

Dodge



Reprinted from the *Dodge Magazine*, Summer 2015

Lighting: A Critical Factor

by Jay Rhodes, CFSP

Lighting, without a doubt, is one of the most critical factors to be considered whenever and wherever the casket will be open for viewing. Lighting makes or breaks any given system of cosmetics. But sometimes you just work with what you are given unaware of any other possibility.

I worked for my father and learned a lot about

Published by

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embalming and very little about cosmetics and lighting. Moving forward, when I opened my own funeral home, we started out using the same cosmetics and lighting that I was accustomed to using. I am actually embarrassed to tell you that we used an over-the-counter pancake foundation

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applied with a damp sponge. No highlights other than a little rouge from a box of “donated” cosmetics. Most every preparation room has one of those with at least a lipstick, mascara, rouge, and nail polish collection.

Once Dick Sanders introduced me to professional mortuary cosmetics, our work improved dramatically. We did our work with fluorescent lighting in the preparation room and controlled incandescent lighting up front. There were two incandescent chapel lamps along with incandescent wall sconces and chandeliers, all on rheostats.

Cosmetics were started internally with the use of tinting arterials. We added the appropriate Icterine dye as needed. Externally, French Rose Tint and Complexion Sprays were used for the base. Highlights were done with a translucent application of appropriate Kalochromes. Brunette Powder, as needed, finished the cosmetics. Final adjustments were made in the chapel using the rheostats to control light levels.

This cosmetic system also served our needs well out in the various churches. (Not the best all of the time, but most of the time). The idea of adjusting cosmetics to take into account each church’s lighting was a foreign concept.

I also knew nothing about cosmetic lighting. I learned this lesson the hard way when we delivered a casketed remains to a funeral home that used creams and cosmetic lighting. Needless to say, our work looked washed out. The receiving funeral home made the necessary adjustments using their cosmetics.

By now you might have come to the realization that we didn’t take advantage of the complete line of Dodge cosmetics. As a Dodge rep, I have now had the opportunity to learn how to use the rest of the product line and would like to thank all of my customers who have contributed to my continuing education. In this case, too many to name.

Speaking of education, I would also like to thank Elwood “Woody” Jones, one of my teachers at Miami Dade. He was perhaps the most animated instructor I ever

had and he firmly believed in the value of the funeral and the importance of what we do. His continuing education seminar on lighting gave me the incentive to take his show on the road. I have a light stand designed primarily for construction lighting, but I have converted it to a portable display that allows me to show how different lighting can be used to our advantage. I can show the effects of different cosmetic bulbs as well as the basic incandescent lighting.

In over 18 years as a Dodge rep, I have consulted with any number of funeral directors who wanted ideas on building or remodeling a funeral home. The consideration for lighting included the suggestion to not challenge themselves with outside light in any room where viewing might occur. Incandescent lighting on rheostats and/or cosmetic lighting was recommended. Cosmetic bulbs were recommended if cream-based cosmetics were being used.

Just recently I learned something that caught me by surprise. Dean Maloney, a funeral director and friend from the time he was in mortuary school, invited me to visit him at his new location. Formerly a cemetery chapel, the facility was being converted to a funeral home. He showed me around and when we got to the chapel, I asked him how he managed to deal with all of the natural light. The east side was all glass; the entry was basically all glass and much of the area behind the casket was glass. While the view of the property presents a panorama of the natural setting outside of the chapel, the natural light would normally challenge the cosmetic appearance of the deceased.

We walked to the front of the chapel and he stepped over to one side and turned on a lighting system that I had not seen used in a funeral home. Up in the ceilings, some twelve feet above us, there were three LED cans. I held out my hand and was surprised to see it pink up. He adjusted it up and down to show he could control any number of situations. To say the least, I was impressed.

Later, he shared with me a copy of the billing, and I was again surprised. The total, including installation, was less than the cost of two traditional chapel lamps. As a result of this experience, I was reminded of an experience with a unique lighting situation.

After selling my funeral homes, I stayed on a bit and was asked to oversee another chapel that presented three light values in one chapel. The east side featured green and gold stained glass, the north side was clear glass behind the casket, and on the west side there was a side room

with incandescent chandeliers that matched the ones in the chapel. Theoretically, we should have changed or adjusted the cosmetics twice a day to accommodate the differences in lighting as the sun made its way through the day. I was always happy when the sun set and the incandescent lighting prevailed. If I knew what I know now, I would have installed at least two LEDs at the front

of the chapel. Yes, the LEDs would need to be adjusted three times a day. But that would be a no-brainer since we would check the remains prior to each period of visitation and the funeral. If I had only known.

After Dean showed me the LED lighting system, I had another funeral director call me to figure out how to make the bodies that were being prepared in a central preparation center look better. Now in defense of central preps that serve a large number of chapels, it is literally impossible to use one cosmetic system for all chapels unless all of the chapels use the same décor and lighting. The problem in this case actually revolved around natural light.

While not necessarily convenient, adjustments to the makeup were necessary. But now they have another choice: install two LED lights.

I now include some mention of cosmetic lighting during embalming seminars. Typically I will ask a funeral director to stand in a corner of the well-lit preparation room. Standing in the opposing corner across the room some twenty feet away, I will aim my LED at the funeral director’s face. Even with all of the fluorescent lighting, the LED will create a nice shade of pink.

Additional considerations for the how, where, when and why of LED lighting will be included in a future article.

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