

# The Obituary

By Allin Kingsbury

An obituary may contain the following:

- Name of the deceased
- Birth date and birth place
- Place of residence
- Place of death
- Deceased members of the family
- Surviving members of the family  
(these often include parents, siblings, spouse, children, step-children, grandchildren, and sometimes close friends)
- Names of spouses of children
- Current places of residence of survivors
- Date of marriage
- Place of marriage
- Maiden name of spouse
- Parents of spouse
- Important events in the life of the deceased
- Former places of residence of deceased
- Employers of the deceased
- Military service of the deceased
- Funeral arrangements (often indicates religious affiliation)
- Place of burial
- Funeral home (a source of additional records)

Sampleobituary:

**Agnes L. Bialke – 97**

**Foley, Minnesota**

**June 7, 1913-October 28, 2010**

Agnes L. Bialke, age 97, of Foley, MN, died Thursday October 28, 2010 at Fairview Northland Regional Hospital, Princeton, MN.

Mass of Christian Burial will be 10:30 a.m. Monday, November 1, 2010 at St., Elizabeth's Catholic Church, Brennyville, MN. The Rev. Dan Walz will officiate. Burial will be in the parish cemetery.

Friends may call from 4 to 9 p.m. Sunday at the Foley Funeral Home in Foley, MN and 1 hour before services at church. Christian Mothers will pray at 7 p.m. Sunday at the funeral home. Arrangements were made by the Foley Funeral Home, Foley, MN. Agnes Bialke was born June 7, 1913 in St. Wendel, Minnesota to Benedict and Mary (Schwartz) Lancello. She married Jerome Bialke November 20, 1933 in St Wendel She had resided in rural Foley for the majority of her life. She is the last surviving sibling out of 11 in her family. She was a member of St. Elizabeth's Catholic Church.

She is survived by her daughters and son, JoAnne (Ronald) Kletsch, Esther, IA; Carol (Charles) Longley, Big Lake, MN; Jerome Jr. (Debra), Foley, MN; 13 grandchildren and 24 great grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband, June 9, 1984, 10 brothers and sisters and 4 grandchildren.

This obituary was found with a search for Ronald Kletsch. It provided the maiden name of his wife, their place of residence, the name of his wife's mother. The husband of Agnes Bialke is also named along with the date of their marriage, and we learn that he is deceased at the time of her death. We also learn that the family is Roman Catholic, and that Agnes is buried in the parish cemetery,

Sample obituary #2:

### **Lorrayne D. O'Neill**



O'Neill, Lorrayne D. age 91, of Deephaven passed away peacefully on September 18, 2012, surrounded by loving family and caregivers. Preceded in death by parents; husband, Donald; brothers, Ralph and Orville Hollenbeck; sister, Harriet Howe. Survived by daughters, Sherrill Bock, Lynda Carr and husband Paul, Marleen Smith and husband Jeff, Janice Weber and husband Ken, Karla Hennessy; 11 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren; brother, Everett Hollenbeck. Funeral Monday, September 24, 11 AM at Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, 18360 Minnetonka Blvd., Deephaven. Visitation Sunday, September 23 from 5-7 PM at David Lee Funeral Home, 1220 East Wayzata Blvd., Wayzata and 1 hour prior to the funeral on Monday at church. Interment at Fort Snelling Cemetery. Memorials to Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Presbyterian Homes Chaplain Ministries. David Lee Funeral Home Wayzata 952-473-5577 [www.davidleefuneralhome.com](http://www.davidleefuneralhome.com)

Published in Star Tribune from September 21 to September 23, 2012

This obituary was found at the Web site of the funeral home. It has a picture of the deceased which is becoming common with obituaries posted on the Internet. Although there was expectation that funeral homes would make earlier obituaries available on their Web sites when they were created, but that has not happened. Most funeral homes created Web sites about 2003. Obituaries before 2003 are not available on the Internet unless they are part of a family history, they are part of a collection of obituaries and are posted on the Internet by a genealogical or historical society, or are posted with a collection of gravestones on a site like [findagrave.com](http://findagrave.com). Obituaries are also included in daily and weekly newspapers and some monthly periodicals which may have been scanned and are available on the Internet.



## Sampl of a funeral home record:

**Name:** Janice Marie Ratzlaff  
**Gender:** Female  
**Age at Death:** 56  
**Residence:** Bakersfield, Alabama, USA  
**Date of Birth:** 7 Nov 1955  
**Date of Death:** 17 Nov 2011  
**Source Location:** Rainsville, Alabama, USA  
**Spouse:** Joel Ratzlaff  
**Children:** Stephanie Dobrenen of Bakersfield and Julie Woodward of Tehachapi  
**Parents:** Jack Oyler  
[Lola Oyler]  
Bart Honeycutt and Bob Honeycutt, both of Modesto, California, and Marilyn Byrd of Groveland, California; Bruce, Jack, and Henry, all of Madera; Denise Oyler and Dana Oyler; Joanna; John

### **Brothers and Sisters:**

### **Full Obituary:**

Janice Marie Ratzlaff of Tehachapi passed away following a long and difficult illness, at her daughters home in Bakersfield on Nov. 17, at the age of 56 years and 10 days, going home to her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. A graveside service will be conducted Wednesday, November 23, at Tehachapi Cemetery, with a memorial service following on Saturday, November 26, at Country Oaks Baptist Church in Tehachapi. Janice was the eldest child born to Jack and Lola Oyler of Fresno, California, on Nov. 7, 1955. She grew up on a cattle ranch in rural Madera County, attended Madera schools, and graduated from Madera High in 1973. She went on to graduate from Reedley College in 1975 and Pacific College in Fresno in 1977, with a [bachelors degree in](#) social work. She married Joel Ratzlaff of Shafter, in Fresno, on Aug. 20, 1977, the two having met when both attended Pacific College. The couple soon thereafter made their home in Milpitas, California, where their union was blessed with two daughters, one of whom she home-schooled from 4 th grade through high school. They relocated to the Tehachapi area in 1989, where they lived through to the present day in Bear Valley Springs. Janice had a warm and bubbly personality, making many

close friends wherever she lived. She was a devoted daughter, wife, and mother, who always put others first. She was a remarkably giving and loving person who touched many lives, even during the darkest days of her illness. She had the gift of hospitality, was an excellent cook, and loved to plan parties for her friends. Janice and husband Joel enjoyed much travel during their married lives, some with family members, to the East Coast, Washington State, Texas, as well as cruises down the Pacific Coast to Ensenada, Mexico, and through the western Caribbean. She especially enjoyed the many short trips she and family members took over the years to the Central Coast of California. Her favorite pastime was to sing, both solo and in groups, which she demonstrated through many years of participation both in community choirs and in church choirs where her family attended worship services. She was active in Kern County Republican Party politics and belonged to the Tehachapi Congress of Republicans, participating in local Central Committee activities, attending political conferences, and registering voters. Janice is survived by her husband of 34 years; daughters, Stephanie Dobrenen of Bakersfield and Julie Woodward of Tehachapi; grandson, Elliott Dobrenen; as well as brothers, Bruce, Jack, and Henry, all of Madera; stepsiblings, Bart Honeycutt and Bob Honeycutt, both of Modesto, California, and Marilyn Byrd of Groveland, California; sons-in-law, Brian Dobrenen and David Woodward; sisters-in-law, Denise Oyler and Dana Oyler; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was preceded in death by her father; mother; sister, Joanna; and brother, John. Janice, the loving warmth and brilliance you emanated throughout your life will be sorely missed by all those whose lives you so greatly blessed during your sojourn on this earth. We dearly love and miss you.



The funeral home record is similar to the obituary. These records are kept on file and there are directories of funeral homes that can be consulted when the place of death is known. The search may not be straightforward when the burial is not near the place of death.

## Sample of a Findagrave.com listing:

### **Albertina Blanche *Poirier* Hutchins**

Birth: Oct. 1, 1887  
Death: Jan. 24, 1984, USA

Home in 1920: Fort Simcoe, Yakima, Washington

Household Members:

Ordia R Leaming 38  
Albertine Leaming 28  
Francis Leaming 5  
Ordia R Leaming 4  
Homaline Leaming 2  
Will Leaming 5 months

groom: I B Parrott

bride: Blanch Leaming

date of marriage: 10 Oct 1942

place of marriage: , Thurston, Washington

date of [license](#): 04 Oct 1942

marriage recording place: , Thurston, Washington

Washington State County Marriages, 1858-1950

Groom: Arthur William Hutchins

Bride: Blanche Barrott (Parrott)

Date of Marriage: 03 Nov 1946

Place of Marriage: , Thurston, Washington

Date of License: 29 Oct 1946

Marriage Recording Place: , Thurston, Washington

Collection: Washington State County Marriages, 1858-1950

Family links:

Spouses:

[Ordia R. Leaming \(1881 - 1944\)](#)

[Ira Blaine Parrott \(1880 - 1946\)](#)

[Arthur W. Hutchins \(1892 - 1958\)](#)

Children:

[Francis Bernadette Teresa Leaming Powers \(1914 - 1968\)\\*](#)

[Ordia R Leaming \(1915 - 1996\)\\*](#)

Burial:

[Odd Fellows Memorial Park and Mausoleum](#)

Tumwater

Thurston County

Washington, USA

Plot: block 40 lot 49

Maintained by: [Bill and Elaine Schrock](#)

Originally Created by: [B Wernex](#)

Record added: Jun 02, 2009

Find A Grave Memorial# 37856486

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ALBERTINA B. HUTCHINS

OCT. 1, 1887 · JAN. 24, 1984





This is one of the better listings on Findagrave.com. It has pictures of the grave marker, links to grave stone listings for other family members, and a lot of information about the deceased which is not found on many other grave stone listings. A few Findagrave.com listings include a complete obituary, old family pictures, and images of documents.

### **Sample obituary # 3**

#### **Harold Protsman**

Harold R. Protsman, 82, 6951 Oregon Road, Celina, died at 7:50 a.m. Nov. 12, 2005, at Celina Manor Nursing Home.

He was born March 31, 1923, in Union Township, to Harley R. and Flossie Bogart Protsman.

Surviving are a nephew, Kenneth (Mariann) Pubentz, Celina and two great-nephews.

Deceased are a sister, Gladene Pubentz; and brother-in-law, Robert Pubentz.

He retired as a teacher from Four County Joint Vocational School, Archbold, and worked as an insurance agent and as a realtor for Mary Hale, Celina. He was a veteran of World War II, serving in the Air Force and Infantry. He graduated with bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Bowling Green State University. He was a member of the Mendon and Rockford Masonic Lodge and the Valley of Dayton Antioch Shriners.

Services are 11 a.m. Wednesday at W.H. Dick & Sons Funeral Home, Celina. Burial will be in North Grove Cemetery, Celina.

Calling is 7-8:30 p.m. Tuesday at the funeral home.

Contributions can be made to Celina Area Visiting Nurses & Hospice.

As can be deduced from the example, Harold Protsman never married. However, one should not assume that there was no marriage if a wife was not mentioned. There may have been no children in a marriage ending with a bitter divorce.

A divorce will complicate the interpretation of the obituary. For example, there may be children with a surname different from that of the father. These may be step children or they may be actual children of the deceased who took the surname of the second husband of the mother. To be sure, one must look at all the birth dates and marriages and arrange the individuals into separate families for each married couple.

# Where I have found find obituaries on the Internet

Ancestry.com	Obituary collection Rutherford Hayes Library index of Ohio obituaries
Rootsweb	Obituary Times Index
Local newspaper	some newspapers have Web sites online, some have an archive available online. There are Web sites that have newspapers scanned and indexed. Many public libraries have old local newspapers, either original issues or microfilm copies.
Find-a-grave	Many entries have a picture of the gravestone and an obituary posted.
Mortuary	Most mortuaries have a Web which includes obituaries.
Funeral Home Records	Funeral Homes keep a file of all their funerals including the obituary
Family trees	Some family trees published on the Internet include obituaries.
Family sources	Obituary clippings are often kept with old family pictures
Monthly Publications	Trade magazines, organizational newsletters, fraternal organization monthlies sometimes include obituaries of members or officers

Note 1: The custom of posting obituaries on the Internet began about 2003. Postings by mortuaries, newspapers and the Ancestry.com obituary collection have almost no obituaries before the year 2003.

Note 2: Obituaries on the Internet from before 2003 are usually added by a family historian as part of a family tree. The only abundant sources of old obituaries are newspapers, and many newspapers are not available on the Internet.

## Finding information not in the obituary

Obituaries are a good source of names and relationships. Except for the deceased, they do not give you birth and death dates, divorce information and seldom give marriage details. These are available on the Internet, even for living individuals.

The following are places I have used and are not intended to be a comprehensive list of possible sources:

Death Date:	Search the Social Security Death Index
Age years:	People Finder Web sites (there are many of these) I like usa-people-search.com
Places lived	US public record index, volume 1 and 2 (Ancestry.com)
Exact birth date:	US public record index, volume 1 and 2
Marriage data	A few states have marriages online. See Ancestry.com and FamilySearch.org.
More personal data	try Google

Good Luck