



June 19, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cemetery First to Offer Online “Life Stories” to Bereaved Families

HAMILTON - A local cemetery organization has become the first in Hamilton to offer grieving families the chance to celebrate the life of their loved one through the internet.

“When a person dies, families often find it intensely comforting to share memories and personal anecdotes,” says John O’Brien, director of The Catholic Cemeteries of the Diocese of Hamilton. “Our new service offers them that opportunity on a broader scale.”

Families or friends of people interred in one of the Catholic cemeteries can post a short story about the person on The Catholic Cemeteries web site (www.thecatholiccemeteries.ca). The new feature is called *Life Stories*.

The Catholic Cemeteries operates five mausolea and 16 cemeteries in Hamilton, Brantford and Guelph, ranging locally from the historic Holy Sepulchre on Plains Road to the newer Our Lady of the Angels on Mud Street. More than 1,400 interments take place each year in the cemeteries and mausolea.

Mr. O’Brien said one of the strongest trends in funerals and burials is that people want to personalize the experience as much as possible. “It is increasingly common that families seek to personalize monuments and crypt plates with photos and mementoes. We see *Life Stories* as an extension of that trend.”

Paul Dermody, funeral director at P.X. Dermody Funeral Home in Hamilton, agrees that “there is a growing desire to celebrate the life lived in a unique way, and *Life Stories* will help people do that. I think it will be very well received.”

Mr. Dermody also noted that an online story can be read and enjoyed by far-flung relatives and friends who were not able to attend the funeral or memorial service. “It’s a contemporary way of connecting loved ones after a death.”

Life Stories was launched in early April 2008. Staff members at The Catholic Cemeteries are making people aware of the new service in family meetings and through correspondence.

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BACKGROUNDER ATTACHED.

Contact: Cynthia Janzen, Hellingman Communications, 905-527-2985, ext. 16.

BACKGROUNDER

About *Life Stories*

- Available as a link from The Catholic Cemeteries home page (www.thecatholiccemeteries.ca).
- There are specific “fields” to be filled in, e.g. date, place of birth and death.
- The story can be no more than 400 words.
- Stories posted will be archived on the site.
- Photos can be posted along with the story.

About The Catholic Cemeteries Web Site

- The comprehensive web site is a resource for families, including:
 - Online purchasing of vigil lights and wreaths
 - Glossary of terms
 - Descriptions of services
 - Frequently asked questions
 - Directory of cemeteries and maps
- From July 2007 through May 2008, the site had 14,218 visits, peaking in May at 1,955 visits.

About The Catholic Cemeteries

- Founded in 1856.
- A not-for-profit and charitable organization that is part of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton.
- Provides both pre-need and at-need arrangements.
- The Catholic Cemeteries are for Catholics and members of their families, whether or not those family members are also Catholic.