



# Biloxi Lions Club

## LIONS ROAR

Founded February 18, 1924

<http://biloxilionsclub.org>



1st Edition

September 2019

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### David vs Goliath

It's a strange title, but it comes to mind for this modern day tale of a small local businessman against an international conglomerate.

Our first speaker in September, Jeffery O'Keefe, CEO Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Homes, Inc., shared this real life David vs Goliath story in which his father, Jerry O'Keefe, started and finished with an unbelievable ending.

While the whole affair was many years in duration, it started in 1994 when Jerry filed a \$5 million dollar breach of contract lawsuit against Canadian based funeral home consolidators, The Loewen Group, over insurance sales/purchase agreement.

The 1995 Jackson, MS, month long trial ended with the jury awarding Bradford-O'Keefe not only the \$5m but also added punitive damages reaching \$500m (8 of the 12 jurors wanted to award \$1B.)

Continued on page 2...



Jeff O'Keefe, CEO  
Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Homes

### UPCOMING DATES, EVENTS AND PROGRAMS

SEPT 11	Lauren Williams, Gulf Coast Community Foundation
SEPT 14	MS Diabetes Foundation Walk, Jones Park
SEPT 18	Lion Rev. Elijah Mitchell, MS Sight and Hearing
SEPT 19	Board Mtg, noon, McAlister's Restaurant
SEPT 25	Loyal Owens, Depression Screening Month, Board Mts Review
OCT 2	Kurt Allen, COO Mississippi Aquarium
OCT 16	Brian Lamar, Naval Birthday/Naval History

*Meetings are noon every Wednesday at the One Thirty One Lameuse, Downtown Biloxi*

## September 4, 2019 Club Meeting Recap

- ◆ Meeting called to order by Lion President Matt; Lions Darrell, Jerry and Tom Wicks led us in song; Lion Tom Wicks led the Pledge of Allegiance; and Lion Jerry offered prayer
- ◆ 50/50 was won by Lion Dorothy; no King of Clubs Progressive
- ◆ Lion Harvey reminded members who can assist at the MS Diabetes Foundation's Diabetes Awareness Walk at Jones Park on Saturday, Sept 14, that it starts at 10 am. Those wishing to assist in cooking the hot dogs to be there about 8 am.
- ◆ Lion Tadd told members the Sight Committee is continuing with eye class collections and new collection boxes have been ordered and will be available soon
- ◆ Our fall NUT SALES will start next week. Lion Melinda will have the forms available. Biloxi Club members start contacting your past customers to let them know.
- ◆ Pres. Matt reminded members that the trial 1 month period at our new noon venue, 131 Lameuse, will be up next week. At the Sept 11 meeting there will be a questionnaire for each member to complete on their opinion of the new venue, or should the club go back to the Yacht Club.
- ◆ Pres. Matt asked the club board members to please make plans to stay after the Sept 11 meeting for a few minutes to canvas the questionnaire
- ◆ Lion Jerry introduced our guest speaker, Jeff O'Keefe, Bradford-O'Keefe Funeral Homes

Continued from front page...

A 5th generation small business owner in Biloxi, MS (David) brings down an international

corporation (Goliath) with the largest State of Mississippi jury awarded monetary verdict up to that time.

The Loewen Group knowing it could not pay the award verdict of \$500m, or the later agreed upon settlement amount of \$175m, filed for bankruptcy protection.

But wait, there is more to finish this story. Throughout this story I have used the term international conglomerate as The Loewen Group was, as I mentioned, based out of Toronto, Canada. Its holdings in the US reached over 700 funeral homes and 109 cemeteries. After their lost 1995 jury trial Loewen fires back saying it did not have a fair trial in the United States or in the State of Mississippi. Loewen cries that its business practices were protected under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA.) The feds launch their own investigation against The Loewen Group for violations of anti-trust and discrimination laws while they were during business in the United States.

Jeff closes his talk on this fascinating family story by saying that the drama in month long trial was right out of a John Grishman novel. And, in fact, there was talk at one time of making a movie. Who knows, tomorrow is another day... Editor's note...Jeff's story made me want to know more. Through Goggle I found numerous articles of how a small Mississippi businessman brought down the #1 funeral home business consolidators. Several articles covered how the trial and how verdict had even White House concerned on how it would effect the newly signed NAFTA. I think I read them all!



It was learned at last week's meeting that Lion Dick Wilson had been admitted to Greenbrier in D'Iberville for rehab services.

The Biloxi Lions say...

GET WELL Lion Dick

We miss you!