

THE JOHN A. GUPTON ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRESENTS:

# THE LIGATURE

“THE TIE THAT BINDS”

THIS ISSUE OF THE LIGATURE IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF OUR FRIEND, TODD W. VAN BECK.

## IN THIS ADDITION



- ◆ Alumni Reunion 2023
- ◆ Green Burials
- ◆ Top 10% Fall
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- ◆ Peace Garden Columbarium

## WEBSITE LINK

Visit our college website to access the Alumni Link:  
[www.guptoncollege.edu](http://www.guptoncollege.edu)



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings fellow Gupton alumni,

I hope you all are enjoying this beautiful weather we have been having. As we continue to recover from the covid pandemic, I am glad to see that some of the traditional activities have resumed for our students. They were able to visit the Wilbert plant for the first time since covid. We are also scheduled to visit the Batesville plant soon. Matthews Aurora will be coming to speak to our students. Such exciting learning opportunities for our students.

By now most of you have heard we lost a monumental speaker, educator, and friend. Mr. Todd Van Beck. Thanks to all the alumni who sent their condolences. We all have a Todd story. He was a wealth of knowledge and a very humble man. I loved that each time he spoke he would remind us we are the future of this great profession. He made a point to “apologize for any deficiencies”. During our lunch gatherings, he often spoke about the young folks having hopes and a dream in their mind and in their heart. I loved calling Mr. Todd for advice and life lessons. His calm tone would make you forget about what you were even venting about. He would offer such good advice. During most seminars his funeral director’s prayer was simple: “The midnight hour the darkest hour that human grief may know, sends forth its hurried summons - asks me to come- I go! I know not where the blow may fall, I know not for whom the bell may toll, I only know that I must go and answer to their call, perhaps a friend, perhaps unknown it is fate that turns that wheel, the tangled skein of human lifelines slowly on the reel, and I, I am the undertaker, cold-blooded you will hear some say, trained to the shock and chill of death with a heart that is cold and gray, trained is that what they call it how little they know the rest, I’m human and well understand the sorrow that throbs in the aching breast”.

I am excited to announce the Alumni schedule for 2023. This year’s event will be held Friday, August 4, 2023, at the Renaissance Hotel starting at 6 pm. On Saturday, August 5, 2023, we will enjoy dinner at Morton’s. We would love to see you all there if your schedules permit. Alumni, we have so many new graduates that do not have employment yet. Friday night would be a great time to walk around the room and meet potential new staff members. New graduates, I encourage you to come out and meet the trailblazers that have made the pathway for us. Can’t wait to see all of you!

A special thanks to Batesville, Aurora, and Wilbert Vaults for their continued support of the Alumni Association. Over the past few weeks, you should have received your pledge cards for the endowment fund. If you have not sent in your pledge, please let me encourage you to complete the card and donate to the John A. Gupton Endowment Fund.

Also, those who need continuing education hours. We have a CEU set for October NFDA arranger training. We will have it posted on the website soon. Our goal is to provide at least one in-person education seminar each business quarter. For the latest news and information regarding the reunion, please visit our website at <https://guptoncollege.edu/alumni/>

Sincerely,

*Christopher Jefferson*



# ALUMNI REUNION 2023

Friday, August 4<sup>th</sup> & Saturday August 5<sup>th</sup>

## FRIDAY - AUGUST 4



**Wilbert Vault** will once again sponsor and host our Alumni Reunion reception. The reception will be held from 6pm-8pm at the beautiful **Renaissance Hotel** (in the **Hub Lobby**) in Nashville, TN. The reception is a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new. **Each Alumni Member in attendance will receive 2 drink tickets this year! And Alumni members donating \$40 to the Alumni dues that evening will receive an additional 2 drink tickets.** Please plan on joining us at the reception this year – we hope to see you there.

## SATURDAY - AUGUST 5

Saturday morning we invite you to join us for breakfast hosted by **Matthews Aurora** and **Batesville**. Breakfast will be served in the “**Bridge Bar**” of the **Renaissance Hotel** from 8am-9:30am before the annual business meeting that will be held at the college at 10am. We encourage all Alumni members to attend the Business meeting. We will gather in the **Harris O. Yates Lecture Hall** and begin promptly at 10am.



On the evening of Saturday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, **JAGC** Alumni Members are invited to gather for dinner at **Morton's Steakhouse** beginning at 6 PM. Morton's features an extensive wine collection, prime-aged beef, succulent seafood, signature steakhouse sides and elegant desserts. Those interested in event should notify Tracy Allen via email ([allen@guptoncollege.edu](mailto:allen@guptoncollege.edu)). Pricing for this event is \$100 per person, which can be paid on the **John A. Gupton College** website OR on the alumni website.



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

There are self-parking garages surrounding the hotel with various rates starting at \$15 an hour. The hotel does offer valet. Currently, rates are still being determined as there is a large event happening that weekend – please check the website and emails for updates regarding parking. We have a block of rooms and reservations must be made by **July 1, 2023**. Rates for our block of rooms is \$379 per night. Guests can call Marriott reservations at 800-327-6618. To preview the website, or make reservations please visit the following web address:

<https://book.passkey.com/e/50549990>



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Batesville

# Rest in Peace, Man, in this Groovy VW Columbarium

PORTIONS OF AN ARTICLE ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON [CONNECTINGDIRECTORS.COM](http://CONNECTINGDIRECTORS.COM) IN JUNE 2019  
BY PATRICIA HARTLEY



The generation who brought us the Summer of Love, Woodstock, and the Manson family are now in their seventies and eighties. Many are making final arrangements for when they move on to that eternal hippie commune in the sky. Luckily, a cemetery in Eugene, Oregon now offers a 1960s-inspired groovy repository where their earthly remains can rest in peace and love — a place that's just as unconventional as their flower child lifestyle. Yes, you can now opt to have your cremains stored within a 1972 Volkswagen van, along with up to 99 other like-minded folks. With its eye-catching psychedelic paint job, including the words "peace" and "love" on either side, the van stands as an homage to the age of Aquarius.

The Peace Garden Columbarium, is the creation of Jeff and Mark Musgrove of Musgrove Family Mortuaries & Cemeteries, was unveiled in 2017 within the family's Lane Memorial Gardens in Eugene. The van is permanently anchored on a concrete pad under a spacious canopy built to protect the vehicle and allow for memorial services. During these services, the directors open the trunk of the van and place the urn and floral arrangements on a custom-made shelf adorned with a tie-dyed peace sign.



Later, urns are placed on wooden shelves within the van. A plaque with the deceased's name, date of birth, and date of death is mounted on one of the six Douglas fir posts supporting the canopy. The Musgrove family tasked mechanic Cody Rushing with locating and rehabbing the VW columbarium. Rushing restored the rusting body, replaced emblems, windows and original parts, and added solar panels to power the headlights, which will remain on, only if dimly, 24/7.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

PORTIONS OF AN ARTICLE ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON [BRUNSWICKNEWS.COM](http://BRUNSWICKNEWS.COM) IN JAN 2022  
BY GORDON JACKSON



**Mr. Arlie McNeill**, pictured here standing alongside President Spann. Mr. Arlie is a 1962 graduate from Brunswick, GA that stopped in to visit **John A. Gupton College** recently. **Navy veteran** Arlie McNeill worked as a dental technician before attending mortuary school and operating a funeral home in Brunswick for the past 53 years. He was looking for a profession when he enlisted in the Navy. He was trained as a dental technician where he learned to clean teeth and prosthetic dentistry, as well as how to assist dentists during procedures. McNeill explained he worked at a funeral home in North Carolina before he enlisted in the Navy. He asked the owners to let him work for a week, and if it didn't work out they didn't have to pay him. As it turned out, he exceeded expectations. After serving for three years, McNeill was offered the opportunity to go to dental school, but he declined the offer because he believed his future was as a mortician.

# MOURNING THE LOSS OF ONE OF OUR PROFESSION'S GREATEST

## Todd W. Van Beck

February 15, 1952 — May 23, 2023



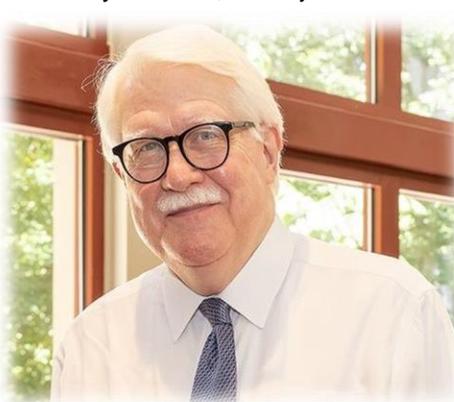
**TODD WESLEY VAN BECK**, passed away on Tuesday, May 23, 2023. Beloved father of Thomas Van Beck. Loving son of the late Thomas Anthony "Tony" and Norma Jean (nee Feekin) Van Beck. Dear brother of Scott (Sarah) Van Beck; and uncle of Wesley, Helen, Sam and Neil Van Beck.

Todd was a person who had a half-century love affair with both funeral and cemetery service. He willingly admitted that he was, "no expert!", but also quickly admitted that there was nothing about this work and life that he did not enjoy, and have intense interest in. Todd had said: "have never done a day's work in my life, it has all been fun and interesting."

Todd earned his Professional Diploma in Mortuary Science in 1973 from the New England Institute of Funeral Service Arts and Sciences (MA), his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and Psychology from Mount Mercy University (IA), and his Master of Arts in Religion from Athenaeum of Ohio (Mount Saint Mary's Seminary). In 2005, he was awarded the Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters Degree from Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service, (Houston, TX). Todd held several certifications and licensures, including the Certified Funeral Service Practitioner (CFSP), Certified Funeral Executive (CFE), and licensure in several states.

Prior to his employment as Program Director at Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science (CCMS), Todd served as Faculty/Director of Continuing Education at John A. Gupton College (TN); General Manager of Forest Hill Funeral Homes & Memorial Parks (TN); Director of Family Funeral Care and Public Relations at A.S. Turner & Sons Funeral Home (GA); President and CEO of the Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service (TX); and Director of Education for the Loewen Group, Inc. (OH). His academic career began at CCMS in 1982.

Todd was an active writer and speaker internationally for many decades covering most every topic that is relevant to our profession. He authored 8 books and over 400 articles on death care topics. A historian and academician, Mr. Van Beck grew up in Southwestern Iowa and declared at the young age of 5 years old that he would become a funeral director when he grew up. As he often said, he was still growing up, still learning, still trying to make some kind or worthy contribution to his beloved profession. Todd operated funeral homes, cemeteries, and mortuary colleges during his career. Todd selflessly served the death care profession in many arenas across the nation and internationally, which satisfied his desire to see the world. He was thrilled and humbled to return to CCMS where he planned to continue his mission until retirement. Visitation took place on Saturday, May 27, 2023 from 12 noon until 2 PM at the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science, 645 W North Bend Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45224. A Masonic Blue Lodge service began at 2 PM, followed by a Celebration of Life service. Additional visitation was held on Tuesday, May 30, 2023 at Hancock Methodist Church, 204 Kimball St., Hancock, IA 51536 from 12 Noon until time of service at 2 PM, followed by interment at Oak Hill Cemetery in Hancock, Iowa. In lieu of flowers, the family request donations to be made to the "Todd Van Beck Memorial Scholarship Fund" at CCMS. Arrangements were handled by the Cincinnati College of Mortuary Science, in conjunction with Vorhis & Ryan Funeral Home.



Our industry has lost such a great man!

Honored to have known him! A treasure to the industry. Condolences to the family.

I am so sad to hear this. His kindness, wisdom, and lasting impression on me will never fade. Rest well Mr. Van Beck for it is well earned.

# FRIEND

I can't count the times I would call the school over the last so many years with an embalming question that I knew he would be the master of the answer. A gentleman and a hero of our profession. Rest in peace good sir.

# LEADER

Todd was an amazing person. I'm so saddened to hear this. My prayers are with his family. His legacy and professionalism will live on for generations.

This has broken my heart. He was such a wonderful man and an even better teacher. He was so good to me during school. My deepest condolences to his family!

Sad to hear of his passing!! A man of extensive knowledge and stories that would captivate you! Prayers of peace and comfort to his family!

I consider it an honor to have had Mr [Todd Van Beck](#) as a teacher and mentor at Gupton. He was always in our corner as students, giving words of encouragement and wanting to get to know everyone of us who walked in the building. When you walked by his office, he wanted you to say hello or stop in for a chat. He will be missed. Prayers for peace and comfort for his family.

Oh no. Always enjoyed catching him in his office for a quick word. Always left wiser. He will be missed

Funeral Service has lost an Icon that promoted the values of The Funeral Profession , he will be missed Great man.....

He was a wonderful man and took pride in what he loves, prayers to his family and friends during this difficult time 🙏

It was such an honor to be able to study under him. He will definitely be missed!

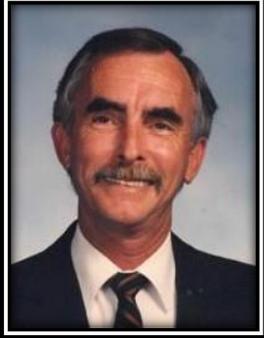
# MENTOR

A beautiful tribute to a wonderful man. In the funeral profession, he was certainly the benchmark for all of us

Enjoyed many thoughtful conversations with Mr. [Todd Van Beck](#). Condolences to his family and to those who loved and appreciated all the great things he did in this life. Rest well Sir.

# COACH

I consider myself blessed to have known him even for such a brief period. The GOAT of this profession without a doubt! He will be greatly missed



**James Raymond 'Jimmy' Boyd**, age 76 of Panama City, FL went to be with the Lord Sunday, April 16, 2023. Jimmy was born September 17,

1946, in Panama City and 1964 graduate of Bay High School. After high school, he attended **John A. Gupton Mortuary College** in Nashville, Tennessee and graduated in 1967. He spent 60 years serving Bay County as a local funeral director and embalmer. He spent the last two decades with his work family, Heritage Funeral Home. Those left to cherish Jimmy's memory include his wife, Carolyn; daughters, Joni Barrentine (Dewayne) and Lynn Steele (Mike); sons, Kevin Boyd (Jessica) and Mark French; and several grandchildren. A funeral service took place on Thursday, April 20, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. at Heritage Funeral Home, with Rev. Virgil Tillman officiating. The family received friends one hour prior to the service. Interment followed at Evergreen Memorial Gardens.

**Dr. Richard E. Sapp**, age 78, of Bell Buckle, passed away April 27, 2023. There were no public services held. He was born July 31, 1944, in Miami, Florida, to the late Martin Everette Sapp and Eleanor Richards Sapp. He was a retired Family Therapy Counselor, and previously was on the teaching staff of **John A. Gupton Mortuary College**.

Survivors include his wife, Patricia Dale Sapp, and a daughter, Rachel Lee, and her husband Alex, all of Bell Buckle; grandchildren, George Lee and Murphy Lee. Feldhaus Memorial Chapel assisted the family with the arrangements.



**Betty Sue Cook**, age 83, of Nashville passed away peacefully at her home on Sunday, March 26, 2023. Survivors include her children Steve (Karen) Cook, Lisa K. Cook, Rhonda Mossbarger, and Bobby (Lisa) Cook (Bobby is a JAG Alumni Member class of 2013); grandchildren Christa Stroup, Stephanie (Matt) Patterson, Spencer

(Riley) Cook, Amelia Cook, Katelyn (Nicholas) Blankenship, Brittany (Rory) Britsol, Walker (Brian) Vincent, and Haley (Ross) Lutts; great grandchildren Micah, Charlie, Ellie Gray, Jeffery, Maggie, Jonah, Luke, Miles, Liam, Ronan, Hugh, and Reese; sister Lou Ann Raymer; and many other loving family members and friends. Visitation took place at Anderson & Garrett Funeral Home on Thursday, March 30th from 4 P.M. until 8 P.M., Friday, March 31st from 2 P.M. until 7 P.M., and again on Saturday, April 1 from 1 P.M. until the hour of Service at 2 P.M. with Rev. Kip Rush and Rev. Hubert Cunningham officiating.



**Helen Yvonne Fuller Murphy**, age 80 of Parsons, Tennessee passed away on Thursday, February 16, 2023, surrounded by her family. She was the daughter of the late Raymond E. Fuller and Cora Mae

Faulkner Fuller. She was preceded in death by her husband of nearly 50 years, Grady L. Murphy, and her brother, Joe E. Fuller. Helen leaves her sons, Jeff and Steve Murphy (both are JAGC Alumni Members: Jeff graduated in 1986, his wife Stephane graduated in 2015, and Steve graduated in 1989); and many other loving family members and friends. Funeral services were conducted on Sunday, February 19, 2023, at 3:00 p.m. in the Chapel of Oakdale-Decatur County Funeral Home in Parsons with Dr. Frank McMeen officiating. The Murphy family received friends at the funeral home on Sunday from 1:00 p.m. until the service hour. The committal service was held Wednesday at 1:00 p.m. at Middle Tennessee Veterans Cemetery in Nashville, Tennessee. Memorials may be directed to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Autism Tennessee or any humane society of your choice in memory of Mrs. Murphy.

# GREEN BURIALS



Green (or natural) burial emphasizes simplicity and environmental sustainability. The body is neither cremated nor prepared with chemicals such as embalming fluids. It is simply placed in a biodegradable coffin or shroud and interred without a concrete burial vault. The goal is complete decomposition of the body and its natural return to the soil. Only then can a burial truly be “ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” a phrase so often used when we bury our dead.

A funeral directors handbook about Green Burials can be found on the website of the “Green Burial Council” if you would like to research this growing trend in America. The web address is:

[https://www.greenburialcouncil.org/green\\_burial\\_handbook\\_funeral\\_directors.html](https://www.greenburialcouncil.org/green_burial_handbook_funeral_directors.html)



Class of 1973 50-year pins & Class of 1998 25-year pins to be awarded.

CHESTER ANGLIN  
JOHN BRATTEN, JR. (deceased)  
SAMUEL CAIN, III  
MICHAEL COPPIE (deceased)  
DANIEL DORRIS  
EARL ELAM, JR.  
CHARLES FITTS, JR.  
GENE LANIER

## Class of 1973

JAMES MCCAULEY  
DANNY MCCOLLUM (deceased)  
PHILLIP PHELPS, JR.  
DAN PLATT

JERRY POST  
FRANKLIN RIVERS  
JOHN RUFF  
ROBERT SCHLANKER

RICHARD SIEMERS  
GEORGE STAUFFER  
OLICE THOMAS  
CLAYTON WELLMAN

TRACY ALLEN  
MICHAEL BROWN, JR.  
KELLY CHARLES  
MELVIN CHATMAN, SR.  
CASSIE CHRISTOPHER  
STACEY CRIDER  
CRYSTAL CULBERTSON  
JOHN DIAL  
MATTHEW DUGGER

## Class of 1998

TIMOTHY FESMIRE (deceased)  
ANDREW FOX  
AARON GARNER  
DONTORNICE GARRISON  
JAMES GRANTHAM (deceased)  
ELIZABETH KEES

TONYA GRIFFIN  
CRAIG HANSON  
BRANDY HARWOOD  
SIERA HEARD  
DAVID HOLLARS  
MARTHA MATTHEWS

JANE MCKNIGHT  
MARTIN MCLEAN  
SHARON NOVOTNY  
PERCY REDMOND  
BLAKE RYMER  
MATTHEW SELLARS  
ERIC SPENCER  
PHILIP TUMMINS  
KENT WOODS

### Current officers

**PRESIDENT**



CHRIS  
JEFFERSON

**1<sup>ST</sup> VICE  
PRESIDENT**



BRANDON  
YARBROUGH

**2<sup>ND</sup> VICE  
PRESIDENT**



MICHAEL  
ILLOBRE

**SECRETARY**



TIM  
BOND

**TRESURER**



KEITH  
STAPLETON

### Top 10%

Spring 2023

KIMBERLY BAILEY  
MARGARET BLACKMON  
TAYLOR BLALOCK  
ROGER BOOKER  
JESSE BYERS  
NICHOLAS GARDNER  
MADALAINE GAY  
REESE HELTON  
ZHARIA HERRING  
ALEXANDRA JOHNSON  
ANNA JOHNSON  
HANNAH ROUSE  
ANDREA SNOW  
JOSHUA SPARKS  
ABBYGAIL SULLIVAN  
ETHAN WARREN  
ASHLEY WHITEFIELD  
KRISTI WILLIAMS  
ROGER WRIGHT

DYERSBURG, TN  
KNOXVILLE, TN  
GREENVILLE, TN  
LINDALE, GA  
LOGANVILLE, GA  
FAIRFAX, VA  
COLLIERVILLE, TN  
CORBIN, KY  
LAVERGNE, TN  
THORNTON, CO  
MEMPHIS, TN  
BRISTOL, TN  
PORTLAND, TN  
GRAND RAPIDS, MI  
DOYLE, TN  
PINEVILLE, KY  
CLARKSVILLE, TN  
NASHVILLE, TN  
CHARLOTTE, TN

[www.guptoncollege.edu](http://www.guptoncollege.edu)

## John A. Gupton Alumni Association



DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI  
RELATIONS

TRACY ALLEN



NEWSLETTER EDITOR

BOBBY COOK

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