

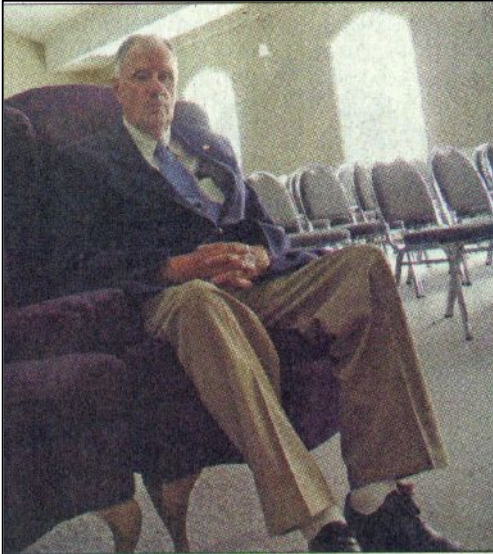
BURKE REMINISCES ON 50 YEARS IN FUNERAL BUSINESS

By Laura Militana

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COOKEVILLE – From country music stars to veterans, Roger Burke has helped many families deal with the pain of arranging funerals.



Over the years – Burke is celebrating a little more than 50 of those in the field – he has seen many changes.

“Ever since I was in high school, I wanted to be in the funeral business,” he said.

It began when he worked with Ed Hooper at then-Hooper & Huddleston Funeral Home in the summer of 1957. He then went on full time and eventually attended Gupton’s School of Mortuary Science in Nashville, graduating in 1963.

(Pictured: Roger Burke is pictured in the chapel of Crest Lawn Funeral Home. Photo by Laura Militana).

“Ed handled the service on Sgt. Alvin C. York in 1961,” Burke recalled. “I helped out in those arrangements.”

While working in Nashville, he helped out with Patsy Cline’s arrangements, along with the other victims of the same plane crash, along with other country stars Jim Reeves and Texas Ruby.

He worked for Hooper & Huddleston Funeral Home until 2001 when he retired, then offered preparation and transportation for a number of funeral homes in the area. He was also the manager at Dyer Funeral Home for two years and then came to work for Crest Lawn Funeral Home four years ago.

At Crest Lawn, he is a senior director, floating between the Cookeville and McMinnville offices.

“I’m the mortician, embalmer and funeral director,” he said. “I come in two to three days a week, but I’m on call all the time.”

Over the years, he’s seen more cremation.

“When I first got into the business, the bodies were laid out at home, he recalled. “that’s changed completely.”

Services are longer and more private now.

“This is a very personal business and it requires a lot of trust,” he said. “I enjoy helping the families.”

He also noted that there are five veterans from around the state he helped arrange services for who are currently on the memorial wall in Washington D. C.

“I’ve learned a lot and worked with some really good people,” he said.

*Read more about the people of Putnam Co., TN and surrounding areas at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>