

The business of death

Written by By Molly Ann Howell Sun Correspondent
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One funeral home director's experience with the unknown

Funeral home directors spend the bulk of their time working on the dead.

They prepare the deceased through a detailed process that involves injecting embalming fluid through the neck until the decay-preventing fluid fills the entire body.

David Anderson was in the funeral home business for four years, and he was the funeral director at Director's Choice LLC., a funeral home in Albuquerque, over seven years ago.

He said that embalming was one of his favorite parts about the job, partly because he enjoyed making the families feel good about how their loved ones looked after death.

"I liked when the family showed appreciation after I did a good job with the presentation, especially when I knew I did a good job," Anderson said.

Despite the good parts about the job, Anderson said there were some creepy moments when he was in the embalming room by himself.

He mentioned a time when he was preparing a body for the embalming process and saw a

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shadow out of the corner of eye while he was in the funeral home alone. When he looked up at the front door, there was nobody there.

And at that exact moment, rigor mortis — the stiffening of the joints and muscles of a body a few hours after death — set in for the body he was working on.

The rigor mortis made the body's fingers curl around Anderson's hand, while a gurgling sound also came out of the deceased's mouth.

This sequence of events only happened once, but Anderson said that was the scariest moment he had ever experienced working in a funeral home.

He said he'd seen shadows out of the corner of his eye multiple times, but the rigor mortis happening when it did added to the general spookiness of the situation.

The spookiness doesn't seem to bother Anderson too much, though.

Instead, he said that the most difficult part about working in a funeral home was trying to support the families through their time of grieving.

"I struggle with being religious, so the majority of the time when families would come to me for guidance and prayer, that was very difficult for me to give," Anderson said.

Aside from the challenges, Anderson said he enjoyed making the families' last moments with loved ones as positive as possible.

After his time at Director's Choice LLC., Anderson went on to maintain the facilities at UNM.

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