

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Bryan Crain

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

Tumultuous 2020 Oral History project

Interview # T20-A-L-2022-42

Bryan Crain, owner and funeral director at Crain Funeral Homes, 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: June 28, 2022

Location: Crain Funeral Home, Anna, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Amanda Riggenbach, *Tumultuous 2020* project manager

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript being
processed.

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:01 / 2.01 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on August 12, 2022.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Bryan Crain, *Tumultuous 2020*, T20-A-L-2022-42

Biographical Information/Overview of Interview: Bryan Crain was born in Anna, Illinois, in 1964. Crain is a third-generation funeral home director and owner. He grew up in the apartment above his parents' funeral home in Anna, Illinois. His earliest memories involve his experiences at the funeral home. Crain's grandparents, George and Marguerite Crain opened their first funeral home in 1932 in Pulaski, Illinois. Though at the time it was unusual for a woman to be a mortician, Marguerite also graduated from Worsham College of Mortuary Science in Chicago, Illinois. The family's success led them to expand to Tamms and Mounds. In the 1950s, Crain's father, Bob, bought into a funeral home in Anna where he worked with the director before he eventually took it over. Crain's uncle, Bill, also became a funeral home director and worked with George and Marguerite before buying his own funeral homes. Crain's father bought Bill's funeral homes in 1981, bringing the total to six funeral homes. During this time, Crain was finishing up high school at Anna-Jonesboro Community High School, where he graduated in 1982. He attended Murray State University for Business Administration and then SIU School of Mortuary Science, graduating in 1985 and 1986, respectively. He joined the family business following his graduation and since then Crain Funeral Homes has grown to nine funeral homes and three memorial parks in Southern Illinois and Missouri.

After discussing his family history and experiences growing up, Crain details his pandemic experiences. Crain outlines the start of the pandemic and Crain Funeral Homes' response to the stay-at-home order. Crain originally believed the stay-at-home order would last longer than two weeks, but not more than a month, so the Home allowed guests to postpone services. When the stay-at-home order was extended, Crain had to navigate the question of how to hold service in a safe way, while allowing guests to process their grief. Crain also describes the difficulty of not knowing how the virus spread, especially when they prepared a deceased who had passed from COVID-19. He took it on himself to be the one who solely prepared the bodies of those individuals in order to protect his staff. Crain concludes the interview by discussing his personal impressions of the virus and its impact on his personal life.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Tumultuous 2020; tumultuous 2020 oral history; funeral homes; Crain Funeral Homes; Southern Illinois; COVID-19; COVID-19 pandemic; covid's impact on funeral homes; Anna, Illinois; funeral

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 and Museum 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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