



503 North Main Street | Culpeper, VA 22701 | Phone: 540.321.4778 or 844.891.5856 | Fax: 540.764.4763

Pallbearer **Etiquette**

By: Debby Mayne "The Spruce"

A pallbearer is someone who is selected by a close family member of the deceased to help carry the casket to the burial site. There are typically six to eight pallbearers, depending on the size and weight of the casket.

HONOR OF BEING A PALLBEARER

No one wants to be in the position of having to carry the casket of a loved one or friend. However, it must be done after someone passes away, so consider it an honor to be asked. Yes, a funeral is a somber occasion, but remember the person closest to the deceased trusts you with carrying his or her loved one to their final resting place.

PALLBEARER SELECTION

It's never easy being the person having to make decisions for a funeral after someone you love passes away. Surround yourself with people who care about you and can help you with whatever need arises. This includes selecting the best pallbearers.

Some people feel that it isn't proper to ask a family member to be a pallbearer. If you feel this way, choose very close friends you trust. The current thought on the etiquette of choosing pallbearers is that is; however, it is acceptable. Other people you may want to consider are business associates of the deceased, church members or neighbors.

Remember that the purpose of a pallbearer is to transport the remains of the deceased from one location to another. This can be from the hearse to the church or funeral home visitation room to the gravesite. Ultimately, the position of pallbearer requires dignity and respect.

Caskets can be quite heavy, so make sure all of the pallbearers are capable of lifting. They may have to walk over uneven ground, so female pallbearers should wear comfortable shoes and clothing that enables ease of movement.

For people who have chosen cremation, a traditional pallbearer is not necessary. However, you can choose honorary pallbearers who walk alongside and behind the person carrying the urn with the ashes.

TIPS FOR CHOOSING PALLBEARERS

- Most caskets have six or eight handles, depending on the size. You'll need to select one pallbearer per handle.
- Men or women may be pallbearers. When selecting them, make sure they can keep their emotions in check.
- Choose carefully. Most of the time, pallbearers are special to the family. They may be very close friends or family members, but you probably don't want to pick someone who has trouble holding back his or her grief. This includes grandchildren who are old enough for the responsibility, cousins, nieces, nephews, and members of an organization that was dear to the deceased's heart.
- Consider naming an honorary pallbearer. If someone isn't capable of helping carry the casket, give him the special honor and allow him or her to walk or ride his wheelchair beside the casket.
- Send thank you notes to all of the pallbearers after the funeral.

TIPS TO FOLLOWING IF YOU ARE A PALLBEARER

- When someone asks you to be a pallbearer, it means that he or she has confidence in you. Accept the honor and responsibility if at all possible.
- First, understand what an honor this is. Handle it with respect and dignity.
- Arrive at the funeral on time or early if requested.
- Dress conservatively – a dark suit with a tie for a man and a dark dress or suit for a woman.

- Listen to instructions and special requests from the funeral director and staff. Do what they ask.
- There is typically a special place for the pallbearers to sit during the funeral. Unless you have a valid reason for doing otherwise, stay with the rest of the group.
- Be supportive of family members and stay after the funeral to talk with them. This is the time to let them know what the deceased meant to you.

Tibbs Funeral Home & Cremation is available to help you. Please contact us if we can be of assistance.