

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Chris Butler

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2021-063

Chris Butler, president of Butler Funeral Homes and Cremation Tribute Center, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Tumultuous 2020* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Nov 2, 2021 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Date: Dec 8, 2021 Location: Butler Funeral Homes and Cremation Tribute Center

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, project manager ALPLM

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed.

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 0:57 + 1:31 / 0.95 + 1.51 = 2.46 hrs.

Session 1: Background and choosing family business, early impact of COVID-19.

Session 2: Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on December 29, 2021.

The interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Chris Butler, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2021-063

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Chris Butler was born in October 1965 in Springfield, Illinois. His father was the second generation of funeral home directors and his mother worked as a homemaker and real estate agent. Involved with the community from a young age, Chris graduated from Griffin High School in 1984. He pursued a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana. An experience with grief helped him realize his desire to work in the family business, Butler Funeral Home. He purchased the home in 2002 and soon Butler Funeral Home became Butler Funeral Homes and Cremation Tribute Center. At the time of the interview, the Butler family of organizations included the Butler Funeral Home in New Berlin and Chatham; the Roselawn Memorial Park, monument, and pet cemetery; Lincoln Land Cremation Society; Butler Pet Cremation Services; and the Boardman-Smith Funeral Home.

Over the course of the interview, Butler discusses the history and mission of Butler Funeral Homes and how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the funeral business. He chronologically outlines the pandemic from March of 2020, including its the immediate effects on funeral homes, to December of 2021. Butler details the plans for protocol to ensure maximum safety for both staff and bereaved families. He also describes the pandemic's effect on his personal life, with his young daughters experiencing online school as well as hybrid models. Butler Funeral Homes had to work with the limitations on people allowed in gatherings and began offering streaming services for their ceremonies. Butler stated that it was in the winter of 2020 that the pandemic began to affect the volume of clientele at the funeral homes. According to Butler, this is when the pandemic became much more prevalent in the Springfield area. Throughout the following months, Butler describes the different ways he personally responded to the community as well as how Butler Funeral Homes responded. One of Butler's key takeaways about the pandemic is the importance of the ceremony when grieving a loved one. Chris also describes his awe in the resilience of everyday people through the past twenty-two months.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Butler Funeral Homes and Cremation Tribute Center; COVID-19 pandemic; funerals; grief; importance of funerals;

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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