

**A Story Initiative Program:  
A Narrative Approach to Public Relations**

By  
Charles Lynn Gibson, DPhil, CFSP  
President  
Smith Funeral & Cremation Service  
Maryville, TN

National Funeral Directors Association  
Pursuit of Excellent Program

An innovative essay submitted for  
Basic Requirement: I:H

2014

**Documentation for Basic Requirement I:H – “An Innovative Essay”****A Story Initiative Program:  
A Narrative Approach to Public Relations**

*Everyone loves stories!* That was the conclusion the Board of Directors at Smith Funeral & Cremation Service, in Maryville, Tennessee, determined last fall as we sat around a conference table in our Smith Learning Studio excited about how we would share our new company logos with our community. Each year, our Board of Directors meets for an annual planning session to discuss new ideas that will facilitate effective public relations efforts in and around our community. This past year, we developed an exciting new and innovative program that has received a tremendous response. The name of our new program is called “*Stories from the Smith Archives.*” This brief essay outlines the inspiration and basic rationale of our Story Initiative Program (SIP), provides a detailed description of the program, and explains how this program benefits our client-families as well as our funeral home and staff. In addition, this essay suggests that any funeral home can benefit from a public relations effort that is willing to implement a SIP in their community.

**Inspiration and Rationale**

As an ongoing means to strengthen our business model over the years, our firm has expanded the services of our original brand (i.e. a full-service funeral home) to include other sister companies to meet the needs of our community, such as a cemetery, an on-site florist, pet services, an event-planning division for non-funeral events (e.g. weddings, anniversaries, parties, and business meetings), and a lower-cost cremation-only alternative. Given the growth and expanding services of our organization, the key question our Board of Directors faced last year was: “How can we leverage the power of the Smith brand name that has an iconic reputation of 50+ years in our community to foster on-going growth with all of our sister companies and

contribute to our overall business sustainability? Our Board determined that a new tool was warranted: a reimaged logo family – a new “visual voice.”

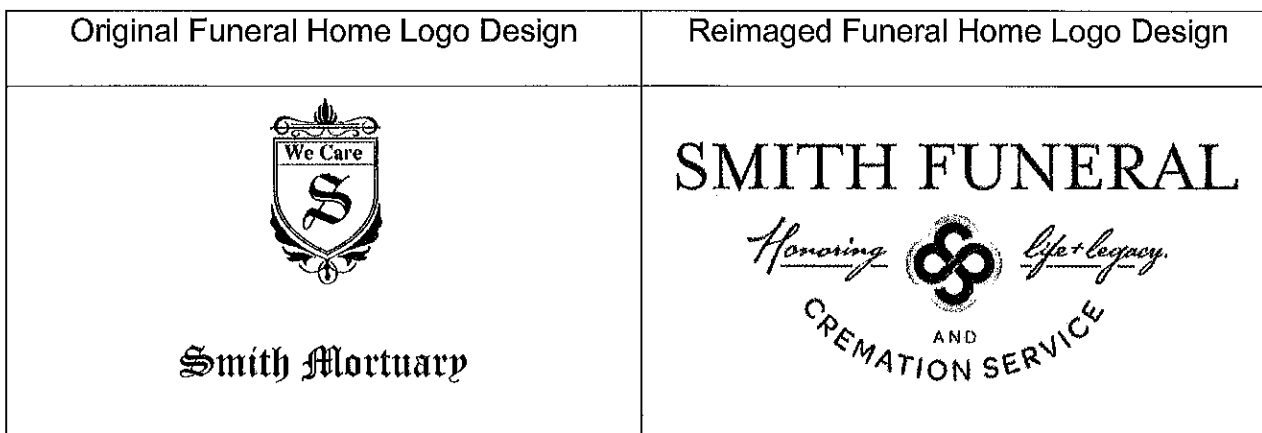
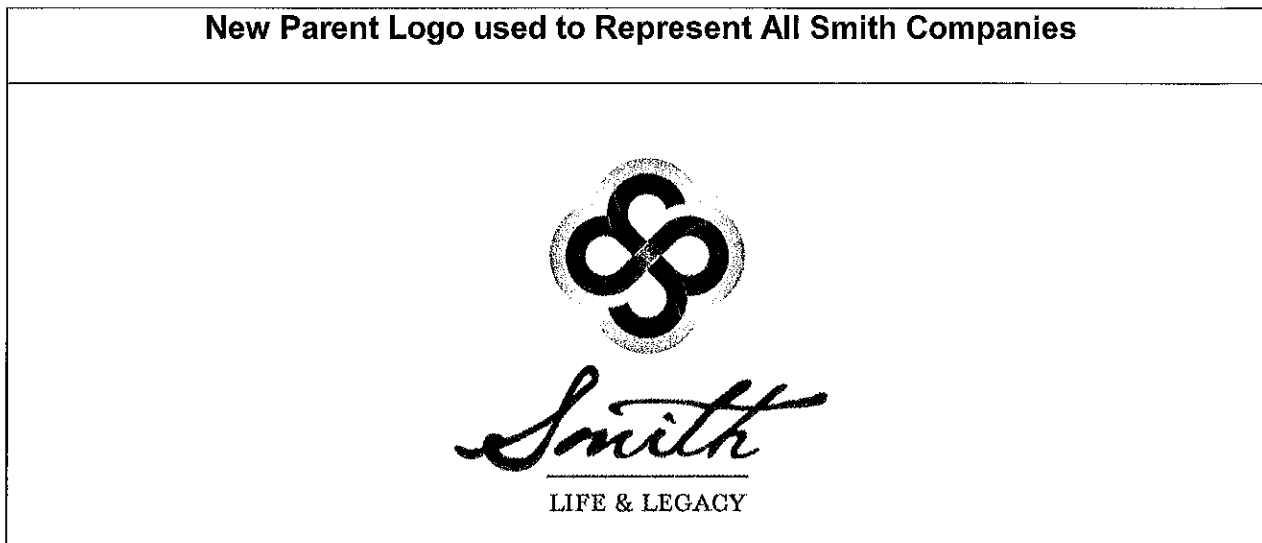
Our challenge was to somehow carry forward **the nostalgic core** of our original Smith brand, and at the same time retool our visual presence to give it a more **contemporary feel** that conveys the essence of what integrates our 6 businesses...**our mission to honor life and legacy.** The goals for our new graphics were quite ambitious: 1) to create a new stylized design that would modernize our Smith brand, 2) to convey graphically a message of infinite trustworthiness and the perpetuity of life, and 3) to extend an element of sacredness and class to all that we do. Further, something important to us in the new design of our Smith parent logo was to utilize the signature of our founder, Leonard L. Smith. Using Mr. Smith’s signature could graphically demonstrate his stamp of approval conveying the message that he would have whole-heartedly embraced what became of his original vision of caring for the people of our community. We determined that a powerful “visual voice” will help us convey our big ideas more effectively to current and new generations: family and community; significance and meaning; celebration and reverence.

In July of 2013, our Board of Directors made the final decision to hire a reputable local graphic-arts firm in our area, Graphic-FX, to develop our new logo family.<sup>1</sup> By leveraging the iconic reputation the Smith name has earned in our community, Graphic-FX showed us how we could communicate to our entire community, including those who have not used our services before, that all of our six companies are integrated by one purpose: *to honor life and legacy.* Before year end, Graphic-FX had created for us a newly reimaged and colorful mark to be used in each of our company logos that would demonstrate our solidarity. They also incorporated an

---

<sup>1</sup> For contact information, see Graphic-FX, 375 Ellis Avenue, Maryville, TN 37804; [info@graphic-fx.com](mailto:info@graphic-fx.com); 865-983-0363; [www.Graphic-FX.com](http://www.Graphic-FX.com).

infinity sign that represents the timelessness of our calling, and a modernized “S” that speaks to the reliable care for which our Smith brand is known (see images below).



Our Board of Directors recognized that developing a new logo family for our companies was **just a tool** to use for a greater purpose – we need **a strong public relations and advertising campaign** that heralds the idea that “Smith-ness” is synonymous with “life and legacy.” The main question, of course, is what methodology would best or most effectively communicate life and legacy to our particular community? That is, what would be a good way to utilize our newly reimaged logos to yield the results we desired for an essential component of our business – our public relations program?

In our research, we discovered that anthropologists describe human beings as the story-telling animal (Gottschall 2012). As a species, we literally crave stories all the time. We love action, comedy, romance, and the perseverance of an underdog, and we are even oddly drawn to stories of tragedy, loss, and mystery. Researchers suggest that we are biologically hard-wired for stories.<sup>2</sup> That is, when our bodies are asleep, our minds stay up all night telling ourselves stories. Further, we do not stop dreaming when we are awake either, as daydreaming (i.e. our normal inner thought-world) seems to be our default state of mind. Consider this: an average daydream is just 14 seconds, but we are told that we have about 2,000 “daydreams” per day. That means that over seven hours each day (half of our waking hours) are spent telling stories to ourselves! Obviously, as a species, human beings are deeply connected to personal narratives: “What is her story?” or “What is his life all about?” As our Board pondered this research, we asked: “Could it be that the legacies we leave behind (i.e. the macro view or big picture of our lives) are simply a composite of the many episodic short stories (i.e. the micro view or short episodes) that give shape and color to our daily lives?” This is precisely the conclusion of Ganzevoort (2011: 214-223):

The idea of a narrative structure of our understanding and experience implies that we organize our experiences in storylike forms...We live our lives from day to day, but we understand our life as if it were a story. Our collective identity, history, and religious tradition are likewise structured as stories. This is a matter of “mimesis” or representation of the external reality in our mind and knowing...Mimesis (*i.e. storytelling*) describes how we come to understand our life and world (*italics mine*).<sup>3</sup>

Most people will surely agree that stories do more for us than mere facts alone. Great stories really live on forever – and we love to share these stories over and over again. One may

---

<sup>2</sup> For further information, consult Annette Simmons’ *The Story Factor: Inspiration, influence, and persuasion through the art of storytelling* (2001), and Johnathan Gottschall’s *The Storytelling Animal: How stories make us human* (2012).

<sup>3</sup> See R. R. Ganzevoort’s 2011 “Narrative Approaches” in B. Miller-McLemore (e.d.). *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 214-223 and Stephen Crites’ 1971 seminal article “The Narrative Quality of Experience” in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 39: 391-411.

think of the timelessness of a Norman Rockwell painting for example – a timeless episode of life told on a single page. Research certainly affirms that the significance of life is demonstrated best through the power of our personal narratives.<sup>4</sup> Stories are in fact the integrative glue of human social life – they help us stick together and find unity among one another. As a funeral service organization, it is hard to argue with this basic control belief: **Life Matters – So Share Stories!**<sup>5</sup> In short, we decided that the centerpiece of our new public relations and advertising campaign would be the honoring of great stories in our community. We decided that indeed our “visual voice” must bear witness to the fact that life stories truly matter.

### **Detailed Description**

With our new logos in place and ready for dissemination, we decided to unveil our new artwork through **a narrative approach** we felt was heavily supported by current research – a Story Initiative Program (SIP) we called “*Stories from the Smith Archives.*” Our Board enthusiastically affirmed that this SIP, if demonstrated effective, would be the backbone of our public relations and advertising efforts for the next three (3) years.

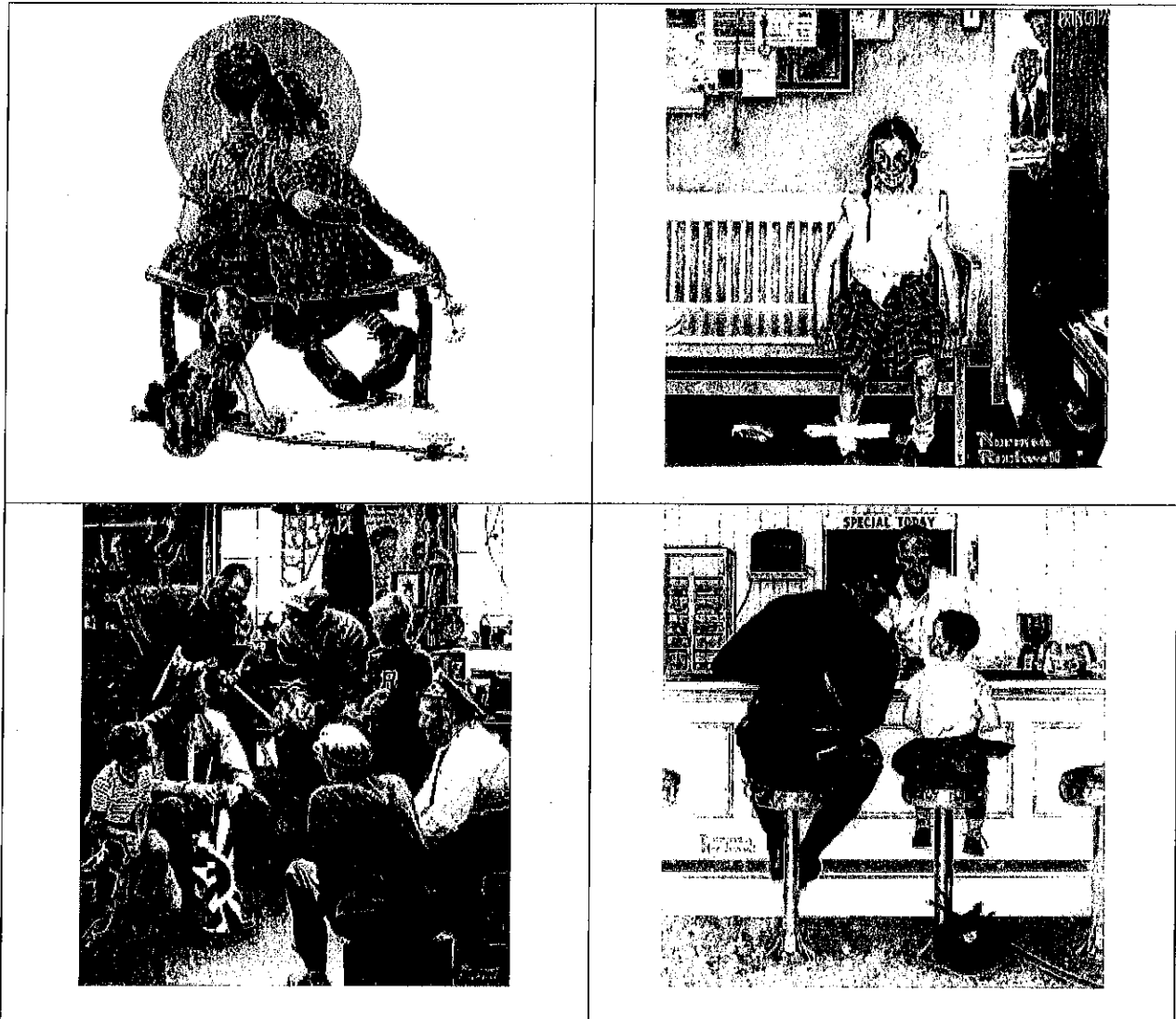
Using the simple idea of **“a good story”** as the sole criteria, we could utilize newspaper, social media, television, and billboards to promote all of the Smith family of businesses. In fact, we decided that we would feature real life stories from our past as well as current stories that are being shared through any of our Smith companies. To help brand the Smith name with the idea of “good stories,” we decided that it would be prudent to share stories about the people who we

---

<sup>4</sup> The power of narratives have been discussed through interdisciplinary contexts, such as psychology, pastoral care, and business. See Robert Neimeyer’s “Narrative Strategies in Grief Therapy” in *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*, 12:65-85, 1999; Donald Capps’ *The Poet’s Gift: Toward the renewal of pastoral care*, Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993; and Paul Smith’s *Lead with a Story: A guide to crafting business narratives that captivate, convince, and inspire*, American Management Association, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> This is precisely one of the key findings the Funeral Service Foundation surfaced in their 2012 landmark study headed by Alan Creedy that utilized the popular Zoltmann Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET). See also Gerald and Lindsay Zaltmann’s *Marketing Metaphoria: What deep metaphors reveal about the minds of consumers*, Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008.

are privileged to meet and serve each year. The stories do not have to be about anyone famous, rich, or powerful – they just have to celebrate something unique and wonderful about being a human being (again, think about the simple genius of Normal Rockwell).



We are delighted to report that at the mid-point of this year's campaign, all of our Smith Stories have been very well-received by our community. We have received emails, phone calls, and even some visits to our funeral home from people excited to talk about one of the stories we shared. We have been told repeatedly that no one in our community is doing anything like this and that it is so refreshing to read something positive and encouraging in the newspaper for a

change. In addition, though our Smith Stories are paid advertisements, they do not have the look or feel of typical ads (examples are at the end of this essay).

Having spent many hours in planning with our Board and our local graphic arts company, and based on the feedback that we received from our community, we developed an implementation system that we use over and over again to facilitate our story initiative and to ensure quality work. Here is the simple eight-step (8) process we follow:

**1) Create a Template and Medium to share the story.**

- We had our local graphic arts company develop a story template specifically designed for newsprint. The template would provide a consistent look and presentation of our Smith brand that we could use over and over again throughout our campaign. Next, we worked out an agreement with our local daily newspaper, *The Daily Times*, to run full-page color ads as our preferred medium to share the stories with our community. Because we plan on doing multiple stories over the year, the newspaper was willing to offer us a great discount. We also believe that the discount we receive may also be attributed to the positive response the newspaper has received from the community as well from our earlier Smith Stories. To utilize additional mediums, we also have plans to share these stories on our Facebook page in upcoming months and to have an enlarged copy of each story framed for our lobby for families to see at their leisure.

**2) Identify the Subjects.**

- We made an original plan for twelve stories to be shared (see table below).
- Subjects should be anyone with a good story to share.



**Signature Stories from the Smith Archives**  
**Possible Story Ideas**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Life Quality</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Thursday, November 28, 2013	Pop's Pumpkins: A tribute to our founder Leonard Smith	Vision	Yes
Wednesday, December 25, 2013 Christmas Day	The Empty Pantry Fund: Honoring the life of Paul Bales	Compassion	Yes
Sunday, January 26, 2014	Hicks Sawmill: Fie Hicks	Perseverance	Yes
Easter Sunday April 20, 2014	Rev. Carl White "If not for Easter..."	Faith	Yes
Mother's Day May 11, 2014	Jerri Franklin Britton and son Drake	Unconditional Love	Yes
June 2014	Tombstone Park Dr. K's Baseball	Teamwork	In-Process
July 2014	A Wedding Day to remember	Hope	In-Process
August 2014	Our Best Friend: An animal companion	Companionship	No
September 2014	Memorial Tribute	Brotherly Love	No
October 2014	A Special Anniversary: Celebrating 50 Years of Marriage	Commitment	No
November 2014	Memorial Tribute for a Veteran	Patriotism	No
December 25, 2014	A Tribute to Dean Stone: A local historian	Legacy	No

**Eight-Step Process cont.****3) Request for a Brief Interview with the subject.**

- Our interviews last no more than one hour. We offer to meet the family at their home or at another convenient location. We developed a simple worksheet to help us in our interview (see below).

**Stories From the Smith Life & Legacy Archives  
Worksheet**

<b>Goal/Objective:</b>	To tell great stories of life and legacy
<b>Subject:</b>	Jerri Britton
<b>Theme:</b>	Unconditional love of a mother
<b>Date to Run:</b>	Mother's Day Sunday, May 11, 2014
<b>Background Info:</b>	Mother of Drake; step-mother of 2; Husband: Tim Loan Officer with Blount Home Mortgage Contact: Cell 865-640-4633 Email: <a href="mailto:jbritton@blounthomemortgage.com">jbritton@blounthomemortgage.com</a>
<b>Interview Appt:</b>	May 6, 2014 at Graphic FX Office
<b>Preliminary Ideas:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use a fun picture of Jerri's family, dressed for a University of Tennessee football game.</li> <li>- Focus not on Drake's special needs, but on a mother's (and step-mother's) commitment to help their family live life to its fullest</li> <li>- Possible quotes from Jerri:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ "You have to have some fun in life."</li> <li>○ "This is what I do."</li> <li>○ "Don't bless Drake's heart!"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Eight-Step Process cont.****4) Secure a Great Photograph of the subject.**

- The idea of using a photograph for each story emerged for us from our video tribute program. Every family that we serve is given an opportunity to bring in photographs for us to make a video tribute in honor of the deceased. Many funeral homes offer this service. As such, funeral directors are accustomed to seeing amazing photographs of people's lives almost daily. We regularly witness the power of these photographs as family members and friends gather together to watch these video tributes attentively before and even during a funeral or memorial service. We have all witnessed how pictures, both old ones and new ones, evoke families and friends to laugh, cry, and share openly with one another. Though admittedly a cliché, it is still altogether true that *a picture is worth a thousand words*. We concluded that every Smith Story must have a good picture to capture the attention of the newspaper readers in our community.

**5) Write the Copy (just a few short paragraphs describing the story will suffice).****6) Update Template with copy and photograph.****7) Seek Approval of the Story.**

- We recommend getting approval of the full ad from the subject or subject's family before publishing. This will not only ensure the quality of the piece, but will also serve as a final check for correct spelling of names, dates, etc.

**8) Submit to the Appropriate Medium (e.g. local newspaper or social media website).**

## **Benefits of a Story Initiative Program**

What are the benefits of a Story Initiative Program (SIP)? We have seen firsthand that a SIP benefits our community, funeral home, and staff. By implementing our SIP this past year, we believe that Smith Funeral & Cremation Service has added value to our community. In addition to our core work of facilitating opportunities to share the significance of life through funerals and memorial service events, our SIP campaign has given us another means by which we can honor life on a regular basis. Remember: because life matters, share stories. Therefore, about once per month, we select a person who has a really good story to tell, and we share it with our community through our local newspaper. What is new and innovative for us is that we are able to reach more people in our community than ever before with our message of “honoring life and legacy” – that indeed, every life matters. “Smith Stories,” as we call them, are not limited to the deceased – anyone with a good story about their life who is willing to share is eligible for consideration in our SIP.

Funeral professionals have suggested for many years that funeral service is about the business of community-theater. Our funeral home, like so many others, is accustomed to undertaking the work of bringing people together to honor the personal narratives of our community through funeral and memorial events. We personally have been doing this for over fifty years in our community. Of course, we do not create the stories themselves. Families who have lost a loved one provide us with the powerful scripts (the subjects) and the sacred casts (those who care). As professional directors, we regularly facilitate meaningful end-of-life rituals, because at the heart of undertaking is a sincere devotion to the well-being of others. Now, with our SIP, we have an additional innovative opportunity to share “life and legacy” with others – that which we know facilitates human wholeness and well-being within our community. Our SIP

benefits our community by tying us all together more closely through the shared experiences of our personal stories. In short, we believe that our efforts in implementing this SIP in our funeral home serves an important civic function and actually strengthens community bonds.

In addition to the benefits our SIP has brought to our community, our SIP campaign also benefits our funeral home and staff. First, we believe that a good SIP is a tremendous public relations tool. Combating the residual negative caricatures in some public eyes that funeral practitioners are death merchants who profit off of the death of others or that funeral homes are greedy casket peddlers or insurance salesmen, a strong SIP offers a tool to improve or solidify your business reputation in your community. For us, we cherish the idea that Smith is being thought of as the place of great stories – a place where human wholeness is celebrated and honored both before and after death. Second, our SIP campaign touches not only the families we serve, but reaches those who do not have a cause to attend a funeral or memorial service at our facility and experience a positive message of the importance of life and legacy. Moreover, we believe that even families who have not chosen our services in the past might relook again at us with fresh eyes on what our firm is all about and the reason we exist in our community.

In addition to the benefits our SIP is bringing to both our community and funeral home, we also experienced a serendipitous finding. That is, our Board witnessed the impact our SIP campaign has had on our whole staff – full-time and part-time, licensed and non-licensed personnel. With our staff on the lookout for good stories to share, they have been inspired that our corporate mission “to honor life and legacy” truly matters, and it is not just a sign we hang on a wall or put on our website. Our SIP has further solidified our philosophy of funeral service in the minds of our staff. Through in-house discussions of the signature stories that we share with

our community, our staff is reminded that their own stories are being written and needs to be shared with others.

## **Conclusion**

We know that Mr. Smith, or “Pop” as we called him, would have been thrilled with how his many ideas of caring for families has blossomed into what is now *Smith Life and Legacy* – the parent concept for our family of businesses. In using Pop’s signature in our parent logo, we bear witness to his deep-seated belief that every life matters. This past year, our Board did not set out to create a new identity per say, but to think about how we could utilize current research to build upon our on-going public relations efforts. As our company brand has continued to expand over the years to meet the needs of our growing community, we recognized that now was a good time to solidify and update our logo family – to bring all of our companies together as a unified whole. The point, of course, was not to create new logos or a mere newspaper ad, but to think of an innovative method by which we could solidify our mission to honor life and legacy in the eyes of our community. As such, we developed an effective Story Initiative Program (SIP) that employs a narrative approach to public relations.

Public relations efforts are essential to all companies in order to extend an on-going consistent image and to communicate a specific message to the public. For us at Smith Funeral & Cremation Service, we want to be remembered as those who honor the lives and legacies of all people in our community. We want to communicate a clear message that we are respected professionals who have a specialized body of knowledge to nurture families through transformative experiences. Research has long debunked the idea that the point of grief is to cut ties to our dead. Instead, we are encouraged to continue the bonds with our dear loved ones – honoring what is best in each of us as we tie our stories together in a meaningful integrated

whole. Smith began over 50 years ago with a small group of undertakers who cared for the living by extending dignity to those who had passed away. That much has not changed. Today however, we understand that the deepest form of “undertaking” is to help people experience human wholeness: encountering life’s significance and meaning through all types of important events, including birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, graduations, and memorials. What we have learned is that these events (and many others) give space and time for us to honor the stories of our lives.

This essay suggests that a Story Initiative Program (SIP), like our *Stories from the Smith Archives*, is an effective narrative method to contribute to a company’s public relations efforts. To be clear, any funeral home of any given size and in whatever location can better connect with their community by celebrating the lives and legacies of the people in their community. The simple device of sharing a common story can be a powerful tool to communicate a positive message of honoring life that will reinforce a strong public image and resonate in the eyes and ears of the public. As funeral professionals, we of all people should be the leaders in our community who are forever heralding the sacredness and dignity of life. The SIP outlined here is an easily repeatable program that fosters great joy and success to funeral service practitioners by strengthening community bonds, improving business reputation, and inspiring staff to greater heights and depths of funeral caregiving in the twenty-first century.<sup>6</sup> The simple truth remains: *people love stories!*

---

<sup>6</sup> Our firm was recently honored to have our “*Stories from the Smith Archives*” advertisements recognized by the American Advertising Federation, winning a prestigious Gold ADDY Award at the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual American Advertising Awards.

# STORIES

— FROM THE —  
SMITH LIFE & LEGACY

*Archives*

LEGACY

*957*

*Pop's Pumpkins / 1969*



*Honoring life. Legacy.*

## If you knew Mr. Smith, you probably called him "Pop."

It's what he preferred. And it just felt right, because Leonard Smith was something like a father to so many in Blount County. When he established Smith Mortuary Company in 1962, it was just one of the many ways he dreamed up to give back to his hometown. That and pumpkins.

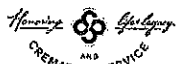
In the summer of 1969, Pop gazed at the vacant lot next to his funeral home and had himself an idea. A few seeds later, Blount County's first community garden was born. His green thumb raised up a bumper crop, with pumpkins so huge

that Pop (above, pointing) had to move them with a bulldozer. He declared his new garden open for picking to anyone in need.

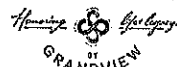
Some seeds grow into giant pumpkins, and others grow even bigger. Over half a century later, Leonard Smith's vision has become Smith Life & Legacy—a family of companies present in every walk of life. From birth to death and every event in between, we are committed to honoring the lives and legacies of Blount County. We think Pop would be proud of the fruit of his labor.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING FROM THE SMITH COMPANIES

SMITH FUNERAL



CREMATION



*Smith*  
LIFE & LEGACY

SMITH EVENT



GRANDVIEW



FLOWER SHOP





# STORIES

FROM THE  
SMITH LIFE & LEGACY

*Archives*

LIFE + LEGACY No. 148 The Empty Pantry Fund / 1952



Empty Pantry Fund volunteers (left to right): Lisa Gibson, Paul Bales, former chairman, Don Gibson and Lon Fink, president

*Honoring Life & Legacy*

## Paul Bales discovered the joy of helping people at age 6.

That was the summer that a local farmer paid him to pick his strawberries. "I'd use the change I earned to buy cookies and take them to the needy at the Blount County poor farm," recalls Paul. "I always took my dog, Shep. He'd bite anyone that tried to stop me."

And nothing could stop young Paul... until the farmer wised up and fired him. "He said, 'boy, I believe you're eating twice as many strawberries as you're picking!'"

Well, Paul would find new ways to help people. When the Jaycees introduced 21-year-old Paul to the Empty Pantry Fund, it was a match made in heaven.

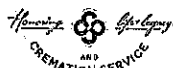


Since 1952, the Fund has freely provided food baskets to Blount County residents in need. Today, Paul Bales (above, center) is one of hundreds of Fund volunteers who help to feed over 1,400 families at Christmas.

Smith Life & Legacy is proud to do our part, donating proceeds from the Candlelight Tribute at Grandview Cemetery and the Memorial Christmas Tree at Smith Funeral and Cremation Service. Like Paul and the many Empty Pantry Fund volunteers, it gives us great joy to help the people of Blount County — the place we call home.

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE SMITH COMPANIES

SMITH FUNERAL



CREMATION



*Smith*  
LIFE & LEGACY

SMITH EVENT



GRANDVIEW



FLOWER SHOP



Photo courtesy of The Daily Times

# STORIES

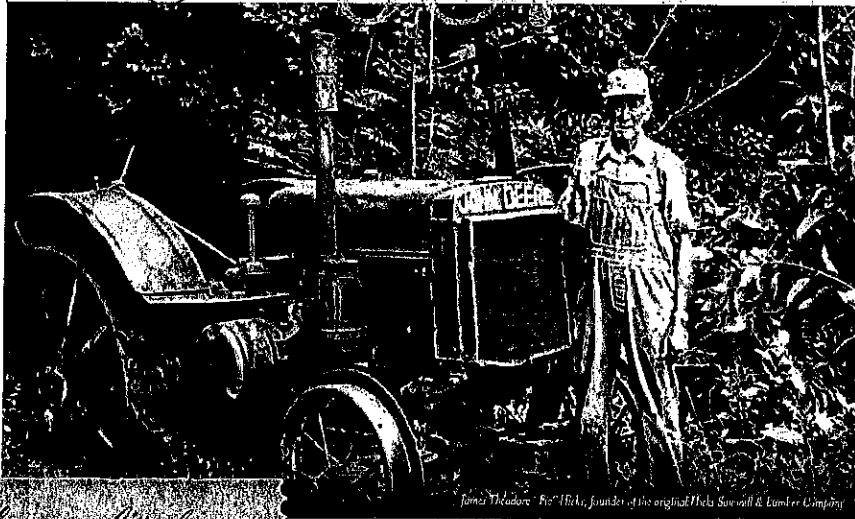
— FROM THE —

## SMITH LIFE & LEGACY

*Archives*

LIFE  
+  
LEGACY No

Hicks Sawmill / 1939



*James Theodore "Fie" Hicks, founder of the original Hicks Sawmill & Lumber Company*

*Honoring Life & Legacy*

### Fie Hicks used twice the elbow grease of an average man.

And that's remarkable, since Fie had just one arm to keep up with the hardest workers in Blount County.

James Theodore "Fie" Hicks and wife Ella Mae had two children to feed when he purchased his sawmill in 1939. The blade claimed his right arm in an accident, but feeling sorry for himself never crossed his mind. Semiconscious in the hospital, Fie would later recall his doctors solemnly wondering how many days he might live. But within eighteen months, Fie simply tucked his sleeve into his overalls and got back to work and life.



Folks marveled that he drove his Ford Falcon easily, hunted with a 20-gauge shotgun expertly and kept the cemetery grounds at Ballards Chapel tirelessly.

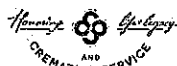
A deacon there, Fie generously tended his own garden enough to feed over fifty church members every week for Sunday dinner.

Today, Fie's son Ed and grandson

Neil have honored this legacy of perseverance by restoring the Hicks Sawmill & Lumber Company in Louisville. Neil Hicks proudly recalls, "I was twenty years old when my grandfather died, and I never once thought of him as handicapped."

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE SMITH COMPANIES

SMITH FUNERAL

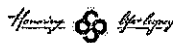


SMITH EVENT

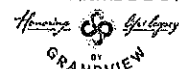


*Smith*  
LIFE & LEGACY

FLOWER SHOP



CREMATION



GRANDVIEW



# STORIES

FROM THE  
SMITH LIFE & LEGACY

*Archives*

LIFE  
+  
LEGACY No

Rev. Carl White / 1953

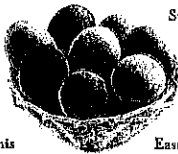


## No one pastors the same church for sixty years anymore.

But Reverend Carl White has a simple explanation for how he's managed to do exactly that: "for me it's much more than just a job; it's my life's calling."

Carl vividly remembers the Sunday that his own pastor became too ill to preach. A guest preacher present said, "I could preach, but let's hear a word from the young preacher there in the corner."

Stunned in his pew, young Carl knew that this complete stranger had seen in him what he had already come to sense inside: God was putting a calling on his life to preach the Gospel message.



By 1953, the congregation that would eventually become Hillcrest Baptist Church began meeting on an open hillside for worship under Carl's teaching.

Sixty years later, folks still drive over an hour to hear the 95 year old man preach truth.

This Easter, Smith Life & Legacy celebrates Carl's lifelong calling. "I've seen a lot of lives changed. If not for

Easter, there simply is no truth. If not for Easter, I have nothing to look forward to. If not for Easter, I have nothing to preach."

We wish you and your family a very Happy Easter.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE SMITH COMPANIES

SMITH FUNERAL



SMITH EVENT



FLOWER SHOP



CREMATION



GRANDVIEW



www.SMITHLIFEANDLEGACY.COM

# STORIES

FROM THE  
SMITH LIFE & LEGACY

*Archives*

LIFE + LEGACY No

Jerri Britton / 2014



*Jerri Britton and son Drake cheer at the Vol football at Neyland Stadium.*

## Well bless Drake's heart if you want a good scolding.

Because Jerri Britton, Drake's extraordinary mother, will be quick to point out that there's not one thing wrong with his joyful, wonderfully made heart.

"If you want to bless him, bless some body part that could make better use of it."

Drake, 19, has cerebral palsy.

Everyone in the Britton household is perfectly aware of this, but Jerri says that stepdaughters Sian and Kelly don't really see it. "He's not their handicapped brother; he's just their brother." The girls have clearly learned what family means from their mom.

Jerri has worked incredibly hard to make sure that Drake gets to experience all that life has to offer. He graduates this year from Maryville High School.

He plays Challenger basketball and baseball.

He's enjoyed theme parks and cruise ships.

But nothing compares to cheering on the Tennessee Vols with his mother.

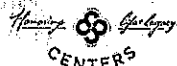
"There's a bump on Aleca Highway at the bridge, and when we hit it, Drake lights up because Neyland Stadium is near. He may be nonverbal, but he just absolutely lights up. And I know, because I'm his mom."

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY FROM THE SMITH COMPANIES

SMITH FUNERAL



SMITH EVENT



FLOWER SHOP



CREMATION



GRANDVIEW



www.SMITHLIFEANDLEGACY.com