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IN ONE OF SAN FRANCISCO'S OLDEST RITUALS, THE GREEN STREET MORTUARY BAND LEADS A BOISTEROUS FUNERAL PROCESSION THROUGH THE STREETS OF CHINATOWN. THE BAND IS A 70-YEAR TRADITION THAT FAMILIES REQUEST TO BOTH HONOR THE DEPARTED AND FRIGHTEN AWAY SPIRITS.

Photo Credit: Deanne Fitzmaurice/San Francisco Chronicle

in this issue

- p1** Look Who's Living the Brand
General Manager's Life on the Frontline Inspires Others
- p2** A Message from Steve Mack
The Golden Opportunity Presented by Mistakes
- p3** Location Profiles
In Search of the Extreme
- p5** New Ad Campaign
Celebrates Life Stories
- p5** SCI Strengthens Recruiting Support
- p7** What Do You Think?
Learn What Surprised Associates the Most about their "Day in the Life" Experience

For translations in Spanish and French Canadian, visit the Corporate Communications page on the Global Village.



the Extreme ...

Green Street Mortuary, San Francisco, Calif.

It's as much a part of Chinatown as the crowded sidewalks bearing medicinal herbs, vegetables and colorful cheongsam dresses, as much a part of the landscape as the steep streets, the lovely bay and the gentle mountains. Green Street Mortuary began serving San Francisco in 1917, just 11 years after the legendary 1906 earthquake that leveled the city. Back then, Green Street was an Italian funeral home, as evidenced by the wooden beams decorated with European motifs, the enormous Tuscan fixtures and the elaborately vaulted ceilings. In the '40s, though, the location's demographics began to change, and now Green Street performs more Chinese funerals than any mortuary in the United States.

Location Manager Bill Steiner has worked at Green Street for 32 years, arriving in 1976 from a funeral home in Napa that served predominantly Catholic families. "It was a big culture shock when I came here. I had to learn the customs and I also went to school for a year to learn Cantonese," says Bill. These days he moves with complete ease through the mortuary, working with 21 staff members who are typically bi-lingual if not multi-lingual, able to serve families in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and many other dialects.

Visitors to Green Street immediately detect the sweet pungency of incense, which is burned at nearly every visitation. Fireproof mats are a must in all four chapels, so that paper gold bars, money and jewelry may also be safely burned: it's how Buddhist families send loved ones to a comfortable afterlife. At the gravesite, larger three-dimensional paper pieces – such as a mansion, a TV set, a Mahjong game table, even a washing machine – may be burned for the same reason. "I asked one daughter why she gave her mother a washing machine. She said it was because her mother never had one in life," says Bill.

Most Chinese funerals at Green Street include a visitation and a funeral service. Many families also opt for a raucous procession through Chinatown, led by the Green Street Mortuary Band. Yes, a brass marching band that plays Anglo-American hymns, such as "Amazing Grace," "Abide With Me" and "When the Saints Go Marching In." The band is one of San Francisco's older and more famous institutions. It dates back about 70 years, and is rooted in the Chinese tradition of noisy funeral processions that honor the dead while frightening away evil spirits. "We make so much noise along the way that we sometimes set off car alarms. But the families like that, because the more noise, the better," says Bill.



A WHITE-GLOVED DOORMAN IS A PERMANENT FIXTURE AT FRANK E. CAMPBELL'S ENTRANCE ON NEW YORK CITY'S PROMINENT MADISON AVENUE.

Frank E. Campbell, New York, N.Y.

Yellow taxis pave the streets – horns blasting, newsstands and hotdog vendors pepper street corners, and as far as the eyes can see, hundreds of people flood the sidewalks rushing to who knows where. New York, the city that never sleeps, rarely ever stops. But when Frank E. Campbell, The Funeral Chapel handles a high-profile service, the city comes to a well-coordinated pause.

(Continued on page 5)

“Seeing one of our funeral processions is like nothing you’ve ever seen before,” says Dominic Carella, Vice President of Frank E. Campbell. “We’re not talking about shutting down a city block – we shut down Fifth Avenue and the 30 blocks in between. More than 100,000 people will stand still along Fifth Avenue intrigued as the procession passes, thousands more will watch as the casket is shouldered into St. Patrick’s Cathedral.”

The funeral home stands three stories high on the corner of Madison Avenue and 81st street in the affluent upper eastside of Manhattan. It comes equipped with a white-gloved doorman, enveloped by designer boutiques and is often staked-out by the paparazzi. Since 1898, Frank E. Campbell, known as the “Funeral Home to the Stars,” has served many of the world’s most prominent. Its clientele list includes professional athletes, actors, musicians, political figures, kings and first ladies.

Unique personal touches like horse-drawn carriages and helicopter flyovers captivate the public, but it’s Frank E. Campbell’s professional, seamless service that makes its star designation hold true today. “Families think of us as the funeral home of choice because of our deep heritage, unparalleled service and high-quality products,” says George Amato, President of Frank E. Campbell. “Our reputation continues to be maintained not only in the public’s eye, but in the eyes of the families we serve.”

Sunland Pet Rest, Sun City, Ariz.

Lucky, Peachey, Bagel Bunny. The



FAMILY SERVICE COUNSELOR RICHARD HALLBECK AND CEMTARIAN BILL SMITH OF SUNLAND MEMORIAL PARK NEAR PHOENIX, ARIZ., PROVIDE COMPASSIONATE SUPPORT TO FAMILIES WHO HAVE LOST AN ANIMAL FRIEND.

names on the markers may seem odd at first, but after a stroll through the three-acre cemetery, you get the picture. Welcome to Pet Rest – the final resting place for all things feathered, furry and four-legged.

As the only pet cemetery in the Phoenix metropolitan area, Pet Rest has served families and their friends for more than 18 years.

Pet Rest Cemeterian Bill Smith oversees every aspect of care – from removal and grooming to disposition. It is work that Bill and his co-workers at Sunland Pet Rest take seriously.

“We interact with families and handle services in exactly the same manner as we conduct a traditional service,” says Sunland Family Service Counselor Richard Hallbeck. “People love their pets and want a place to honor their memory.”

Many families choose Pet Rest because of the location’s close proximity to Sunland Memorial Park. “We’ve had families purchase cemetery property for their pet and then cross the street to purchase a family plot for themselves,” says Bill.

Now in his third year with Sunland Pet Rest, Bill, a retired printing supervisor says, “I know I’ve done my job when the family says it looks like they are sleeping.”

Do you have an interesting or unique story to tell about your location or park? We want to know!

E-mail your story ideas and high-quality photos to editor@sci-us.com and you may appear in an upcoming issue of *Inside Dignity*.