



Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard
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One Facebook post got a lot of attention recently from the people in our community as news from the mortuary gained dozens and dozens of comments. People were excited to see that something historical has rolled into town.

Ryan Stevens, local mortician, has purchased a vintage hearse and it is a beauty!



The 1939 Packard is in great shape. The emblem across the front reads, “Funeral Coach II” with another one along the hood that says, “Henney”. Ryan was quick to point out that was “Henney” not “Hemi”. The exterior black paint shows only a few age-related cracks on the fenders and I only saw one very small rust spot. The interior has its original rose-colored velvet upholstery.

The engine is in running order, I was told, but Ryan wants to have it checked over thoroughly before driving it very far. He

opened the hood, so I could see the motor. The hood had a hinge down the center from front to back and opened from each side. This engine even I understood as it was very simply constructed and things like the spark plugs were easily visible. Nothing fancy to go wrong here. The engine is a powerful 120 horse power!

An interesting feature was that this was the first hearse to use swivels to give it a three-way entrance to the rear compartment. Caskets can be loaded and unloaded more easily and to either side or to the rear for convenience.



Ryan bought this hearse from a man in Sonoma, California. The history of where it was used is uncertain, but Ryan searched for quite some time before locating one. It seems there is an interest in mortuaries to buy new coaches that look like old ones at enormous prices, but Ryan wanted the real thing. There are only two or three antique coaches being used by morticians in the country and he wanted to be on this list.

Plans are underway to have it completely restored to its original beauty. This will be a long process as companies who do this work are in high demand and have long waiting lists. It will be a while before this hearse is actually in use, but it will someday be seen driving down the streets of Fillmore on its way to the cemetery.