

# Ask the Undertaker

By Ryan Helfenbein

Remember the movie *Ghostbusters* back in the 1980s? The *Ghostbusters* theme song would go something like "who yuh gonna call, GHOSTBUSTERS!" This line would be said over and over again in different situations. Believe it or not, this question is one of the most commonly asked questions when it comes to my industry: who do I call when a death occurs?

Let's start with what needs to be done in order for the deceased to be transported from the place of death to the funeral home. It is required by Maryland law that a doctor or medical examiner signs a death certificate before the deceased can be removed from the place of death. For this reason alone, the funeral home is not typically the first to be contacted when a death occurs. In a situation where hospice care or a nursing facility is involved, the nurse usually gets verbal commitment from the doctor stating that they will sign the death certificate. Once the nurse has received either a verbal commitment or an actual signed death certificate, the funeral home of choice is contacted and transportation from the place of death to the funeral home is made.

OK Ryan, so you still haven't answered the question... Who do I call? Let's look at this in three different situations: the death occurs at home, the death occurs in a hospital or nursing home (including hospice care), or the death occurs suddenly, as in an automobile accident.



**First scenario.** If my wife comes home tonight and finds me dead, her first call needs to be 911. The police and paramedics will take care of instructing her in what needs to be done next in regard to contacts. If the paramedics find that the cause of death is not suspicious and my primary physician states she will sign the death certificate, then the next call will be to the funeral home. If my doctor states that she will not sign the death certificate since she does not know what caused my death, I would be sent to the medical examiner in Baltimore to determine the cause. The chief medical examiner would then sign the death certificate after that determination is made.

**Second scenario,** what if death occurs in a hospital or nursing home. In this case, the nurse would have been instructed earlier by the family as to what funeral home needs to be contacted. The nurse would be the one to contact the funeral home on the family's behalf.

**Finally,** what if death occurred suddenly? This is very similar to the first scenario. Call 911. Most of the time the deceased will be sent to the medical examiner to determine the cause of death. In the case of an automobile accident, the medical examiner would determine what caused the death as a result of the accident.

This is probably more detailed than some of you care to read, however, remember it is very important that people understand who needs to be contacted. Finally, to simplify all of this, when in doubt call 911.

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## Thrift Shopping

By Kater Leatherman

Now that we are getting back to the basics, recycling, regifting and repairing have risen to the top. So has thrift shopping. But it hasn't always been that way. Years ago, thrift shopping was mostly for the bohemian population and the poor. There were consignment stores for treasure hunters, vintage shops for hippie types and a smattering of secondhand clothing stores located in the seedier side of town.

All of that has changed. The current state of our economy has also lifted the stigma around thrift shopping. Not only is it easier on the budget, it is stimulating, mostly because rarely are any two items alike. For many, the thrill is about finding something that is absolutely fabulous that you would never pay retail for. The fit is perfect, the fabric beautiful and it costs less than a new pair of socks.

For the best prices, head for the charity-based organizations such as Goodwill and Salvation Army. Shops that donate clothing in order to generate revenue for hospitals, churches and women's Junior Leagues are also good buys. However, beware. Some consignment stores have gotten so expensive that you're better off buying new clothes. Vintage shops can be pricey, too.

After 35 years of "thrifting" my way through life, here are 12 ideas I came up with to help you get the most out of your shopping experience:



### OutLook's Bits & Bytes

Soap is not just for bath time anymore. If deer are decimating your carefully chosen perennials such as hostas and getting into your veggie patch, try breaking up bars of any of the popular deodorant soaps and scattering it around the perimeter. It's a proven way of discouraging those eating machines.