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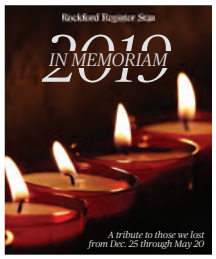
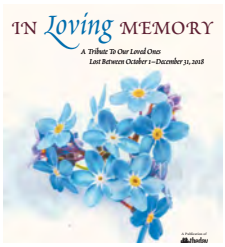
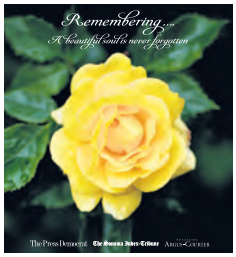
Best Practices Design and Content







Having pre-designed listing and page layout configurations make ordering an on-demand Tributes section a snap–literally a three-click process–since the obituary listing information is already in the content management system. However, there are still a few elements to prepare that will enhance the section and make funeral homes and your readers happy. Below are best design and content practices acquired from Tributes sections all over the country.

Decide how to handle photos

The Tributes templates are designed with a consistent size for photos, and the listings. Having photos fill these boxes, versus having white space between photo and border or irregular photo sizes, is more aesthetically pleasing. If the proportions of the headshot box in the original obituaries are the same proportions as the Tributes section, there is no problem.

Robert "Bobby" Almeida
June 1, 2019

However, if your newspaper is running irregular proportions, such as some square and some portrait, you will need to decide how to handle these. Cropping to fit a square format may result in cropping off tops of heads, ears, or chins. You can also create a border and accept the whitespace inside the box or choose a layout that does not have borders around the photos.

For obituaries submitted without a picture at all, choose some rotating photos. Here's how the **Press Democrat** in Santa Rosa, California uses art to replace missing photos in their Tributes sections.

Add an introduction

You are creating a new tradition for your community so tell them what it is about and why it is important. Here is an example from the **Northwest Herald** in Crystal Lake, Illinois.

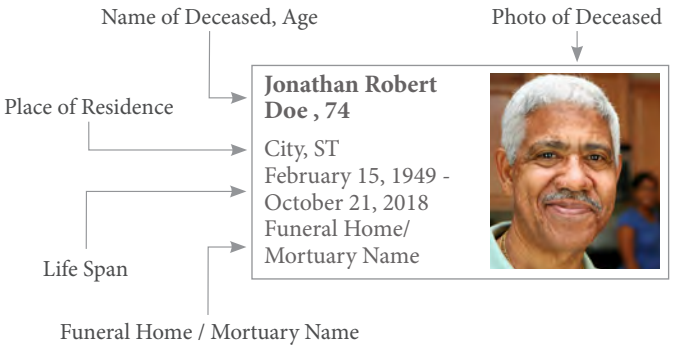
"During a family´s time of sorrow, we want to reflect on the lives of those who have recently passed. The Northwest Herald and nwherald.com offer a special quarterly feature to commemorate and honor those we have lost."

This is the way the **Northwest Herald** presented their introduction before the first Tributes listings ran.

Note: *The introduction also mentioned the frequency is quarterly. This helps the community build the new tradition.*

The **Springfield Republican** in Springfield, Massachusetts also has a nice introduction in their inside front cover.

ANATOMY OF A TRIBUTES LISTING



Collect the required data in the original obituary

The data fields you collect for the initial obituary affect which information flows into the individual listings in the Tributes sections. The most common fields are first name, last name, age, city, state, life span, and funeral home name. Non-AdPortal users need to ensure that these fields of data are present in their front-end order-taking system.

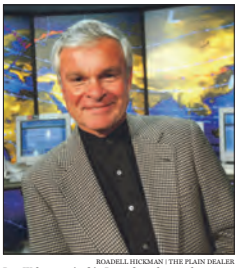
Include editorial obituaries for that time period

Editorial obituaries provide a "context timeline" for families and add interest for readers who can derive sense of place and time in the life of their community. In this example from the **Cleveland Plain Dealer**, headquartered in Brooklyn, Ohio TV-5 personality Don Webster's editorial obituary published as a notable death in their December 28, 2018 edition. Mr. Webster was a well-known weather forecaster and station manager for Cleveland, Ohio ABC affiliate WEWS-TV 5.

Notable death

Don Webster, popular TV-5 personality dies at 79

Tom Feran
tferan@plaind.com



ROADELL HICKMAN | THE PLAIN DEALER

Don Webster retired in December of 1999 after more then 35 years on the air at WEWS Channel 5.

Don Webster, who became one of the most popular personalities in Cleveland television history during 35 years at WEWS Channel 5, died Thursday at his home in Westlake. He was 79.

The unexpected death was announced by WEWS, but the cause was not immediately available.

Webster retired from the station 19 years ago this week, but he remained an on-air presence doing commercials and through a tour business with his wife, Kandi. The couple had returned to Cleveland after retiring to Hilton Head, South Carolina.

"He was one of the most humble and interesting people I've ever met in the business," said Channel 5 General Manager Steve Weinstein, "It's a sad day at Channel 5 and in Cleveland."

Webster's career was unsurpassed in its variety. Hired away from a TV job in his native Hamilton, Ontario, he arrived at TV-5 in September 1964 to host an "American Bandstand"-type series called "The Big Five Show" and a game show called "Quick as a Wink."

The latter lasted only 13 weeks in a ratings battle against "The Mike Douglas Show." But "Big Five," at 5 p.m. Saturdays, was such a hit that it was renamed "Upbeat" and nationally syndicated to 90 cities, including New York, Los Angeles and Chicago. It lasted until 1971.

Webster meantime added other duties, including booth announcing and delivering weather and sports. He hosted "It's Academic" (now known as "Academic Challenge"), nine years of live Ohio Lottery shows and even the final days of "The Gene Carroll Show," after the deaths of Carroll and two replacements on the local amateur hour.

He had a brief stint co-hosting "The Morning Exchange" before starting "Afternoon Exchange" with Wilma Smith in January 1978.

He served as assistant to the general manager and then station manager 1983-89. "Management was probably the low point," he recalled in 1999. "It started out well, but I ended up being a bean counter and bookkeeper more than a television person. That just didn't sit well."

He returned to the air in 1989 as the lead weather forecaster for "Newschannel 5," and said he "enjoyed it more than I ever did before because I realized it was what I should be doing."

He said he left it when he was only 60 because his father had died at 34, when Don was 11, from a previously undetected congenital heart problem.

"The reality is, you never know how much time you've got," Webster said. "When people ask me why are you [retiring], I think the answer is, I know I'm on the back nine, but I don't know what hole I'm on. That about sums it up — you've got to get out and do what you enjoy when you can."

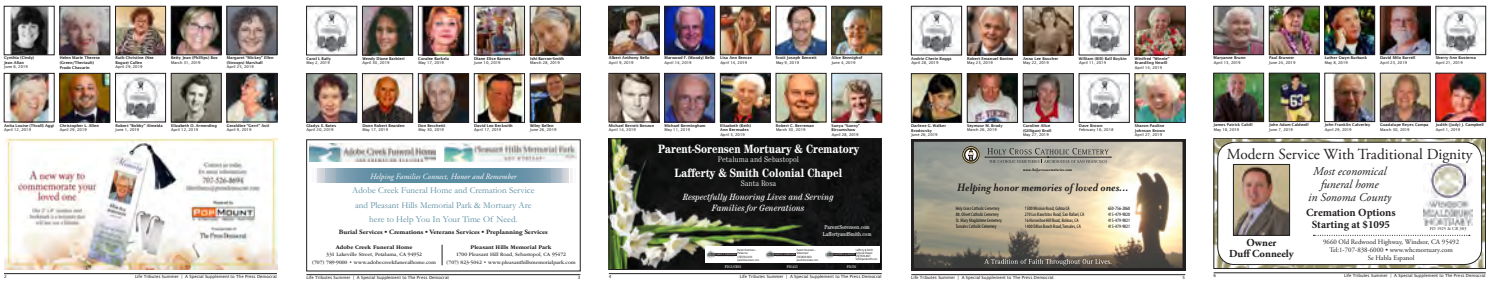
Information on survivors in addition to his wife and on services was not yet available.

Penn Live Patriot-News in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania devoted a whole page with a comprehensive look at the year 2018 in review in their January 13, 2019 *In Remembrance* edition. The article highlighted notable lives lost last year across various areas of interest including: Film & TV, music, politics, culture, and authors, to name a few. Some of the notable lives included: President George H.W. Bush, actors Burt Reynolds and Jerry Van Dyke, and music legend Aretha Franklin. Penn Live's *Rest in Peace 2018* article is a great example of adding interest and providing a "context timeline" for their readers.

Rest In Peace 2018

A look back at the year's final farewells.

by LINNEA CROWTHER | Legacy.com



Create modular ad sizes and limit positions

The easiest way to sell ads into the section is with a few set ad sizes and positions. The **Press Democrat** in Santa Rosa, California sold five half pages that ran on pages 3 to 7 of Tributes. Four were sold to funeral homes and crematoriums. A simple lay-out and set of options worked from them!

Add a directory of funeral homes in the back

A directory is a great way to give your funeral homes additional exposure. The **Northwest Herald** in Crystal Lake, Illinois runs a four-page directory of funeral homes. Other newspapers list the funeral homes on a single page.

Avoid alphabetic headers

The system already alphabetizes the first letter of last names. Adding alphabetic headers is overkill. Experience has shown that this adds a level of difficulty when it is time to make changes. Obits that "flow" alphabetically do not need a "letter header."

Ensure last names are in the last name field

Whoever is proofing the **original obituary** should make sure the last name is in the Last Name field so when the Tributes listings are flowed, changes will not be needed. Remember, Tributes listings sort alphabetically based on the Last Name field, so a little early proofreading will avoid confusion down the road.

Promote the next issue

In addition to the initial introduction, promotions let the community know that you have created a new tradition around honored people their community has lost. Will it be quarterly? Biannually? These can also be used as fill ads for irregular spaces, or unsold ad positions.