

# NEWSLETTER

JOHN A. GUPTON COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

FALL

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## Inside this Issue...

*President's Message*

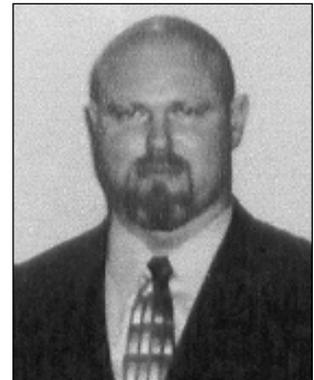
*A Fresh Look Into A Priceless Concept: Mentorship, Part I of III, by Travis Lindsay*

*In Memory*

*This and That From Here and There*

*Alumni Meeting and Reunion*

This year's reunion was a great event to have been in attendance. The Inaugural Alumni Roast Friday night sold out and the silent action ended during the banquet generating a lot of interest. During the business meeting Saturday the officers and I decided to make fund raising for the schools new Marketing Room our main goal for the upcoming year. Steve Spann is in the process of developing a budget for this room. We know we will be needing carpet, a conference table and a few other items that will help simulate a selection room for training future funeral directors. Please let me know if you can assist us in this project and don't forget about next year's guests of honor for the roast, Robbie Bacon & Dr. Oliver Yates. Thanks to everyone that donated to the auction and assisted with the roast, especially Jim Brewer and Steve Spann.



*Steve Murphy '89*

## This and That From Here and There...



*Melanie Heath Bryant '96* was installed as Vice-President of the Arkansas Funeral Directors Association at their annual convention in June. Melanie is associated with Heath Funeral Home in Paragould, AK.

*Jacky Carver '65*, owner of Sanderson Funeral Home in Carthage, TN and a member of the Gupton College Board of Directors, fell and broke his hip early in the week of August 8. He had surgery and is home and doing well. Keep Jacky and his family in your thoughts and prayers. Jacky Sr. is the father of *Jacky Carver, Jr. '96*.

# A FRESH LOOK INTO A PRICELESS OLD CONCEPT: MENTORSHIP PART I OF III

BY TRAVIS L. LINDSAY- DIRECTOR OF FUNERAL SERVICE EDUCATION - JOHN A. GUPTON COLLEGE

The new buzz-word being tossed around corporate America today is “mentorship.” This is an old concept that has recently been revived and has found its way back into the board rooms and training programs of some of the nations most successful corporations. Along with many other types of industry, the funeral industry is one that has enjoyed the benefits of mentorship in generations past. As funeral service has evolved, we seem to have lost touch with the concept and especially the extreme value of taking that person with no experience, but much to offer, under our wings and passing along the knowledge and traditions that we all want to see continue in the future.



According to Webster’s New World Dictionary, a mentor is defined as: a wise, loyal advisor, teacher, and coach. And mentorship is defined as: the act of taking on the responsibility of being a mentor to another. We all remember those people in our lives that made significant contributions, taught life lessons, and led us by example through trying times as well as the times they did not even realize they were being looked up to. Most of such happened in the rush of everyday operations and was not even considered a “training concept,” it was merely an act of teaching the ethics, morals, and functions of a funeral professional who held dear the trust of those he or she served. In funeral service, it seems that everyone has at least one story of someone who made a significant impact upon his or her life. Most of us have multiple stories of various people throughout our careers who have touched us either in a positive or negative manner which in turn has helped shape us into the professionals we are today. We all serve in an industry built upon tradition, which is based upon the experiences, good and bad of those who served before us.

In research for this series, it was necessary to look at all aspects of the concept of mentorship, not just the reborn aspects printed in modern business journals and motivational literature but the traditional core which in our industry is quite simple, by talking to those who are considered elders and more importantly to listen much and speak little while in their presence. It is amazing to hear of the true selflessness of our elders in this industry. These are the very people who took their own time to teach what was right and how to give to those in need while expecting nothing in return. It is with this spirit that we, the younger generation must carry out what was intended by those selfless efforts. Many of the most respected funeral service professionals of our time took young kids and turned them into caregivers by simply living up to what is expected by those we serve, such as sincere empathy, reverence for the dead, honesty, and integrity. Such attributes are not quite as common in society today in general so it means the task of mentoring is tougher than ever. Mentorship is not at all new to funeral service, perhaps the act has really never been given a proper name but it has been a common thread thus helping to weave the fabric of our industry and has turned the car washers of yesterday into the shining professionals of today.

Recently at the TFDA convention in Franklin, Tennessee, I had the opportunity to hear many of my elders speak to one another about their own mentors. It seems that when there is more than one funeral director in the room the stories of days gone by begin to flow. Most of those stories although comical had a lasting impact upon the life of the teller. On more than one occasion, Mr. Fentress Casey of Henderson, Tennessee was referred to as a true gentleman and mentor who never let anyone needing help, including his employees go without it. One of my own mentors, Mr. Roy Watson of Winchester, Tennessee is commonly referred to by families served as “the gentleman’s gentleman” further proving that he is indeed what he seems; a true professional who simply serves a calling without complaint. One of the most

*continued on the next page*

# ALUMNI ANNUAL MEETING AND REUNION

## 50 Year Graduates Recognized



On Saturday evening, August 6, 2005, the graduates of 1955, were honored. Since the 50th anniversary of the college in 1996, graduates have been recognized and presented a lapel pin on their 50th anniversary. College President Steve Spann presented **Charles L. Chapman '55** of Jasper, Georgia with his lapel pin at the annual banquet. Mr. Chapman commented that he had only been back to Nashville a couple of times in the last 50 years. Charles is now retired, after selling his funeral home in Jasper. He appreciated the weekend and was pleased to see what the alumni association and college are now doing. Steve Spann also recognized **Bob Shackelford '55** of Savannah, TN, **George Leonard Bilbrey '55** of Jamestown, TN,

and **Leon Johnson '55**, Henderson, TN, who were unable to attend due to health problems. Alumni President Jeff Shackelford, nephew of Bob Shackelford, was presented the lapel pin to take to his uncle. The others were also to be sent to them.



## Alumni Roast

An Alumni Roast for **Jim Brewer '62** and **Steve Spann '82** was held on Friday, August 5, 2005. Following a feast of down-home cooking, the fun



began at the College. All proceeds from the Roast were donated to the Endowment Fund, an idea conceived by **Steve Murphy '89**. The Roast began with **Robbie Bacon '81**; recounting episodes that included Steve's picture-perfect hair and preparation room rules to follow with Jim. **Robert Thurman '65** and **Gary "Mississippi" Walker '65**, both long-time friends (?) of Jim told stories of ambulance days in Nashville with Jim. **Carney Bell '59** brought a letter of greeting from a turkey farmer, old friend of Jim's, along with a most suitable award. Honorary Alumni Member, Danny Hurt, told of how Jim is always

there to help, either in or out of trouble, which ever Jim deems suitable. Danny also presented a check for the Endowment Fund to the College from the Tennessee Funeral Supply Sales Club. In connection with the Roast, a Silent Auction also took place over the weekend, both raising over \$2500.00 for the Endowment Fund.

## Alumni Officers 2005-06

(L-R) Past President Jeff Shackelford; President Steve Murphy; College President Steve Spann; First Vice President Stan Hatmaker; Second Vice President David Bentley, Secretary Morris Moore; Treasurer Keith Stapleton; Chairman of the Board Gene Pike.



## Sponsorship

BATESVILLE CASKET COMPANY  
Saturday Morning Breakfast

WILBERT NASHVILLE  
Friday Night Wilbert Reception

DELTAURORA  
Saturday Morning Breakfast

SHACKELFORD FUNERAL DIRECTORS- BOLIVAR, TENNESSEE  
Tennessee Tradition

# ALUMNI REUNION WEEKEND

The Marriott at Vanderbilt on West End Avenue was the site of Gupton alumni arrivals back to Nashville and registration for the 2005 Annual Meeting and Reunion. Tommy Hurt and Danny Hurt of Nashville Wilbert hosted the opening reception on Friday evening in the Crescent Room at the hotel. The Wilbert reception has become an alumni reunion tradition and the Crescent Room is also traditional, located on the site of a portion of the former Gupton College location. This social event allowed alumni and guests to fellowship, meet new friends and renew old friendships. The Silent Auction was set up and bidding began on an array of donated items to benefit the Endowment

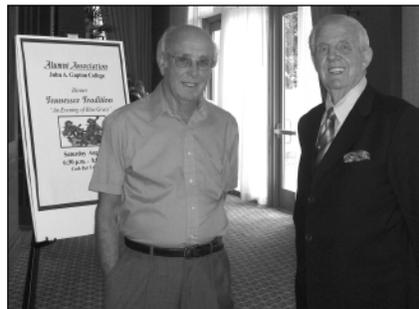


Fund. The first Annual Alumni Roast followed the reception at the college, a fun evening for a good cause. Saturday morning was unique in that Batesville Casket Company and Deltaurora casket company co hosted our breakfast. An array of breakfast food and lots of stories filled the Crescent Room as the Silent Auction continued, raising those bids. The group moved to John A. Gupton College on Church Street, where the building was leisurely toured and the Annual Business Meeting was called to order.

Alumni learned about the continuing efforts of the college to maintain the level of education superior in funeral service. President Steve Spann reminds us that the College is a non-profit organization, owned by the alumni and run by the Board of Directors. Board Chairman Gene Pike commented that when other mortuary schools wanted to purchase Gupton College that Mrs. Gupton choose to not sell but to give it to her family.....her students. Saturday afternoon was free for



the alumni and guests to enjoy Nashville. On Saturday evening, the annual banquet was held at the Marriott, with the installation of officers, honoring 50-year graduates and a night of bluegrass with Tennessee Tradition. Consider next year being a part of the alumni weekend and talk with other alumni about also taking part of this fun and educational experience.



How should I know, I only work here!



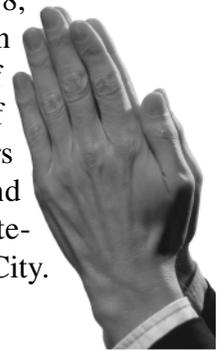
## In Memory of Alumni Friends and Family

**Mary Margaret Story Yarbrough '01** died July 27, 2005 from injuries sustained in a fall from a bluff into the Current River at Shote Hole, MO. Mary Margaret, 25, was climbing a bluff to jump into the river when she slipped and fell on July 24, 2005. She was taken to a St. Louis hospital where she died. She had a desire to be a funeral professional since age 10 and had completed her internship in December 2002 at McMikle Funeral Home in Charleston, MO and had completed the licensing requirements for Missouri. She remained employed with McMikle Funeral Home and had recently been elected secretary/treasurer of the SEMO Funeral Directors Association. The Family requests memorial contributions to Mary Margaret Story Yarbrough Scholarship Fund, c/o First Security State Bank, P.O. Box 99, Charleston, MO 63834. This scholarship will be used for a mortuary student at John A. Gupton College.

Mr. James "Bud" Teague, age 73, died July 20, 2005. He was employed by Evans Mortuary in Rockwood, TN. He was the uncle of **Thomas R. "Butch" Evans, Jr. '70**, owner of Evans Mortuary.

Mr. Kenneth Lewis Mobley, age 82, died June 15, 2005. He was the father of Shelia McNeil and father-in-law of **Arlie McNeil '62** of Edo Miller Funeral Home, Brunswick, GA.

Mrs. Ollie Woodall Gilliam, age 78, died August 16, 2005 in Union City, TN. She was the wife of **Oliver Gilliam '49**, President of the Tennessee Funeral Directors Association 1978-1979 and formerly part owner of White-Ranson Funeral Home in Union City.



## MENTORSHIP, CONTINUED

influential professionals in Tennessee, who has touched so many lives as friend and mentor, is Mr. Jim Brewer of Marshall-Donnelly-Combs Funeral Home in Nashville, Tennessee. Through relationships built with what he has said were "wet behind the ears students," Jim has earned the respect and title of mentor from literally hundreds of people throughout his career. Through his relationship with John A. Gupton College, Mr. Brewer has played a significant part in my development as a professional as well as all of those he has mentored.

There are literally hundreds of other mentors out there that have had an impact on each of our lives, too many to mention. The important thing is to take advantage of those resources and strive to become what they represent to us. Everyone involved in funeral service understands the value of what our mentors have given to us which now makes us a treasure to the new generation just like we view our own mentors. The business is obviously different now and forever changing. Funeral homes are experiencing the pains of change in many areas such as consumer demands and the non traditional employee. The constraints on today's professional can sometimes make it difficult to entertain the idea of polishing rough stones into gems. The gap in professional generations is widening and must be bridged for the good of the future. Are your treasured resources being used to their fullest? Do you have the desire to be endeared by those you can reach out to and make a positive impact upon? The experience, leadership, and integrity that you possess is priceless to a generation who is hungry to become what they see in you today.

The next installment in this series will focus on today's students and future job candidates, many of whom are not the "traditional prospect" but bring new and innovative opportunities to the table. Through the revival of true mentorship, we can bridge the gaps between yesterday and tomorrow in funeral service.

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## **THOUGHTS FROM THE SECRETARY**

John A. Gupton College has a new website, [www.guptoncollege.com](http://www.guptoncollege.com), and the home page contains the alumni NEWSLETTER. Just click on the icon and open the current edition in color. The summer NEWSLETTER was up only 2 days after contacting the printer. CBS Music City Printing will be forwarding the upcoming editions to the web site as they are completed. I suggest you take a look! If you did not attend the recent Alumni Annual Meeting and Reunion, you missed a great weekend. I am looking forward to working with Steve Murphy, Stan Hatmaker, David Bentley and Keith Stapleton. The project for the year, in helping with the Funeral Marketing Area, is an opportunity for the alumni to help the funeral directors of tomorrow. Be sure and send news for the NEWSLETTER...thanks.



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