

Love's Imprint

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For John H. Reischman and his brothers, David and Vincent, the death of their father, John, in November brought a search for solace, a casket and ultimately, a monument for his burial plot in Coram.

John H. Reischman, 38, of Centereach, and his family found all that at Moloney Funeral Home, where they'd made funeral arrangements. But they also encountered something of a surprise at the Lake Ronkonkoma facility: "There's a shop downstairs; who would have thought of it? Chains, crosses, plaques," Reischman said.

A gift shop?

"Well, it makes life a lot easier," he said.

Though the Reischmans perused the inventory without making any further purchases, James Manzella sought, and found, some inspiration there: After the death of his father, Jim, in June, the Farmingdale resident selected something from the shop that would bear not just his father's memory but his very imprint.

"It is a thumbprint; it is a little memory," said Manzella, 28. To create the gold or silver pendant, tie tack or other jewelry, the funeral home takes an imprint from the deceased as a wax casting that is used to create a keepsake.

"I thought, wow, that is a very cool idea," said Manzella, who hopes to utilize his father's thumbprint for pendants for himself and his mother, Lana. It's all the more meaningful, he said, because his father, a construction electrician, "had very big hands; he was a big guy."

Peter Moloney, one of the funeral home's partners, said the fourth-generation family business opened gift shops - an emerging industry trend - at four of their five locations to "soften the approach" of buying at a time of death. Jewelry featuring a thumbprint or ashes "keeps the person close to the individual's heart."

Manzella is not sure when he'll have the items produced. "But I know," he said, "I will wear it."