

12

Five generations of Fullers

by Lisa W. Hoppenjans

The Town of Dale celebrates its 175th anniversary this year.

Fuller Funeral Home has served Dale for 117 years of the town's 175.

Same family, same location.

"Some people just have a natural predisposition to handle life's unpleasant tasks," says fifth-generation owner, Aaron Fuller. "You have to care about people."

Aaron's great-great-grandfather, Paul W. "P.W." Fuller started an undertaker's parlor, blacksmith shop and ambulance service in the same building in 1901.

Now, in those days, an ambulance consisted of a team of horses and a wagon, and its main purpose was to transport the doctor to his patients. It was quite common for the town undertaker to operate the ambulance service, as well. And, until state regulations were adopted in the 1970s, many hearses had emergency bubble lights on their roofs.

P.W. and his wife, Isabelle's son, Thomas Ross "T.R" Fuller joined the family business and eventually took it over. T.R.'s wife, Bertha, was totally committed to the lifestyle and even held a funeral director's license. At that time, Aaron explains, a wife could apply for a license under her husband's name. Bertha Fuller was one of the last women the state of Indiana to hold such a license.

"Fifteen or 20 years ago, not many women went to mortuary school," Aaron notes.



Aaron's grandpa, Charles Paul "C.P" Fuller, as he appeared in the 1940s. C.P. was involved with Fuller Funeral Home for 66 years.

Bertha was a licensed funeral director in the *1920s*.

riday & Saturday



Aaron's great-grandfather, Thomas Ross "T.R." Fuller.

T.R. and Bertha's son, Charles Paul "C.P." continued in the business for 66 years. Their sons, Robert and Paul, also carried on the family legacy.

Aaron well remembers his grandpa, C.P., as he practically grew up in Fuller Funeral Home.

"I can't attest to it, because I don't remember," Aaron grins, "but the story is that I was in daycare in Santa Claus (the former Community Center housed a daycare) and, when they had a graduation ceremony they asked all the kids what they wanted to be."

According to family lore, Aaron proudly exclaimed, "An undertaker!"

He got his wish.

By the time he was 8, he was helping with funerals, meeting cars in the parking lot, asking if they would be going to the cemetery affixing flags identifying the cars as being with the funeral procession and directing them how to line up.

As the service ended, he would run out to open the doors of the hearse, then scurry back in to begin loading the flowers designated to go to the grave site into the back of a van the funeral home used for that purpose.

"Then, I had to sit in the back and keep them from tipping over, with C.P. yelling 'HOLD THOSE FLOWERS UP!" Aaron chuckles, remembering.

When they arrived at the cemetery — ahead of the hearse — Aaron would begin unloading flowers while C.P. took up his red and