Strode Funeral Home Stillwater, OK ontact Name: Christy Taylo

Contact Name: Christy Taylor

May 30, 2006

NFDA 13625 Bishop's Drive Brookfield, WI 53005-6607

To Whom It May Concern:

Following is an essay that will describe how I was able to assist a client family in a very special way.

Sincerely,

Christy Taylor
Funeral Director and Office Manager

On Wednesday May 10, 2006 I received a strange telephone call from a young woman who wanted to see the inside of a casket. She came to the funeral home and I took her into our casket selection room. She began asking very specific questions regarding the interior of a casket. I inquired as to her line of questioning and she told me that her grandfather was very ill and under hospice care. Grandpa was very adamant that he be buried in the tradition of the "Old West" with a plain wood casket, no outer container, horse drawn carriage, etc.

The grandchildren were getting together to make Grandpa a casket out of rough cedar planks. It was Granddaughter's responsibility to finish the interior of the casket. The more we talked, the more flustered Granddaughter got because she did not have the necessary skills or equipment to complete the job right. Since I am pretty handy, I offered to come to her house to take a look and see what I could do for them.

Later that night, I got to see the rough beginnings of a rudimentary casket. I spent about an hour measuring, etc and was able to give them tips and advice regarding the construction of the exterior of the casket.

As for the interior, I could tell they needed all the help they could, so I offered to bring my sewing machine, glue gun, tool kit, etc. I gave them a list of necessary supplies and agreed to come by that Saturday to help. I ended up spending over six hours there that day! I even went back early the next day to help finish the casket.

The grandchildren took the casket to Grandpa's house and let him see it. He was very pleased with how it turned out. It was a very beautiful cedar plank casket, with horseshoe

handles, tooled leather corners. The interior was green satin for the bed, throw and pillow and white satin for the lid. I suggested that Grandpa's brand be used and Grandson branded it on the exterior of the casket and on a piece of wood that was placed on the cap panel in the interior of the casket.

In the meantime, I discovered that Granddaughter had requested assistance from another funeral home (our competitor) and was rebuffed. The family was originally going to use the competing firm but after comparing prices and witnessing the superior level of service they would receive, they chose to use our funeral home.

Grandpa died on May 16, 2006, only two days after seeing his casket. I was able to make the removal and meet Grandma and the rest of the family. We made arrangements for Grandpa's services to be on May 19, 2006 at our funeral home chapel and for the interment to be in a small country cemetery. Arrangements were also made for a buckboard wagon to transport the casket to the cemetery and for a group of mounted horsemen to accompany the casket to the cemetery.

The grandchildren brought the casket to the funeral home and we learned two things right away: 1. The casket itself weighed well over 300 lbs and 2. It was about ½" too wide to make it around a tight corner in the back hall of the funeral home. It took a group of four employees to move the casket through the front entry of the funeral home, up two small sets of stairs and into the stateroom.

Family members and friends provide a large array of Old West memorabilia to display in the stateroom and at the service. Items included a cowboy hat, cowboy boots, saddle, horse blanket, rope, etc. Grandpa was dressed in a Western style suit along with his trademark bright red neckerchief.

The service and procession went well and we transferred Grandpa from the funeral coach to the buckboard wagon about ½ mile from the cemetery. Over 2 dozen mounted horsemen led the procession. When we arrived in the cemetery, we discovered the cemetery had marked the wrong grave!

Arrangements were quickly made to have the correct grave opened and several family members agreed to stay and help lower the casket. After the casket was placed, a son and grandson wanted to stay to see the grave closed. Once the grave was closed, they realized that they did not have a ride home! I ended up giving them a ride to their house in the funeral coach.

I stayed and enjoyed a meal with the family. Many times the conversation turned to Grandpa's casket. The family was very appreciative of the assistance they had received and agreed that Grandpa would have been pleased with the service.

The family wanted to pay me personally for my time and trouble, but I refused. Instead they sent me a very nice card and pair of pearl earrings to show their gratitude. I ended up making several good friends among the grandchildren.

It is not everyday that someone asks for help building their own casket. I was happy to lend my expertise to the project, not only because someone needed my help, but to challenge myself to see if I could do it. The family received benefit because Grandpa got the casket and funeral that he wanted and the family bonds of unity were strengthened through striving towards a specific goal. The funeral home received benefit because our reputation was enhanced by the uniqueness of the service and the word of mouth generated by family members and friends who attended the services. We continue to receive compliments and hear positive comments about Grandpa's casket and services from family members and others in the community.

May 19, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

Christy Taylor, funeral director with Strode Funeral Home, helped me and my family make a casket for my grandfather, Benjamin Greene. She is also the funeral director who handled all the funeral services for us from start to finish.

My grandfather wanted a plain, simple casket. My husband Chad decided that he would make a cedar casket. We didn't know how everything should work out, so I went to Strode Funeral Home so I could see an actual casket. I was especially nervous because it was my job to make the inside of the casket.

Christy was very helpful and answered my questions. When she saw that I needed help, she offered to come over to my house. She brought her sewing machine and spent several hours working on the inside of the casket. She helped Chad with some of the fine details regarding the construction of the rest of the casket. She even let us store the casket in her garage for safekeeping.

When the casket was finished, we got to take it to Grandpa's house so that he could see the finished product. He was very excited to have a casket just like he wanted. He died only a few days later.

Grandpa's funeral services had a Western flair and Christy helped arrange all the details for the memorial video, displays in the stateroom, and procession to the cemetery in an old buckboard wagon. The cemetery dug the wrong grave, but Christy stayed to make sure that Grandpa was buried in the right spot.

We were very pleased with the service that we received from Strode Funeral Home. The casket turned out to be very beautiful and we really appreciated Christy's help with everything. All the family members agreed that Grandpa would have been pleased with the funeral.

Sincerely,

Yantcy Greene Granddaughter of Benjamin Greene

Photo Caption: Christy Taylor, funeral director, and Chad Greene are shown with the casket they constructed for Chad's grandfather, Benjamin Greene.