

# Job of funeral director takes a special person

By **STEVE LeBLANC**  
The Champion

Death may be a certainty, but the way it's dealt with by loved ones is never predictable. And for that matter neither is the life of a funeral director, who on a daily basis assumes countless tasks and a myriad of roles — all in an effort to ease people through one of the most difficult experiences they'll ever have to face.

So says Jeremy Liegis — who takes great pride in being part of the J. Scott Early Funeral Home team, and a member of the profession as a whole.

"I think it takes a special person to do this," said the 23-year-old, who began working at a funeral home on a part-time basis during high school and has now been a full-time funeral director in town for the past two years.

"We're caretakers of the dead and caregivers to the living."

It's responsibilities pertaining to the latter group that he finds most challenging — and ultimately more rewarding.

While preparing the body for burial, entombment or cremation and filling out all the necessary paperwork are the mandatory parts of the job, Mr. Liegis said it's often the minor and seemingly insignificant duties that make the difference to family and friends.

Among those are arranging rides home for those who've accompanied their deceased loved ones to the hospital, putting memorial notices in the local newspaper and making sure everything's in place for every stage of the funeral — including the possible reception afterward.

"Sometimes you might have to put notices in five different papers around the country and it's a big deal if one of them gets missed. Or a family might ask you to have Coke there (at reception) for the kids, and you've got to make sure the caterer has some. You'd be surprised at how much those things mean to people," he explained.

"There's a lot of little stuff involved, but it all goes back to honouring the dead."

Depending on the family and what they're looking for, funerals can require anywhere from a few hours or a few days to organize.

Some families want a big, lavish funeral complete with police escort and a post-service reception while others prefer much smaller affairs.

Some families need a lot of help on many details — with everything from choosing a casket to what to write in an obituary — while others know exactly what they want before walking through the door.

And when you throw wide-ranging religions and personalities into the mix, funeral directors

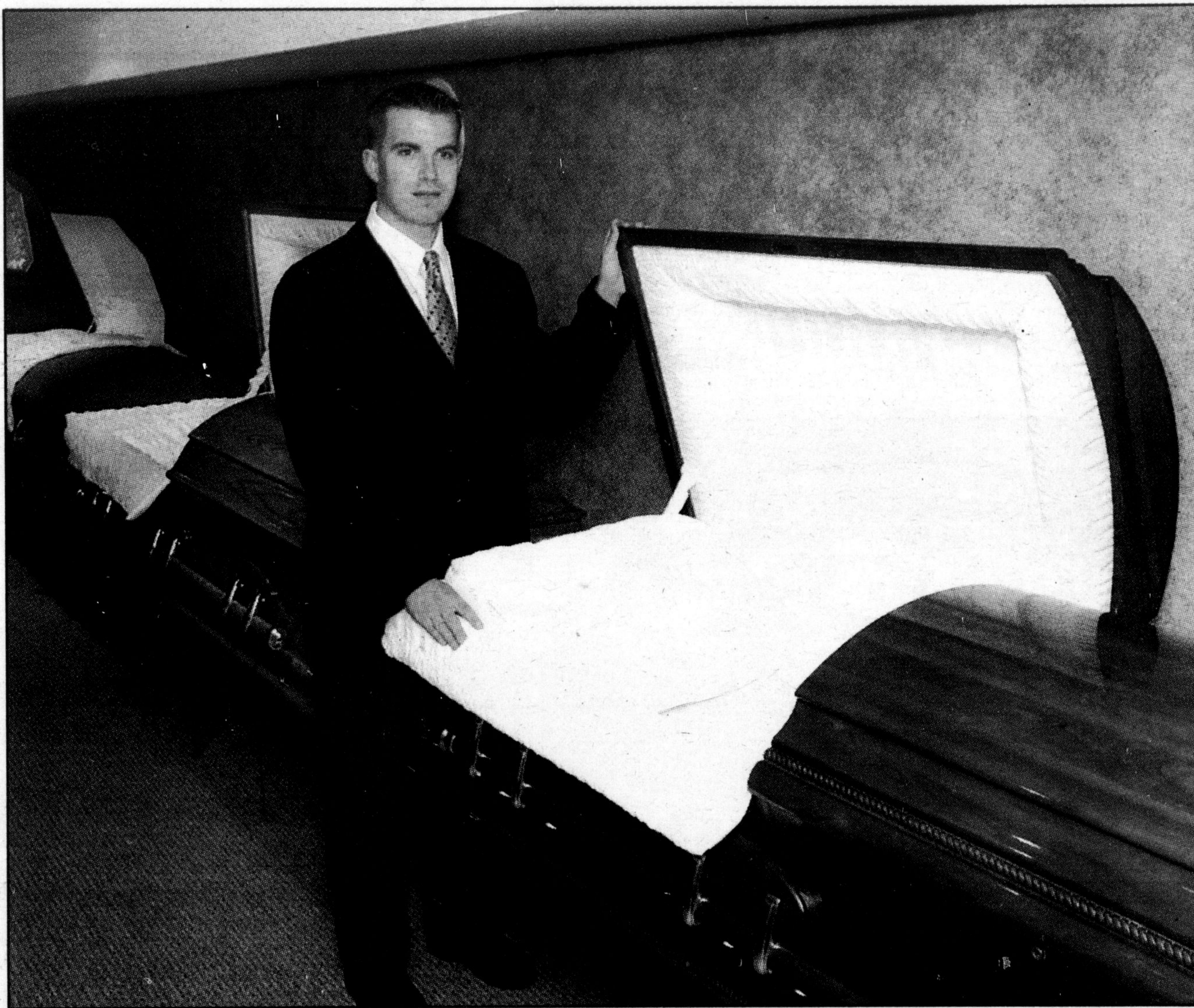


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

**Jeremy Liegis and the J. Scott Early Funeral Home team offer care and support to local families during one of the most difficult ordeals they'll ever have to face.**

have to be extremely flexible as well as organized.

"Everyone is different and no two situations are exactly the same. With one family, your job might be very businesslike and another time they may really open up to you," said Liegis, who on any given day may be confronted by any given emotion associated with death — including sadness, fear, anger, depression and even denial.

"You just have to be genuine. Families can sense when you're not yourself. You can't always let it get to you, but at the same time the day I stop caring is the day I get out of this profession."

Because death is never convenient, funeral directors are often called upon to work long and unusual hours.

And with so many different tasks involved — everything from the actual embalming to post-reception cleanup — the job can be physically demanding.

"You can go days without having a funeral and then have three in a day, so there's a lot of teamwork involved here as well," Mr. Liegis stressed.

And on those days when the phone isn't ringing, he and the local funeral home staff aren't just sitting around waiting. Maintenance to both the interior and exterior of the funeral home and

occasional follow-up visits to those who recently lost someone close are among the tasks assumed during downtime.

While a funeral director must be many things to many people, Mr. Liegis prides himself most on being a constant learner — always willing to accept comments and suggestions in order to more effectively carry out his duties.

"My hope is that I keep learning for as long as I do this job," he said.

"I take a lot of pride in being a funeral director. People are putting their trust in you and you're helping them through one of the most troubling things they'll ever deal with. That's a great honour."

# ONEIDA®

## VALUE STAINLESS

"Value Priced 18/8 Stainless Flatware"

- Made by Oneida in 18/8 Stainless
- Exquisite pattern detail
- Full lifetime Warranty
- Dishwasher safe
- Balanced weight for comfortable feel
- Never needs polishing

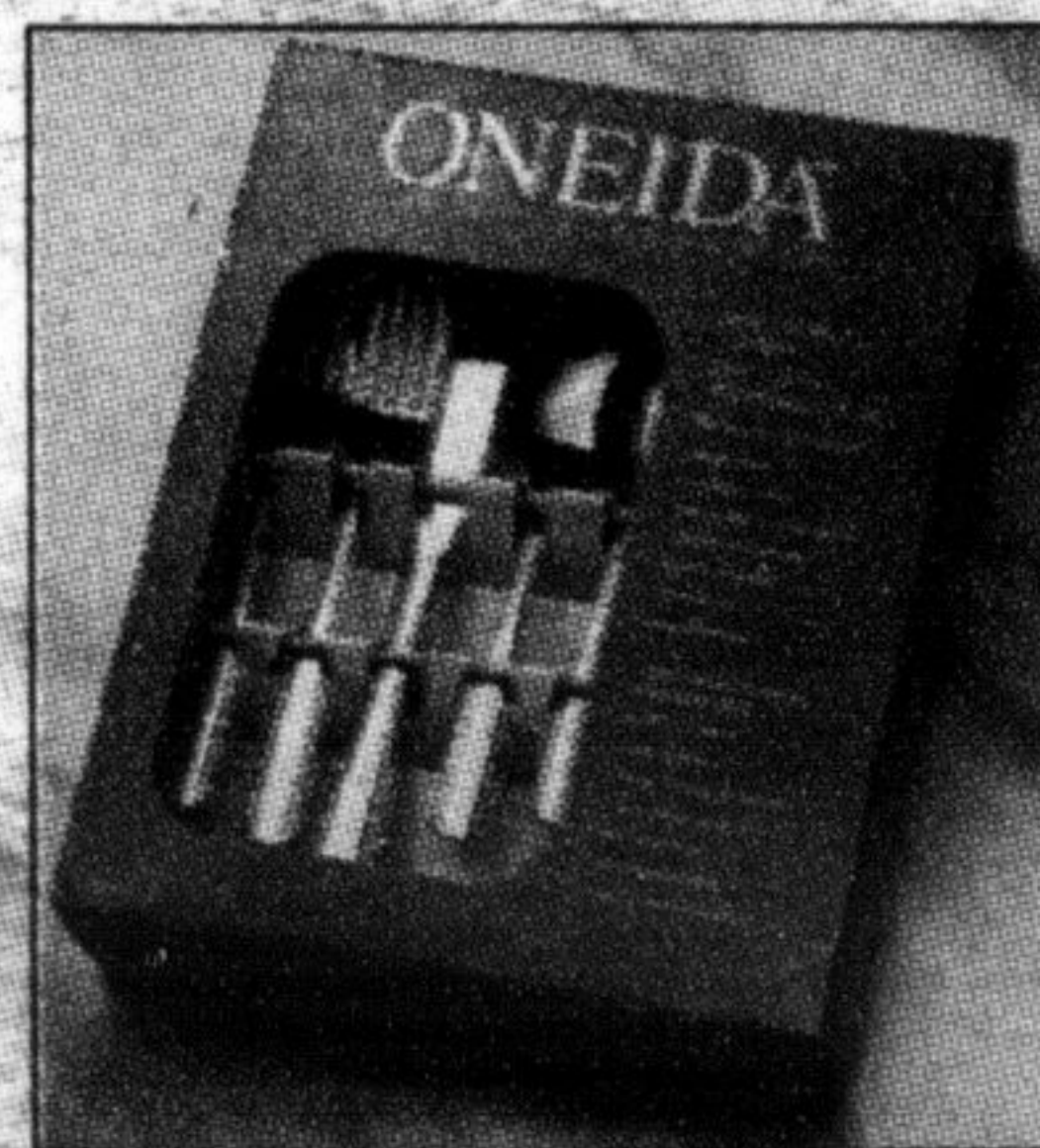
## Delacourt's

Fine Tableware \* Giftware \* Table Linens \* Bridal Registry

(corner of Main & Martin)

Free Gift Wrapping

878-0050  
Fax: 876-1658



### 45 PC. SET

(8 place settings,  
5 serving pieces)

SRP. \$140

NOW

\$99.99

