

# Duffy and Snowdon Funeral Homes

History

*"Where dignity and understanding prevail*

*and*

*where service is foremost"*



Howard J. Snowdon was the twentieth Mayor of the City of Scranton. He was born in Pittston on September 8, 1888, son of Joseph and Maria Huntley Snowdon. On July 19, 1898, when Howard was 10, he went fishing with his father and brother, Bert. Joseph had just finished a night shift as hoisting engineer at No. 10 mine in Pittston. The family was fishing from the D.L. & W. Bridge over the Susquehanna River when Howard decided to go swimming. Howard became caught in the current. His father jumped in to save him. Rescuers came and were able to remove Howard from the water but sadly Joseph drowned. Joseph left behind a wife and 5 children, he was 38 years old.

This incident is the beginning of the story of Snowdon Funeral Homes. Howard, who had a profound understanding of grief at a young age, decided to help families that were experiencing the same pain.

## **Howard J. Snowdon:**

Howard J. Snowdon graduated from Wyoming Seminary. He then attended Eckels College of Embalming in Philadelphia in 1908. In 1911, Howard a funeral home at 1810 Sanderson Avenue, Scranton. After World War II he opened another funeral home at 802 Mulberry Street. Howard's brother also became a funeral director in Pittston.

Howard married Lottie Morris in 1915; they had a son, Howard Jr., and a daughter, Charlotte. During the early 1920's Howard, unfortunately, had the sad job of removing of deceased workers that came in on the train to Scranton. A young man, Wesley Franklin, always found the time to help Howard. Howard Snowdon recognized Mr. Franklin's compassion and hired Mr. Franklin as his part-time assistant.

In 1938 Howard was appointed as City Treasurer. He served in that capacity for three and a half years before announcing his intention to run for Mayor. Howard did not accept political contributions.

Howard J. Snowdon stated that his number one goal was to attract new business to Scranton. Howard and a delegation of Scrantonians traveled to Harrisburg to lobby Governor Arthur James. Mr. Snowdon was told by Governor James that he could not support such legislation. Governor James called the plan "Revolutionary, socialistic and drastic." That did not stop Howard Snowdon. In July of 1942 the war was impacting areas like Scranton. It was estimated that 1,000 people a week were leaving the valley and that the County had already lost 20,000 residents to "war production centers."

Through the Chamber of Congress and political contacts in Washington, Howard Snowdon was able to procure \$6.5 million for the Murray Corporation in South Scranton to manufacture bomber wings for the Air Force B-29 airplanes. The Murray Corporation operated 24/7, employed 7,000 and its payroll was \$1.5 million a month.

In the early 1940's prostitution and gambling were so bad in Scranton that the Commander of Tobyhanna Depot had declared Scranton off-limits. Howard moved quickly to halt vice and gambling and to get the soldiers again contributing to Scranton's economy.

The Scranton Times described Mayor Snowdon as "dignified in appearance...he usually maintained the same dignity in defending his stand on an issue." In early July 1943, Snowdon got into an ongoing debate with Councilman Sam Druck over the administration of city government. Snowdon set the tone of the debate by quoting from Alexander Pope and Greek philosopher, Plato. Druck replied with references from Cato, Abraham Lincoln, Lord Beaconsfield and Sir William Jones. Snowdon countered with Horatio Alger and Demosthenes. For five days running the Scranton newspaper had a field day publishing the intellectual insults as they were flung back and forth. That level of debate has never been matched in City Council Chambers.

On August 19, 1943, Congressman John W. Murphy informed Mayor Snowdon that the United States Navy was naming one of its vessels after the City of Scranton. Mayor Snowdon christened the U.S.S. Scranton.

Mayor Snowdon left office in 1946. He was quoted as saying "I went in merely as a man opposed to corruption in any form."

Governor James H. Duff appointed Howard Snowdon to the State Board of Funeral Directors in 1949; a year later he was elected chairman.

Howard Snowdon continued to operate his funeral parlors until, at age 71; he fell ill and died a week later on July 1, 1960.

His son, Howard (Sonny) Snowdon took over the business. Sonny ran the business with the same ethics and standards as his father.



**Wesley Franklin:**

Wesley Franklin was born in 1898 in East Benton, PA. When Wesley Franklin was 3 years old, his father died of Bright's Disease. Wesley's family had a farm and his mother, Anna Colvin Franklin, who was educated in Davenport, Iowa at the Palmer School of Chiropractic, had a chiropractic practice in Scranton.

Wesley graduated from Dalton High School and made the decision to leave the farm and work on the railroad. His compassion and understanding of death lead him to help Mr. Snowdon remove the deceased that were shipped back to Scranton on the train.

Wesley Franklin accepted a part-time job offer from Mr. Snowdon and moved into an apartment above the Funeral Home at 1810 Sanderson Avenue in Scranton. He was an avid baseball player and played on the Green Ridge Baptist Church team where he met his wife, Hannah. Hannah was a graduate of Temple University in Philadelphia. They married in 1925 and their first daughter was born at the Scranton Funeral Home.

Wesley Franklin continued to work on the railroad and part-time for Mr. Snowdon until Mr. Snowdon, recognized fully Wesley's gifts, sent Wesley to Eckels Embalming School, the same school Mr. Snowdon

graduated from. Upon graduation, Wesley Franklin worked full-time for Mr. Snowdon. After 3 years of employment, Mr. Snowdon encouraged Wesley to go out on his own and together they found an available business in Moscow.

Wesley Franklin bought the Moscow funeral business from Mortimer Edwards in 1929. Wesley's first location was at the corner of Routes 435 & 690 in Moscow. The Franklins lived above the funeral home. His daughter Jean was born there.



In 1939 Wesley moved the business to the house where the Moscow Fire Department now stands. The Franklin's welcomed the birth of their son, Wesley, Jr while living there.



In 1941 Wesley Franklin moved his business and family to the newly purchased 401 Church Street in Moscow.

Wesley converted the house into a funeral home and welcomed the birth of Barbara to their family.

Wesley hired an assistant. George Smith was known for compassion for people in the hours or days immediately following the death of a loved one. Wesley Franklin noticed this quality and felt that George could, perhaps, offer more complete service in the Franklin Organization.



Wesley was elected Burgess of Moscow in 1953 and served until 1969; with his election the title of Burgess was changed to Mayor.

In 1965 when Wesley was ready to retire, he thought of Sonny Snowdon. Wesley had remained lifelong friends with the Snowdon's. Sonny accepted Wesley's Franklin's offer and purchased the funeral home.



Wesley Franklin and Mr. and Mrs. Sonny Snowdon.

Wesley Franklin and Mr. and Mrs. Sonny Snowdon.

George Smith:



George Smith  
Service is his business

George was born in Drinker, and attended Moscow High School. He married Lois Polcha in 1947 after 3 ½ years in military service. Their wedding day was marked by the added excitement of a ride on the recently acquired fire truck for Elmhurst-Roaring Brook Townships, an organization that George was deeply involved with. George and Lois were never too busy to take the time to help a friend or neighbor, even while raising their three children Gayle, Wayne and Eleanor. George, in addition to many years of voluntary service to the Elmhurst-Roaring Brook Fire Company where he has served as president and trustee, was also the supervisor of Elmhurst Township.

George became Wesley Franklin's right hand in 1959 and continued in the same invaluable capacity to Howard Snowdon, Jr. when he purchased Wesley Franklin's funeral Home in 1965.

### **Howard (Sonny) Snowdon:**

Sonny Snowdon attended Penn State University before spending 3 ½ years in the Army Medical Corps in Germany. On his return from military service, he attended the Cincinnati College of Embalming and then entered into business with his father. Howard married Margaret Ichter and had two sons, Howard John and Raymond. Sonny was an avid golfer and had a love of flying. Sonny was a secretary and board member of the Green Ridge Bank. He was also a Member of the Board of Friendship House. When Sonny semi-retired, his sons Howard John and Ray took over the business.

When Raymond left the business in 1995 to pursue other interests, Sonny had been impressed by a young man named Kevin John Duffy. Kevin newly out of Simmons Mortuary College showed the instinctive ability to effectively communicate with someone in grief and the professionalism they were looking for. Sonny Snowdon hired Kevin to replace Raymond.

Sadly, Howard John Snowdon died suddenly in 2005. Kevin J. Duffy moved into the town of Moscow and began managing the business.



Howard John, Ray, George Smith and Sonny Snowdon

### **Kevin John Duffy:**



Kevin John Duffy was born in Wilkes Barre in 1961. He was raised in Conyngham, Pa. His father, John Duffy, was the only local doctor in the area. Kevin spent his childhood in a very active doctor's household. Kevin displayed at a very young age an ability to comfort people. Dr. John Duffy's experience with the medical field, hospitals and death led him to easily recognize Kevin's abilities of empathy. It was his father's suggestion that he become a funeral director, which Kevin knew fit him perfectly.

After attending Johnson and Wales College, Kevin entered into Simmons Mortuary College in New York. He began working for the Snowdon's in 1995. After 9 years of being employed by the Snowdons, Kevin had a brief excursion in the Lehigh Valley to work with the Kulik Funeral Homes to study in all the customs and grieving processes associated with Christian, Jewish and Muslim funerals.



Kevin and his wife, Lisa, with their children, live in Moscow above the funeral home. Kevin is a member of St. Catherine's Church of Sienna; he is on the cemetery board of Moscow, a member of the North Pocono Rotary, member of the North Pocono Free Masons, and a member of the North Pocono Cultural Society. They are actively involved in the community with their children attending schools and working in North Pocono.

Mr. Howard J. Snowdon, Mr. Wesley Franklin and Mr. Kevin J. Duffy were not generational Funeral Directors. This is not an easy business; it is an instinct and a calling to enter this field on your own. When the Snowdon's decided to sell the business, the decision came easily to them. Kevin John Duffy, they knew would follow the same path of empathy, professionalism and dignity as the original owners Howard J. Snowdon and Wesley Franklin.