

# **Babies in the ceiling?? Wait...What??**

**Is regulation necessary in the Funeral Industry?**

# 119th Annual Meeting | Chandler, AZ



TOP TEN AT 10PM

**FUNERAL HOME HORROR**

## Cantrell Funeral Home

- Originally owned and operated by Raymond Cantrell, Sr.
- Mr. Cantrell, Sr. became licensed in 1952.
- Cantrell became a trusted name in the Detroit area and needed to expand – moved to this facility in 1964.
- Current establishment over 20,000 square feet.



## Cantrell Funeral Home

- Raymond Cantrell, II became licensed in 1985.
- Cantrell, Sr. was the designated manager until 2017, however he had passed away in October of 2016.





## Prior Disciplinary History

- 1999 – Investigation showed unlicensed individuals were providing embalming services.
- 2000 - Investigation showed Incompetence and Gross Negligence against Cantrell, II.
- 2000 – Complaint of bodies in facility. Found 11 bodies awaiting burial, one an infant from 1997.



## Prior Disciplinary History



- 2001 – Advisory letter issued to establishment regarding poor condition of embalming room.
- 2002 – Cantrell II license suspended. Fined \$6,000 and ordered to pay restitution of \$41,456.
- 2004 – Investigation showed unlicensed individuals were providing services at establishment. Fine of \$10,000

## Recent Inspection History



- March 2017      Unsatisfactory
- November 2017    Denied Entry
- December 2017    Unsatisfactory
- February 2018     Unsatisfactory
- April 2018        Unsatisfactory
- April 2018        Unsatisfactory

## March 2017 Inspection



- Unsatisfactory Inspection
  - Establishment had a direct connection to embalming room
  - Deteriorating floor covering in embalming room
  - Walls/Ceilings had chipped/peeling paint
  - No working ventilation



## March 2017 Inspection



## December 2017 Inspection



- Unsatisfactory Inspection
  - Corrected the direct connection to embalming room
  - Deteriorating floor covering in embalming room
  - Walls/Ceilings had chipped/peeling paint
  - No working ventilation



## December 2017 Inspection



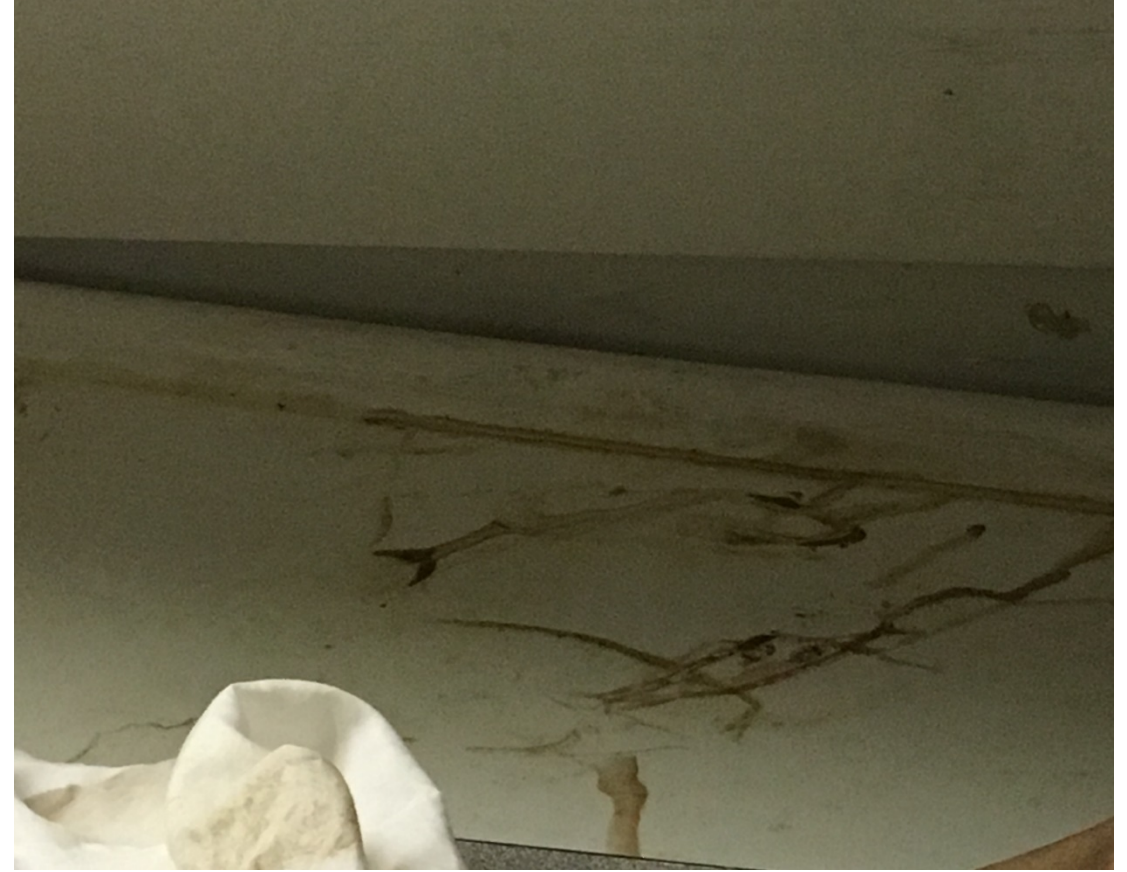
## February 2018 Inspection



- Unsatisfactory Inspection
  - Deteriorating floor covering in embalming room
  - Walls/Ceilings had chipped/peeling paint
  - No working ventilation
  - Not clean/sanitary



## February 2018 Inspection



## April 2018 Inspection (1<sup>st</sup> visit)



- Unsatisfactory Inspection
  - Deteriorating floor covering in embalming room
  - Walls/Ceilings had chipped/peeling paint
  - No working ventilation
  - Not clean/sanitary



## April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)



- Unsatisfactory Inspection
  - No improvement from past inspections
- Found multiple decedents throughout the facility

## April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)





## April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)



## April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)

- Two decedents were in the preparation room. One of the two had individuals was in the same position as 16 days earlier when an inspector was on-site.
- Directly off the prep room was an air-conditioned room. This room was referred to as “cold-storage.” There were five decedents in this room. The bodies were placed on plywood and wood shelving in this room.

## April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)

- Three decedents were in the makeup/dressing room. This room was littered with clothing and other items used to dress the decedents. The three bodies were placed on two folding tables, head to toe.
- Four decedents were awaiting transport to the crematory for “direct cremations.” They were in cremation caskets.



## April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)





## April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)

- Four decedents were in an unused chapel. The bodies were in caskets and the funeral services had been completed. The bodies were in various stages of decomposition.
- Two decedents were found in a garage. The bodies were in caskets. The funeral services were completed for these individuals, and they were also in various stages of decomposition.

## April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)



## April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)

- One individual was found in a casket in the back of a hearse. The body was brought back to the establishment after a grave side service by Mr. Cantrell, II. The body had been in the back of the hearse for over a month. Mr. Cantrell, II had forgotten about this individual being there.
- One infant was found in a casket, sitting on top of a file cabinet.





## April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)

- During this inspection we located approximately 250 cremains throughout the facility.



## **April 2018 Inspection (2<sup>nd</sup> visit)**

- As a result of what was found during this inspection, the establishment and manager were suspended based on incompetence and gross negligence, improperly stored bodies, poor conditions in the embalming room, and prepaid funds not placed in escrow.
- The following day we returned. With the assistance of licensed funeral directors, we worked to remove all bodies and cremains from the facility.



LOCAL

4

5:04 62°



## August 2018

- Our office received a phone call from an anonymous caller.
- The caller indicated that there were infant bodies hidden throughout the facility.
- After consultation with the AG's office, our staff returned to the facility the following day.

## August 2018

- We found numerous infant caskets throughout the facility. These caskets all appeared to be in the facility from the prior inspection in April.



*August 2018*





## August 2018



- On previous closet, how that was no



rough this  
as visible

**August 2018**





**August 2018**





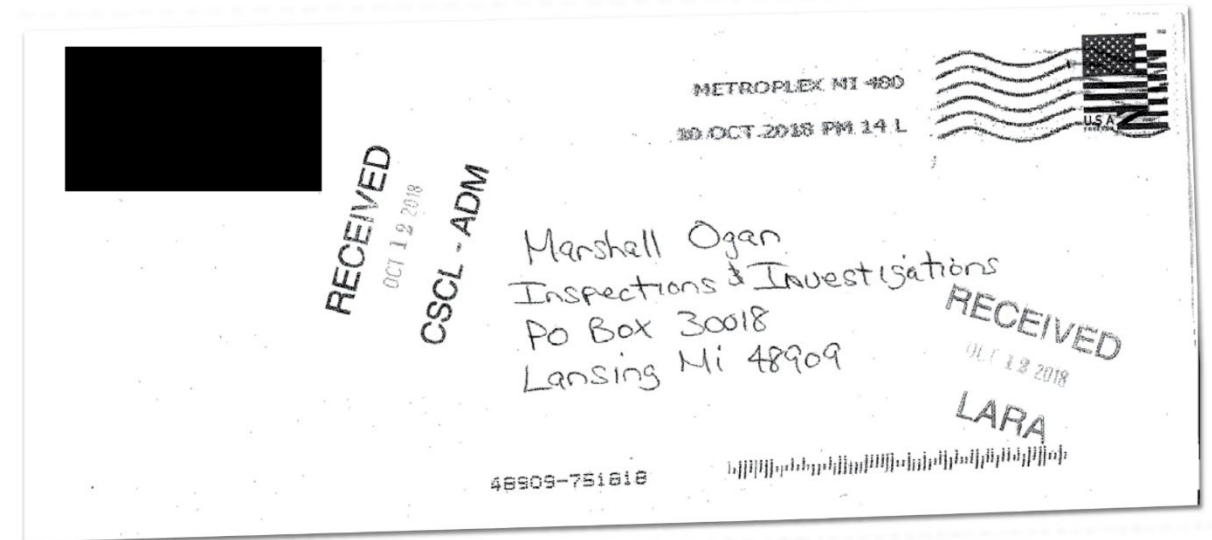
## August 2018



- We did locate a stillborn corpse in a plastic urn on top of a desk.
- Also located another set of cremated remains after an exhaustive search.

## October 2018

- Our office received a letter indicating that there were remains in the facility and directed us where to find them.
- The letter provided instructions on where to locate the hidden bodies.



## October 2018

- LARA employees returned to the building the same day the letter was received.
- Additional remains were located.





## October 2018

- They were located above the drop ceiling in a box and casket.
- Detroit Police Department responded with their Crime Scene Unit and Homicide Task Force, the Medical Examiner's Office, and the Michigan State Police.



## October 2018

- The casket contained the remains of 2 infants.
- The box contained the remains of 9 infants.





## October 2018

- The bodies of the 11 infants ranged in age from early gestation to a couple of months old.
- A cadaver dog swept the facility on this date and no additional remains were found.
- A bucket of medical waste was located.





## What happened next...

- LARA worked with licensed directors to locate the next of kin to assist in final disposition. Some of the remains dated back to 1998.
- In total 34 bodies and 273 cremated remains were removed from April through October. Of the cremated remains 52 were unidentified.
- Detroit Police Department took custody of the infant remains and opened an investigation.
- With the assistance of local funeral directors, all remains achieved final disposition.

## What happened next...

- The licenses of the manager and establishment were already summarily suspended in April.
- At the completion of the investigation LARA issued formal complaints against Cantrell Funeral Home, Jameca Boone, and Raymond Cantrell II.
- The findings included:
  - Numerous acts of fraud, deceit, dishonesty, incompetence, and gross negligence in the practice of mortuary science.
  - Storing deceased human bodies in a disrespectful and callous manner.
  - Unlicensed activity and aiding and abetting unlicensed activity.
  - Operating a funeral home without a licensed manager.
  - Reusing single use caskets.
  - Unsanitary conditions and inadequate ventilation in the preparation room.
  - Untimely filing of death certificates.
  - Improper storage of medical waste.
  - Failure to escrow approximately \$66,000 in connection with prepaid funeral contracts.

## What happened next...Final Orders

- Cantrell Funeral Home, Inc
  - Revoked minimum of 10 years
  - \$115,000 fine
- Raymond Cantrell, II
  - Revoked minimum of 10 years
  - Restitution – half of \$11,480
- Jameca Boone
  - Revoked minimum of 3 years
  - Restitution – half of \$11,480
- Cantrell Funeral Home, Inc  
Prepaid Registration
  - Revoked minimum of 10 years
  - Restitution -\$50,465.85



## Then what???



- Investigation led us to other Detroit area funeral homes.
- Located 63 infant corpses in the establishment.
- The Office of the Governor set up a “task force.” All Detroit area funeral homes were inspected over the next 60 days.

## What have we done since...

- Changed how the Department performed Inspections.
- Added additional field staff.
- Continuing Education for our licensees was put into law.
- Established a positive working relationship with the Wayne State University Mort Sci Program.
- Continuing to work on meaningful Rules and Legislation to discourage these types of incidents.

## What are you doing???

- As a professional in the funeral industry, what are you doing to help prevent these types of incidents?
- Do you advocate for change?
- Do you report concerns?
- Are you giving a voice to the voiceless?
- What is your professional legacy?







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