

# Tending To Hearts

“A Snyder Funeral Homes Publication”

## Funeral Etiquette: Children and Snapshots

by Hannah Snyder Wernecke

Hi, I'm Hannah, a 4th generation funeral director and embalmer working in the family business since 2011. Recently, I consulted Chat-GPT about the do's and don'ts for attending a funeral service, and I was surprised to find myself disagreeing with some of the advice provided. It seems there are widespread misconceptions that need to be addressed. I believe two of the “don'ts” should be turned into “do's.”

### ~~don't~~ DO Bring Small Children

Chat-GPT said, “Small children can be unpredictable and may cause disruptions.” Yes, kids can cause disruptions, but that's no reason to leave them at home. Seeing little feet running around a cemetery can be an uplifting and a beautiful reminder of the cyclical nature of life. Children have a unique way of drawing adults' attention to overlooked details, and their presence can be a comforting distraction during a visitation or memorial.

In mortuary school, we were taught that my generation, the Millennials, are the first “death devoid” generation. Our parents often left us at home during calling hours and funerals, resulting in a lack of experience with death. Coupled with advancements in medicine that have extended our grandparents' lives and drastically reduced infant mortality, many in my age group had no experience with death until adulthood, or even still have no direct experience with loss.

This late exposure could be psychologically challenging, as we're not entirely sure of the long-term effects. Millennials may face a steeper learning curve in accepting death, experience heightened uncertainty about aging and loss, or shy away from comforting death rituals. Generation X has also experienced a bit of this, and certainly Gen Z and Generation Alpha are on a path to experience death avoidance even more so than Millennials ever did with many people opting to reduce or eliminate funeral services altogether. This could be fixed nearly instantly by once again making it commonplace to bring children to services, allowing them to see the deceased in their casket, and answering any questions raised with honesty and sincerity.

Next time you have the opportunity to take your child—or grandchild—to a funeral, I highly recommend you consider bringing them along. You might give them a healthier perspective on death to carry through their whole life, plus maybe you will find they bring you a little bit of extra comfort in the meantime.  
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## don't DO Take Photos

Chat-GPT said, “Taking photos is generally considered disrespectful.” I disagree. Taking photographs preserves memories, documents events, and shares experiences. What’s disrespectful about that?

Funeral photography, also known as post-mortem photography, is as old as the 1839 invention of the camera. Victorians, who could afford only a few photos in their lifetime, often had one taken after death. These photos, posed to appear alive, were cherished keepsakes, capturing the essence of the person due to their complete stillness as was needed for a clear photo at the time. Taking a photo after death is a deeply personal choice and maybe best left to the immediate family. I nudge my client families to take one. Going back to that moment in time is impossible, but you can delete the photo in the unlikely event you regret taking it.

Somehow, we've reached a point where we eagerly snap a dozen photos of our breakfast stack of pancakes at Bob Evans, yet we shy away from capturing a single moment at our grandmother's funeral. This shift reflects a change in our cultural values, where the fleeting joys of everyday moments often overshadow the profound significance of honoring and remembering our loved ones. Perhaps it's time to reconsider. Guests may want to respectfully seek next-of-kin permission before photographing directly into the casket, but otherwise all should feel comfortable discreetly taking candid snapshots.

Sharing photos with friends after the service can be deeply meaningful. Grief is most publicly supported in the first few weeks, but continues long after. Neighbors stop by with dinner, friends offer to run errands, families fly in from all over the country... it's a flurry of activity those first few weeks. Too soon for the deeply grieving, things seem to “go back to normal” for everyone else. A quick text several weeks later, “Thinking of you today. The service for your wife was so special I couldn't help but take a photo of the pallbearers.” along with your snapshot will assure your friend that not only do you have them on your heart as they continue to face silent grief, but they will know their spouse's legacy endures.

Hearing this topic, my husband wished he had more photos from his grandfather's memorial service two months ago—though by all accounts he has more photos than most. I took some photographs and my dad (J. Todd Snyder) captured a video of the ceremony. As funeral directors, we know not everyone is comfortable pulling out their phone in moments like that, but we are. It was a monumental day for our family and worth remembering in detail.

The funeral industry is often compared to the wedding industry, but the spending and documentation for weddings increase exponentially each year, while people are spending less time, less money, and documenting almost nothing photographically at funerals. Brides even purchase signs reminding people to keep their phones away—that's how strong the impulse is to take a personal photo at a wedding. This trend highlights how we increasingly prioritize celebrating beginnings over honoring endings, yet both are essential to fully appreciate and balance the entire spectrum of life.

As we document our lives, let us not forget the importance of honoring and remembering those we have lost. Taking photos at a funeral is not disrespectful. Funeral photography has a long history of documenting the collective experience of grieving and healing. Posting on social media can include life's heavy moments too. So, at the next funeral you attend, consider taking a photo or video—even if the deceased is not in the shot. It can be a powerful way to honor and remember your loved one, taken from your point of view.



*LifeGem is located in a suburb of Chicago, Illinois. They create diamonds from extracting carbon from cremated remains, human hair, or pet fur.*

## Cremation Creations—LifeGem

contributed by Beth Buxton, LFD, Snyder Funeral Homes

LifeGem is a company that has been in business for over twenty years, located in Chicago, Illinois. Their mission is to bring comfort and a lasting, unique memorial to families with the beautiful diamonds they create from the carbon extracted from cremated remains, human hair or pet fur.

LifeGem owns and operates the only diamond production facility in the entire United States. This adds another level of peace of mind knowing the diamonds being created of a beloved family member or pet takes place right here in the USA.

Approximately a half cup of cremated remains, or a palm amount of human hair or pet fur is requested from LifeGem to create the diamond. This can also be a combination from different people and pets to create a unity diamond. The carbon is then heated to extremely high temperatures under special conditions where it is converted to graphite. The graphite is then placed in a diamond press where it is subjected to heat and pressure forces much like what happens over time with natural diamonds in the earth. This allows for a diamond to be created in a controlled environment within a six-month period. There are diamonds created as colorless, blue fancy diamonds, and pink-red diamonds. The carat size range from .10 ct to 3.0 ct. with most being cut as round brilliant. There are options for other cuts depending on the size of the diamond being ordered, such as a Princess or Radiant cut.

LifeGem's clarity ratings can range from VVS to SI with flaws similar to a natural diamond. All of LifeGem's diamonds are skillfully cut and certified for authenticity. The diamonds are all individually inspected, graded, and identified by gemologists trained by the Gemological Institute of America (GIA).

Snyder Funeral Homes is a funeral home partner with LifeGem and we would welcome any questions you may have. Please contact your local Snyder Funeral Home location anytime for assistance.



## Chicken Stew with Dumplings



### **Chicken Stew:**

- 1 (3 pound) rotisserie chicken
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 ribs celery, sliced thin
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 2 (14.5 ounce) cans chicken broth
- $\frac{3}{4}$  pound new potatoes, cut into 1/2-inch dice
- 2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground black pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon dried basil
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon dried thyme

### **Dumplings:**

- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons cold butter, cubed
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup milk, or more as needed
- 2 tablespoons dried dill

### **Directions:**

1. To prepare the stew: Debone rotisserie chicken; cut meat into chunks or shred. Set aside.
2. Melt butter in a large Dutch oven over medium heat; cook and stir onion and celery in hot butter until soft, about 10 minutes. Sprinkle in flour and whisk continuously to make a thick roux, about 2 minutes. Slowly pour in broth, whisking to remove any lumps. Add potatoes, frozen vegetables, salt, black pepper, basil, and thyme. Cover and cook over medium heat until vegetables are tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in chicken meat and continue to simmer.
3. Meanwhile, make the dumplings: Combine flour, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl; cut in butter with 2 knives or a pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in milk and dill until dough comes together.
4. Drop rounded tablespoonfuls of dough into simmering stew. Cook, uncovered, for 10 minutes. Cover and cook until dumplings are tender, 8 to 10 minutes more.

# Cemetery Spotlight— Dayton National Cemetery



*The Dayton Soldiers' Monument at Dayton National Cemetery*

Dayton National Cemetery, located in Montgomery County, Ohio, was established as the permanent burial site for residents of the Central Branch of the National Asylum for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in 1867. It is one of 11 federal cemeteries affiliated with the system of National Homes for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. Management of these facilities was transferred from the U.S. Army/National Home system to the newly created Veterans Administration in 1930.

The design of the cemetery is attributed to Chaplain (and Capt.) William B. Earnshaw, who was considered to have "judgment and taste" in these matters. Earnshaw served in the Army of the Potomac and the Army of the Cumberland, from which he was named superintendent at Stones River and Nashville National Cemeteries. In September 1867, Earnshaw arrived at the Dayton Soldiers Home, as it became known, having been encouraged to seek the position by Gen. George Thomas.

## **Eligibility:**

Burial in a national cemetery is open to all members of the armed forces who have met a minimum active-duty service requirement and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable. A Veteran's spouse, widow or widower, minor dependent children, and under certain conditions, unmarried adult children with disabilities may also be eligible for burial. Eligible spouses and children may be buried even if they predecease the Veteran.

Members of the reserve components of the armed forces who die while on active duty or who die while on training duty, or were eligible for retired pay, may also be eligible for burial.

Please contact your local Snyder Funeral Home for information regarding burial in a National Cemetery. Our knowledgeable staff can also answer questions about required military discharge documents, military honors information and advance funeral planning.

## Snyder Rodman Funeral Center

### *“A CENTURY OF CARE”*

The Snyder family has been honored to serve Ohio families for over 100 years. Since the funeral home founding in 1922, five generations of Snyders have gone above and beyond to comfort the living while creating meaningful tributes to honor and celebrate each unique life lived. To learn more about our story, please watch the documentary produced by [New Day Creative](#)

## Our Snyder Funeral Home Family—Est. 1922



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