

When Valarie Rose was growing up it wasn't common for women to have a career in funeral services. But even the disapproval of her parents and the fact it was a male dominated field didn't stop her.

"It was an all-male type of business," said Rose. "Now it's predominantly female."

While she was in high school, Rose knew she wanted to be a mortician.

"In high school my nickname was Morticia," said Rose.

After high school, Rose attended college at San Francisco Mortuary School for a year. There she learned embalming, funeral directing and counseling.

Throughout college, she worked part time at a mortuary in the Bay Area.

"I started out being interested in embalming," said Rose. "But I found out that I liked working with families."

Rose found it rewarding to help others in a time of need.

"You get a ton of satisfaction," said Rose.

Rose graduated from her program as the only female in her class. She found support from her classmates, despite her gender.

Once she finished college, she worked as a mortician at East Lawn Mortuary for 25 years, but now she is professor and program chair at American River College.

"I never even considered teaching," said Rose. "I never thought I liked teaching."

Her teaching career began when she was approached by the prior department chair while still working at East Lawn Mortuary.

She began her teaching career as an adjunct. About two years later, the department chair job opened and she was offered the position. Without any hesitation, Rose took it.

Rose said she does miss embalming and funeral directing, but her love for teaching has grown.

“I love Professor Rose,” said first-year funeral education student Tearra Johnson. “She’s easy to talk to [and] she answers any and all questions.”

As a professor and the department chair, Rose can give back even more to the community and mortuary industry.

“She’s amazing,” said second-year funeral education student Nina Ortega. “She’s full of knowledge.”