

New Bridges Funeral Home in Quest for the Best



Bridges Funeral Home

KNOXVILLE, TN—Dennis Bridges of Knoxville is one of those rare individuals who always knew what he wanted to be. “All I ever wanted to be was a funeral director,” he has said many times.

Though he had been president of Knoxville’s local mortuary society for many years, and served with a local funeral home for some 18 years, Mr. Bridges always had a dream of building his own facility. That dream was realized when **Bridges Funeral Home** celebrated its grand opening August 26, 27 and 28 with over one thousand visitors to its location, 5430 Rutledge Pike in Knoxville.

“When I set out to build my new funeral home, I wanted only the best. Now upon its completion, I feel that we have achieved that goal. A large part of that is the prep room and dressing room that were designed by **Duncan Stuart Todd, Ltd.**,” Mr. Bridges commented.

A Knoxville resident, Mr. Bridges wanted to give the city a funeral home that was locally owned as a way of “giving back” and he wanted it to be the most beautiful one in the south. “When you walk in our front door, we want you to experience the ‘aah’ factor,” he stated.

By all accounts, Mr. Bridges accomplished his objective. The 13,000 square-foot structure with 7,000 square-feet of covered portico includes two large chapels that can reconfigure into three with comfortable seating for 500 guests, and with capabilities for four visitations. The main chapel features a stained glass angel created by a local artist. An advanced media set-up is available for video tributes.

When it came to making decisions about the prep room, Mr. Bridges continued his quest for the best. He called Duncan Stuart Todd, Ltd., and liked what he heard. Now that the project is completed,

he feels that his confidence is rewarded. “From day one,” he said, “it was like working in a room made for a funeral director by a funeral director.” Although Duncan Stuart Todd, Ltd. are not funeral directors, years of experience have given them the knowledge to design with the practitioner in mind.

Martin Bartling, a colleague and friend of Mr. Bridges for 40 years, is enthusiastic, too, about the efficiency of the prep room. “It’s just so darn handy,” he comments, adding that “there is no wasted movement. Everything is convenient, and flows well from the prep room to the dressing room. It makes my job so much easier to work in a room that is tailored to our needs.”

A major benefit of the prep room is the air system. It was important to Mr. Bridges to protect his embalmers by providing an OSHA compliant source of clean air. He installed a state-of-the-art Pre-pAir ventilating system avail-



The new State-of-the-Art Prep Room

able exclusively in the United States from DST, Ltd.

It may be of interest to other funeral directors that even though Mr. Bridges worked with a local architect, from the outset he recognized the benefit of seeking the specialized services of DST, Ltd. in order to realize the full benefit of his investment. Over many years of practice, DST, Ltd. has developed a smooth and effective method of partnering with building owners, architects, engineers and contractors resulting in a “win/win” for all.

During the progress of the Bridges Funeral Home project, as with other similar jobs, AutoCAD files of the proposed new building were e-mailed to DST, Ltd. while the project was in the design stage. The company then overlaid their specialized prep room design expertise to the embalming and dressing room areas. Through a series of back and forth exchanges of design information, DST,

Ltd. guided the Bridges team toward the best fit possible for the new embalming area, always aware of inherent design constraints such as time, budget, operational processes and overall final objectives.

With an understanding of funeral home operations gained from 30 years of experience passed down by the company’s founder, the late **J. Stuart Todd**, DST, Ltd. is able to utilize a knowledge base which few other architects in the country have the advantage of. The end result allows the overall building owner, architect, engineer and contractor to focus on the global picture while resting assured that the requirements of the modern prep room are fully met.

Bridges Funeral Home is Dennis Bridges’ first new construction. With his partner, **Ms. Kim Powers**, he also owns funeral homes in Denver, CO, Northern New Mexico, Waco, TX, San Antonio, TX and Miami, FL.