

by Cathy Hampton

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Butch and Cathy Hampton.

ICCFA Magazine author spotlight

► **Cathy and Butch Hampton** own Hampton Funeral Home in Prescott, Arizona, and Sunrise Funeral Home and Crematory in Prescott Valley, Arizona, which they purchased in 2008. The Hamptons serve the communities of Prescott, Prescott Valley and Chino Valley.

► Hampton Funeral Home was established in 1956 by Henry C. Hampton Sr. It is the former Goldwater home, built in 1893.

www.hamptonfuneralhome.com

► Butch Hampton has served on the board of directors of both the Arizona Funeral Directors Association and the Arizona Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Association.

Tips from the Hamptons on dealing with similar high-profile funerals:

- **Make sure you establish up front that you, as the funeral directors, are in charge of services** and others (such as organizations dedicated to emergency personnel) must organize their events around what you plan with the families. It had not occurred to us that we would need to make this clear until a group tried to tell us we could not attend a service we were directing!

- **Don't hesitate to contact your funeral director friends directly or through your state association for help.** Others will want to help, and you will need them. We're glad we accepted help—it was a big reason everything went off without a hitch.

- **Take offers of monetary or in-kind help with a grain of salt** and be careful what you promise families, other than what you can deliver yourself. We and our funeral director friends, along with our suppliers, covered the families' funeral expenses, so we directed others who wanted to help to the firefighter charities.

- **Learn if there are reputable organizations collecting funds** for victims' families so that you can direct people who would like to make a donation to those groups.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

This is the story about how a small-town funeral home, with lots of help from friends, took care of the 19 Granite Mountain Hotshots who died June 30 fighting a wildfire in Arizona.



The Hampton Funeral Home in Prescott. The Hamptons and the funeral professionals who helped them donated their services for the 19 fallen firefighters.

Honoring heroes

How a small-town funeral home in Arizona handled the services for 19 fallen Hotshots

It was June 18, 2013, and the Doce fire was roaring toward our home near Prescott, Arizona. We were ready to leave as we were getting updates and current evacuation status reports via the reverse 911 system.

Our side of Granite Mountain was saved by a courageous group of firefighters, working both in the air and on the ground. A combination of DC-10s and helicopters dropped slurry (a fire retardant) and water,



A view of the Granite Mountain fire from the Hamptons' driveway.

creating firebreak lines on the mountain. Where needed, they dropped slurry and water directly onto structures.

On the ground and around the mountain were the Granite Mountain Hotshots, part of the Prescott Fire Department. They drove the fire back from the doorsteps of our friends' homes. One whose home was saved is the founder of Make-A-Wish America. He and his wife had worked year-round to create a defensible space on their property, which around

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these parts is a necessity.

A week later, the Doce fire was still burning, though structures were no longer threatened. As I drove to our home on Williamson Valley Road, buggies carrying the Granite Mountain Hotshot crews were headed back into town, followed by buggies carrying other Hotshot crews from across the state as well as from nearby states. As they went by, I told my father, who was visiting from Michigan, that the danger had passed and I hoped the firefighters would get some much needed rest.

Just a few days later, a bolt of lightning started the Yarnell fire in the high desert. This time, the buggies wouldn't carry the Granite Mountain Hotshot crews home.

As the Yarnell fire raged, the air and ground attack crews worked together as a well-oiled machine. The terrain was much like that where the crews had recently been deployed on Granite Mountain, and as always, the crews' efforts were coordinated by some of the best wildland firefighter supervisors in the country.

On Sunday afternoon, June 30, 2013, the wind changed. I went out the front door of our home, which faces the Yarnell direction, and was almost knocked over by the wind gust. Our wind chimes, which had been quiet for a few days, were frantically screaming the alarm. The fire was now coming in our direction, and though the flames were some 20 miles away, all of us on Granite Mountain were fearful.

No one knew that our Hotshot crew was caught in the middle of that rapidly shifting blaze, with nowhere to go. Later that afternoon we began to hear some chatter, mostly on the police scanner, about the possible loss of some of the firefighters. Then our son came up from the basement and told us to change the channel on the TV.

We froze as we heard the news that paralyzed our town: Nineteen Hotshots had perished. The entire community was affected. Many people knew one or more of the Hotshots personally. Our oldest son, Hank, had lost a longtime friend, Andrew.

The planning

Monday morning, the meetings began. The 100 Club of Arizona, a non-profit organi-



Phoenix ME staging area: White hearses parked at the Maricopa County Medical Examiner's Office, waiting to take the firefighters back to Prescott.



Above left, the procession of white hearses enters Prescott. Above right, one of the 19 hearses driving through town.



zation which helps the families of firefighters and other public safety officers injured or killed in the line of duty, came up from Phoenix, as did the vice president of the International Association of Fire Fighters.

Firefighters from across the state arrived in Prescott to handle emergency calls so that the members of our department could mourn and do what was needed to help the families of those who had died.

Thinking outside help would be necessary to handle the services for so many people, one of the Phoenix IAFF officials told us that a funeral service group had offered to take care of all the funerals.

Immediately a grumble rose from the assembled crowd. We said that Prescott could take care of our own, that funeral professionals from all over the state would help us. And that is exactly what happened.

Once representatives from all the departments involved gathered and talked it over, they met us at Hampton Funeral Home and asked if we could arrange to bring the men home to Prescott and Yavapai County from the Maricopa County Medical

Examiner's office, located 90 miles to the south, in Phoenix.

It was Tuesday afternoon. The ME's office gave us a release date of Saturday, July 6.

We called funeral homes throughout the state and asked if they would help us. Every single funeral director we talked to, choking back their own tears, said yes to whatever we needed—they would be there to help. Within an hour, we had all of the white hearses fire officials had requested.

Everyone was to meet at the Maricopa County Medical Examiner's office by 9:45 a.m. on Sunday morning, July 7, to transport our men up to the Yavapai County ME office.

Prescott, Arizona, is home to a state-owned cemetery, the Arizona Pioneers Home Cemetery, which up until a few years ago was not available to the public. This cemetery was able to give us an area that could be dedicated to the Hotshot crew. We wanted the crew to be together, even if only symbolically.

Once we were able to secure the cemetery property, more volunteers came forward, from firms donating vaults to construction companies offering the use of backhoes and

SERVING THE COMMUNITY



Above, fire officials and law enforcement officers from all over the world line up in the Hampton Funeral Home driveway, ready to present honors when a casket is brought out the front door to be taken down to the street and loaded onto a fire vehicle (**below**).



dump trucks. A retired gravedigger came out of retirement to lay the Hotshots to rest.

The procession

Everything was set for the procession to Yavapai County. Sunday was a good day for the funeral homes assisting us. Then Maricopa County called and asked us to move up the removal date from Sunday morning to Wednesday, July 3. After many calls, from representatives of the governor and our state senators to the individual medical examiners involved, we were allowed to stick to the original date of July 7.

At about 12:20 p.m. on that Sunday, the procession left the Maricopa County ME office. A team of funeral directors from Tucson, led by Ron Adair, had placed each man in a white hearse bearing his name and with the Granite Mountain Hotshot emblem on the door. Each individual was accorded honors and accompanied by an honor guard for the procession to Prescott, American flags waving.

Planning ahead made all the difference for the successful transport through mountain roads to Yavapai County and our Mile High City. A few extra white hearses brought up

the rear, just in case, and tow trucks were strategically stationed along the route.

Along the entire procession route, the public lined the roads. People stood atop buildings and on overpasses, crowding 10-deep in places to show support for our Hotshots. The news media was everywhere, on the ground and in the sky, providing live coverage.

The heat was treacherous, and a few of our motorcycle officers from Prescott, who accompanied the hearses as escorts, suffered from the heat the pavement was radiating. At one point, we had to stop to allow them to cool down.

Our hearse, a 1996 Cadillac, decided to have both the air conditioning and the water pump quit. The vehicle had been functioning flawlessly and was well maintained, so this came as a surprise. In any case, all the planning that had been done to deal with potential problems saved the day.

Unnoticed by the public—despite the photographers and helicopters—one of the extra hearses pulled up next to ours and Ron Adair and his crew pulled up in their Suburban for a discrete transfer of our precious cargo to a backup hearse.

The only thing reported in the press was that a hearse had been seen with its hood raised. Our Hampton Funeral Home hearse went to the back of the line and limped home at the end of the procession. So all in all, our emergency was not an emergency and the procession went as planned.

When the procession reached Prescott, my husband, Butch, turned off, drove back to the office and grabbed his truck and made sure he arrived first at the Yavapai County ME office. He had signed all the Hotshots out of the Maricopa County ME Office and therefore had to sign them all into the Yavapai County office.

Having returned our Hotshots to Yavapai County, where individual funeral homes (contacted by the families of these heroes) could make removals and begin to arrange services, we felt a sense of relief. Our job was done, and done flawlessly.

The services

The public memorial service was scheduled for Tuesday, July 9.

Sunday evening, after returning home from the procession, my husband and our team began receiving calls from families wanting to make arrangements for their sons and husbands. One of our many funeral



Above, the first individual service in Prescott, held at Granite Basin Lake early on the morning of July 10. The woman in the foreground, from the Missouri Fallen Firefighters Association, coordinated the Honor Guard and the teams who flew in. Left, Black Hawk helicopters at Love Field in Prescott waiting to take Hotshots who were Marines back home.

director friends, George Menke, who had come up from Sun City with his hearse on Friday to stay at his Prescott cabin until time for the procession, was there by my husband's side.

George called his retired right hand, Margie Nelson, who expertly ran his Sun City funeral home for many years. Almost before he could ask if she was willing to help, Margie and her husband arrived in Prescott. Margie was at Hampton Funeral Home bright and early Monday morning, and she and I handled the behind-the-scenes organizing for the services.

By Tuesday evening, we realized that our funeral home would be handling arrangements for all 19 families. We put out a call for help, and the funeral professionals who had assisted with the procession came through again. All of us donated our services.

Desert Rose sent up three hearses from Phoenix on Wednesday at 4:30 a.m. to take three out-of-state Granite Mountain Hotshots and their honor guards, escorted by fire trucks and police, to Sky Harbor Airport, 100 miles away in Phoenix. A C-130 was waiting to fly them back home, accompanied by honor guards.

The funerals in Prescott began at 7:30 a.m. Wednesday. At 11 a.m., two hearses, one from Westcott Funeral Home in Cottonwood,

Arizona, and the other from our funeral home, took two of the Hotshots who were Marine Corps veterans with their escorts to the local airport for transport by Black Hawk helicopters. (Our hearse had been repaired Monday at no charge by our dealer, Lamb Cadillac.)

On this first day of services, a funeral director was assigned to each service. Trish Hansen and her team from Hansen Funeral Homes in Phoenix and Chad Johnson and his team from A.L. Moore and Sons in Phoenix were there. Butch stood by while the honor guards performed their services. Wyman Funeral Home sent a director to help with services on Thursday evening.

We directed church services, lakeside services and graveside services.

The Missouri Fallen Firefighters Association sent an incident command team to organize everyone and everything involved with the services. Families met with the Hampton team, who relayed family requests to the incident command team. This team coordinated each funeral service honor detail and procession vehicle.

Details were written on a whiteboard to help us coordinate everything so that no service would overlap with another. That way, the members of every Hotshot's family would be able to attend the services held

locally for any of the other Hotshots.

Although the incident command team's coordination efforts were welcome and helpful, the team did not have any funeral professionals on it. This became apparent when we were told at a graveside service that we weren't allowed to be there because the family had requested "private" services.

Needless to say, funeral professionals are the ones in charge of funeral services. Period.

Brendan, the lone surviving Hotshot, attended each service. It wasn't until our son Matthew, who operates our crematory, attended a service with us that we realized he and Brendan had been in high school together.

We were allowed to bring each Hotshot from the ME's office to the funeral home after the family contacted us. The removals took place accompanied by honor guards who remained with each Hotshot until final disposition either at the Pioneer Cemetery or other place chosen by the family.

The helpers

While in our care, the Hotshots were never alone; honor guards who came to Prescott from all over the world stood watch, day and night. Our two funeral homes were filled with uniformed firefighters, forest service personnel, law enforcement and federal park service officers, border and customs agents and Marine Corps officers.

I ended up making a few frantic calls when I realized I had forgotten to arrange delivery of a breakfast, dinner or other meal to one of the funeral homes. Local restaurants donated all of the food.

One night, the restaurant owner called to tell me that when he arrived with food, every honor guard member personally came out to shake his hand and thank him. He left with tears in his eyes. Local dry cleaners took care of the dress uniforms, working nights because the uniforms were needed for services during the day.

This was our monsoon season, and torrential rains and lightning actually knocked down a tree across the street from Hampton Funeral Home while Butch was making funeral arrangements with one of the families. The power went out and candles lit the parlor.

The public memorial service attended by Vice President Biden and state and local officials, the families of the fallen 19, the lone survivor and firefighters from our community filled the event center. Outside the venue, giant screens were set up so the overflow

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crowds could view the service.

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Giant 4-by-6-foot whiteboards listed each Hotshot, along with the services scheduled; casket, urn and/or memory jewelry the family had selected; and the name of the director assigned to the service.

Our first funeral service was the morning after the public memorial service, at a local lakeside. The street in front of the funeral home was closed and a platform was set up to allow the honor guards to place the flag-draped casket on the fire truck. This procedure, a solemn duty performed by precision and accompanied by full honors, was repeated for each of the Hotshots.

Casket teams provided by fire departments from the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, area were the anchors for most of the main lifting and placing of the caskets on the fire trucks. These firefighters volunteered their time to come to Prescott. They were humble and quiet, well practiced and proficient in performing their part of the honor team.

The firefighters wore full dress uniforms more suitable for the cold weather of Wisconsin than the extreme heat and monsoon moisture of Arizona, but not one word of complaint was heard from them; their hearts were broken and they had a job to do. The honor guards escorted each casket, urn and presentation American flag to their final destinations.

Funeral professionals from all across Arizona—Messinger Funeral Homes, Whitney-Murphy Funeral Homes, Hansen Funeral Homes, Westcott Funeral Home, A.L. Moore-Grimshaw Funeral Homes, Jerry Warren Funeral Home, Mt. View Funeral Home, Bunker Funeral Homes, Wyman Funeral Home, Adair Funeral Homes, Menke Funeral Home, Heritage Memory Chapel, Desert Rose and United Funeral Support Services—supplied hearses for the procession up from Phoenix.

Hansen Funeral Homes, A.L. Moore Funeral Homes, Menke Funeral Home

and Wyman Funeral Home sent directors to Prescott to help with the individual services, which began on Wednesday and ran through Saturday.

Our two funeral homes sheltered and served as the staging areas for the fire departments to begin each service. Coordinating things from two locations, eight miles apart, was quite an undertaking.

Our Sunrise Funeral Home is located in Prescott Valley and has a large parking area—big enough for full-size ladder fire trucks to set up in the lot, and to have the casket formally placed on the truck before leaving in procession. However, we used both of our funeral homes, depending on where the service was held.

We went over the logistics for each facility and each service over and over again. We were diligent in our duties, worried about forgetting anything. We found ourselves waking up in the middle of the night and scribbling notes about details to check in the morning. There was no room for error. The stress was amazing, but as funeral professionals, we couldn't show it.

Margie Nelson and I were in the office, behind the scenes, ordering caskets and urns, fielding phone calls and doing anything the families needed. We kept the information on those whiteboards updated and in full view of the staff so that everyone would know what needed to be done and when.

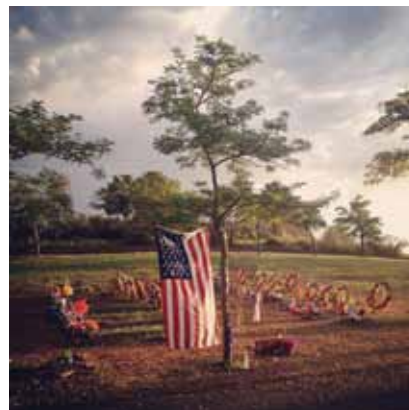
Hampton Funeral Home is grateful for



Hotshots from around the country leave the public memorial service.



The Pioneer Cemetery entrance.



The Granite Mountain Hotshots area at the Pioneer Cemetery.

all the help we received from funeral homes across the state, as well as from local businesses. It was an honor to serve our Hotshot families. Not only did all of the funeral homes involved donate their services, most of our suppliers donated products and services or offered us greatly reduced prices.

We are currently working on coordinating headstones and a monument to be placed at the Pioneer Cemetery Granite Mountain Hotshots gravesite.

The protectors

One last thing that many people ask us is what we did about those terrible people who protest at funerals. In our case, it was not Westboro Baptist Church members but people who said they were “friends” of Westboro. The answer is that Patriot Guard riders were everpresent, protecting our families.

The protestors kept moving, trying to be seen and heard. At one point, as reported by the Prescott Valley Police

Department, “concerned citizens” intervened to quell the protesters’ obnoxious rantings as police stood by, keeping an eye on things. These particular concerned citizens were wearing colors—they were members of the Hells Angels, Arizona chapter.

These concerned citizens let the protesters know they were not welcome in our town and would not be allowed any closer to the families of the Fallen 19. The Hells Angels were not threatening or menacing, just a little intimidating—and it worked. □