

Duncan Stuart Todd, Ltd.— The Power of Design in the Prep Room

by Marjori and Duncan Todd

Let's say you are planning a new preparation room and you are working with an architect and/or contractor. In the process, you may have assumed that if you install some equipment in the designated space for a prep room, everything will turn out all right. But, that's not necessarily so.

In the design of nearly any commercial structure, there is a need for specific expertise in certain areas in order for the client to realize the full potential of his or her investment.

For example, specialists are often called on by architects and owners for acoustics, audio-visual, and commercial kitchen expertise.

In the funeral industry, a handful of architects have carved a niche as specialists in funeral home design. Still, within this specialty, there exists a need for further specialization — the often-overlooked preparation room.

Recognizing this need, the late J. Stuart Todd—who pioneered the funeral home design specialty—founded a company to address the ins and outs of designing prep rooms. That firm has been owned and operated by his son and daughter-in-law, Duncan and Marjori, for the past seven years, doing business as Duncan Stuart Todd, Ltd., The Preparation Room Specialists (DST).

DST offers a specialty one-stop service that encompasses design and equipment, much of which is exclusive to their firm. The company's flagship service is Premier Source design, a plan that recommends a logical, effective layout for the prep room. It is designed specifically with provisions



North Sacramento Funeral Home, Sacramento, CA

for the proper airflow of its exclusive PrepAir ventilating system. The layout includes placement of cabinetry, foot end equipment, safety equipment, lifts and specialty items, as well as lighting, flooring and finishing recommendations.

Consider that, in most communities, the local building trades are seldom called upon to participate in more than one funeral home project and therefore do not have the opportunity to gain experience in this kind of work. A reputable plumber, for instance, is thoroughly familiar with how to install a bathroom. He is less likely to be familiar with embalming room equipment, codes and construction techniques.

Here is where the power of a well-documented layout by a specialized design professional can increase the likelihood that construction will go smoothly, and often save time, money and headaches. In most instances, the lead architect on any kind of project recognizes the benefits that specialized consultants can offer, and not only calls on them, but welcomes them.

The following comment—related to DST by a client—emphasizes the importance of specialized expertise when planning a prep room. Randall Danielson, owner/director of the Johnson-Danielson Funeral Home in Plymouth, IN took the advice of a colleague who said, "I only wish more funeral home owners would realize that this (the prep room) is where their money is made, not in that room full of boxes."

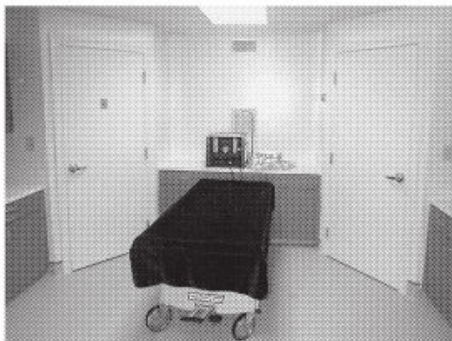
A funeral home owner or director contemplating new construction today is faced with many

challenges. Of his experience, Rob Moore of Moore Funeral Home in Brazil, IN, said, "We spent weeks trying to find plumbers, HVAC and construction personnel who could construct our new prep room to meet our needs and all OSHA regulations. The cost soared and there was no assurance that the room would actually meet required specifications. One call to Duncan Stuart Todd led us to a perfect prep room that we knew was built right from the start."

A critical issue for preparation rooms is the need for creating a safe, comfortable and healthful environment. Factors that enter into this planning are: one, that OSHA criteria must be satisfied; and two, that the preparation room must function within the entire operation. Duncan Todd, who is also a registered architect, is particularly qualified to work with other professionals on the client's team.

Henry A. Morgan, owner of North Sacramento (CA) Funeral Home, says, "It starts with an understanding of the needs of the organization and the ability to communicate with the owner. Duncan Stuart Todd, Ltd. did this very well with the North Sacramento Funeral Home in the designing of our embalming room. We are extremely happy with the outcome."

In Greeneville, TN, Harold Limburg utilized DST's Premier Source for his Rose Hill Funeral Home and Cremation Services. "In my new funeral home, I was very concerned with the planning of the preparation room. I decided it was best to go to the experts who knew OSHA regulations and other requirements for this space," he said. "I contacted Duncan Stuart Todd, and they designed a state-of-the-art Preparation Suite and Dressing Suite. I will



Rose Hill Funeral Home and Cremation Services, Greeneville, TN

never regret the day I chose them for both the planning and the equipment necessary to furnish the rooms. Their expertise is unequaled in the industry."

DST has an enviable roster of successful preparation rooms in funeral homes nationwide.

By providing their specialized consultancy to architects at large, DST has played a significant role in helping owners achieve the best possible results for their project.

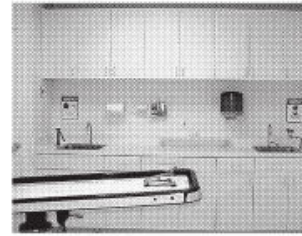
Kent Rusch, funeral director and owner of Cline and Hanson Funeral Home in New London, WI, called on DST when the growth of their business outstripped their facilities. It was necessary to reconfigure space, provide new plumbing, electrical and ventilation while expanding a single station room into a two-station room.

Sam Frain and Dan Frain in Winamac, IN, were challenged with modernizing Frain Mortuary, a 120-year-old structure. The limitations involved naturally required changes as the project progressed. The Frain reaction was that "it was as easy as picking up the phone and calling DST."

Perhaps the most compelling reason for seeking specialized design service is to protect the health and well being of funeral home employees. That thought was paramount to Bob Skinner when he made a decision to renovate Skinner Funeral Home in Cumberland, WI. "A new ventilation system, coupled with a separate room for the embalmer to shower and change clothes helped us move into the 21st century," affirmed Mr. Skinner.

By choosing to work with a specialist in prep rooms, you can harness the power of design to get the results you want when your preparation room is on the drawing board. ♦

Duncan Stuart Todd, AIA, is a nationally accredited architect with more than 25 years of design and construction experience. Marjori Todd has worked in the engineering field for more than 20 years and has a solid understanding of the building process. The Todds can be reached at 888 655 6612, info@dstlimited.com or visit the web at www.dstlimited.com



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