

# *Moss Funeral Home PC Celebrates 50 Years*

*(Excerpt from Breese Journal of Thursday, February 6, 2003)*

Dealing with death often begins long before physical cessation of life and continues long past burial. Still, the time at death and just after death is a time for healing and honoring our loved ones.

No one knows this better than the Moss family. For 50 years, families in Clinton County have called upon Moss Funeral Home for assistance in their times of need.

Moss Funeral Home was established in 1953 with Leander "H Ben" and Bernice Moss as the founders and sole proprietors of the business.

Today, second and third generations of the Moss family are at the helm. Fifty years in business is quite an accomplishment, yet Dave Moss, son of Ben and Bernice, is quick to point out that there's much more to the success story.

"We're more proud of the fact that people have had the confidence in us to allow us to serve their families - and, by doing so, letting us into their families," Dave said.

A grand opening announcement which appeared on the pages of this same newspaper in 1953 declared the Moss Funeral Home motto that "we shall in every action, word, and thought, give sympathetic, thoughtful and thoroughly competent personal attention to the wishes and needs of all our patrons." We shall remember always, it is the bereaved family whom we must please, and we shall keep in mind that every person wishes to remember the deceased as in life..." Those same beliefs which Ben and Bernice first instilled in the business continue today.



**A second and third generation of the Moss family is now running the business. Pictured is Bernice Moss with ( from left to right ) her grandson Phillip and sons Dave and Mark**

## **Moss Funeral Home Opens Here Today**



**Leander Moss**

Leander " Ben " Moss has announced that he is opening his new funeral home today, January 22. The Moss Funeral Home is located at 535 N. Fifth Street, across the street north from the Clinton County Electric Cooperative building. The building was recently purchased by Mr. Moss from August J. Hummert who has moved to St. Louis.

( Breese Journal **January 22, 1953** )

*We shall in every action, word, and thought, give sympathetic, thoughtful and thoroughly competent personal attention to the wishes and needs of all our patrons.*

*We shall in each and every service be satisfied with nothing short of perfection in smoothness and dignity.*

*We shall remember always, it is the bereaved family whom we must please, and we shall keep in mind that every person wishes to remember the deceased as in life, and only with science and our skill can we make the final appearance familiar and pleasing.*

*Mr. and Mrs. Leander Moss*

### **OUR PLEDGE--Written by Ben Moss in 1953**

Ben's interest in the mortuary profession was sparked as a young man when he worked part-time at Hempen Funeral Home in New Baden. The Mosses married in 1943 and after serving in World War II, Ben attended Mortuary College in St. Louis.

Ben graduated in 1947 and started his career by working for Bruegge Funeral Home in Breese. He left Bruegge in 1951 and took, a job at Galbreth Funeral Homes (now Irvin Funeral Home) in Centralia.

Ben and Bernice opened their funeral home in Breese on Jan. 22, 1953, after purchasing the August Hummert Home at 535 N. 5th Street. The old Hummert home was a stately three-story frame structure, with large parlors and room to visit.

The Mosses made their residence on the second floor of the home along with their seven children: Donna (John) Boeing of Palos Heights, Ill., Gary of San Diego, Dave (Maura) of Breese, Barb (Richard) Rhodes of Belleville, Lora. Zurliene of Breese, Glen (Theresa) of Dayton, Ohio, and Mark (Kim) of Trenton.

At that time, along with handling funerals, the Moss family also provided ambulance service.

Dave, 52, can say that he has worked in the family business since its inception ... well, almost.

"All of us kids had jobs to do when we were younger," Dave said. "We would be 12 or 13 years old, and we'd go on ambulance calls with our dad."

In those days, when an ambulance call came in, the hearse was transformed into an ambulance, by simply placing a cot inside and a flashing light on top. No medical care was given to victims until the early 1970s.

"We basically just sat back there and held their hand until we got to the hospital," Dave recalled.

It was later, in 1953, their first year of operation, that the Mosses saw a need to serve citizens in other parts of the county. They opened their second funeral home at 604 Munster Street in Germantown in the Victorian home of Rosalyn Phillips.

Moss Funeral Home in Breese served the community until 1966 when the present facility was completed. The new funeral home could serve four funerals at one time, with a large and a small chapel both of which could be divided. It also included a large office, lobby, private lounge for the family, smoking area, casket display room, an embalming/prep room and the new residence of Ben and Bernice. Ben's idea was to have a one- level building for easy access for the elderly and handicapped.

Dave joined the business in 1972 after graduating from Worsham College of Mortuary Science in Chicago. He immediately joined his father working in both Breese and Germantown and was licensed as a funeral director and embalmer in 1973. That same year, he became the first licensed emergency medical technician in Clinton County.

In 1974, a new Moss Funeral Home in Germantown, located at 630 Railway, was completed. The single-level building had a large visitation parlor, which could serve two families at once. It also included a spacious lobby and smoking area, along with a private lounge for family members.

Moss Funeral Home in Trenton opened in 1982. It is located in the former John Manhardt home at 105 South Main Street. This one-level facility had the same layout as that of the funeral home in Germantown and offered the same amenities to the families served.

Renovations have since been done at all three locations. As the years went on and the business continued to grow, it was decided that extra help was needed. Mark Moss, the youngest son of Ben and Bernice, entered the business in the early 1990s.

"Joining the family business was something I always wanted to do," Mark said, "but I waited awhile before I finally made the, decision."

Mark spent seven years living in California before returning to the area in 1991. He graduated from St.Louis Community College in 1993 and was licensed as a funeral director and embalmer in 1994.

"Dad was getting older, the business was growing and they needed more help," Mark said. "I decided it was time to move back and join the business."

Dave added,"Dad was very proud of the fact that his two sons followed in his footsteps."

Ben Moss passed away on Sept. 29, 1995 at the age of 71. Although he didn't live to see it, he would also have been very proud of his grandson's decision to join the business.

Third generation Phillip Moss graduated from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale in 2000 and was licensed as a funeral director and embalmer in 2001. The state of Illinois only requires an associate's, degree in Mortuary Science, yet Phillip earned his bachelor's degree from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale in 2000. With Mortuary Science being a relatively new program at SIU-C, Phillip was a member of the program's first graduating class.

Patrick said he, too, had always intended to enter the family business. "When my grandfather was still living we would discuss it," Phillip said. "My grandmother is very proud, and I know he would have been too.":

Just as Ben and Bernice's children were always helping at the funeral home, doing odd jobs such as delivering funeral notices, vacuuming, scrubbing and cutting grass, the third generation of Moss children have their duties as well.

Phillip and his siblings, Patrick and Katrina, have grown up in Breese sharing their residence with the funeral home. Patrick chose a different career path and resides with his wife Nikki and daughter Amaree in Nashville, Tenn. Katrina is a seventh grader at All Saints Academy in Breese.

Mark and his wife Kim reside in Trenton with their three children; Justin, Edwin and Rebecca. As a fifth-grader, Edwin has just begun grass cutting duties, and who knows, a fourth generation to join the business may be on its way. Phillip and his wife Kelly are expecting a baby in May.

While Phillip's degree gave him the basics to enter the profession, he also credits his family members for the knowledge they have shared.

"I've got good mentors," he added. "I've learned a lot from Mark and Dad."

The Mosses all agree that there are some aspects of the business which you just can't learn in school.

"It's much more than just the daily work of developing a business," Mark said; "It's working with the community, meeting people and developing relationships."

Growing up and now working in the mortuary profession, the Mosses have witnessed many changes over the years

"First of all, when Dad entered the business they were still having visitations in the homes of the deceased. The last home visitation we had was in 1955," Dave noted.

In 1980, the trend changed from having visitations for two nights to just one night.

For the Moss family, like so many other funeral directors in the area, a tremendous burden was lifted in 1981, when the city of Breese took over ambulance service.

"Having ambulance service was twenty-four/seven," Dave said. "We couldn't go anywhere. We were basically tied to the telephone. Years ago, there were no cell phones or pagers. One of the biggest luxury items was to have a telephone ringer that sounded outside of the house, so at least you could go outside."

Meeting the demands of both the funeral and ambulance businesses, Ben and Bernice never took a vacation together until Dave entered the business in 1973.

While some chemicals used in the profession have advanced, Dave said the embalming process has virtually remained the same.

Other technological changes have been quite evident, especially with regard to the publication of funeral notices and obituaries.

"When we would get a death call, we immediately called Erwin Mahlandt to flip the switch so that the lead pot on the linotype could start heating up," Dave said. ,

He remembered buying their first fax machine for sending obituary information to the newspapers.

"Dad was always into making contact personally," Dave said. "He was used to talking to newspapers directly. He was amazed by technology. It's not that he was afraid of it, but he couldn't understand how it played a part in the business.

Now Moss Funeral Home has entered cyberspace and recently created its own Internet website ([www.mossfuneralhome.com](http://www.mossfuneralhome.com).) on which visitors will find information about services and facilities, along with obituaries, local florists and nearby lodgings.

A special feature of the website is a community calendar which can be used by any club or non-profit organizations to list upcoming events.

As for other changes, Mosses said that years ago the main focus of the funeral director was the appearance and presentation of the deceased. While this is still a major part the profession, today there is added emphasis on the grief process and the care and guidance of the families of the deceased.

Today, the Mosses see families seeking more personalized services. And, in turn, the personal attention given to the families has expanded.

To that end, a program call "After-Care" was initiated 1995. Two well-known members of the community, Sylvia Henken of Carlyle and Ruth Lager of Aviston, run this program for the Moss family. It

involves contacting and visiting families of the deceased two or three weeks after their loved ones have passed away to see if any additional help is needed in dealing with the grief process.

Facing death is a daily part of the mortuary profession, yet, the Mosses admit that there are times when they find it difficult as well.

"Sometimes we have to take a step back," Phillip said. "We're not totally immune to the feelings of loss and grief that families are experiencing."

In 2001, Moss Funeral Home offered its first "Holiday Ecumenical Service" to bring families of the deceased together for prayer under one roof.

"One of the best therapies is to know you're not alone in your loss and the feelings you're experiencing" Phillip said.

Dave added, "We want people to know that our services don't end when we leave the cemetery. They can call on us at any hour of the day."

Or, as Ben always said, if you're unhappy, tell us ... if you're happy, tell others."

## *Our Family Serving Your Family for 50 Years 1953-2003*

(Excerpt from *Breese Journal* of Thursday, February 6, 2003)



Bernice and Leander "Ben" Moss-1953



Bernice and Ben-1993



Dave and Maura Moss with Katrina



Phillip and Kelly Moss



Mark and Kim Moss with Justin, Edwin and Rebecca



**OUR FAMILY**-Barb Rhodes, Bernice Moss, Donna Boeing, Mark Moss, Glen Moss, Lora Zurliene, Gary Moss and Dave Moss



**OUR EMPLOYEES**-(front row, left to right)....Virgil Ripperda, Sylvia Henken, Ruth Lager, Bernice Moss, Carol Fischer, Herman Haselhorst; (second row) Paul Dierkes, Phillip, Dave, Mark, Curt Zurliene, Edwin Smith, Steve Guttersohn; (third row) Justin Griesbaum, Brandon Knobloch, Colby Voss, Kurt Linnemann, Chris Pollmann, Not pictured is Ryan Weh.