

A Message from Lance Pauli presented at the IFDF Conference & Tradeshow which was held at Sanibel Harbour Marriott Resort & Spa, Fort Myers, Florida, June 5, 2015.



Welcome everyone to southwest Florida! I hope this meeting has been great for you. I love this quote by Baroness Karen Blixen: "The cure for everything is saltwater: sweat, tears, or the sea". It's all here!

I thank the Harden/Pauli staff for being here. A special thanks to Roger Beyers and his staff for covering our funeral home and allowing us to be together today. Before Betty and I accepted this office I met with our staff because I knew I needed their help. I have never accomplished a successful goal without their help. At Harden/Pauli we live by the belief that good is the enemy of great and these special people have made sacrifices to make their careers and our funeral home great. I humbly thank them for this

opportunity to serve this association.

I thank my family and I'm thrilled they are here today. I know my choices when it came to family and work haven't always been right and you were disappointed when you needed and wanted more of my time, love, and attention, but you always supported me. Our two sons suffered most, yet they gave Betty and I unconditional love, terrific daughter-in-laws, and the very best grandchildren. I am guilty of wrong choices and am very sorry. I'm glad you're here because you are in a room full of people like you and me. They are the finest, most sacrificing citizens of this great state. This is the heritage of successful funeral directors, embalmers, and their families.

I thank all of my brothers and sisters of Selected Independent Funeral Homes here today. Everyone here today will learn how I followed your leadership in 1990. The former National Selected Morticians of Florida remain the standard bearers of truth, honesty, and ethical practices.

And, now I ask the God of Heaven to open the windows to Earth and allow my parents, grandparents, son, sister, Aunt Amelia, Clarence Harden, Judy Ralph, Marjorie Beyers, and Pat and Caren Boyd to witness my testimony. The men of this group would never have achieved their success and character had it not been for their mothers, wives, and daughters. These women were smart, independent, patient, fun loving, and fiercely protective of their husbands and children. My mother preached that women should be given the same opportunities for career and education as men. Equal pay and compensation for equal work and contribution. She would be proud of the women here today.

Last but not least is my beautiful wife Betty. She is what I value most and is my best choice in life. Betty's patience and understanding help me to get through the stresses and demands of operating an independent funeral home. She understands the physical and mental fatigue that every funeral director and embalmer lives with. Betty witnesses every week the emotional challenges her staff and their family's experience. She respects and understands the sacrifices you and I make as we serve the broken hearted, grieving citizens of Florida. I am blessed because, in spite of my faults, Betty so deeply loves me and our family. I hope you all get to know this amazing lady better this year because you will see her strength, hear her wisdom, and receive her prayers.

I was 15 years old when I went to work for Ron and Loretta Kays, Ed and Joyce Ponger, and Paul and Jackie Schelm and I stayed there until I enrolled at my beloved Miami-Dade College in 1978. Mr. Kays and Mr. Ponger merged two successful businesses in 1975 and I witnessed the challenges that surfaced when two very successful businesses with competitive employees merge. Mr. Schelm was the general manager who led with wisdom. I worked for Fred and Carol Richardt in Miami from 1978 to 1980. I dearly loved those two years working beside Bob Healy and John Fitzgerald at Florida Mortuary Services.

I learned some of my most valuable lessons during my youth: I learned to respect my employer, the importance of working well with others and, most importantly, I discovered how easily I could be replaced. I graduated college in 1980 and went to work for Clarence and Dorothy Harden and never left Central Florida. I am thankful that these people never gave up on me and they gave me opportunity to work. Each employer, including my parents, burned into my soul the importance of courage and determination. I must include a special thanks to Jim Justice, who has watched my entire career since 1974, and Larry Davis, George Corey, and John Deakins. They have invested a lot of time into my life.

Sir William E. Gladstone, four times Prime Minister of Britain once said:

“Show me the manner in which a nation or community cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender sympathies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land, and their loyalty to their ideals”.

Harden/Pauli Funeral Home was invited into the membership of Selected Independent Funeral Homes in 1989. I will forever be indebted to Gary Daugherty, Ivan Beyers and Lowell Hooper for sponsoring our invitation. The 1980's were a difficult and challenging time for independent funeral home owners. National corporations created debate, questioned ideals, and caused division among funeral professionals. This was not division between two local competitors, but challenging dreams and principles of dignified character deep within the souls of good men and women. I attended a state meeting of Selected Independent Funeral Homes hosted by Mike Bowden at Boynton Beach in 1990. The room was full of important Florida funeral directors. Mr. Cliff Van Orsdel asked permission to address the meeting. He was very concerned about the national corporate influence and control of

decisions within the Florida Funeral Directors Association. Mr. Van Orsdel said he was going to address the association at the next state wide meeting concerning the voice and influence of the independent funeral home owners in Florida.

I believe the result of Mr. Van Orsdel's passionate concerns for the success and survival of the independent funeral home is this very association: The Independent Funeral Directors of Florida.

Mr. Harden received a telephone call from his good friend Clyde Lankford inviting him and "that kid Pauli" to attend a funeral directors meeting at Deland in the winter season of 1991. Mr. Lankford said: "We are going to organize a group that is going to do what is best for the citizens of Florida. We're going to talk, have a few laughs, have a meal, and spend some money. Bring your checkbook". The organized corporate charter of IFDF was adopted in September of 1992. Historically speaking: very few Florida funeral directors knew the power and influence of the organizing charter members. These powerful people believed the advocacy and protection of Florida citizens' rights was supremely important. They risked time, money, and reputation because they knew it was the right thing to do. Here we are 24 years later. Strong, unified, valuable, and time tested.

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I believe the founding members of this association believed what Sir William Gladstone was willing to prove. If you study the history of cold hearted, lawless, and selfish societies you will discover how barbarous and pagan cultures cared for their dead. For the past 50 years Florida funeral directors have been challenged with serving people who are willing to settle for less dignity and respect in order to hurriedly move on with their lives with unhealthy grief. Direct disposition is unhealthy. Independent funeral directors and embalmers understand the importance of their work to heal grieving hearts.

This association will remain strong and respected as long as we continue to protect citizens rights, educate communities, promote equal opportunities for all workers, control consumer costs, and protect reverent dignity and respect for the deceased human body. I believe Clifford Van Orsdel's courage and determination, to say "enough is enough", will keep our honorable cause of fairness and trust on a clear course. The Independent Funeral Directors of Florida are not the only association to represent the interests of all Florida death-care professionals. But, Florida history reflects if the independent funeral directors and embalmers will not protect and defend compassionate care for its dead, then no one will.

As your President I will lead with my father's words: "Son, when it comes to competition; don't make your competitor look bad in order to make yourself look good." The Independent Funeral Directors of Florida will remain loyal to our ideals for our victories. My theme of the 2015-2016 year will be words of the famous University of Miami alumnus Warren Sapp who said: "If they ain't laughing at your dreams, you ain't dreamin' bit enough". Our long standing responsibilities of the Master Trust, Political and Governmental Affairs, Membership, and Conferences will continue in their excellent and efficient review and planning. I am asking the board of directors for additional attention toward our supply companies and their sales representatives; review of membership led by Scott Whitehead; review and reporting of the recruitment and fostering of our youth with emphasis on middle school, high school, and university students led by Vern Dorsey. Review and oversight of the I-PAL Mentoring program with emphasis on leadership within our association and the work place led by Deloris Lewis-Ray. And finally, review and action for the mentoring, support, and promotion of women in Florida Funeral Service led by Rick Williams with a special program or individual conference during the Silver Anniversary of this association.

I will close with the parting words of A.H. "Gus" Craig, Jr. at Clyde Lankford's Yacht Club at Deland, Florida that winter of 1991: "Ladies and gentlemen this has been a great day. Good food, good drink and a fun evening. It is now time to take action. Get out your checkbooks, drive safely home, and let's go to work". Thank you.

Lawrence W. (Lance) Pauli, Jr., President

Independent Funeral Directors of Florida 2015-2016

Friday, June 5, 2015 Marriott Sanibel Harbor Resort, Fort Myers, Florida