

# How To Celebrate Your Loved One's Life

The funeral of a loved one can be a terribly difficult thing. Not only are you saying goodbye, but you also have to balance a number of details. But while a funeral is normally thought of as a somber event, it doesn't have to be — you can take this time to celebrate your loved one's life.

## Choose The Right Location

Funeral business has traditionally been built on neighborhood convenience, but nowadays with connections in more than just the local neighborhood, you can find a provider who has a great facility that is centrally located. Choose the venue or location that will embody great spirit.

## Eulogize Eloquently

Have a short and sweet (five minutes max), formal eulogy. When families mark points on index cards it can help build the theme of what that person meant to you and the community, and helps the tenor immensely.

Today, families enjoy the "sharing of memories" portion of the service, which opens the floor to anyone who wants to share a story. This can be within the body of the service, or can be placed after the service, making it part of the reception and piped through the sound system.

## Commemorate Life

When you plan your loved one's service, there are some components that can make the event more memorable:

- **Candles, Candles, Candles.** You can never use too many candles. Aesthetically, it gives the venue a beautiful glow, and it's believed candle lights will make a lasting impression in one's memory.
- **Pictures Mark Time Well.** French-webbed upholstery boards make for very useful showcases of loved one's photos. You can position pictures into the lace webbing, which eliminates damaging the pictures by taping or

gluing, and you don't risk losing the pictures to and from the place of the funeral. If the family comes early to the service, they and the funeral director can place the pictures onto the boards. It's very therapeutic for the immediate mourners to be involved in that.

- **Music.** In the body of a funeral ceremony, the formula of no more than two songs works well. Aside from allowing time for reflection, it really breaks the segments of a funeral well. Whether it's "Amazing Grace" or Pink Floyd, it's all good. Thomson-Dougherty Funeral Home recommends transitional music at recessional, respecting the formal ceremony that just occurred, ushering in the reception, and then the music then gets in step with the buzz of the celebration.
- **"Food Is Love."** That is the saying often uttered at Thomson-Dougherty. The director of Thomson-Dougherty, Mike Dougherty, has a father and grandfather who married purebred Italians, meaning they eat and drink a lot at the same time with family and friends. "With funerals becoming our family reunions these days, it is understood that we are going to eat well. We are such a busy society — and in many cases, at distant points of the map — so when we are together it is imperative to take the time to break bread and drink wine together," says Dougherty.
- **Go Custom On Printing.** For example, if the provider doesn't have the ability to put your loved one's photo on the memorial folder, do it yourself. The most impressive memorial folders and programs are usually the ones the family takes ownership of. Most funeral memorial folders today still look like ones found in the old family bible.

## Provide Closure

"Hallowing the Grave" is what Dougherty calls it. This is the culmination at the cemetery. After the officiant finishes the committal service, it seemed funeral directors were missing an opportunity to put an exclamation point on it, leaving people at the graveside not knowing what to do next.

This beautiful and symbolic piece is taking an individual flower from the casket spray — or having the funeral director hand out individual roses to all who attended — and then express to them that this is symbolic of their love and respect for the deceased. The flowers are placed on top of the casket (or next to the urn) as one is preparing to leave the graveside. ●



## HOW-TO TIPS

### The Best Service

- **Pick the best venue.** Pick the venue or location that will embody great spirit. Thomson-Dougherty is big on live plants, natural light and a well-appointed home-like atmosphere. "When I dreamed of this funeral home, it was very vivid in how it should look, smell and feel," says Dougherty. Anyone who knows Twin Cities, funeral homes, knows this is the most relevant kind. A mansion befitting everyone.
- **Have the best reception.** The facility helps, but being a great host is the straw that stirs the drink. The spaces at many funeral homes aren't conducive to a reception. Thomson-Dougherty stages the serving area from its sun room, while the service is going on in the chapel, making it a seamless transition moving from the service to the reception.
- **Use the best artists.** If your family is involving an open casket for the loved one's memorial, request your provider use their best restorative artist. This will impress upon them that this is important to you. Cosmetics should look perfectly natural. There is profound value in the final "memory picture" of a loved one well-presented.