

THE LIGATURE

THE TIE THAT BINDS

FALL 2014

Official Publication of the
John A. Gupton College Alumni Association

Letter from the President

Dear Gupton Alumni,

This is an exciting time at Gupton College. We have a lot of exciting things going on, the extensive renovations are about 80 percent complete. We are still working on some rooms downstairs. We also are looking forward to the National Funeral Director's Convention that is being held in Nashville this year. I hope you have marked your calendar to attend this year's convention. Along with the convention, The Alumni Association will be hosting an Alumni Reception at the college, Tuesday, Oct. 14 from 5:30 PM until 7:30 PM. It would be great to see old friends and make new ones.

I would like to thank the alumni for putting their trust in me as President of this great association for the 2014 – 2015 year. This college is blessed to have the leadership of President Spann and his staff, State of the Art facilities, and a Board of Directors with such wisdom and direction to lead this institution to become one of the leaders in funeral service education. But, we need to remember that this would not be possible without you, the Alumni. This school belongs to you, get involved!

This year's reunion was great. We had a good attendance at the reception on Friday night along with a good turnout for breakfast and the annual business meeting. I would like to thank Batesville, Aurora and Wilbert Vaults for their continued support of the Alumni Association.

I encourage each of you to consider giving back to your college either through the Harris O. Yates Endowment fund, Alumni donation, or honorariums to the library.

In closing, I want to thank everyone for their support and if you have any suggestions on making our association better, please contact me anytime.

Best Regards,

Greg Greene

Greg Greene
Class of 2008



Want an electronic
version of The Ligature?

Send us your
email address!

Email us:

allen@guptoncollege.edu
cook@guptoncollege.edu

Check us out on FaceBook

JOHN A. GUPTON
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Tag photos, leave
comments find old friends

Or check out our website:

www.guptionalumni.com

A NOTE OF THANKS

We would like to sincerely thank **Ryan “Opie” Padgett** for his contributions over the past 7 years as editor of the Alumni Newsletter. His accomplishments can be seen in the progress of the newsletter over the years and his work and dedication will be missed. Recent graduate and new alumni, Bobby Cook has agreed to take over responsibilities as newsletter editor and is looking forward to continue providing a quality publication to the alumni of John A. Gupton College. Opie will still be serving as college historian. If you have anything that you would like to send for consideration in future issues, you can send the information to Bobby at cook@guptoncollege.edu

CLASS NOTES

Beginning with our next issue of the newsletter, we would like to begin publishing important life events in the lives of our Alumni. This could include awards, achievements, births, weddings, travel, or any significant event that you would like to share. Please forward your contributions to Bobby Cook at cook@guptoncollege.edu by January 10, 2015 for inclusion in the next issue.

Sigma Phi Sigma News

The official Fraternity of John A. Gupton College has been in talks with potential new members. Fraternity President **Cody Martin** is excited about the future of the Fraternity and will be involved in organizing community activities in the near future.

The Fraternity is interested in helping the Alumni association to organize and lead an ‘Alumni Walk’ at Radnor Lake and would like to begin by finding out how many Alumni members would be interested in participating. There would be a small registration fee that would be donated to “The Friends of Radnor Lake” in honor of **Dr. Harris O. Yates**, who spent many years as a tireless advocate for Radnor Lake. Dr. Yates was a member of the JAG faculty for 56 years, and his many contributions to our school will never be forgotten.

If you are interested in participating, please send an e-mail to **Bobby Cook** at cook@guptoncollege.edu including your name, contact information, and graduation year. We will announce more details as they become available.

GRADUATION COMMENCEMENT SET



The 2014 Graduation Ceremony will take place on Friday, December 5th at 2:00 PM at the Blakemore United Methodist Church. As always, it is very exciting to see a new group of Alumni members join our ranks and we are looking forward to their future contributions to our profession.

Obituaries



DAVID "DAVE" CHARLES LIPTON, November 21, 1933 - May 5, 2014

David Charles (Dave) Lipton was born November 21, 1933 in Warren, AR, the only child of Stephen William and Mary Weir Lipton. He died at his home in Monticello, on May 5, 2014. He is survived by his wife, Brenda Gardner Lipton, whom he married on July 12, 1975.

He was a graduate of Warren High School, Arkansas A&M, (now UAM) and John A. Gupton mortuary school. Dave was a former motel owner-operator, a member of First Assembly of God Church where he had served as deacon, and was a member of Gideon's International.

JACKIE RAY PARTLOW, July 25, 1940 – June 30, 2014.

Jackie Ray Partlow, age 73, loving husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, known to his family as "Pa", passed away on Monday, June 30, 2014.

Born on July 25, 1940 to the late Samuel Anderson & Alma Rebecca Lannom Partlow, he enjoyed his early childhood days in "The Glade" with his friends and family. He was a 1958 graduate of Lebanon High School, a 1963 Graduate of John A. Gupton College of Mortuary Science, and a member of College Hills Church of Christ. Mr. Partlow established Partlow Funeral Chapel in 1979, fulfilling a lifetime of compassion and service.

Jackie enriched so many lives, whether he was taking care of others, traveling with friends, or simply putting a smile on someone's face with a hand shake or a big hug. But of all his accomplishments, his greatest was his family, which he referred to as "his little bunch".

He is survived by his beloved wife of 50 years, Linda Partlow; daughter, Jnae R. Partlow; son, Jason Partlow and his wife Kathy; grandchildren, Ashley Blair Greer and her husband Michael, Hunter Lee Reynolds, Jack Anderson Partlow & Grant Alexander Partlow; great-grandchildren, Samuel Paxton Greer "Critter" and Pollyanna Rose Greer "Little Miss", and many special friends.

Jackie's family would like to express special thanks to the staff at The Pavilion for all their love, care, and support, and special friend and cardiologist, Dr. Tom McRae and his wonderful staff



RONALD MILTON STRONG, October 15, 1942 – July 27, 2014.

Ronald Milton Strong, 71 of Hickman, KY passed away on July 27, 2014 at his residence. Mr. Strong was owner of Strong Funeral Home; a 50 yr. member of the Funeral Directors and Embalmers Association of Kentucky; NFDA Policy Board Director; Past President of the Funeral Directors Association of Kentucky; founded the Hickman Harbor Service; Past President of the Hickman Country Club and a member of the First Baptist Church of Hickman. . Mr. Strong was a member of the John A. Gupton Alumni association and graduated in 1962.

Mr. Strong is survived by his wife Linda McMullin Strong, son Todd (Laura) Major of Hickman, a daughter Robin (Scott) Major Craig of Pittsburg, Kansas; three sons, Anthony Strong of Butler, KY., Mark (Jackie) Strong of Louisville, KY and Stephen (Angela) Strong of Louisville, KY. and a daughter Suzanne Strong of Louisville, KY. Brother Frank Strong of Woodland Mills, TN. Grandchildren: Austin, Davis and Brooklyn Major of Hickman and Tanner and McKenzie Craig of Pittsburg, Kansas. Grandsons Jackson Strong of Butler, KY and Max Strong of Louisville, KY. and granddaughters Mady Strong of Louisville, KY and Kristin Fraley of Louisville, KY. Great Grandson Benjamin Strong of Butler.

Preceded in death by his parents J C and Golda Carlton Strong and a brother James Strong. Funeral Services were held on Wednesday, July 30, 2014 at 1 PM at the First Baptist Church , 205 Moulton Street, Hickman, KY. Visitation was on Tuesday, July 29, 2014 from 4-8PM and after 10 AM on Wed. at the church. Rev. Henry Callison, Rev. Tom Quinby, and Rev. James Roberson officiated. Burial followed in the Hickman City Cemetery.

Donations can be made to the First Baptist Church, 205 Moulton Street, Hickman, KY 42050 and to the Alan Leichhardt Endowment Fund, P O Box 4779, Frankfort, KY 40604

Obituaries



ANNETTE "ANNIE" MANNING BASS, *October 19, 1961 – August 18, 2014*

Mrs. Annette "Annie" Manning Bass, Age 52 of Lancaster passed away Monday, August 18, 2014 at her home.

Mrs. Bass was born October 19, 1961 in Lebanon, TN the daughter of Jimmy Nell Nixon Manning and the Late Fred Wilson Manning. She was also preceded in death by Grandparents; James H. and Eufaula Heflin Nixon and Doyle and Grace Wilson Manning, and Great Aunt; Ms. Robbie Heflin. Annie was a 1980 graduate of GHS. She married Danny Bass on March 28, 1981. Annie worked at Citizens Bank for over thirty years, and was a member at the Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church Fellowship in the Gentry Community.

Mrs. Bass is survived by her Husband; Danny Bass of Lancaster, TN (1978 John A. Gupton graduate). Children; Megan Bass of Nashville, TN and Kurt (2012 John A. Gupton graduate) and Christina Bass of Lancaster, TN. Mother; Nell Nixon Manning of Lancaster, TN. Brother and Sister-in-Law; Terry and Lesa Manning of Bowlings Branch, TN. Mother-in-Law; Oleda Gwaltney Bass Hill of Gordonsville, TN.

Funeral Services for Mrs. Bass were held on Friday, August 22, 2014 at 1 PM at the Gordonsville Chapel of Bass Funeral Home with Glenda Cowan and Bro. Bill Cowan officiated. Graveside Services and Interment was private.

Visitation with the Bass family was at the Gordonsville Chapel of Bass Funeral Homes on Thursday from 2 PM to 8 PM and on Friday after 10 AM until service time at 1PM.

The Bass Family requested that in lieu of flowers and food, memorials in Annie's memory be made to the Vanderbilt Ovarian Cancer Research or to the Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church Livestream.

MELANIE HEATH BRYANT POSEY, *May 21, 1971 – August 30, 2014.*

Melanie Heath Bryant Posey of Paragould departed this life unexpectedly Saturday August 30, 2014 at Arkansas Methodist Medical Center in Paragould at the age of 43.

Melanie was born May 21, 1971 in Paragould to Lynda Heath Bryant and the late Jimmy Ray Bryant. A lifelong resident of Paragould, Melanie was a third generation funeral director, embalmer and assistant manager of the family business, Heath Funeral Home, founded by her grandparents, the late Verlyn L. & Helen Heath in 1945. In addition, she served as the organizer and founder of the funeral home's Tree of Memory Service, a memorial tribute service during the Christmas season to honor those they served.

Melanie was a 1989 graduate of the former Ridgecrest (Paragould) High School and Arkansas State University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in human resources. She attended John A. Gupton College of Mortuary Science in Nashville, where she graduated second in her class in 1996.

Melanie was a past president of both the Arkansas Funeral Directors Association and the Northeast Arkansas Funeral Directors Club. In addition, she served on several National Funeral Directors Association committees.

The funeral Mass was held Wednesday September 3rd at 2 p.m. at St. Mary Church in Paragould with Father Mike Sinkler officiated and Deacon Ricardo Puello assisted. Burial followed in St. Mary Cemetery. Visitation was from 6-8 p.m. Tuesday September 2nd in Heath Funeral Home's Colonial Chapel.

Lasting memorials may be made to the Melanie Heath Posey Children's Education Fund, in care of Centennial Bank, P.O. Box 490, Paragould, AR 72450; the St. Mary School Scholarship Fund, 220 N. 2nd St., Paragould, AR 72450; or to a charity of the donor's choice.



Congratulations to the top 10%, summer semester:

Landon Anglin	Dover, TN
Elaine Boyd	Nashville, TN
Lisa Clark	Clarksville, TN
Melinda Crawford	Nashville, TN
Tyler Matney	Williamson, WV
Brittney Milam	Clarksville, TN
Erwin Shea	White House, TN
Alexandria Sibley	Bowling Green, KY
Brandy Warner	Sneedville, TN

ART DONATION

We are pleased to announce that we have new artwork (Thomas Spencer Art) on display in the Yates Lecture Hall. The artwork was donated by Bill Perry, Class of 49' and Bob Perry, Class of 82'. Please stop by to see this new addition to the John A. Gupton décor.

SCHOOL PICNIC



The students and faculty of John A. Gupton College attended a picnic at Edwin Warner Park on Tuesday, July 22, 2014. The picnic was organized by the Sigma Phi Sigma Fraternity and the college provided Bar-B-Que. This was an opportunity for the students and college staff to relax and enjoy each other in a fun setting. Several people participated in the game "Cornhole", others gathered under the pavilion and talked and laughed with each other. Thanks to everyone who participated in this event.

VISITORS AT MUSIC CITY MORTUARY

National Funeral Directors Association CEO, **Christine Pepper** and VP of member relations, **Anna Bernfeld** paid a visit to Music City Mortuary on Wednesday August 13, 2014 while in Nashville. Here they are pictured with **Jeff Murphy**, co-owner of Music City Mortuary.

Music City Mortuary is co-owned by Brothers, **Jeff Murphy** ('86) and **Steve Murphy** ('89) and opened in 2001. Music City Mortuary provides: Removal Services, Embalming, Mortuary Shipping, and Administrative assistance with preparing, filing and securing necessary documents, including certified copies of the death certificate, cremation permits, and burial/transit permits.

Music City Mortuary is also a clinical site for John A. Gupton College Students.



ALUMNI RECEPTION

John A. Gupton College, Tuesday, October 14, 2014, 5:30 pm-7:30 pm

Please join us in an alumni reception at John A. Gupton College at 5:30 pm in the afternoon of Tuesday, October 14, 2014. Take a break from the National Funeral Director's Convention and meet with fellow alumni while they are in town for the convention! Take a tour of the new facilities and meet with new and old friends for a few hours. Transportation will be provided from the Music City Center. For more information, please contact the school @ 615.327.3927

ALUMNI REUNION 2014

The annual John A. Gupton Alumni reunion took place as scheduled on August 1st and 2nd. On Friday August 1st, the annual meet and greet reception took place at the Nashville Marriott – Vanderbilt. The reception was sponsored by the Wilbert Vault Company. A gathering of both old and new members, this event is always lots of fun for everyone involved.

Saturday morning, August 2nd, was the breakfast sponsored by Aurora and Batesville. The breakfast was held at the Nashville Marriott from 8:00am until 9:30am. The breakfast was followed by the annual Alumni Business Meeting. The location for this year's business meeting was the new Harris O. Yates Lecture Hall.

On Saturday evening the Alumni Reunion moved to the Caney Fork River Valley Grille for dinner. Everyone enjoyed the evening and are already looking forward to next year's reunion.

Due to personal and work schedule conflicts, the Alumni Newsletter staff was unable to attend this year's reunion, so we unfortunately do not have any pictures to share. However, if any of you were in attendance and took pictures that you would like to send, we will try and get some of them uploaded to the Alumni Association website for everyone to enjoy. Please send those pictures to cook@guptoncollege.edu



NEW OFFICERS INSTALLED

Please help us congratulate and support the new officers for the John A. Gupton Alumni Association.



Greg Greene (Class of 2008)
President



Jeff Duffer (Class of 1986)
1st Vice President



Ronnie Gandy (Class of 1982)
2nd Vice President



Bill Hudson (Class of 1991)
Treasurer



Billy Yarbrough (Class of 1984)
Secretary



*Going forward we would like to include an article written by an Alumni member in a new newsletter section titled, "Alumni Spotlight". In this edition, we spotlight recent graduate and new Alumni, **Jason Mason**. Jason graduated in 2013 and is currently serving his apprenticeship with **SCI at Woodlawn Funeral Home and Memorial Park** in Nashville, TN.*

"The Question of Why"

An Alumni Spotlight article, by Jason Mason

When I had decided to pursue a career in the funeral industry, the question I heard most frequently was the question of 'Why'. "Why do you want to work at a funeral home?" "Why do you want to work with dead people?" Or most commonly, "Why do you want to do that?" I understood this because being a mortician isn't quite the same thing as being an accountant, or a chef, or a nurse. But what plagued me most was just how many people within the mortuary industry, itself, wanted to know 'Why'.

Scholarships? The TFDA scholarship requires a handwritten, two-page essay with the instructions, "include why you decided to enter funeral service", and the ABFSE states that their essay, "is extremely important as it should address your decision and choice to pursue a funeral service education."

School? Ask any Gupton student how many times an introductory to one of their classes began with writing a paragraph about why they entered the mortuary industry. And then ask them for a nickel. You'll have a great many nickels by the end of your day.

The question of 'Why' was a recurring requirement that irked me in a manner in which I couldn't quite place my finger on, and everywhere I looked everyone seemed to be asking 'Why'. It bothered me so much that I didn't apply for any scholarships. It bothered me so much that I began making up answers to tell people; my responses would range anywhere from, "I attended a funeral and their services inspired me" to "The unicorns in my head told me to do it."

So why all the 'Why's? Is it like small talk within the industry, like talking to someone about the weather? If the unicorns are to be believed, maybe it's just a way to get a good joke out of someone; the funeral industry is known for its humor (at least amongst its adherents). There's also the thought that perhaps the people on the other end of those voluminous collections of essays simply want to ensure that anyone they are even remotely affiliated with can string together a few words that will collectively make complete statements of thought. From a scholarship perspective, the ABFSE states, "As it is often the policy of scholarship sponsors to issue press releases for the recipients of the scholarships they award, please provide us with a media contact (newspaper) for your city of residence." Maybe such organizers would just prefer not to have their photo taken with someone whose family tree resembles a sickly stump rather than a mighty oak. Who's to say?

My fear is that industry insiders ask 'Why' because they've always asked 'Why'. I fear this because I fear stagnation, I fear spinning wheels of ideology and I fear becoming part of a career field that refuses to change with the times; I fear choosing not to grow within an ever-changing landscape of public opinion that frequently craves placation through modernization. I fear the question of 'Why' because I have a distaste for those who emphatically rest on their laurels.

Then again, perhaps the biggest reason I avoid the question of 'Why' is the fact that I don't have the answer that people are looking for. Sure, some enter into this industry because of some grand or epic trauma in their life which has led them to help others through their grief process; a grief process that is arguably one of the most difficult of life's turmoil's to overcome. And yes, it's like that for me too. But in an industry often referred to as 'a calling' there sure are quite a few people that want more of an explanation than, "I felt a strong, inexplicable desire to do this as a profession."

I doubt the question of 'Why' will ever cease to exist within the funeral industry. And just like there will always be people who can point to one instance in their life that led them to becoming a mortician, there will always be people like me who chose this trade for a thousand reasons; not just one.



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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