

EDITOR'S DESK

BY EDWARD J. DEFORT

For Every “Six-Seven,” There Is a “23 Skidoo”

The 2025 NFDA International Convention & Expo had its share of innovation and discoveries that we hopefully will put into practice over the next year and beyond. But you know what? Not one person came up to me and said “six-seven” while pretending to balance a scale with their hands.

The “six-seven” phenomenon is all the rage among Gen Alpha and the youngest of Gen Z. My 10-year-old niece made the “six-seven” motion at me recently, and my only response was, “What?” I asked her what she was trying to tell me, and she replied, “Nothing.” And that is true – the combination of the gesture and expression has no specific meaning outside of internet memes.

The very fact that it has no meaning is supposedly what makes the trend so funny, as it causes confusion for older people, parents and teachers.

The point is, every generation has its thing, so know where the other person is coming from. As the NFDA research discussed during the opening general session revealed, different generations speak differently about funeral services and end-of-life arrangements. This is because their views are shaped by distinct cultural values, life experiences, technological fluency and economic realities. And it's not as though funeral directors always use professional jargon; even common words might have different meanings to different generations.

The shift in language and focus re-

flects the departure from highly traditional, ritualistic services and the newfound emphasis on personalized, flexible, value-driven commemorations.

Most of these barriers are surmountable when adequate time is taken to explain each part of a service. For example, if you ask whether family members are interested in a celebrant, they might assume a celebrant is a religious speaker and respond accordingly. By mentioning outright that a celebrant is not necessarily a religious speaker but rather there to drive conversation and offer remarks about the deceased, you might change their answer.

A common thread in the research is that older respondents tend to adhere to traditional observations of funerals, whereas younger generations do not have much experience with funerals at all. What this means is that there might have to be some learning for the younger generations and unlearning for the older ones.

The next time my niece hits me with a “six-seven,” I will respond with the classic “23 skidoo.” This is an expression that became popular more than 120 years ago. Back in the day, “23” was slang for “go away,” and skidoo was a version of “skedaddle,” which means “get going.” At least this expression has some kind of meaning! And when my niece looks at me with the same quiz-zical expression that I had after hearing “six-seven,” I will simply say, “I think I've made my point.”

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