make no profit from the obituary.

“We try to be very transparent about the process. The brochure lays it all out and helps the grieving with the entire process. Everything depends on what they want. Sometimes the customer will write it all out, in which case we often help them to scale it back some, if that’s what they want. Many people have no idea what to put in an obituary. It is a onetime expense that will be on the internet forever, that they, all their friends, and their family will have forever, so that is also something that they have to keep in mind. It could be a very high cost once they consider all of the options. But

once they do, it may be worth it to them to pay \$2,000 or whatever the final cost may be.

“Another thing that has changed is unit pricing. Before 1984, there was a price of the casket and everything that came with it was in that price. The burial, the funeral coaches, the minister, the soloist, and everything else that came with the funeral was included. That is no longer the case. Now we have what is called a general price list.

“It used to be a family who was Catholic went to a Catholic funeral chapel, and a family who was Protestant went to a Protestant church, but now the lines are blurred. Personal relationships are much more important today when it comes to selection.

“When people first walk in the door for a funeral, it is very important that they are greeted properly. The most important thing is to express condolences and assure them we are there to guide them through the entire process. That way, when they leave, they are assured that everything is in place and in order.

“Whether the funeral was one hundred years ago or today, the pain of the loss for the family does not change. It is always there and will remain the same forever. No better or no worse today or one hundred years ago. Many things have changed over the years, but what has not changed is all the feelings that people have. And with all of this, it is our responsibility to do the very best we can to make sure they are properly taken care of in a heartfelt and supportive way.

“We generally see two different kinds of deaths: The sudden death and the prolonged illness that leads to death. When it comes to prolonged death, grief counselors say there is anticipatory grief because you know the death is coming and know everything about it. It’s like how a person tightens up their stomach when they know they are going to get punched in the gut. You know you have to get ready because it is coming. If someone dies very suddenly, then most people want a viewing, but if someone has been in the hospital on life support and the family has been with them much of the time, then moving on without the viewing is more likely.

“If someone dies in their late nineties or in their hundreds, then in most cases the family has been with the deceased and it is not necessary to have a viewing. In some cases their passing can be more of a relief, especially if there has been a lot of suffering involved.

“Another thing that has changed is that the whole family used to come in together, be in the same room, and make the decisions together. Today it happens in parts. One member of the family is in Colorado, North Carolina, or California. Another is in the military in East Germany. You have to hear from everyone, and you have to piece it all together. Because of this, the funeral may be two or three weeks after the person passes. In the past, the arrangements

could be set and the funeral would be in three or four days. Now it is delayed because of all the missing pieces. People are saying things like, ‘We have graduations, we have weddings, we have other events. Put the funeral on hold.’ Every family and every situation is different, and it is up to us to pull it all together and make it work.

“Today everything is pieced together slowly instead of all at once. What we say to people is very different today, but one thing remains the same: We never underestimate people’s grief. When we train our staff, we drive it home to be very sure you never underestimate someone’s grief.

“We survey every family after it is all completed. Sometimes we get feedback that we have to respond to immediately. Things like, ‘The person at the funeral chapel seemed a little cold’ or ‘No one offered their condolences.’ We monitor these surveys to ensure everything is up to our standard.

“In the past, people would just walk into the funeral chapel and say something like, ‘We are here to plan our mother’s funeral. We just left the hospital where she died this morning.’ There was no appointment; they just walked in. There were no cell phones. Today it has to be done by appointment. Everything in this day and age is scheduled.

“Communication is different because maybe you have said three or four times over the phone how sorry you are about the death, but when the family comes in you must say it again so everyone can hear how you feel for the family. It’s important to reiterate, ‘We are very sorry for your loss, and we want to assure you that we will do everything possible to make sure you are supported and assisted during this difficult time.’

“Keeping a positive attitude is critical, and we always find a way to do our job. We have a job to do and we do it. In trying to be as

compassionate as possible, you still have to keep your wits about you, make the necessary plans, and pull everything together for the family.

“Another thing that has changed is the reception. In some cases, people think more about the reception than the actual funeral. People have all kinds of different ideas for where the reception will be, the time for it, and what the food and beverages will be. As the process moves forward, we have to think about everything and make sure it logistically works.

“We schedule the timing for everything. We set the time for the visitation, the funeral, the reception, and the burial. If it is at Fort Snelling with military honors, we set that up too. The scheduling on our part is a massive process. That’s our job and we do it very well. There is really no room for error.

“Things have changed significantly. It used to be that we would have the funeral, go to the cemetery, then return for the reception. Now we tell people that we do not recommend doing it that way. We now recommend that people go to the cemetery for the burial last. One of the reasons for that is that a lot of people will stay for the reception but not plan on going to the cemetery, so you lose people along the way. If there is a real tragic death, the plan might be to go to the cemetery, and then to some place completely different for the reception.

“We hold receptions at the church and at our chapels. Churches are able to accommodate larger numbers of people, so we are able to work it out with all types of situations. We try to do whatever is best for the family.

“Our staff training program is more on-the-job than anything else. First of all, they must have graduated from a university pro-

gram in mortuary science. The key is to make sure that they are respectable-looking, act the part, and, more than anything else, know what is expected of them. Professionalism is the key to everything. They are going to meet people who are grieving, so they must come across as someone who is there to help them during this most difficult time.

“Our employees are going to take care of someone’s mother or father and need to look professional. It just won’t work any other way. The clients will not have the confidence in them that is needed.

“We look for a person who gets it. What I mean by that is someone who looks professional from the start. Our staff always wear suits on the job. We look for people who have been educated well and seem to fit into our environment. They must be well groomed and have a definite interest in the job. They will be around funerals all the time, and they must put their best foot forward.

“When you are working for Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels, we ask that you be well groomed and professional.

“During training our new employees are told exactly what to do during the funeral. They are told where to stand, what to do, and how to act. We teach them what to do in any given situation. Once we hire someone, we believe we have the very best.

“It will vary as to how many employees are at a funeral. It could be two, three, or four at any given time. It depends on the number needed for the size of the funeral and what other needs are present. The scheduling can present a major problem for us, but it is something we are always aware of and have to solve. Sometimes children are in school, relatives are out of town, someone can only be here on a Saturday, and people are coming from everywhere. Whatever the problem might be, we find a way to make it all work.

“There are a number of issues that come up in scheduling. COVID-19 also caused a major concern as far as postponements and the days that people are healthy and available. No matter the problem or the difficulty, we pull it all together and make it work.

“During COVID we had to add onto our preparation room to provide a cooler for deceased human remains. We have had as many as eighty bodies in a room at one time waiting for the funerals. We use an ankle band identification and a QR code to be sure that we have accurately identified each person. We make sure that caskets are labeled properly. We have to be sure the right body is in the right casket and going to the right church. There is zero room for error.

“There are all kinds of horror stories that go with funerals, but we are careful to not make any mistakes that can hurt us or the families. We watch everything closely so we don’t have anything unfortunate happen.”

William L. McReavy recalled, “I was working with my dad when I was fourteen years old, and I guess I always knew that I was going to follow him into the business. When Dad died it was my job to take over the business, and I started that process just three years later when I went on to get my degree. My original thought was to go into medicine and become a doctor, but that all changed when Dad passed. I have enjoyed my career.

“Five to nine percent of the people that work in the funeral business come from family that are in the business. But most of the employees come from some type of connection. They have been hired to cut the grass for the funeral home in their town, or maybe they start out by washing the cars or cleaning the chapel, that type of connection. They have been working at the chapel doing something else and like what they are doing. They are the kind of person

that enjoys assisting people. It is the type of job where helping out or assisting others seems to be a calling for them.”

William L. McReavy mentioned, “I have always said that, to go into mortuary science you don’t have to be smart enough to be a lawyer, a doctor, or a CPA, but you do have to have incredible character. You have to have very high emotional intelligence.

“In this profession the days go very fast. There is so much to do to keep you busy that before you know it the day is gone. And, if you truly like the idea of helping and assisting others, then you are in the right business.

“A former employee once said, ‘Funerals are addicting. I would rather die than work 10:00 PM to 6:00 AM ever again.’ This person had worked the midnight shift and absolutely hated every minute of it. The person, very simply, was in the wrong profession. These are people who do not know much about the business or never tried to learn about what we do. When you are in the funeral business you are helping people during the most difficult time of their life.”

Chapter Seven

First Arrangement Conference

The following is drawn from an interview of William W. McReavy, son of William L. McReavy.

“**W**hen planning a funeral, there are about seventy decisions to be made and every one of them is important. The following is an example of what actually happens when someone comes to us to plan a funeral. This is a made-up scenario where someone’s father has died. The following is roughly what we would say to guide them.

“First of all, we express our sincere condolences to their family. We state that we are here to help them and to do whatever it is that they need or want.

“This is what we refer to as an ‘at need’ funeral. It is not a funeral that is pending or something that you expect to happen at some point in the future. We ask if they have thought about what they might want regarding the type of service, the church, the reception, etcetera. We ask if their father had any wishes that he shared. And we go from there.

“Then we talk about some of the options that are available to the family. We take our time to be sure that we do it right. We ask,

for example, are there any events in the family that will prevent us from scheduling on certain days or weeks? A lot of times there may be a wedding or a graduation that might require special coordination with the funeral arrangements. We may need time for people to fly in.

“We then show families a price list to ensure we are in compliance with the Federal Trade Commission. This document shows everything we have so they know exactly what the price is for a casket, an urn, the cemetery costs, and everything else that goes with a funeral. A lot of what we have available is on the sheets that we give them, and it is broken down so they know exactly what they will get for these prices. We try to make it very easy for the family to look at and to decide.

“We inform them that they don’t have to decide anything today. They can take this price list home, look it over, and let us know what they decide. There should be no surprises anywhere.

“They could have their father in a casket to be viewed by their

entire family, or a memorial service that has a visitation in the evening as well. It is generally more expensive to have a traditional funeral, but it also depends what they decide to do. A cremation can turn out to be more expensive. The best thing to do is to take the information we provide home, look it over, and then decide what to do.

“For example, if their father was a veteran then he could be buried at Fort Snelling, so they do not need a cemetery plot. Some of the cost that may be more expensive can be connected to the cemetery plot. But really what it comes down to is their family’s comfort with a traditional burial or a cremation.

“We are frequently asked, ‘What is the cremation percentage?’ This depends where you are in the state. Our percentage is a little higher than most places because we operate and own the crematorium. We also have our own cemetery plots so that will reduce the overall costs for families.

“Cremation is a reduction of the body when exposed to extreme heat. Bodies are made up of mostly water, but everyone is a little different. For the most part, our skin and our organs are about 80% water. During cremation, all that water is reduced and comes down to just the calcium in the body.

“Whether they go with the casket or the urn, if they look at the brochure they will see the prices for the type of funeral arrangements that they prefer. A lot of it comes down to seeing the deceased. There are different ways that we can arrange it for them. They can have the traditional type of viewing where they have it at the church or funeral chapel the day before and the casket is open to all family and friends. Traditionally, the immediate family comes one hour before the regular viewing. The next day there is

another viewing, which will be followed by the funeral service. If this is done with an urn, the viewing would be done before the cremation just for the immediate family. The casket could be rented or purchased.

“Going down the list, we also need to know about the church. We can have the service almost anytime, but not in two days, for example. That’s just too fast. But perhaps in a week or so would be fine. It’s all up to them. They are the ones who get to decide what is going to be best for their family and how to best honor their father.

“Once we have identified the date, we talk to the church and set everything up. We do the same with the cemetery. We can make arrangements with them or the family can. Sometimes it is best if we work with the family and speak to the church or cemetery staff together to be sure everything is coordinated properly.

“We can help with everything. They do not have to do anything alone. We will help set up appointments so that they do not have to. We are here to assist them and make the entire service process easy and comfortable. This likely will include appointments with the church, the cemetery, and anything else that they need.

“A typical cemetery plot might be around \$1,500 to \$2,000, while urn options are a little less. We can call the church together and work out the schedule that works well for everyone. Essentially, we are here to assist with anything they need.

“One of the biggest decisions that they will have to make is with the length of the visitation. Some families will set as little as two hours, and some will have the standard four hours. Typically, we suggest that they do the funeral in two parts: Have the visitation the night before for two to four hours, and have the funeral the next day with an hour before for family and close friends. Some

people like to have an hour before the actual visitation for just immediate family. By doing it this way, it is kind of a dress rehearsal for the next day.

“There is always a way to make things work. If there is somebody who can’t make it to the service, maybe they can come to the visitation the day before. It offers an option to family and friends.

“As we discussed earlier, we will help with the obituary. If they would rather go home, think about it, and write some things down, they can. If they would like us to write it, we can do that too. We offer a brochure with all of the costs on it. We have no markup on the obituary; rather, the family pays exactly what the newspaper charges. The family receives a proof of the obituary and its expenses that they must approve. It is all up to the *Pioneer Press* and the *Star Tribune*.

“We always say that an obituary is a onetime thing, and it might be somewhat more expensive than they may prefer, so it is all up to them. It might be worth it, or they can scale it back to meet their budget. Again, we don’t make a penny on it, but it is a onetime cost that will be there forever. What is important is to be sure that they say everything that they want to say. Sometimes, by looking it over a few times before it is submitted, they might realize that they don’t need everything, and that helps them scale it back some.

“It depends on close family to determine what the content is. We help them to give them a good start, and then they go from there. Some things are important to have, like full name, age, date of birth, date of death, and by whom they are survived, such as their wife, children, great-grandchildren, brothers, and sisters. Sometimes it is important to include what the deceased did for a living and what church they attended. They may want to include

something about memorials and where they should be sent.

“At the church, they will want to suggest a certain clergy to perform the ceremony and, if that particular pastor is not available, a second choice. Again this is something we can help with, and we would set up a meeting with the pastor.

“Planning for the visitation will give them some indication as to how many people will attend. As the family notifies their family and friends, you will get a pretty good idea of those who will come to honor their father. It is important that they make sure that everyone is contacted, especially those who are out of town. After all of this, you take a guess. If you need to, you can always cut the sandwiches and bars in half. The luncheon is a social part of the event that is very important for the family. The church will have someone who is in charge of the luncheon. They have done it over and over again and are very good at it, so the family will be able to rely on them for assistance.

“During the pandemic, we had very little that seemed like a visitation, luncheon, and service. Some were postponed entirely, and some had box lunches for those who attended.

“Additionally, we help set the music and talk with the musician and family about music choices.

“Before the family leaves, we will take a look at the caskets and the urns. We remind them that no decision needs to be made that day.

“The first meeting is just to learn what the various options are, and to give them time to decide what they want to do. Pallbearers will need to be discussed, as well as flowers. We give the family a small list of things that they will need to do and keep in mind: Things like clothing for the deceased to wear. We always have a

printed folder with some options, like a memory card that is separate from the program that will be available at the service.

“A register book will be available. We will gather information about the death certificate. Things like a date of birth, social security number, and other necessary information must be collected from the family, as well. We will give them a proof so that they can approve it and, once it is approved, we will order certified copies of the death certificate. They let us know how many copies they want.

“For the viewing, they will let us know whether their father would want any jewelry, a watch, or anything like that. We will request that they get those items to us.

“If they would like a DVD, we can provide that for them. We do those complimentary, and they can have a thirty-picture video that tells their father’s life story from when he was very young until he entered his senior years, depending on what pictures they have. This can involve the whole family’s input as to what pictures to include. We will also give them picture boards to take home so they can provide their own pictures in addition to what we put together. Framed pictures and other memory items can also be displayed.

“It is a lot to think about. We can include a webcasting so that people can see it live from all over.

“In our general price list, to be very transparent, there is a cost for what we call waiting time. When we wait for the luncheon, it is an additional fee while our staff are there, waiting, before going out to the cemetery. One thing to keep in mind is that, when they go to the burial and then come back, the family will likely lose many of their friends for the luncheon.

“Every funeral is very different. We point out that their father’s death is unique, and we want to provide a good reflection of his life. For the eulogy, they probably want a family member, but they

can discuss this with the church and their family. The church will want the service to go about an hour, but it is best to keep it to about forty-five minutes.

“Payment should be made at the arrangement or at the very beginning of the visitation. We don’t want that hanging over their head, so getting it over with right away seems to benefit everyone involved. We usually do one payment either by check, Visa, MasterCard, or Discover Card.

“When they leave here to go home, they will be provided with a list of things to do. We will have our own tasks to do, of which we will keep them informed.”

Chapter Eight

COVID-19 and All That Went with It

The following is drawn from an interview of William W. McReavy, son of William L McReavy.

“**T**hings really changed when COVID-19 hit us. It started in 2019. The first person that died near the Twin Cities during COVID-19 was in Fridley. We were notified of the death and were told that we should come with our staff dressed appropriately. My nephews Jordan and Jon and my son Brett went so they could see firsthand what was happening. It reminded me of the first transfer that I went on for one of the first AIDS-related deaths. I was really happy to see that the next generation was stepping up and was not afraid to do the job. It showed the staff that we were not afraid to do what we do, and it worked.

“We really had no idea, much like the rest of the world, how to proceed, but we knew that the number one objective was to protect ourselves so that we could continue on with our business. If we got sick and had no one to do our work, it would have been a disaster. We also, as a top priority, had to find a way to protect the families. There were so many unknowns with the COVID-19 pandemic that

we had a conference call every single morning to talk about what we were going to do.

“We started receiving more death calls and went back to the same facility two or three times. We were called to assisted living places, nursing homes, and hospitals. Lots of people were talking about what was happening, and we found ourselves extremely busy transporting the deceased from their place of death to our chapels. In lieu of services, we were doing a tremendous number of transfers, getting death certificates, and writing obituaries.

“The visitations and services had essentially shut down. In one year’s time we had an additional 431 deaths, which was a 27 percent increase because of COVID-19-related deaths.

“Basically, obituaries citing the arrangements for a funeral were non-existent at this time. We did an enormous amount of communication with families. Everything was a question. It was all up in air as to what we were going to do. Some said, ‘Just cremate. We are

not going to have a service at this time.’ Others said, ‘We will have it at a later date. Just do the death certificate.’ I recall people driving up to our parking lot to receive their loved one’s remains in an urn.

“What started to happen was people would call us and say they really wanted to have a service but didn’t know if they could. We all just sat in limbo. Sometimes we had financial agreements with families that would stay open for months. Eventually we started telling people that we were going to simplify things and do as little as possible, and that the family should call us in a year or so to ask for our help.

“We also advised families that they could pay now, at today’s price, and that payment would be good whenever they decided to do something. We didn’t know at the time if there would be price changes, so this was fair because they got to pay the price they would have paid had we not had COVID-19. They basically paid for a memorial service, and I owed them one when we began doing them again. I then allowed them to add or subtract from their original plan. That worked out pretty well.

“Those who died of COVID-19 contained a residual risk to the living. We had to use great precautionary measures. One family I recall wanted to see the person who had died. We told them that it would be best if they did not touch or kiss the deceased. Everyone wore gloves and masks that day, and we sprayed down the casket with disinfectant spray. They had a quick glance out in the parking lot. It was very sad.

“Our embalmers have had a lot of experience with AIDS and other infectious diseases, so they really knew what they were doing. Some families, however, didn’t have their loved one embalmed; they just had them buried soon after death.

“Today we have pretty much returned to normal after the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. It has lasted about three years, and it isn’t over yet. Some people have waited for a long time and still have not had their service. On many occasions we scheduled funerals, then COVID got worse, so we had to postpone. This was a common occurrence.

“When we saw what was happening in New York, we knew that the COVID-19 response was not an overreaction. We were very fortunate to have enough cooler space to be able to handle what we were faced with.

“We looked to our staff for their ideas. Daily we asked for their input and their questions. My most interesting, yet sad, story came from a memo that we sent out to the whole staff. It was a directive that there would be no face-to-face meeting with our customers. We were afraid that our staff would get sick and there would be no one to handle the customer services. The staff was directed to use DocuSign. I told them they must tell their customers about it and ask them to use it. We would need to begin talking to families by phone and telling them that this disease is too contagious for us to have personal contact. We needed to tell them that we could not endanger them or our staff. There were to be no more face-to-face meetings.

“That very day, one of our arrangers had a family that wanted to meet face-to-face. The arranger told the family, ‘I’m sorry, I cannot meet with you, but we do have DocuSign now, and you can use that.’ The arranger told the person that the disease was too contagious.

“The woman involved said, ‘I go by your chapel every day. Can’t I just stop in for a minute and sign what I need to sign?’

“Our arranger told her. ‘I’m very sorry, but no. We can talk on the phone, and I can walk you through the DocuSign. I know it will work for you.’ So that’s what happened.

“About three days later, the woman’s brother called and said that the woman was in the hospital with COVID-19, which she apparently caught from their mother who had died from it. A few days later he called again and said that his sister had died. Now there were two funerals to plan. The same woman who wanted to sit down face-to-face with us was now deceased.

“Around the same time, I went down to WCCO personally with an ad to the public about how we can help during these trying times. ‘This is what we can do and how we can help you,’ the ad stated.

“Another case involved a personal friend whose father was very concerned about planning for his wife’s death. And then he died from COVID before his wife did. We had yet another double funeral.

“We had people, too, who could not see their loved ones for many months. Their loved ones had been in nursing homes and they could not be let in. Our staff even had challenges in some nursing homes where a patient had died and the staff would not let us in. We would have to wait outside where the nursing home staff would bring out the deceased. On some occasions, as we were taking the deceased on the cot to the vehicle, the family of the deceased would stop us and say, ‘Is that my mom or my dad? Can we see her or him?’ We would let them see their loved one in the parking lot for the last time. There are no words to explain the sadness.

“COVID-19 precautions eventually began to change somewhat and let us return to some kind of normalcy again. It seemed like an eternity that we had been dealing with this terrible disease. Some of it is still lingering. Some people are still wearing masks

and keeping distance from others. I think, overall, we did a really good job of handling all the issues and problems that came with COVID-19. We have a tremendous staff, and they were extremely helpful throughout everything that we went through.

“Taking precautions, like offering clean pens, was very important, and we did that as often as possible. Every time someone would need a pen to use, they would know they are getting a clean pen. Some of our obituaries even today include things such as, ‘Please wear a mask to the service,’ as well as other safety type measures.

“Webcasting is very important today. It used to only be socially acceptable to come in person to a funeral from out of town, while today, watching the service online is accepted. Many things have changed because of COVID, and some of the changes have been for the better. We also found that cemeteries were used more regularly for funeral services, as people wanted to be outside with the casket. Some changes worked at the time and have continued on.

“We saw some churches remaining as open as possible during COVID, blocking pews and keeping people separated as much as possible. It was a different time, and each entity had their own way of handling it. We had some churches calling to find out what other churches were doing.

“People were very understanding throughout the entire process. We kept our eyes and ears open to what was going on, then provided what we learned to the families. I don’t think we would do anything differently. We watched, we listened, and we passed on what we knew.

“We have seen many changes through the years to the funeral process. One of the major ones is the decor of funeral chapels. Until ADA requirements changed, funeral chapels used to have many

steps. Back when funeral chapels were still called mortuaries, everything was very dark. Burgundy velvet drapes were commonplace to make the space somber and dark.

“Other changes included terminology: *undertaker* became *mortician*, and *mortician* became *funeral director*.

“The decorations in our buildings became lighter, and we added bright chandelier lights and high, vaulted ceilings. In one of our chapels we put in twelve additional windows to bring in sunlight. There was a time when the profession did not want natural light, and now that has changed as well.

“Instead of having a funeral, people sometimes want to have a celebration of life. This puts a positive spin on something that can feel very negative.

“People today find ways to do funerals with different options. They release doves, they release balloons, or they find other ways to make the celebration of life a positive experience. For example, once we were called on to serve a family whose young son died. His favorite color was orange, so we had a casket custom-painted orange and a balloon release of several orange balloons.

“Providing pictures and videos of the deceased is common today, as it allows the family to see the deceased in a positive way. This has worked well for many, especially as it has become more common for just the immediate family to view the body

“The best indicator of the future is the past and the present. Webcasting, videos, and nice pictures are common. No one has a crystal ball that shows what the future holds, but certainly technology will be a game changer. Everything from email communications to digital record storage has been a major change and a good thing for families and the profession.”

Chapter Nine

Being Proud

The following is drawn from an interview of William L. McReavy.

As William L. McReavy mentioned, “It’s important to be involved in many organizations and to network. Staying involved ensures your community knows you and your work.

“I think what I am the proudest of is the expansion of our business. I’m proud of the way we built the Glen Haven Chapel, the Swanson Funeral Chapel, and all our beautiful buildings, some with cemeteries attached. I have been very fortunate in hiring good people. They are the very best at what they do. We have always had excellent people working for us who really care about others. We never had to worry about what they were going to do or say.

“Having a positive attitude is as important as anything. It is key that our employees know that they have an important job to do, so we hire positive people. Having a good attitude is the most important, and it is our job to keep our employees happy by spreading out the work so it is manageable. We often move employees around from place to place; our staff go to the chapels where they

are needed.

“If we were going to build the business over again and start from scratch, I would not change much. We have done well over the years, and the company has, in some ways, taken on a life of its own. We have always tried to keep our business profitable while remaining competitive. We were forced to expand and to move out to the suburbs to keep our business going. We also had very difficult times through the years, sometimes doing as many as three funerals a day. Typically, we have fewer funerals per day, but we never know what kind of day it will be.

“Expanding the company has made us extremely proud. We are not sure that our company will expand any further than it has now. Growing the company to this point has been one of our biggest accomplishments. We are also proud, as we have said many times, of helping people in their time of need.

“The best part of the job has always been helping people through the most difficult times of their lives. We try to do the

right thing for them and to be sure we always say what we want to say. We want to execute a perfect funeral.

“Tears and laughter are very close together in our business. People who have lost someone and are grieving can often say something very sad, then move immediately to laughter. It is not as uncommon as you might think. In the funeral business, it’s a lot like being with someone on a boat during a horrific storm. They don’t know what to do. They have never experienced anything like this before. And then the Coast Guard shows up. They come on board, take over, and get the people home safely. We are like the Coast Guard. A lot of people are leaning on us to get them through this very difficult time.

“Typically, a phone call will start the planning stages. The next day we meet, and we really start the heavy planning. The next day we sort out all the details to move the service along. While that is happening, it comes down to a visitation. Then you have a service and a burial. And the thing is, you don’t just have one service going; you have multiple services all over the city all at different stages over a period of a few weeks. Project management is the key to getting it all done efficiently.”

Chapter Ten

Excerpts from *Funeral Business Magazine*

The following is drawn from an interview of William W. McReavy, son of William L. McReavy.

“**W**e got our start in the funeral business in 1857, one year before Minnesota became a state. We are family owned and operated, and we were the first established funeral organization in the state. Today we have sixteen locations, which include four cemetery funeral home combinations, three crematoriums, a flower shop, and a highly successful prearrangement division. We really put an emphasis on our staff training, facilities, and equipment. We work hard so we are prepared not only to meet but exceed a family’s expectations when they call us, as we have been doing for five generations.

“I always thought that I might follow in my father’s footsteps, but I had two other professions I was also considering: an airline pilot and a professional drummer. I ultimately decided that becoming a pilot was probably more secure. Life brought me back to funeral service, and the more I saw, the more I liked it. The bottom line here is that I absolutely love this profession, and I can no longer imagine doing anything else.

“My favorite parts of the business are the acquisitions and expansions, but those don’t happen all the time. In the meantime, I just love to serve families. At the end of the day, this business is all about the quality of service we can provide and exceeding expectations. I am constantly trying to refine what we do so we can be a better company each year.

“We have two trademarks: ‘The Most Trusted Name in Funeral and Cremation Services’ and ‘Quality and Value Funeral and Cremation Services.’ We understand the trust that people place in us, and we take it very seriously. We do everything we can to provide quality at every step. We have positioned ourselves to be able to provide quality service, facilities, and equipment at a reasonable price. With sixteen locations, we have synergy between our properties. Beyond that, we have been great at adapting to trends over the years. We take time to evaluate which ones are worth embracing and implementing, and which ones we should avoid.

“Our greatest challenges have led to our greatest achievements.

I always ask the question, ‘Who can stand up in a hurricane?’ That is my number one objective: to make sure we are always standing no matter what storms we encounter. That means ensuring every aspect of the business is strong enough to withstand the challenges that might come along over the next several decades.

“As we look back on our careers, I am most proud of the successful expansions and acquisitions we have completed. Our ability to successfully grow the business since before Minnesota was a state is truly remarkable. Embedded in all of this is our unwavering ability to aid our customers in the most difficult time of their lives.

“Funeral service is about taking it one service at a time and making sure expectations are always exceeded. When anyone attending a service comes up to us and thanks us for the work we’ve done, that is the best part. Our job is to serve our community, and it’s very rewarding and reassuring to know our service is deeply appreciated.

“I have given advice at times, and most of it comes from a belief that the number one reason people join this profession is because they consider it a calling. I recommend that people take that natural passion and continue to learn from every experience and every transaction. Never stop learning. There are always ways to improve upon what you are doing and grow to be the best you can possibly be. Even if something doesn’t turn out exactly like you thought it would, we can learn from the process.

“We look forward to continuing to take on the daily challenges that we face. We are excited to serve our community and to get better at what we do each day. We love our ability to constantly improve and grow, and I look forward to continuing that.

“Everything changes and everything evolves. When I first start-

ed out, the thought of having a celebration of life at a country club or a VFW wasn’t even a possibility by society’s standards. Today, we not only accept that as a norm, but we also embrace it as being a great idea. The traditional business model of funeral service is constantly being challenged, and you have to learn how to adapt. Funeral chapels that refuse these changes will be left behind.

“When we do have some free time in our busy work schedules, I like to crunch numbers and look at things from all angles. I enjoy meeting with employees to get first-hand feedback. I want to hear about their experiences and where we can make improvements to be more efficient and make the environment better for them. I want to help them with anything they need to make their jobs easier, and enable them to do their job to the very best of their ability so they feel good about what they are doing.

“On a personal level, we all need a break from work to come back refreshed. I enjoy spending time with family and friends, working out almost every day, playing golf in the summer, and skiing in the winter. I recently purchased my dream drum kit. The best part of working in funeral services and drumming is that I can afford to eat!”

Chapter Eleven

Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels

The following is drawn from an interview of William L. McReavy.

“Our business started out with our Southeast Chapel—that’s where the storefront with the wood structure was. Then we moved to a couple different places, and eventually we ended up at 405 Central Avenue where the company evolved.

“Donald R. McReavy was looking to the future when he wanted to move to the St. Anthony Men’s Commercial Club and make it a funeral chapel. He died in 1949, and several years later the family was able to fulfill his vision.

“We moved a lot before we settled in on our permanent sites. The demographics shifted so much during those times. There was a time where everyone who died seemed to live in the area, and then things changed and it really spread out. Now we have multiple funeral chapels, and we expanded from Minneapolis out into the suburbs. At one point all of our chapels were in Minneapolis, and now we have six in Minneapolis and ten in suburban locations.

CRYSTAL LAKE
Chapel and Cemetery
3816 Penn Avenue N
612-521-3677

DAWN VALLEY
Chapel and Memorial Park
9940 Bush Lake Road
952-941-7686

GLEN HAVEN
Chapel and Memorial Gardens
5125 W Broadway
763-533- 8643

HILLSIDE

Chapel and Cemetery
2610 19th Avenue NE
612-781-1999

BLOOMINGTON

2300 W Old Shakopee Road
952-884-8145

COLUMBIA HEIGHTS CHAPEL

4101 Central Avenue NE
763-789-4436

COON RAPIDS CHAPEL

1827 Coon Rapids Blvd NW
763-767-1000

DAVIS UPTOWN CHAPEL

2301 Dupont Avenue S
612-377-2203

EDEN PRAIRIE CHAPEL

7625 Mitchell Road
952-975-0400

EDINA CHAPEL

5000 W 50th Street
952-920-3996

HOPKINS CHAPEL

1400 Mainstreet
952-938-9020

NEW BRIGHTON CHAPEL

706 4th Avenue NW
651-636-9821

NOKOMIS PARK CHAPEL

1838 E Minnehaha Parkway
612-721-1651

NORTH EAST CHAPEL

2901 Johnson Street NE
612-781-6828

ROBBINSDALE CHAPEL

4239 W Broadway
763-537-2333

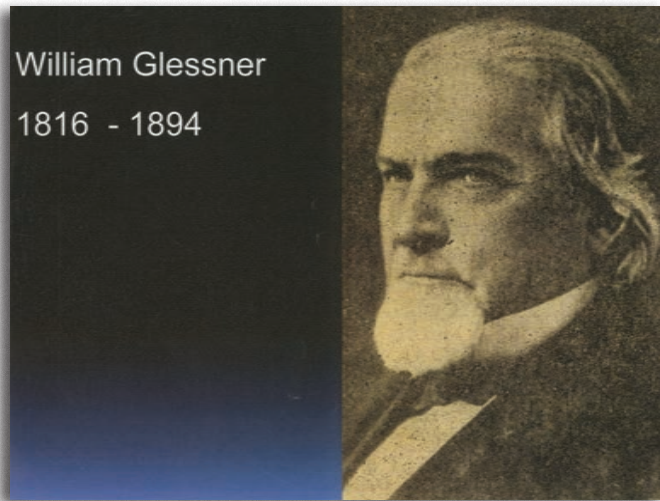
SWANSON CHAPEL

1600 Lowry Avenue N
612-529-9691

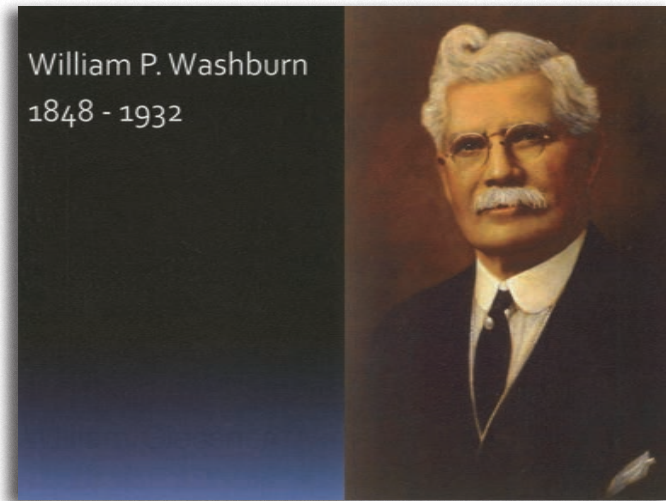
BLAINE PREARRANGEMENT CENTER

10450 Baltimore Street NE
763-231-0506

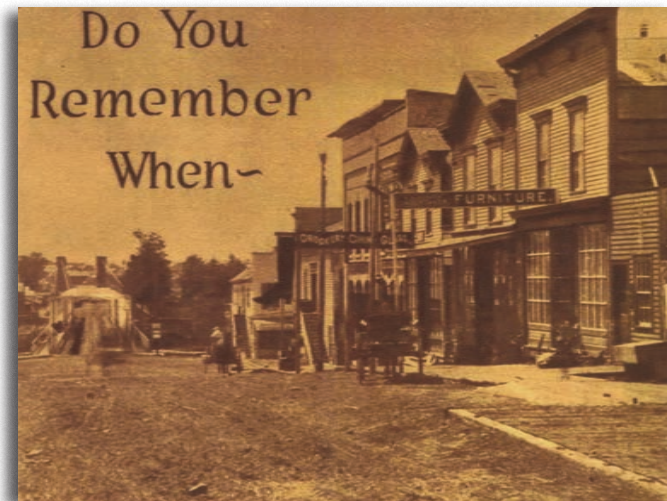
McReavy Family Photos



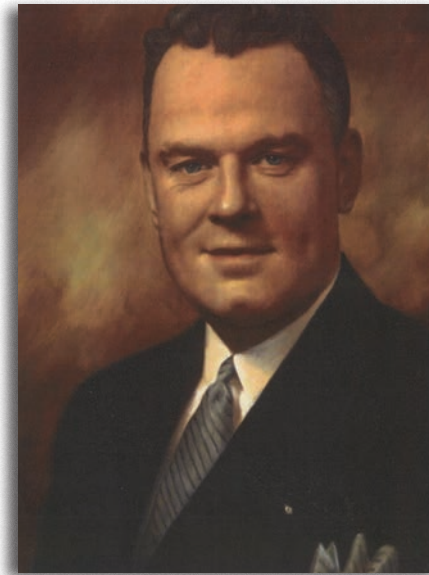
William Glessner



William P. Washburn, 1848-1932

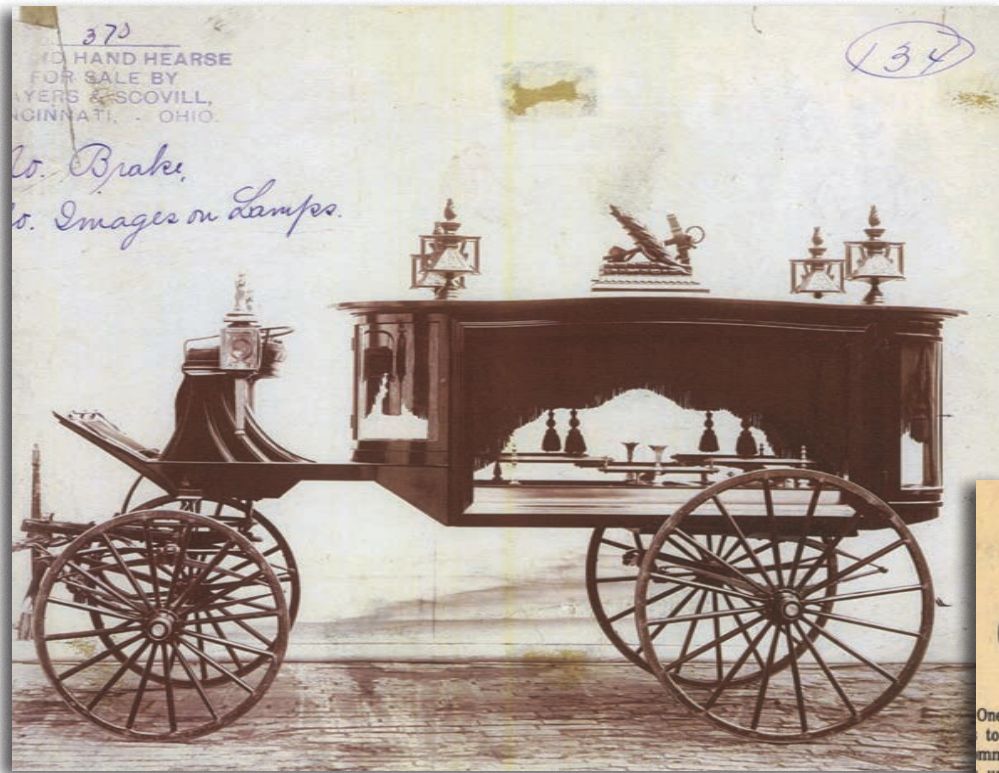


The first funeral chapel



Donald R. McReavy,
1906-1949
(Bill Sr.'s father)

The second cart to carry a casket



The first cart to carry a casket

Wed., Dec. 29, 1971 — MINNEAPOLIS ARGUS — Page 9

Washburn-McReavy History Older Than City, Statehood

By DAVE HILL

One of the first businesses to open in any frontier community, it seems, was an undertaking parlor. As soon as a new community sprang up on the American frontier, settlers began to die and an undertaker was needed to bury them.

So it comes as no surprise to learn that when the Greater Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce decided to honor various city businesses for a century or more of service, one of the businesses they chose to honor was the Washburn-McReavy Mortuary.

As one of the oldest businesses on the eastside, its history can be traced back



VINTAGE FUNERAL CAR ONCE A COMMON SIGHT
But Chapels Still Serve Eastside

The first motorcar to carry a casket



In 1944, the McReavy SE Chapel moved from this location across the street to 405 Central Avenue SE in Minneapolis.

Washburn-McReavy SE Chapel, 1944–1973. In 1973, we moved to 200 Central Avenue, which was the old St. Anthony Commercial Club. Bill Sr.'s father, Donald R. McReavy, always wished he could have this location as a funeral chapel.





405 Central, the main chapel



Florian, the daughter of Donald and Lillian, died on October 9, 1944. The funeral was held at Andrew Presbyterian Church.



405 Central Avenue SE in Minneapolis—our first new Cadillacs



Donald R. McReavy, Lillian McReavy (mother of Bill Sr.), and Bill Sr.'s sisters, Roxanne and Arlene. Representing the Minneapolis Aquatennial as general chair, Bill Sr. is shown driving his family in the nighttime Aquatennial parade.



Donald R. McReavy, general chair of the Aquatennial in 1947, rides in the center of the row of five horses in the daytime Aquatennial parade.



The first white coach in Minnesota in 1961



Bill and Kay got married on June 11, 1954.



The Northeast Chapel, photographed in the *Northeast Chapel Newspaper*

The fourth chapel location, built in 1974



Northeast Chapel

- First Branch Location
- Interments to Hillside and Sunset Cemeteries
- Beginning of white pillars and fountains

The new Northeast Chapel

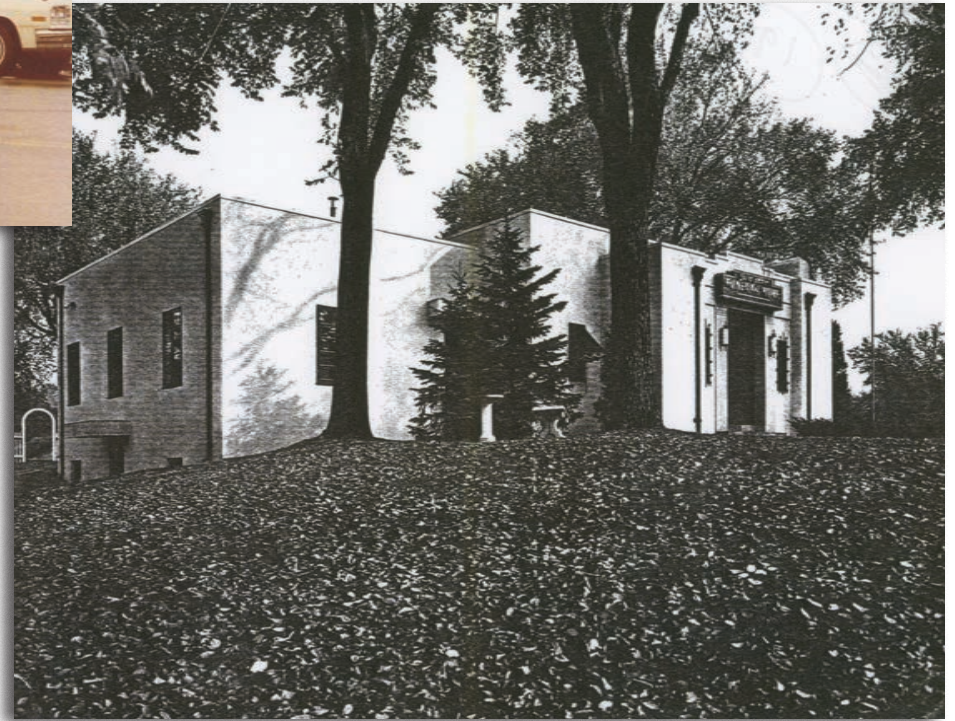


Southeast Chapel

- First location established 1857 on the Mississippi River
- University of Minnesota and Downtown Minneapolis
- Build on heritage of the Washburn – McReavy name



A fireman's funeral



The first Swanson Chapel, 1961, before remodeling



The start of the new Swanson Chapel



Construction of the new Swanson Chapel



Construction of the new Swanson Chapel



Construction of the new Swanson Chapel



Swanson Chapel

- First chapel west of the Mississippi River
- Significant demographic & cultural challenges
- Interments to Crystal Lake Cemetery

The new Swanson Chapel



The Washburn-McReavy Swanson
Funeral Chapel



Hopkins Chapel

- First Suburban location
- Construction of crematory 1986

Hopkins Chapel, 1978



Washburn-McReavy Davies Funeral Chapel, 1987



Robbinsdale Chapel

- First tear down and rebuild/Most cost effective project
- Built on heritage and Duschane name
- Interments to Glen Haven Memorial Gardens

Robbinsdale Chapel, 1985



Edina Chapel

- First remodel of restaurant/Most expensive project to date
- \$9000 demographic study/400+ Resident Deaths
- First vaulted ceiling, grand piano & freeway visibility
- Direct Competition with SCI

Edina Chapel, 1992



Bill and Kay's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary picture



Eden Prairie Chapel

- Geographically furthest south location
- Only property we built from the ground up.
- Demographically low median age, Built for the future

Eden Prairie Chapel, 1997



Coon Rapids Chapel, 1997



Nokomis Park Chapel

- Came with acquisition of Hillside
- Addition of WMFC name raised volume
- Major enhancements to facility
- Closest location to Fort Snelling National Cemetery

Nokomis Park Chapel, 2001



Columbia Heights Chapel

- Remodel of a Bank
- Only 1 chapel/visitation area
- Could not buy competitor so we built

Columbia Heights Chapel, 2001



Werness Brothers Bloomington Chapel, 2005



Crystal Lake Chapel, 2005



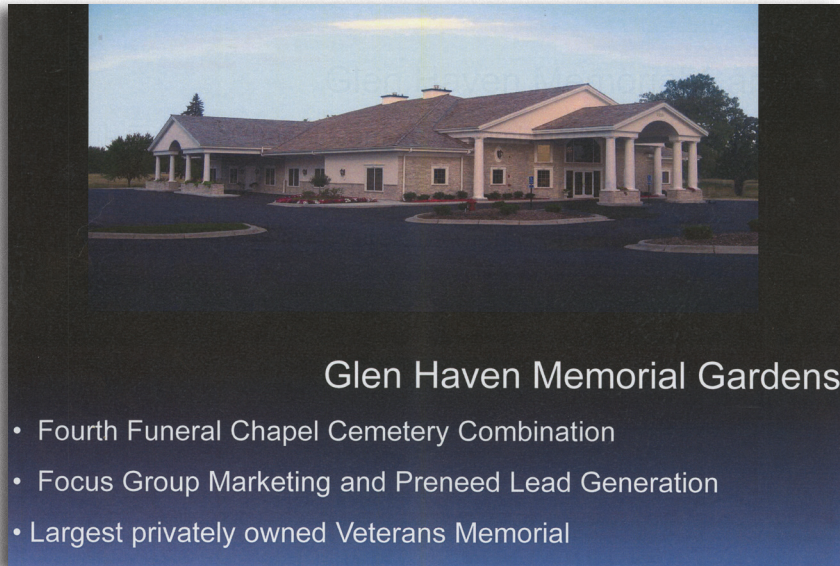
Dawn Valley Chapel, 2005



Groundbreaking for Glen Haven



Glen Haven Chapel, 2007



Glen Haven



Ribbon cutting at Glen Haven



Minnesota's largest private memorial, dedicated May 27, 2008, at Glen Haven Memorial Gardens



Dennis Schulstad, Memorial Day, with William L. McReavy



Memorial Day services



William L. McReavy, Memorial Day



Swans at Glen Haven Memorial Gardens



Washburn-McReavy
FUNERAL CHAPELS, CEMETERIES AND
CREMATION SERVICES

*New Brighton Funeral Chapel
Opening November 1, 2015*

New Brighton Chapel



Ribbon cutting, New Brighton Chapel



Minnesota State Capitol



Minnesota State Capitol rotunda

Viewing

—WILLIAM W. McREAVY

Viewing of the deceased has been proven to be very important almost all the time according to the most respected grief counselors throughout the United States. As imagined, there are circumstances, such as a tragic death or the death of a child that are extremely difficult. In these instances, we frequently find situations where family members are apprehensive about viewing the deceased; sometimes they believe it will traumatize or otherwise negatively affect them. When family members are unsure if they want to or are willing to view the deceased, we have learned through experience that the best thing to do is to take them to the actual room where the viewing would take place and walk them to a doorway approximately forty feet from where their loved one would be lying in state. We then explain that a family friend or somebody who is more willing to view the deceased could go in first and come back to share their experience with the others. Anyone with great apprehension could then decline to enter the room or could slowly proceed into the

room under their own power and take their time to approach the casket. Many times we have seen the people who are the most apprehensive to view go in, show a great deal of emotion, eventually become comfortable with being with their loved one, and, when it comes time to leave, have a difficult time leaving them behind. Experience shows this to be very therapeutic and helpful in grief resolution. We survey every family and communicate with them throughout their experience, and we frequently hear that they are grateful for our professional guidance and can't imagine not having been able to see their loved one one last time, to say "I love you," and to say a final goodbye. We have observed many times the transformation of surviving family members moving forward in the grieving process, often in a matter of days, and it is clear that viewing played a critical part in their being able to accept the death and move forward, returning to a normal, healthy lifestyle. Life will never be the same again; however, it is found the surviving family is able to eventually celebrate the joy of having their

loved one as a part of their life and smile and be grateful for the time they had with their loved one.

Many people, even those with extensive life experience, don't always believe viewing is necessary or advisable. One example we use to help people understand why we do what we do is as follows: Imagine you are in your house and someone comes running in to tell you that the car in your driveway just exploded. Ask yourself what your natural reaction would be. Would it be to run to the telephone to call the fire department or possibly your insurance company? Or would it be to run to your car to see this tragic event with your own eyes. Now imagine someone tells you over the phone or in person that your loved one just tragically and unexpectedly died. In comparison, your personal automobile exploding cannot begin to compare to the tragic loss of a loved one. It comes down to one simple fact: *Seeing is believing*.

The following are three friends of the McReavy family who are recognized as leaders in grief counseling.

“It is interesting to me that the more than six thousand years of historical funeral evidence and artifacts, as well as crosscultural research in well over one hundred contemporary people groups, North American Anglos stand virtually alone in thinking the viewing of the body is unnecessary. This is clearly a case where our so-called highly advanced culture has it wrong, moving us one gigantic step backward in mental health. Failure to view the body was a mistake in every case I can recall in more than twenty-five years of clinical practice.”

—DR. WILLIAM G. HOY, FT

“Avoiding viewing of the deceased leads to searching for what we have lost.”

—RICHARD OBERSHAW,
MSW, LICSW, ACSW, THE GRIEF CENTER

“A wound that goes unacknowledged is a wound that cannot heal. . . . Death ends a life, not a relationship.”

—DR. ALAN WOLFELT,
THE CENTER FOR LOSS AND LIFE TRANSITION

Mental Health

—WILLIAM W. McREAVY

As licensed funeral directors, we are frequently asked about how we can maintain good mental health. Numerous times, families in the midst of planning funerals will make comments such as, “How in the world do you do this every day?” Whenever I was asked this question, I would share that it started with exercising daily and recognizing that I had not experienced a death of a loved one personally. There is no question that when family friends came to me for assistance in arrangements, it hit much closer to home, and I did have to be careful not to get too emotionally involved. That didn’t mean I didn’t show emotion, care, and concern and express condolences to the family. On occasion, I had to explain that my job was similar to that of an emergency medical responder, so that even if I knew the person who needed emergency medical attention, I had to focus on the job at hand and stay calm enough to attend to all the various tasks that needed to be done.

Everyone’s mental health was challenged during the pandemic, but especially those in health care and deathcare. It is always advisable for staff members to communicate with each other and to check in to ensure they are doing okay emotionally. We inform our staff that we have access to mental health professionals, should they need care in this area. If they need a break from being exposed to too many highly emotional situations; we will work with them to provide them with what they need.

Loss of a Child

—WILLIAM W. MCREAVY

As funeral service professionals, we are known to build defense mechanisms to protect ourselves so we can be exposed to death daily our entire career and still function in a normal and healthy way. In addition to physical exercise, an adequate amount of sleep and a manageable amount of stress are also very important for funeral directors. It is our responsibility as owners and managers to have a manageable schedule that allows our staff to get enough rest to be able to do their job to serve families with a high level of care and compassion. It also requires excellent listening and organizational skills.

There are many funeral arrangements that can present funeral directors with significant challenges emotionally. Over the decades we have had several very tragic individual deaths that may have been accidental, suicide or homicide. These types of situations are very challenging for a funeral director to organize and ensure that they maintain a stable emotional condition. In addition to individual deaths, we have served families that have experienced two

people in the same family that have died in motorcycle, snowmobile, boating, and automobile accidents. We have had three in the same family die from a house fire, automobile accident, and explosion. We have had four that perished in a plane crash and five in a very tragic residential situation. So many of these situations are unimaginable and challenging.

As tragic as these events are, there is one category that seems to be the hardest for funeral directors: the loss of an infant or child. We have served every age and have had so many different circumstances. When a family wants to view a child who has died, it is important to complete a delicate embalming procedure. We have had embalmers with small children of their own tell us they just could not do the embalming, so we would turn to an alternative staff member to complete the difficult task. When my wife was pregnant with our first child, I took care of three infants who had died. The primary reason for my meeting with these three families was that nobody else wanted to, unless they were given no choice.

The first child was stillborn. The second was a child whose parents had been given some knowledge that their child might not survive for long after birth. The parents of the third child, along with the young mother's family, came in to make funeral arrangements for the child, who had lived for only four days and then died of SIDS. The mother, in the midst of a great deal of grief, said that the ultrasound had been perfect and everything, and their baby had had no health concerns. I thought to myself that my wife had had the ultrasound two days earlier and that by no means were we out of the woods for having a healthy child. Needless to say, I didn't tell my wife about the three families I had met with during her pregnancy until years later.

The young parents selected traditional burial, so we provided the information to the family about casket options. The young mother said that she couldn't stand to walk in to see her baby lying in a box. It was then suggested that we would do our preparation work, have the child dressed, and if it would be more acceptable, have a female funeral director holding the child when the family came in. When the family arrived, our staff member was holding the child when I led the family into the room. Over the next four hours, the family members took turns holding the baby and passing the baby around to hold and to love. By the end of the evening, there had been a transition from fear, grief, and tremendous loss to something much more positive, including some laughter and feelings of gratitude for the time they spent with their child. The mother and dad then tucked the child into the baby casket along with a few toys and stuffed animals and a special baby blanket given to them by the grandparents.

It is stories like this that seem to allow funeral directors to step up and take on very difficult situations and somehow make them bearable for the families we serve.

The Little Fireman

—LEWIS (LEWIE) MARSHALL, RETIRED WASHBURN-McREAVY DIRECTOR

Several years ago I took care of a funeral for an eight-year-old boy that died from cancer. His parents told me he loved fire trucks and wondered what I might be able to come up with to make their son's funeral special.

I looked around online and located a fire truck collectors' club. I contacted them to see if they could have one of their vintage fire trucks outside the church the day of his funeral. They did better than that. They brought over a pumper fire truck that his casket could be carried on. The boy's parents and grandparents were able to ride to the cemetery in the crew cab. His parents were so excited.

I also contacted Northwestern Casket Company about getting a red casket. They custom-painted one and embroidered a fire truck in the head panel. They also included a Dalmatian puppy doll. Brown-Wilbert Inc. painted a burial vault fire engine red. The boy's parents asked me to take photos at his funeral, which I did. A

week or so after the funeral, his mother met me at the Edina Chapel and downloaded the photos from my camera to her laptop computer.

It was a funeral I won't forget.

Godfrey House

—KAY McREAVY

Bill, Cyndi, Bill Jr., and I have been active in many parts of the city of Minneapolis. Southeast Minneapolis is where Bill Sr. was born and raised. One of the special places in Southeast is Chute Square. Many years ago, Franklin Steel hired Ard Godfrey to come from Orono, Maine, to build a sawmill on the Mississippi River, where Pracna is now located. Steel had property on the river and gave it to Godfrey to build a home for his family. It was built in 1848, when Ard came without his family, and finished after they arrived in 1849. The home is now on its fifth location, having been moved four times for development. When it was on Bank Street the kitchen wing collapsed. In 1909 it was moved onto Chute Square.

One day Katie Lenmark drove by the little yellow house and saw it was closed up and standing vacant. Katie was the president of the Woman's Club of Minneapolis and thought, "Isn't that a shame. Someone should restore that house for the City of Minneapolis." It is the oldest frame home still in existence in Minneapolis. She took her request to the board of directors, and they all agreed it would

be a worthwhile project.

When I heard about their plan, I joined the Woman's Club in 1975. I helped with Phoebe Haugen and Daisy Hetherington, traveling around to find the period acquisitions for the 1950s home. Bill and I gave the dining room table, which we found in St. Paul. It was like the one the Godfreys had in the dining room. In 1976 the Woman's Club presented the refurnished restored house to the City of Minneapolis as a bicentennial gift.

Developers have tried to get the property. Bob Boisclair wanted to build a hotel in 1983. Twenty-five members of the Woman's Club, led by the chairman, who happened to be me that year, dressed in 1850s dresses, showed up at the city council meeting. The city council decided to let us keep the historical little house on Chute Square. Also, Mr. Boisclair gave us \$35,000 to rebuild the kitchen wing. The Godfrey House and Chute Square are across Central Avenue where our Southeast Chapel was located.

Testimonials

The following are just a few of the many testimonials Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels has received over the years.

“You took care of both of my parents with their pre-planning and their funerals. Excellent and very professional! Thank you!”

—PAT

“We expected quality service and we received it! Thank you very much!”

—BETTY

“Washburn-McReavy is like family in a time of grief.”

—TODD

“The director kept us informed on a very tight timeline. I appreciate that. Timing was everything!”

—DONNA

“Everything went smoothly, as planned. Thanks to our director for being so nice and making arrangements as easy as possible.”

—SUSAN

“We were very pleased with the outstanding service that we received.”

—LAURIE

“Our director was most helpful to the family, took care of all details that were needed, and was most gracious to the whole family.”

—JANET

“The facility was beautiful, and the director was accommodating when more people than we expected turned out. The service was beautiful and unforgettable.”

—KELLY

“The directors were so helpful and attentive to our needs. They made it possible for us to have the kind of funeral service that was beyond our expectations.”

—ROBERT

“The service and flowers were lovely. We received many comments that my mother’s funeral was one of the most beautiful they had ever attended.”

—DEBORAH

Some Final Thoughts

The following is drawn from an interview of Kay McReavy.

“**T**he most important part of our company is our staff. Bill Sr. picked up where his father left off in 1949, when his father passed away. We have over two hundred staff at the present time at Washburn-McReavy. Bill and I are the third generation.

“Bill Jr. graduated from the University of Minnesota School of Mortuary Science in 1984. Cyndi, who is the head of our administration and funeral preplanning, graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1979. She worked for Republic and Northwest Airlines in management for thirteen years and came to work with us full-time in 1992. Bill Jr. and Cyndi are the fourth generation to enter our business, and they remain instrumental in our day-to-day operations.

“Bill Jr.’s son, Brett McReavy, graduated from the Mortuary Science Business Program at the University of Minnesota in 2016.

“Cyndi’s son Jonathan McReavy Seitz graduated from the Program of Mortuary Science at the University of Minnesota in

2011 and is a funeral director in charge of our four cemeteries and our cremation services.

“Cyndi’s son Jordan McReavy Seitz graduated in 2016 from the Program of Mortuary Science at the U of M and is serving on the board of the Minnesota Funeral Directors Association and working full-time at Washburn-McReavy.

“Cyndi’s oldest son, Justin McReavy Seitz, is an attorney for Stinson LLP, having graduated from the Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota in 2009 and from the University of St. Thomas School of Law in 2013. Justin serves on our board of directors.

“We are proud of our family and of all our employees, who do an excellent job every single day.”

The following is drawn from an interview of William L. McReavy.

“I have been asked the question many times, ‘What keeps you going after seventy-five years in the business?’ The only answer I have is that I guess it is in my blood. When we have a service coming up, I want to make sure that we don’t miss anything, and that we have a service that is absolutely perfect in every way possible. When I go to a funeral, it is to be sure that the family is well taken care of and to be sure that they are getting everything that they want and need.

“‘Perfect’ is a powerful word. It means that no mistakes are made—none. Everything is done right. All funerals are different, but we still have to be sure that all the arrangements are done exactly to the family’s wishes. We double and triple check everything to be sure no mistakes are made. When something is off a little, we quickly get it back on track so the family is pleased when the service is over.

“It is a onetime event for the family. You can only have the funeral once, so it is important that everything goes perfectly. I truly believe that in any given one hundred funerals we have had as close to one hundred perfectly run services as possible. I really believe that statement.

“In planning a funeral, there are so many things that have to be done and arranged before the service takes place. With that many things to plan and prepare for, there is obviously the possibility that something could go wrong. But I would say that we have an almost perfect record throughout the years.

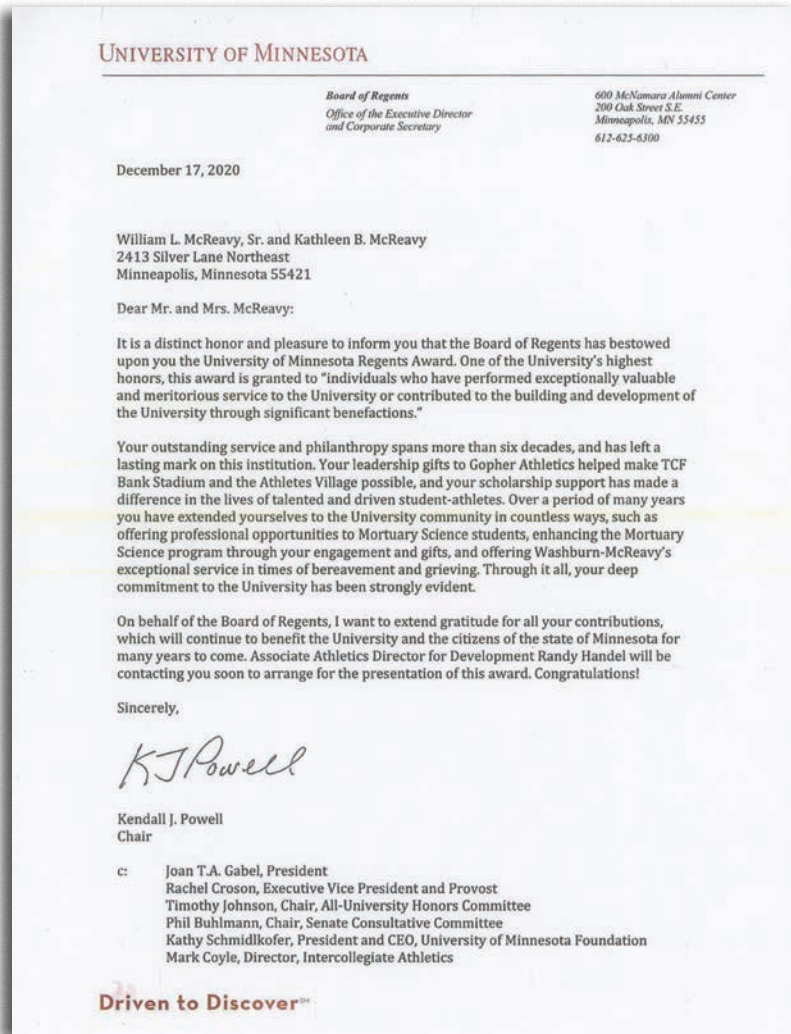
“I have the same desire today, after seventy-five years, to do everything properly. The key is to have a good staff, and we have that. One of the reasons that I like to go to funerals today is to watch our staff and to be absolutely sure that they do everything the right way.

“With my son, daughter, and grandkids handling most things, I feel confident that things will be done right. The most important thing is that the family is happy with the way things have gone. We have trained experts in the business who truly think the same way that I do: that we must do things right.

“I wanted to write this book because I thought my family and others would like to know about the company and history behind it. My wife Kathleen has been a major contributor as she has supported me over the years. She has done a wonderful job. She is the best anyone could ever be.

“I feel good about what we have accomplished. We started small and now are a very large company. We work hard to make everything we do perfect. I realize being perfect is a huge accomplishment, and when a family comes up to me and says, ‘Thank you. You have done a great job,’ that’s the very best thing that can happen.”

McReavy Family Photos



Board of Regents letter



Board of Regents award



City of Minneapolis proclamation of Washburn-McReavy Day



Bill Sr., Grand Marshal, 2014



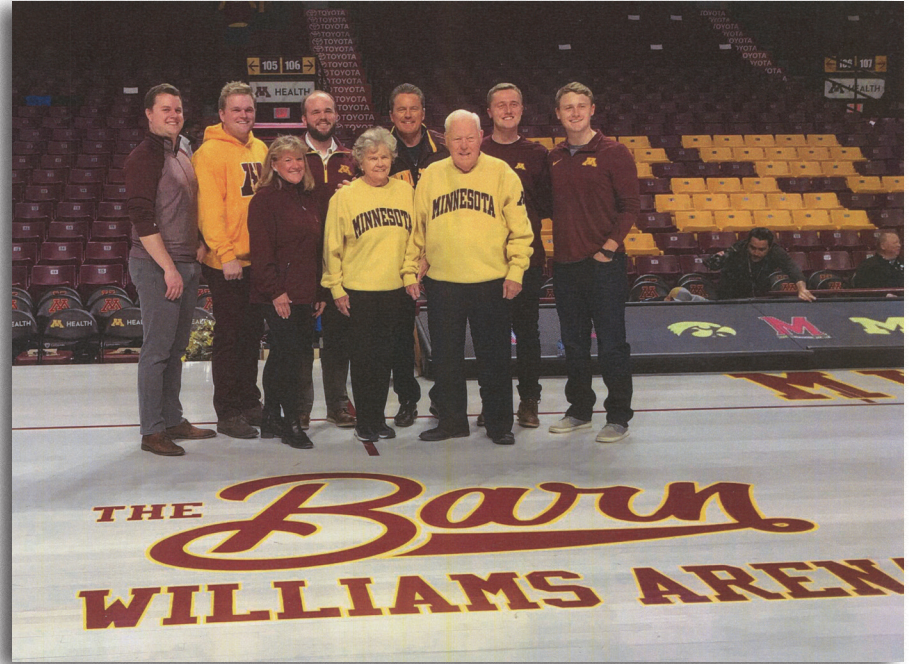
A young boy's funeral—he loved orange.



A young boy's funeral—another photo of the orange balloons.



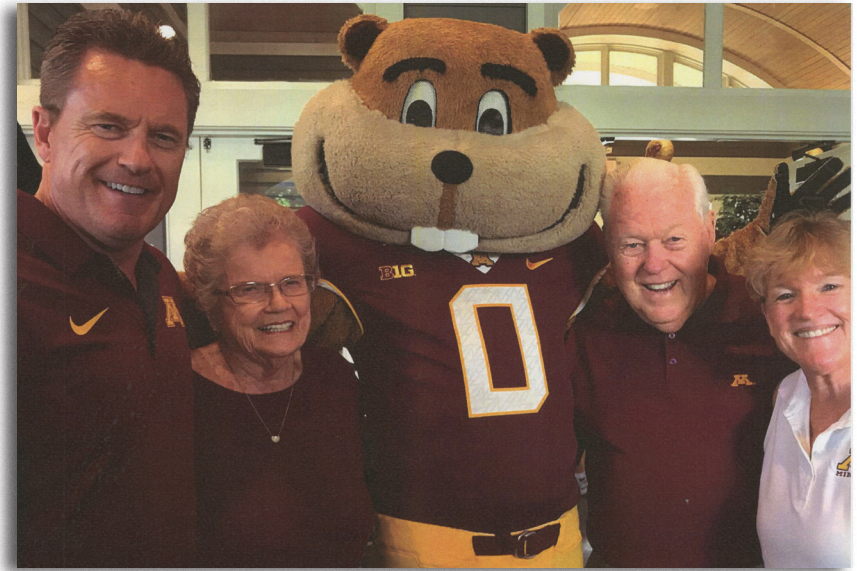
William L. McReavy presenting the Brandon Hall Award to Brandon's mother



Gopher basketball, Bill, Kay, and family



University of Minnesota Regent's Award



Goldy and family



Bill and Kay with the Gopher football and clock from P. J. Fleck, Minnesota football coach



Bill and Kay receiving the Regents Award



The Godfrey house had been closed for years until the president of the Woman's Club of Minneapolis, Katie Lenmark, decided it should be restored by the club and opened for tours. It is the oldest frame house still in existence in Minneapolis, built by Ard in 1848 and 1849.



Kay at the Ard Godfrey House for Dandelion Days



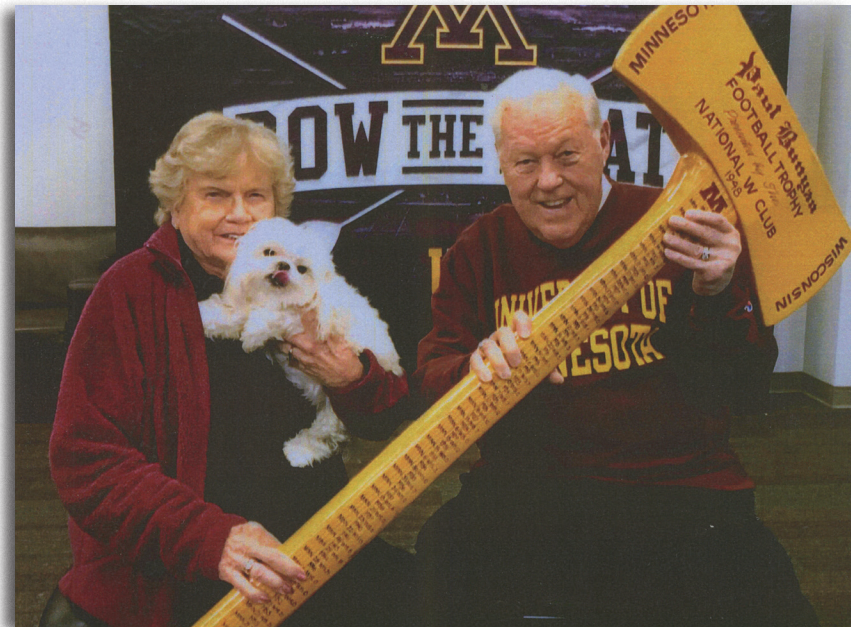
Minneapolis Aquatennial, Bill McReavy Jr., 2018 Commodore



Jordan, Cyndi, Jon, Kay, Bill Jr., Bill Sr., Brett



Policemen attending a funeral at the Basilica of St. Mary



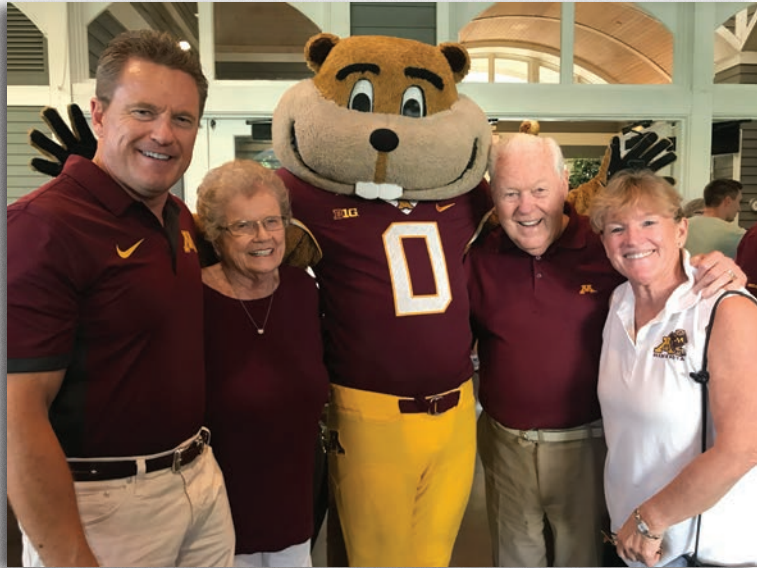
Bill and Kay with Paul Bunyan's Axe



University of Minnesota recognition ceremony



Celebrating a Gopher victory



Rowing the boat with Goldy Gopher



Bill and Kay's fiftieth anniversary



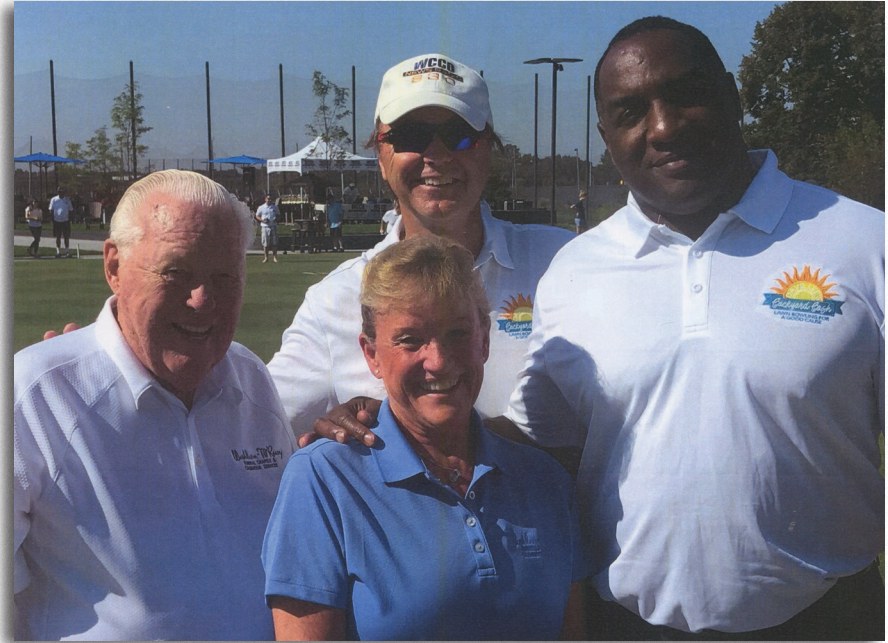
Bill Sr. and Dale Carlson, who retired as Hillside manager, with Mike Burns in the background



Kris Seale, Cyndi, Bill Sr., Bill Jr., and Todd Carlson



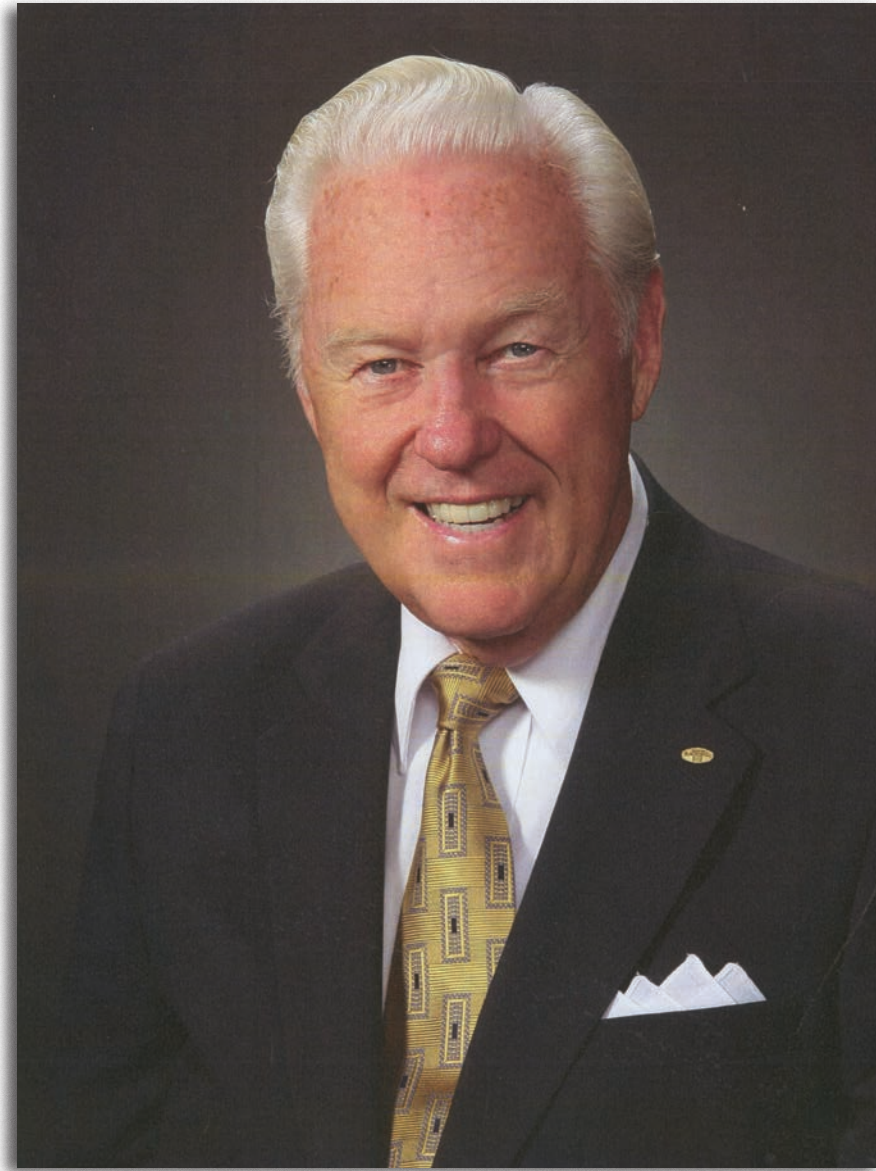
Bill Sr., Kay, and grandson Jordan



Bill Sr., Dave Lee, announcer for WCCO, Cyndi, and Darrell Thompson,
Bolder Options president



Bill, Kay, and Muff



Bill Sr.'s portrait for North Memorial Hospital, where he served for eighteen years on the board



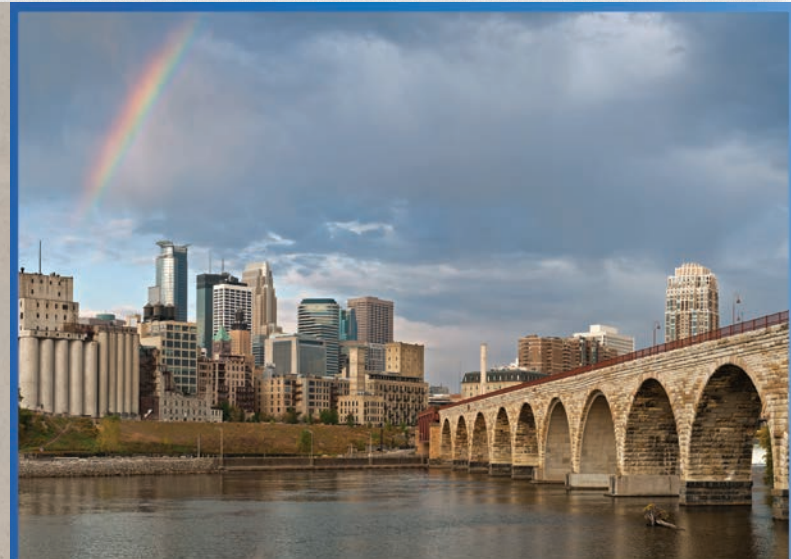
Hillside Chapel

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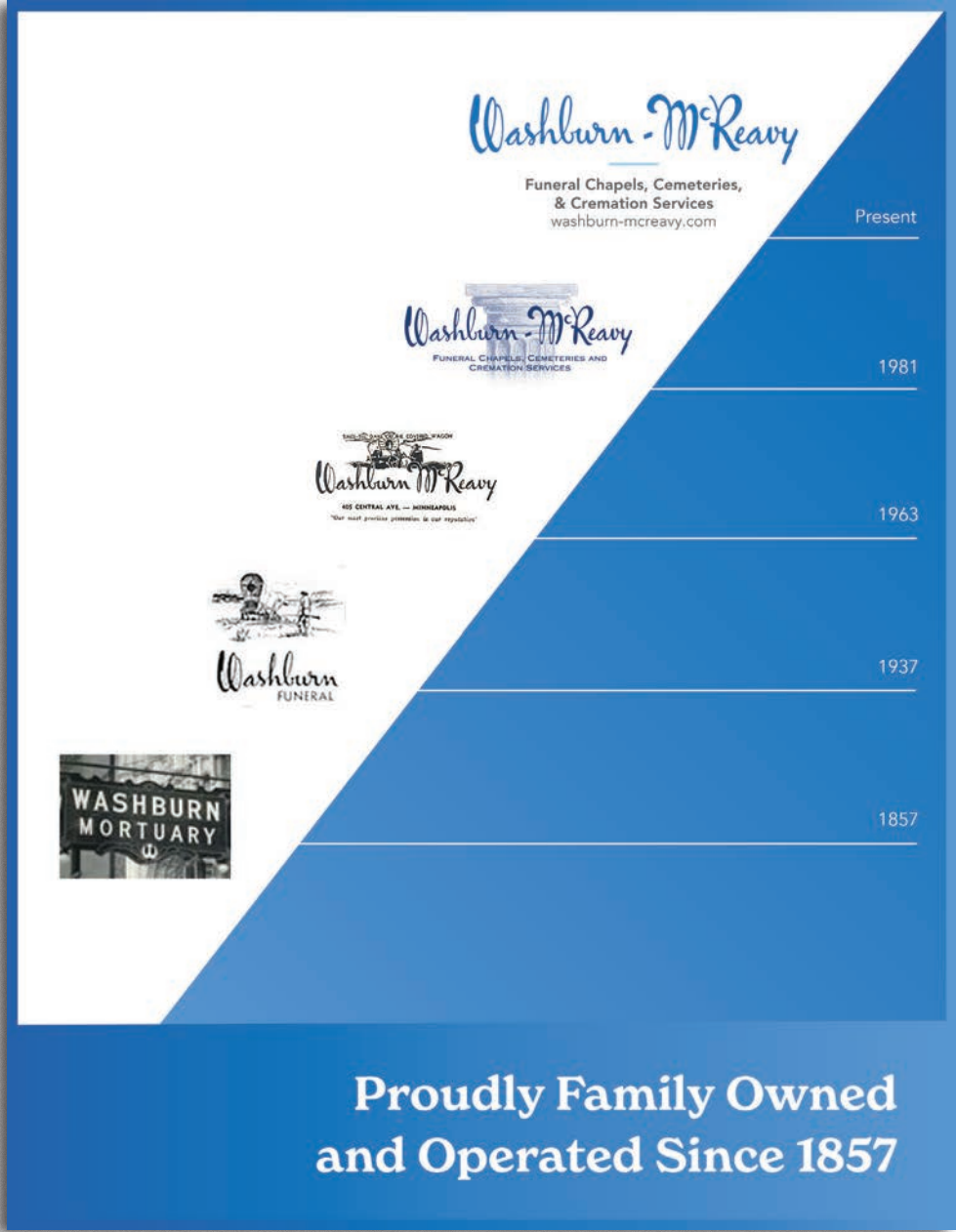


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Cemeteries and
Cremation Services

James J. Hill hired Charles Smith, the great-grandfather of William L. McReavy, to come from Ohio to build the Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis in 1883.



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