



# 2022 ANNUAL CHAPTER MEETING

The 2022 Annual Chapter Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, March 12, 2022 from 2:00 p.m. To 4:00 p.m. This year Ms. Sunny Markham, the owner of Countryside Memorial Park, will be attending our meeting to answer all your questions about the Green Burial process.

The meeting will be held at the University United Methodist Church at 5084 DeZavala Road. See below for directions.

*For members who wish to attend the meeting on line using the Zoom program, following are instructions for viewing the meeting on your computer:*

**Search for:** [www.Zoom.us](http://www.Zoom.us)

**Click:** Join a Meeting (upper right)

**Type in Meeting ID #:** 838 6633 4708 (no spaces)

**Click:** Join

**Click:** Allow

**Enter Meeting Passcode #:** 889050

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**Unmute icon is on bottom left**

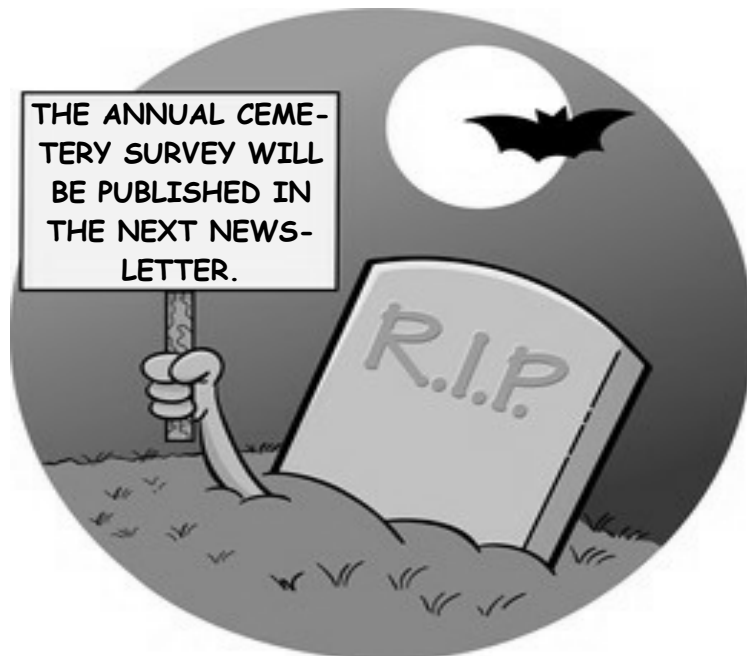
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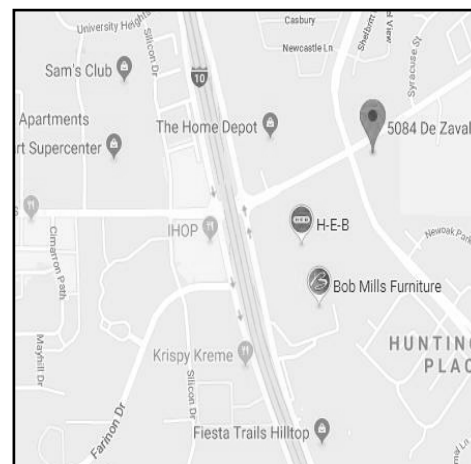


*See you at the meeting or join us on Zoom!*

## ANNUAL CEMETERY SURVEY



## DIRECTIONS TO 2022 ANNUAL MEETING



**Annual  
chapter meet-  
ing**

**University Unit-  
ed Methodist  
Church, Main  
Bldg., John  
Wesley Room**

**5084 De Zavala  
Rd.**

**I-10 W Exit 558**

### **Message from the Chapter President, Norman Crader**

Best wishes for the New Year to all. I hope this newsletter finds you safe. This year we are going to have our Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 12, 2022. Location information is in the newsletter. We will follow all COVID-19 safety guidelines regarding masks and social distancing during the Meeting.

This will be my last meeting for the FCA as President so we need someone to step forward to take over as President. I will be willing to remain on as President Emeritus for one year to help with orientation so if interested please call 210-341-2213 to be placed on agenda for the vote.

We also need some board members for next year. If interested please call the phone number 210-341-2213 or sign up at the meeting.

I'm happy to announce we will have a guest speaker to discuss how a green burial works. We do have access for a green burial and plots for this. The cemetery is called Countryside Memorial Park.

So bring your questions and help with our volunteer staff by signing up for some work. We hope to see you there.

*Best Regards, Norman Crader*

### **Treasurer's Corner, Linda Espino**

Happy 2022 to all. A quick Treasurer's report for you: In 2021, we averaged 13 new members per month .. thank you for your continuing support by spreading the word about our great group.

To remain healthy, our budget would like to see 15 new members per month. We are close! As you may know, we moved our one-time dues to join FCA from \$35 to \$40 starting in January 2022 .. this will help cover the small shortfall in member growth. We are currently healthy in funds that support our costs on things like stamps for mailing new member packets, printer, paper, ink, annual meeting expenses, bulk postage for our informative twice-a-year newsletter, researching / updating our member list, telephone, website upgrade and a few other minor expenses along the way.

We are able to maintain relatively low costs because we have a great group of volunteers that keep FCA running. I heartily thank them all.

This coming year, we are hopeful to allow new members to sign-up online and then handle their dues / donations that way if they choose. Always, we will be happy to process your checks received in the mail .. both for new members and donations, too!

Looking forward to seeing you on Zoom or in person at the Annual Meeting in March.

*Best Regards, Linda Espino*

## **“DEATH DOULAS” PROVIDE AID AT THE END OF LIFE**

*The New York Times; By Abby Ellin Published June 24, 2021*

As parents of a child with a progressive and potentially fatal illness, Maryanne and Nick O'Hara lived on hope. Hope that their daughter, Caitlin, who was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis at age 2, would prove the statistics wrong and live longer than the 46 years expected. Hope that she would receive the lung transplant she spent two and a half years waiting for in her early 30s. Hope that her body wouldn't reject it. That hope faded on Dec. 20, 2016, when Caitlin O'Hara died of a brain bleed at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, two days post-transplant. She was 33.



Shattered, her mother decided to try to give meaning to her grief. And so she signed up for a certificate program at the University of Vermont's Larner College of Medicine to become an end-of-life doula, or "death doula," working with individuals and families as they moved from this life into whatever is next.

"In our culture, we go overboard preparing for birth, but 'hope for the best' at the end of life," said Ms. O'Hara, 62, who lives

in Boston and Ashland, Mass. "The training was really a way of going even deeper into my own grief and realizing how I could take my own experience and help other people have a better end of life. "I saw for myself how horrifying it is during a medical crisis and then after a death, to realize that life keeps going and needs attending to," she continued. "As soon as Caitlin passed, suddenly it's over and the person is gone and you have to deal with the business of living. A good doula will support you with that."

"The beginning of life and the end are so similar," said Francesca Arnoldy, the lead instructor at UVM's End-of-Life Doula program. "The intensity of it, the mystery, all of the unknowns. You have to relinquish your sense of control and agenda and ride it out, and be super attentive in the moment."

Unlike hospice workers, doulas don't get involved in medical issues. Rather, they support clients emotionally, physically, spiritually and practically, stepping in whenever needed. That could be a few days before someone dies, sitting vigil with them in their last hours, giving hand massages, making snacks.

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# “DEATH DOULAS” PROVIDE AID AT THE END OF LIFE

The New York Times; By Abby Ellin Published June 24, 2021

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Or it could be months or even years earlier, after someone receives a terminal diagnosis, keeping them company, listening to their life stories or helping them craft autobiographies, planning funerals. Prices range from \$25 an hour on up, although many, like Ms. O’Hara, do it voluntarily. And like Ms. O’Hara, many have signed on to help give new meaning to their own grief while helping others in the process.

Since its founding in 2018, the National End-of-Life Doula Alliance, a professional organization of end-of-life practitioners and trainers, has grown to nearly 800 members; membership nearly doubled in the last year, said its president, Angela Shook. Interest has increased in training programs with the International End-of-Life Doula Association, Doulagivers, and the Doula Program to Accompany and Comfort, a nonprofit run by a hospice social worker, Amy L. Levine.

Much of the growing interest in these programs has come from workers who found themselves unemployed during the pandemic and recognized that they could still be of service. “People were reaching out from a variety of different ages, younger than we would normally see, because they realized that people

were dying in their age category, which doesn’t usually happen,” said Diane Button, 62, of San Francisco, a doula facilitator at UVM and a member of the Bay Area End-of-Life Doula Alliance, a collective of death workers. “It made them more aware of their own mortality and really made them want to plan and get their documents and advance directives in order.”

As for Ms. O’Hara, who is also a novelist, she is primarily helping people write their life stories. Her training at UVM was “humbling.” “I went into it thinking ‘I’ve been a volunteer with people who are dying, I’ve lost my daughter, I’m an expert in grief,’” she said. But the longer she studied, the more she realized that she was only an expert in her grief.

“You really can’t tell anyone else how to grieve,” she said. “You can offer advice, but there’s no timeline for grief. As soon as people get a diagnosis, they’re grieving. Their way of life is over. Everyone has suffered some kind of grief with the pandemic, even if they haven’t lost a person.” She believes that grief and joy can coexist. “My grief is never going to go away,” she said. “I wouldn’t want it to. Grief and joy and love — it’s all part of the same spectrum. I’m grieving because I loved someone so much.”

# INTRIGUING FUNERAL CUSTOMS FROM THE 1800’S

By Tom May; Funeralt Celebrant



Traditions and customs for funerals vary from culture to culture and from time to time. In early America, many communities had unique practices in honoring and burying their dead. A look at 1800s funeral customs will provide some un-

derstanding of traditions today, while giving a unique perspective on the lives and times of America’s ancestors. There were several customs for funerals back in the 1800s that are much different than those today. Here are some examples of the differences.

**Funerals in Deceased’s Home.** Funerals were held in the home of the deceased. They were open to the public rather than just for friends and family. The body would usually be displayed in the front parlor. As news of the death spread, people would stop by the home to pay their respects. If a funeral was held at a funeral parlor, it usually meant the person did not have enough family or friends to take care of the services.

**Sitting With the Deceased.** The loved ones of the deceased would sit with him or her during the day. Close friends would come over and sit with the body throughout the night. The belief was that someone had to be with the body, as a way to show continued respect and a way to ward off evil spirits.

**Black Crepe.** Tradition has it that black crepe was attached to the wreaths, door, and porches as an announcement to neighbors and friends that the family was in mourning. Neighbors and others would respond with help, food, and condolences.

**Small Flower Displays.** The use of large displays of flowers at a funeral were rare. A wreath or small flower was sometimes hung on the front door of the home or the business were the individual worked.

**No Coffins.** Coffins were not used by early settlers. Instead a sheet often consisting of wool or linen dipped in wax, a blanket, or a quilt was used to wrap the body.

**Understanding Some Unique Phrases and Practices.** Some of the words and phrases that are heard and used today had their origins in the nineteenth century. Here are a few examples which heighten understanding.

**Laying Out the Dead.** Until the mid-1800s, most families cared for their own dead. They prepared, dressed, and displayed the loved one within their own homes. Many communities had a group of women who came in to help “laying out the dead.”

**Death’s Door.** The formal room often had a false door that led directly to the outside of the home with no steps from outside with which to enter. This door was known as “death’s door” for it was used to remove the casket and transport the body. It was considered improper to remove a body through the regular door where the living would enter.

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# INTRIGUING FUNERAL CUSTOMS FROM THE 1800'S

By Tom May; Funeral Celebrant

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**Family Graveyard.** During this time period, the family graveyard began giving way to the idea of local cemeteries. Many churches led the efforts in this regard, explaining the cemeteries next to churches today

**Undertakers.** It was during this period of time that the Undertaker came into being. This individual would "undertake" the duty of preparing the body for funeral for the family.

**Wakes.** In the 1800s, it was not always as easy to know if a person was really dead. During the days following a person's death, the body was closely observed for three days to make sure the person didn't wake from a deep sleep or illness before the funeral or burial.

**Living Room.** During the time when funeral homes hosted the wake and the funeral service, the family parlor became known as the "living room" because they were no longer used for displaying the dead.

**Saved by the Bell.** The expression "saved by the bell" is a common phrase that comes from these times. The deceased would be buried with a rope in their hand that was attached to a rope outside the grave. If the person in the coffin was found to be alive, he or she could ring the bell for help.

**Widely Held 1800s Funeral Superstitions.** During the days of the 1800s, many people believed significant superstitions concerning death, dying and the funeral process. Some examples of these kinds of widely-held opinions include the following.

**Stopped Clocks.** All of the clocks in the house were to be stopped when the loved one died. It was believed that not stopping the clock would lead to bad luck.

**Covered Mirrors.** Mirrors in the house were either covered or removed from the home during the wake and funeral. It was believed that if someone saw the reflection of the deceased in a mirror they also would die. Some believed that the soul of the loved one would get trapped inside the mirror and not be able to pass on to the other side.

**Feet First.** If a body was removed from the home and taken to an undertaker for embalming, they were always removed feet first. The fear was that the dead might look back into the home and lure those present to join them in death.

**Face-Down Photos.** Family photographs were turned face-down to prevent any close relatives or friends of the deceased from being possessed by the spirit of the dead. The belief was that dead would see someone they knew in the picture and would inhabit their body.

Times and traditions around the world have changed since the 1800s funeral customs. Regardless of the time or the custom, the funeral answered the questions of what to do with the body; what type of ceremony would be used to honor and acknowledge the death, and how will this person be remembered.

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## 7 THINGS YOU SHOULD NEVER SAY AT A FUNERAL

By Robin Stevenson, readersdigest.ca Updated: Jan. 08, 2021

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Struggling to find the right words to convey sympathy at a funeral? Even the most well-intentioned comments can come across as hurtful instead of helpful. Here are some common phrases you should never say at a funeral—and what to say instead.

**Never say "I know how you feel" at a funeral. *Instead, say: "I can't imagine how you feel."*** By the time we're adults, most of us will have experienced the loss of a family member, friend or colleague. What's important to note, however, is that although the phases of grief are similar, we don't necessarily know how another grieving individual truly feels. Everyone's experience is unique, everyone's loss is the worst, because it's theirs.

**"Time heals all wounds" is something you should never say at a funeral. *Instead, say: "Take the time you need and be gentle with yourself."*** There's no formula when it comes to grief. The grieving process takes time and important dates like anniversaries and birthdays can trigger an emotional tsunami. Allow the bereaved to move through that process at his or her own pace. Don't force your timetable for healing. Allow them to experi-

ence all the hurt, sorrow and pain he or she is feeling at the time.

**Never say "At least he didn't suffer," "At least she made it to her birthday," or "At least she died doing what she loved" at a funeral. *Instead, say: "I am here for you."*** It's best to avoid any statements that begin with "at least." These sentiments are often an attempt to make dark days more bearable, but they won't diminish the pain of losing a loved one. What the person grieving really needs is your quiet presence. Check in during the day of the funeral and beyond. People want to be heard; to be listened to. Grief shared is grief lessened."

**"Let me know what I can do" is something you should never say at a funeral. *Instead, say: "Here's what I can do for you..."*** This comment places the burden on the bereaved to reach out for help at a time when they likely don't know what they need. Running a few loads of their laundry, tidying their house or yard and preparing meals are just a few ways to genuinely show you care as opposed to merely saying you care.

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# 7 THINGS YOU SHOULD NEVER SAY AT A FUNERAL

By Robin Stevenson, *readersdigest.ca* Updated: Jan. 08, 2021

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**Never say "She's in a better place" at a funeral. *Instead, say: "She will be missed."*** Most likely, the person grieving is thinking the best place for [the deceased] to be is *with them*. There's also a danger of assuming the person ascribes to certain beliefs, which may not be the case. Simply show your support for your grieving friend, colleague or family member. At the funeral, a touch of your hand, a look in your eye or even a hug often communicates more than words can say."

**Never say "It was his time" at a funeral. *Instead, say: "I am so sorry for the loss of your precious [person's name]."*** This platitude can be particularly upsetting for the grieving person to

hear as it implies a reason for the death when they may be feeling the death was senseless or irrational. Even if the loved one lived a long, full life, the person grieving would likely have been wishing for many more years together. When expressing your condolence be sure to say the person's name. That way the person grieving knows you are genuinely concerned.

**Never say "You need to say goodbye" or "Life must go on" at a funeral. *Instead, say: "He will always be remembered for his generosity/love for his family..."*** Statements like these tend to minimize the grief journey. Life will go on but it will look very different for the person grieving as they adjust to their new normal.

## RUDE ACTS TO AVOID AT A FUNERAL

By Ilana Kaplan, *BestLife*, January 17, 2022

Funerals are always an emotional experience. Sadly, we all end up attending them at one point or another, and we try to say and do the right thing when we're there. It's hard to know what to expect until you've arrived, but you'll need to prepare for mourning relatives, friends, and acquaintances—all of whom have to be handled with a certain degree of grace. That's why it's important to know the proper etiquette for attending these somber events, including what you should never do. Read on to find out the rude behavior you must avoid at a funeral.

***If you're at a funeral, put your phone away.*** There are many circumstances where being on your phone is a faux pas, including at the dinner table and during work meetings. Considering you're there to honor someone who passed away, funerals should also be a no-phone zone. "Talking or being on your phone during the service is one of the most disrespectful things you could do at a funeral," says Myka Meier, Beaumont Etiquette founder and etiquette expert. It's important to be as present as possible. "Silence your phone, shut off your phone, or even just leave it behind. There's nothing good you can do with it in that situation. Bring your attention to the place you are and the people you're with," Daniel Post Senning, an author and spokesperson for The Emily Post Institute, tells HuffPost.

***It's also a no-photo zone.*** This one falls under phones, too. Sometimes it's appropriate to capture a moment, and other times it's not. It's important to distinguish between the two, especially at a funeral, which means that generally speaking, you should save the photos for another occasion. Diane Gottsman, national etiquette expert and founder of The Protocol School of Texas, tells HuffPost that the smartphone

era has made it "a habit to capture the moment and post to social media." The only exception, she says, would be if you got the family's permission.

***Dress for the occasion.*** Your closet may be filled with bright hues, bold patterns, and statement attire, which is great—but for a funeral? Not so much, at least in the Western world. "You want to make sure you dress in a manner that is respectful, especially if it's held at a religious institution such as a church," says Meier. That means going with more modest dressing and muted tones. Maryanne Parker, founder of Manor of Manners and author of *Posh Overnight: The 10 Pillars of Social Etiquette*, tells *Country Living* that "you can still wear jewelry as long as you don't wear a fashion statement." But there are exceptions when it comes to funeral fashion. If it's a celebration of life, perhaps your most joyful looks are encouraged. Different cultures also have different rules, so make sure to check with the family before attending.

***Be composed & sober.*** Feelings of grief and loss will express themselves in raw emotion and that is understood and even encouraged at a funeral. But, trying to suppress or mask these emotions with alcohol will almost always result in embarrassing encounters and bad memories from an event that should help bring closeness and closure.

***Above all else, be supportive.*** No matter what, the grieving party is likely just comforted by the fact that you showed up. They will appreciate your efforts to stand by their side during this trying time. But should you find a moment where you think you can make the day a little easier for them, they'll likely thank you for it later, whether that means holding a door open for their family members, talking to funeral attendees, or bringing them food.

It is a scenario we come across time and time again while working in an elder law firm. A client comes to our office for estate planning. While compiling a list of their assets, we learn that they have real estate that was inherited from their mother.



Our office reviews the deed records to make sure we can account for this property in the client's estate plan. Unfortunately, though, the land is still titled in the client's mother's name.

"That can't be right! Mom's will left everything to me!" The problem is that while the client's mother had a will, it was never admitted to probate. Accordingly, title to the property was never formally transferred to our client. This means that they cannot sell it -- or pass it to their children in their own will -- without taking further action.

Probate is simply the legal process of ensuring that a deceased person's assets are properly transferred and that their debts are paid. A probate court will determine who should receive the deceased person's assets based on either the instructions in their will or (if there was no will) under the "laws of intestacy." The following will attempt to answer some of the frequently asked questions we receive about probate:

What can I expect during the probate process? This depends on several factors -- whether the deceased person (in legal terms, the "decedent") had a valid will, whether the will provides for "independent administration," whether the decedent had any outstanding debts, and whether anyone comes forward to contest the proceeding.

If your loved one had a will drawn up by a licensed Texas attorney, the process will almost always go much more smoothly. In that case, the will should name an executor -- a person who is in charge of wrapping up the decedent's affairs -- and should almost always provide for independent administration.

It is very important to have the original signed will (not a copy!). The executor should bring the original will to a probate attorney, who will file it with the court along with an application for probate and a statement of facts about the decedent's life, death and family history. The court will review the will to ensure it complies with Texas law, and issue letters testamentary which give the executor the authority to manage financial accounts, pay the decedent's taxes and debts, and wrap up the

estate. This may or may not require a formal hearing, depending on the court you are in.

The executor will need to file a complete inventory of the decedent's probate assets with the court. The attorney's office will also publish notice to potential creditors, alerting them that the decedent has died, that a probate estate has been opened, and that they have a short window in which to bring claims against the estate to pay back the debt.

The executor will pay any valid creditor claims out of the estate assets, and then distribute what is left to the beneficiaries. For real estate, the executor will need to sign deeds formally transferring the property to the decedent's heirs. Assuming that the will provides for independent administration, the executor will not need to go back to court to sign off on these transactions. The full process usually takes between 3 to 6 months unless someone comes forward to challenge the will.

My loved one printed a will off the internet, and it doesn't say anything about "independent administration." How does that affect the process? Texas law allows for estates to be probated "independently" of detailed court oversight, but only if the will expressly provides for it. Otherwise, the executor is "dependent" on the court to review and approve every action taken on behalf of the estate. Unsurprisingly, this type of dependent administration is much more tedious, time-consuming, and expensive. That is why it is always best to retain an estate planning attorney to draw up your will!

I've heard probate is a nightmare. How can I avoid it? If you have a valid will that provides for independent administration, probate in Texas is a fairly straightforward process -- not nearly the bogeyman some people would have you believe.

That said, there are valid reasons to want to avoid probate: if you own properties in multiple states; if you wish to exert more control over your assets after your death; or if you simply want to make sure your family does not have to deal with hiring a lawyer and going to court while they are still grieving.

There are ways to avoid probate, but they all require detailed estate planning. Lady Bird deeds allow you to automatically pass real estate to your loved ones at your death, while still giving you the right to live in and use the property during your lifetime. Putting "payable on death" beneficiaries on your financial accounts will transfer certain assets outside of probate. Setting up and properly funding a revocable living trust can provide another avenue to avoid probate. The best course of action will depend on your unique circumstances and the types of assets you own. Schedule an estate planning appointment with our office for further details.

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We have a copy of the will but cannot find the original. What do we do? There is a way to probate a copy of a will, but it requires additional work as well as cooperation from the witnesses who signed the will. Set up an appointment with one of our probate attorneys for more information.

My loved one died without a will. What do I need to do? If there is no will, the laws of intestacy determine who inherits your property. A probate proceeding will still be necessary to identify the heirs at law, pay the decedent's debts, and ensure the estate assets are properly distributed. A proceeding to determine heirship is the typical method for administering an intestate estate. This is a much more involved (and expensive) process than the simple probate of a valid will. It is always better to have a will!

In some cases, usually dealing with very small estates or limited assets, there may be other methods of probating the estate without lengthy formal proceedings. A variety of factors will determine whether these options are available to you. Contact our office to schedule a probate appointment for further details.

My loved one died ten years ago, but the family never did anything and now I want to sell the house. Can I still probate

the will? No. You have four (4) years from the date of death to probate a decedent's will. After four years have elapsed, your options become much more limited. Depending on the circumstances, there may be a method of using the will to transfer title to real property. You will need to speak to your lawyer to see if this is a viable option. If not, the decedent's assets will pass as if they died intestate (without a will), meaning a proceeding to determine heirship may be required.

What if I do nothing? If an estate is never probated, the legal title to land, houses, bank accounts and vehicles will not formally pass to the decedent's heirs or beneficiaries. You will not be able to access the decedent's financial accounts unless your name was already on them. You will not be able to sell the decedent's cars or real estate – because legally, you don't own them. You may be able to go years without running into these issues, but eventually, and inevitably, they will arise.

If you wait longer than four years, the will may not be honored, and the decedent's property may pass to other relatives in ways they did not intend. In general, the more time that passes after the decedent's death, the more difficult it becomes to administer their estate. The best course of action is to speak with a probate lawyer within six months of a loved one passing away. That said, it's always better late than never!

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**ROADSIDE MEMORIALS***By, Sally Painter & TXDOT Regulations*

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A roadside memorial is often a very important tribute to a loved one. Many people find leaving this kind of marker consoling and a way to honor their deceased loved one.

What Is a Roadside Memorial? A roadside memorial is a type of marker, often a cross, flowers, or wreath, that memorializes the place where someone died, typically in a traffic accident/wreck. This marker is significant since it's the final place where the person was alive or more importantly, where they died. This tradition comes from ancient times when travelers would die along a path, trail, or road and were buried where at that spot as a matter of necessity.

What Are the Crosses on the Side of the Road Called? A cross on the side of the road is known as a descanso. The word descanso is Spanish and means to rest. This is an appropriate word for a place where someone has died from a traffic wreck. Descanso also signifies that the death was unexpected and usually violent.

In Texas, memorial markers can be placed on state highways to honor a family member or a peace officer if certain criteria are met.

**Memorial Markers for Traffic-Related Fatalities.** Organizations and relatives of persons killed in any traffic-related crashes may install commemorative markers (such as crosses) beside the road at the location of the crash. The Texas Department of

Transportation (TxDOT) allows such markers, provided the district approves the location of the marker

**Memorial Sign Program for Victims of Impaired Driving and Motorcycle Crashes.** This special sign program allows family or friends of victims of motorcycle or impaired driving crashes to purchase a sign to be placed near the site of the crash. Each Memorial Sign, bearing the name(s) of the victim(s), serves to commemorate loved ones while raising awareness of these serious issues

**Victims of Impaired Driving.** A memorial sign program for victims of alcohol or controlled substance related crashes. For program guidelines, refer to the Memorial Sign Program - Victims of Impaired Driving page of the TxDOT website.

**Victims of Motorcycle Crashes.** A memorial sign program for victims of motorcycle crashes. The victim must have been operating or riding on a motorcycle to be eligible. For program guidelines, refer to the Memorial Sign Program - Victims of Motorcycle Crashes page on the TxDOT website.

**Memorial Markers for Peace Officers.** Special program that allows TxDOT to place privately funded memorials honoring peace officers killed in the line of duty. TxDOT may execute an agreement with a non-profit corporation to fund, install, and maintain memorials honoring peace officers.

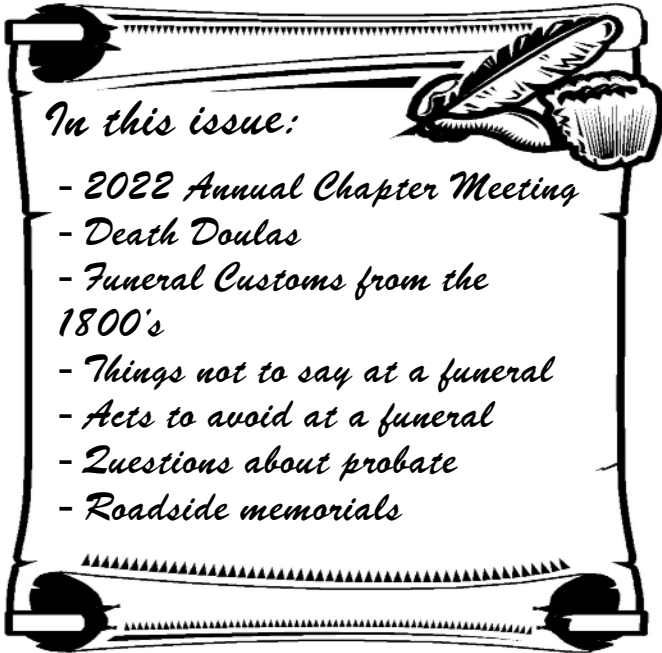


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Of San Antonio, Texas**

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of Thanks*