

PFDI Utah Fly-in at Leavitt's Mortuary and Aultorest Memorial Park



The Leavitt Family made sure that everyone had a fabulous time at the Utah fly-in.

The next day was the tour of Michael's facility and a program by some of his "in-house" experts. Everyone was impressed immediately when they arrived because of the digital color sign that allows them to post the picture of the deceased and other service details. Michael said at first there were a few complaints because it was such a new idea. Then, very quickly, it became something people requested. They wanted to know

We were greeted by the original Leavitt family, PFDI member, Michael's Dad, Tom. Michael's two brothers were also there. Michael's wife and her Dad, who is now the General Manager of the funeral home, and her mother, joined the PFDI members at the speciality restaurant in the Ogden airport. They had extravagant gift baskets for everyone attending compliments of the Leavitt family. The food was superior and the conversations amazing.



during arrangements "will you put our Mom's picture up on the sign?"



Michael chauffeured the group around the grounds of the cemetery pointing out highlights. He mentioned that if members have enough land they should consider renting space for cell towers. The towers were only very high poles and he received \$1,000 a month from one.

The cemetery is 80 acres of property and has an impressive history including two civil war brigadiers buried there. They use to be strictly a memorial park but now they allow uprights because of the demand. They do 225 interments annually and offer granite monuments with a very attractive outdoor display that are "Guaranteed to be the lowest in the area."

Leavitt's offers a scattering garden and pathway with wildflowers which is very popular since cremation is popular in their area. But, their most beautiful appointment was the picture of Michael's daughter, Chrissy, who tragically died a few years ago at a very young age due to a reaction to Advil. Michael has turned Chrissy's life into many a positive memorial and one more is the Crystal Gardens Mausoleum which is their most beautiful resting place.

The program continued with an in-depth presentation by Michael. Some of the highlights were that they now use airbrush cosmetics.

Families comment regularly on how good their loved ones look. And, the modern décor of the mortuary was noted as well.

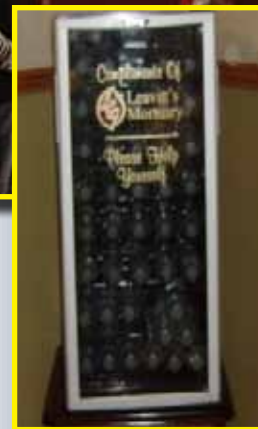
They have a special room for IDs and their chapel holds 350 or more. They originally didn't have all the seats in the chapel and left it open

for additional seating as necessary. But, they constantly heard that the chapel wasn't large enough. Once more pews were installed there were no more complaints. It appeared to be an optical illusion that without the seating they could not see there was room.

Every family receives a DVD. They allow them to bring in 10 pictures for a video at no charge. Any picture after that there is a charge per picture. Families find that fair, and love to add quite a few pictures and buy copies of them as well.

A baby grand piano was added and is the instrument most often utilized for services. Almost no one uses the organ which they believe is obsolete. They only use the organ twice a year.

Michael felt one of the things they get the most compliments on is his complimentary water as the families exit. He credits Cameron Ward with the idea to put the waters in a small refrigerator as





individuals leave the chapel they can serve themselves. They also do extensive work with custom programs completely personalized.

There was an extensive program by their pre-need manager with lots of insight. In attendance were members that are experts in pre-need but realized that they often let their pre-need numbers go by the wayside when they learned the number of contracts Leavitt's was writing compared to the volume they have.

The pre-need division does quite a bit of marketing and advertising including events as well. One event alone, the moving Vietnam wall, attracted over 20,000 people to the cemetery and funeral home.

They experimented with a display in the local mall. Because mall space has been more reasonable in recent years, they contracted to have a display and went together with related businesses and hospice to share the cost. Even though they got great feedback and lots of attention from this, they did not continue when the lease ran out because they found the staffing of it was very difficult. You could hire people to "cover it" based on hourly fees but it was hard to have them continue to be faithful in showing up for work.



The family service people also handle complaints, pre-need funerals, pre-need cemetery and at-need cemetery. It is a very active part of the organization with a manager that is eager to try new ideas.

Michael Leavitt also showed us their current in-door mausoleum which is attractive because of the inclement weather in their area. The glass-front niches are particularly desirable because of the opportunity to memorialize. They



explained the success of the crematory as we toured the facility and saw their retort. And, they talked about their community center and floral business as well as their casket imports. But, one idea that had members snapping multiple pictures was the inside porte corche that the Leavitt's created for their remodeling and addition a number of years ago. It allows families to drive inside to get out of their vehicles when visiting the funeral home or attending the funeral. Families love not having to brave the elements in order to pay respects or attend the funeral of someone they love dearly. This became another example of how comfort is so important in serving families and the Leavitt chapel actually includes plants indoor with sky-lights to give it a very outdoor sunlit feel. The mortuary has a room they usual regularly





for catered events; however, a number of the members said that would be a fabulous place for catered receptions since it is so very attractive with the high ceilings and the sun streaming in.

The tour was packed full of valuable practical business information and after it was concluded, Michael took us to Snowbasin to ski. Some felt more comfortable with snowmobiling.

But, the ones that chose to ski thoroughly enjoyed being escorted down the mountain by the three Leavitt brothers who all are pro-skiers having starred in ski movies. Afterwards, the group met at the mountain house in a luxurious lounge and discussed all the highlights of the tour and continued that discussion at a cowboy bar that was one of a kind. Tom Leavitt shared that the last time Tom Belford

visited this bar on a PFDI convention he stood on the counter and put a dollar on the ceiling! No one felt brave enough to do that since the leader of the pack, Belford was not there. It was a great way to unwind after a lot of exercise and a comfortable atmosphere to share and challenge ideas.

Then, the evening was spent in the old town as a group dining and testing out other venues as President Fred Cook and Vice President Tom Starks talked about other ideas for PFDI and other ideas for individual funeral home operations over dinner at a local restaurant in the old town. At the conclusion, there was gratitude that the Leavitt family had welcomed everyone so royally and packed a lot of learning into a brief period of time as a western cemetery, mortuary, pre-need operation, mausoleum, cremation society and scattering garden were available to tour all at one location.

Utah was beautiful. The snowcapped mountains and old west style and the Leavitt family was gracious as Tom Leavitt recalled memories of how the PFDI family had helped him through different challenges he had faced in the business. And, Michael Leavitt now the head of the family firm mentioned the new ideas that he had learned at PFDI meetings, which are now a successful part of his business. Everyone left thinking once again that even though the conventions are so worthwhile that there is nothing like the fly-in where you get to know the members and pick up so many practical ideas.

