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MAGAZINE

November/December 2014

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Casket, Vault &
Shipping Special Issue

Wishing You a Prosperous and
Happy New Year!!!



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with a Southern Accent Since 1919

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notes from the editor

by John Yopp

In this season of sharing, giving, expressing gratitude, forgiveness and love may we all remember the bountiful blessings that we are to be thankful for. I wish you a meaningful and love-filled Christmas and Holiday season and a successful and prosperous New Year ahead. May your days be filled with love, joy, growth and inspiration.

The short story below has no author but understand it is a true story and one that we all should take heed to that our perceptions should be heart felt rather than judgmental. This story is a prime example of how we must view every situation with an open mind and be free of judgment.

THE GOLD WRAPPING PAPER - An Inspiring Christmas Story

Once upon a time, there was a man who worked very hard just to keep food on the table for his family. This particular year a few days before Christmas, he punished his little five-year-old daughter after learning that she had used up the family's only roll of expensive gold wrapping paper.

As money was tight, he became even more upset when on Christmas Eve he saw that the child had used all of the expensive gold paper to decorate one shoebox she had put under the Christmas tree. He also was concerned about where she had gotten the money to buy what was in the shoebox.

Nevertheless, the next morning the little girl, filled with excitement, brought the gift box to her father and said, "This is for you, Daddy!"

As he opened the box, the father was embarrassed by his earlier overreaction, now regretting how he had punished her.

But when he opened the shoebox, he found it was empty and again his anger flared. "Don't you know, young lady," he said harshly, "when you give someone a present, there's supposed to be something inside the package!"

The little girl looked up at him with sad tears rolling from her eyes and whispered: "Daddy, it's not empty. I blew kisses into it until it was all full."

The father was crushed. He fell on his knees and put his arms around his precious little girl. He begged her to forgive him for his unnecessary anger.

An accident took the life of the child only a short time later. It is told that the father kept this little gold box by his bed for all the years of his life. Whenever he was discouraged or faced difficult problems, he would open the box, take out an imaginary kiss, and remember the love of this beautiful child who had put it there.

In a very real sense, each of us has been given an invisible golden box filled with unconditional love and kisses from our children, family, friends and God. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold.

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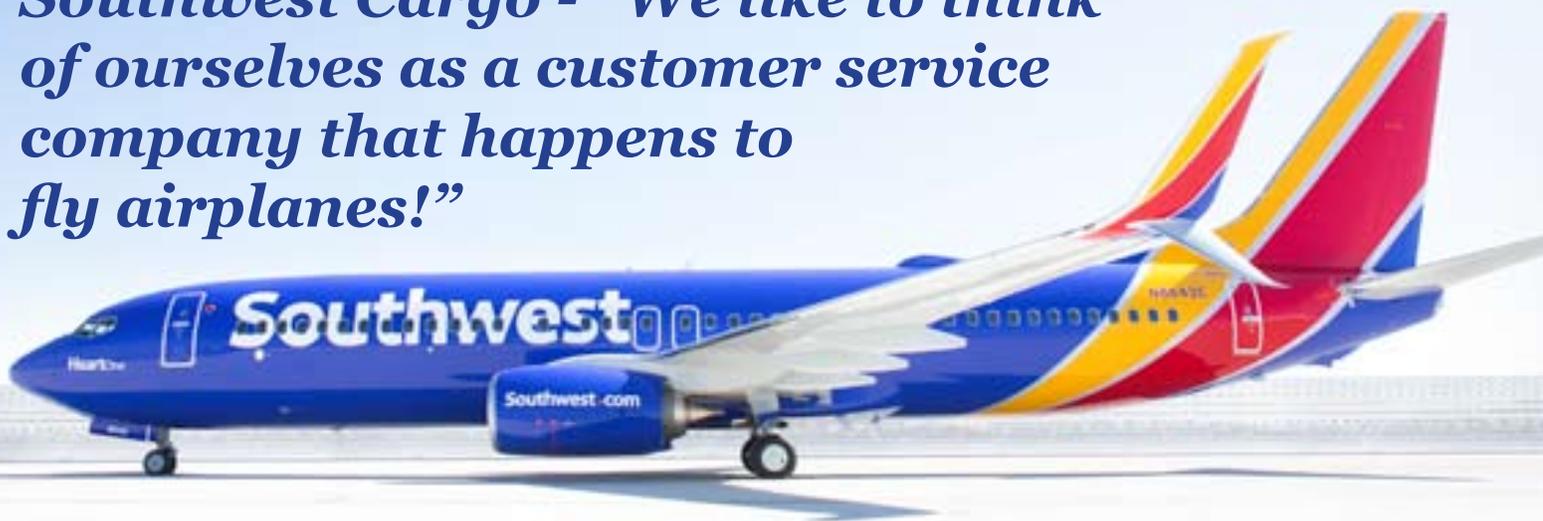
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Southwest Cargo - “We like to think of ourselves as a customer service company that happens to fly airplanes!”



by: Amy McKinney, Southwest Airlines Cargo and Charters Business Consultant

Did you ever wonder why Southwest Airlines, America’s largest domestic airline, waited so long to get into shipping human remains or what it might have taken to implement a new service to the standards Southwest prides itself on? Did it seem strange that for years, we never took care of your industry? For years, industry leaders like you in conjunction with local civic leaders told us that there was a need within your communities for and better choices. Throughout the last decade, your industry has faced many challenges. In smaller cities only served by Southwest and smaller regional jets, funeral home owners struggled with time and costs associated with using a hearse and paying someone to drive across the country to transport a client’s loved one to their final resting place. Others within the industry were asking for more options in a limited air cargo industry. Ironically, consolidation within the airline industry was providing fewer options. In an era where only the strong survived, we saw several airlines merge. Remember TWA? How about Northwest, Continental, or America West? The demand for Southwest only grew stronger.

Until five years ago, Southwest was not one of your options. Southwest only occasionally handled the transportation of military human remains or remains for employees or their immediate loved ones as a courtesy. The process was complex. It was very manual and not suited for large numbers of these types of shipments. Southwest had a number of challenges to overcome before we would reach the quality of service we wanted. The necessary technology was not in place. A booking process was imperative to the success of the service. Booking offers customers a specific flight, schedule information they can pass along, and tracking options to ensure the highest level of service to the funeral home’s client. Booking allows Southwest to ensure there is space on the airplane to accommodate the shipment and that stations are properly staffed and notified. To add to this, our operation was not suited for shipping human remains. Imagine handling a human remains shipment during the famous Southwest ten minute turn of our early days (a “turn” is how long the airplane is on the ground between flights). In general, human remains are relatively heavy and bulky compared to most air freight yet need to be handled with the utmost care. We were challenged with how we could effectively handle such shipments while keeping our focus on safety, customer service, efficient turn times, and on time performance. Until we could do it right, we decided we would not do it.

Over time, things changed. Southwest developed a system that allowed us to book freight. We had the technology to forecast available space on our flights and set aside space for booked human remains shipments. Bigger planes filled with more passengers meant longer turn times. We had more time to capably and safely handle the loading and unloading of human remains up to 500 pounds. The time was ripe for change. We went to local



industry leaders to ensure we could launch a service that would be competitive within the industry. Steve Martin, the president of the Texas Funeral Director Association, was a key part of the business development discussion and helped Southwest gain insight into the process, customer expectations, and any potential challenges a client may bring up. We then worked with different teams within Southwest to create the best customer experience.

Our Care Center changed their setup to allow booking through a dedicated care line. As the bookings came in over the first few months, it was apparent that we needed to become a seven day a week Customer Care operation. Within less than a year, the Care Center hours of operation were extended and we were able to accept bookings seven days a week which helped us to provide better customer service.



Other changes were necessary in our operation to effectively service this unique customer segment. Southwest thought through the process from time of tender to unloading at point of arrival by gaining insight into the best equipment to take care of this shipment. Although certainly cheaper, we quickly decided not to rely on existing forklifts in our facilities. We had a high expectation of the level of respect and care we wanted each client's loved one to receive. Southwest made an investment and worked with our Ground Support Equipment team to develop customized carts and dollies that would create a caring and respectful way to transport the casket and with a safe loading process.

Our Ground Support Equipment team came up with the idea of recreating the unused mail carts in our system. This was a way of using existing assets to keep the cost down for Southwest. We started with just a few cities in our system to see what would happen before we delivered carts systemwide. The mail carts were shipped

to both Phoenix & Las Vegas shops. No matter which shop the approved cart was launched from, we wanted an end result that would be an effective and reliable cart that the funeral home owner would see a benefit from. The Southwest shop in Houston was asked to produce the dollies. They developed two models, one for the small scales we have in the system and one for the standard size scales. Houston Ground Support Equipment team has now produced our entire dolly inventory, with 128 in the system. As of 2014, we have a total of 187 carts in all our domestic cities, including one in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

We refined our service and gained insight into a number of things including the impact to each process within our operation, the benefit of a dedicated line into our care center, and the unique equipment ideal for this type of shipment. Starting off with a test customer, we compiled their feedback with what we learned from our employees, which helped outline what was necessary. Throughout the test, our ramp, cargo, and operations employees offered the level of service required, which was no surprise!

The last challenge was to get the word out. After decades of not allowing human remains shipments, we needed to tell people about our new service, Southwest Support. We partnered with local, state, and national associations. We attended countless trade shows. We put messaging out in trade publications. We visited with folks. Quickly the word got out – Southwest Airlines was in the business of transporting human remains. We officially launched Southwest Support in November 2009.

We are now celebrating five years of our Southwest Support service. So, what was the easiest part of the launch? Our people. Southwest Airlines was already known in the transportation industry for our excellence in air cargo. As Southwest evaluated the possibility of transporting human remains, it was clear that our employees would offer a great option for you and your clients. Our people are well known for the level of care and respect we provide for each and every shipment. Customers continue to benefit from America's largest domestic carrier, full of friendly employees offering a level of service and smiles incomparable in the industry. We like to think of ourselves as a customer service company that happens to fly airplanes. And, our top priority is to serve you. As we continue to grow our business, our hope is that we provide you with new destinations to consider, a quality and standard you come to rely on, and a hassle-free service that keeps Southwest as your air cargo carrier of choice.

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Making Burial Vaults Personal

by: Wayne Stellmach,
Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc.



68% of burial families are interested in personalization of the burial vault.

➔ Does this line up with your percentage of personalized burial vaults? ➔

Industry journals are rife with articles and examples about the desire of many families to create highly-personalized services for their loved ones. Funeral directors only need to look at their own experience with families to affirm this. Years ago one didn't even see photo boards at visitations where now it's rare to see a service without physical or digital photos. Many services today include family and friends relating stories of their loved one where in the past it was solely the minister who spoke and wove a few words about the deceased into an otherwise routine homily. Personal mementos are often placed around the room or even with the deceased. Their favorite music is often played. A casket may be chosen that reflects the spirit of the person. And yet the burial vault is so often provided as a bland box with no personalization – even though many people who have experienced a graveside service that incorporated a personalized burial vault are deeply touched by this final tribute.

“We never knew we could do this. We took pictures of the vault, we participated, we cried, we laughed... we're so grateful you told us.”

*(From a family served by Mel Wideman,
LaGrone Funeral Chapel,
Roswell, New Mexico)*

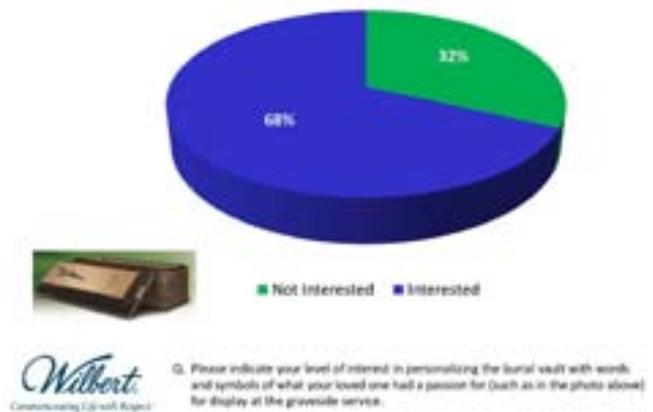
“When they see the vault cover that has been personalized to represent that person's life, you could just see the emotion on not only the immediate family but usually everyone else there. It really does add to the acknowledgement of that person.”

*(Joan Billman, Fleming-Billman Funeral
Directors, Ashtabula, Ohio)*

“As funeral directors, we have the responsibility to suggest things to families. They look to us to help them.”

(Mel Wideman)

Majority of those choosing a burial vault are interested in personalization



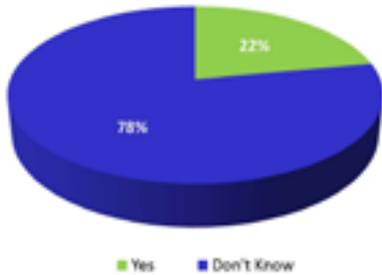
Perhaps because the burial vault is often the last item discussed during an arrangements conference, a thorough education on vaults and personalization options may be overlooked by funeral directors sensing family fatigue. Yet with the right tools, education can be concise. Research validates that families do care about the protection provided by burial vaults and are actually very interested in personalizing the burial vault to reflect the life of their loved one. Families do want to know their options – and their educated choices may surprise you.

In a 2013 survey of burial-inclined families, independent marketing research firm Product Acceptance & Research (PAR) found an extreme lack of knowledge regarding burial vaults. However, with just minimal education, families expressed preference for burial vaults over unprotected grave boxes and a high level of interest in personalization.

The survey began with the very fundamental question of whether participants knew the difference between a grave box and a burial vault. Seventy-eight percent said that they did not know the difference, even among

those who had made prior burial arrangements. In fact, over a quarter thought that both a grave box and a burial vault were needed.

78% of burial families do not know the difference between a burial vault and a grave box



Q. Is there a difference between a burial vault and a grave box?

After establishing this baseline of knowledge, the researchers then asked participants to watch a brief video explaining the differences between grave boxes and burial vaults as well as some of the personalization options available on many burial vaults. (To view the video, go to

<http://vimeo.com/89840961>.)

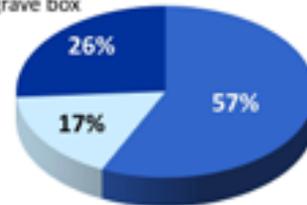


After watching the video, **only seventeen percent chose a grave box**. This rather enlightening finding challenges the level of unlined boxes being sold in the marketplace. Considering that the only education provided was a two-minute video, with no human intervention, this was a remarkably low percentage. As the chart indicates, eighty-three percent would choose or consider a burial vault. The value of education cannot be emphasized enough.

Why did such an overwhelming percentage of study participants choose a burial vault? Predominantly it was concern for **protection** and desire for **personalization**. Sixty-eight percent said protection of the grave contents from the weight of the earth was important while sixty-four percent indicated that protection against groundwater, earth and insects were important.

After learning the difference between a grave box and a burial vault, only 17% chose a grave box

- 57% chose a burial vault
- 26% needed more information before making a decision
- 17% chose a grave box



Q. After having viewed the educational video, if you were making burial arrangements in the future would you choose a burial vault or a grave box?



Personalization was of interest to a majority of survey participants with sixty-eight percent expressing a desire for personalization of the burial vault with graphics, words and/or photographs to commemorate their loved ones at the committal service. Even among the remaining thirty-two percent were many who first wanted to know how much personalization might cost before making a decision. Since many do not charge extra for personalization as it is generally included on better-quality burial vaults, it would be logical to assume others in the undecided one-third would likely select personalization to make the service memorable.

“One of the things we have done is to find out what the person’s hobbies or interests were and then put something that reflects this on the vault as a surprise to the family. We did a service for a man who loved hunting and our Wilbert partner put a hunting scene on the vault and we didn’t tell the family. They loved it and it made the committal service very special.”

(Chris Robinson, Robinson Funeral Home, Easley, South Carolina)

The bottom line is that families value personalization on burial vaults – which also increases **your** bottom line as this is only available on lined burial vaults. But the need for education is critical, even at the tail end of the arrangements conference. Take advantage of resources such as the two-minute video used in this research study which can educate families quickly and consistently on outer burial containers and the personalization available on burial vaults. It’s important to families and will be long remembered by all who attended the service.

“Customization on burial vaults opens up an opportunity to really celebrate that person’s life and their interests rather than just conducting a funeral ceremony.”

(Chris Messina, West Cobb Funeral Home & Crematory, Marietta, GA)

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Doric Products – Ensuring the Highest Quality Products and Service to Our Customers and the Industry

The Doric Products Board of Directors has a history of concern for the environment. Doric has made a point of participating in various programs including regrind of plastic materials and reuse of shipping materials for many years. A primary shipping item, plastic corner boards that are used when shipping stacks of liners, are returned to Doric for reuse—and Doric even pays for their return. The company decided to take an even more serious look at its overall environmental footprint and implemented some additional changes.

Doric started by evaluating procedures in the offices. Doric has reduced the amount of paper that is printed and sent via the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and fax machine drastically. Weekly communications to customers are now sent by email instead of fax and mail allowing the customer to decide if it is necessary to have a printed copy. This change alone has kept hundreds of thousands of sheets of paper, ink and envelopes out of the landfill. Customers are also given the option to have invoices and statements emailed. Through the cooperation of our employees in the manufacturing and office areas of the Illinois location, we have eliminated more than 78 yards of waste that will not reach the landfill.

Internally, Doric purchased an advanced scanning system which is used in all facets of the company. It is no longer necessary to make multiple copies of documents for different staff members. Documents are now viewed independently at each workstation using customized software. This is a savings not only of paper and ink but also in the amount of paper that is moved to our archives each year.

The plant has surpassed the traditional separation of various papers, plastics, cardboard and metal for recycling. Doric has also made improvements to their energy footprint. Warm air from thermoforming units is funneled into additional warehouse spaces to be used as heating during the fall and winter. Warehouses



in multiple states have received lighting upgrades. VersaBay® Fluorescent lights were installed along with adjustable motion sensors. This improves both employee safety and energy conservation.

Another area of improvement is in the manufacturing of Classic Metal Vaults® (CMV), Doric's popular line of airseal units. CMV has increased the use of more environmentally friendly vault coatings. This has led to the introduction of an additional basic vault, referred to as the Service Vault. The Service Vault has a finish that contains a lower VOC (volatile organic compound) in the finishing coat than the traditional wrinkle textured vault. It is also important to note that the Service Vault requires only one (1) pass through ovens while the wrinkle must pass through two (2) times. Customers now have a more environmentally friendly choice when purchasing a basic vault. Doric has begun using similar coatings on higher-end vaults as well and is pleased to provide an improved work environment for all employees. Thanks to customers, in a short amount of time Doric/CMV has converted over 25% of sales to this type of finish coat.

In an effort to provide excellent customer service, Doric has installed an updated inventory and manufacturing barcode system. Products receive barcodes at a variety of stops in the manufacturing and shipping processes. In the event of a concern, the barcodes allow Doric



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to identify the point in the process that needs to be evaluated. This has allowed Doric to respond to customer concerns in a more timely fashion and improve our customer service and quality.

Overall quality of products is always on the forefront at Doric. To this end, Doric has brought the production of some items home to the U.S. While some of these products are now outsourced inside the U.S., others are being produced at Doric's own manufacturing facilities. This allows Doric to tighten the reins on quality control.

Doric Products has been busy on a number of other fronts as well. They are now an authorized Mossy Oak® retailer for burial products. Currently they offer both Break Up and Break Up Infinity patterns for your Doric burial vault or Doric cremation urn vault. In addition, they have also become a distributor of Frigid Fluid® products to provide cemetery equipment to the funeral industry.

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Vantage Products Corporation was founded in 1978. The plant was a research and development facility of Hercules, Inc. before being purchased.

Initially, manufacturing was small and included custom furniture parts, door skins and burial vaults, but the company grew very rapidly, and over time dropped other products to focus on the funeral products industry as their expertise and market share expanded. Vantage owns huge injection molding machines that can adapt to unique applications, ideal for the funeral products industry.

Vantage is now located and headquartered in a new, state-of-the-art 100,000 square foot facility in Covington, Georgia. The facility is home to two new injection molding machines, robotic painting systems, R & D, as well as ample storage and shipping facilities.

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Casket Merchandising Made Simple By Robert L. Pierce

Casket sales have never been about profit or selling. Funeral service and casket sales have always been about understanding and educating your families and providing them with satisfying options that make them feel that they have made decisions that are appropriate for them. It is a funeral directors responsibility to present merchandising that makes families happy with their choices.

The decision making of families is heavily influenced by their discussions with the arranger before they enter the showroom and by the merchandising with which they are presented after their conversation with the funeral director. The family makes their final choices but the funeral director constructs the environment in which the family's choices are going to be made. These two critical points of influence contribute heavily to both family satisfaction and profitability.

To families, caskets are simply boxes with varying degrees of appeal. They just want to feel good about the choices they make. They respond to the guidance given to them by the arranger and by the merchandising of the showroom but ultimately they make choices that make them happy and reinforce their self-image. Caskets are very different to families than they are to funeral directors. Funeral Homes must always remain aware that they are merchandising to the needs of families, not funeral directors.

I have represented thousands of funeral home buyers and sellers and I have gained an appreciation for what makes a funeral home profitable and the "mistakes" or lack of attention that cause a funeral home to be less profitable. This is an example of a circumstance that changed a person's retirement dramatically.

The funeral home in my example was not profitable and, as a result, was not very valuable as it was being run. Here is what I found. The showroom was nice and generally appeared to be merchandised appropriately with one very obvious exception. The funeral home presented a twenty gauge "value" casket in a stand-alone and lighted display as families entered the showroom. The offending casket was named after the founder of the funeral home and was offered with several interiors and in several colors. It was a simple matter of removing the misplaced, mispriced, and inappropriate casket; changing another unit or two; and renaming a bronze casket for the founder to make the funeral home spectacularly profitable. These simple changes caused the sales, profit and value of the funeral home to increase dramatically and a retirement was saved.

This example is, of course, extreme but it illustrates the point of this article. If a funeral home presents one or two inappropriate, mispriced or misplaced caskets, it can affect the profitability of the funeral home dramatically. When merchandising is presented in a manner that makes families feel foolish for not choosing a casket to which they have been "steered," they can begin to believe that they were forced into making an unsatisfying choice.

Families are interested in the appearance of the casket, whether it is "appropriate" for their loved one, and how it will be perceived by their guests and family members. The family's approach makes merchandising of caskets very important. It is critical that the appearance and price of each casket match within the context of the entire showroom. It is when the price of a casket and the perception of value are out of sync that families are

made to feel uncomfortable. Families who are made to feel uncomfortable tend to make unsatisfying choices based on price. Value pricing a low end unit may be done with the best of intentions but it is going to steer some families toward an unsatisfying purchase and it will make the funeral home less profitable as a result. If you present an appropriate range of consistently priced options in a simple understandable manner, families will make satisfying decisions that make the funeral home more profitable.

This simple concept can be used to change the profit of a funeral home significantly. There are two elements to making a transition to a profitable showroom. First, the funeral director arranger has to take the time to acquaint the family with the different types of caskets, materials, etc. before the family enters the physical (or digital) showroom. An educated family will make more satisfying choices and will be happier with their experience. And second, the caskets in the showroom have to have a logical progression of perception of value and price. Families want to feel good about their choices. The funeral home makes families feel good about their choices by making their options simple and understandable. Profits increase when funeral homes follow this very simple principal.

Conclusion

The management of a funeral home has become considerably more complex over the last several decades. Not only do managers have to be able to manage and merchandise for many different types of services, they have to make sure that every services is perceived by the family and their guests as having been very special and responsive to the very personal needs of the family and their guests. That is a high bar but it is the funeral industry's best defense against direct cremations.

Managers also have to focus on the way a family feels during the planning process. Families have to feel comfortable and have to be presented with simple, satisfying and understandable choices to make them comfortable. Caskets are just one of the family's choices that have to be made simple, satisfying and understandable.

A well merchandised showroom eliminates the need for salesmanship during the planning conference. It puts the responsibility for profitability on appropriate

merchandising where it belongs and results in the funeral director having more quality time to spend with the family.

It takes effort to build a showroom that is responsive the needs of one's families but it is well worth the effort. It makes families and funeral directors happier and it makes funeral homes more profitable. I have never seen the application of these very simple concepts fail to add one thousand dollars per call or more to the bottom line profit of a funeral home. Test your paradigms every day, step out of your comfort zone, and manage proactively. If you do, good things happen.

Bob Pierce was a Certified Public Accountant, the Chief Financial Officer of an aggressive cemetery and funeral company, and was involved in the purchase and sale of more than one thousand funeral homes and cemeteries. He is President of Pierce CFO, a firm specializing in profit and value management and sales and acquisitions of funeral homes. Pierce CFO has offices in Tallahassee, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; and Alexandria, Virginia. He can be reached for comments at 888-860-6468, on the web at piercecfo.com, or by email at bob@piercecfo.com.

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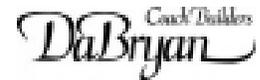
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Doric Products Celebrates Annual Fall Meeting on Mackinaw Island, MI

Doric Products, Inc., held its annual shareholders' meeting on Mackinaw Island (MI) this year. The shareholders expressed their continued support of each of the existing Directors and elected a new member as well.

The Board of Directors for the coming year consists of Joe Brewster (Brewster Vaults, Millville, NJ), Jerry Cooper (Central Burial Vaults, Oklahoma City, OK), Michael Crummitt (Crummitt & Son Vault, Martins Ferry, OH), Charles "Chuck" Foskey (Wicomico Vault, Salisbury, MD), Gerald Hardy (Hardy Doric, Inc., Chelmsford, MA), Hubert McQuestion (Lake Shore Burial Vault, Brookfield, WI), Adair Payment (Atlas Concrete Products, Orlando, FL), Steven Vincent (J.P. Vincent and Sons, Galena, IL) and Jim Wiens (CVI Funeral Supply, Newton, KS).



Steve Vincent will continue to serve as President, Jim Wiens as Vice President of Finance and Treasurer, Mike Crummitt as Vice President of Manufacturing and Gerald Hardy as Secretary. The Executive Committee consists of Mike Crummitt, Hubert McQuestion, Steve Vincent and Jim Wiens. President Vincent is looking forward to building on our past innovations including DoricLink, the first iPad app available in the burial vault industry. The Board will also build on last year's success of sourcing as many products as possible within the U.S.A.

Jerry Cooper of Central Burial Vaults in Oklahoma City, OK, is the newest Director on the Board of Doric Products Inc. Jerry, having been in the vault industry since the early 60s brings a wealth of experience and knowledge with him. In 1975 Central Burial Vaults was housed at one location. Today, they operate three manufacturing facilities. Jerry and his family have received numerous honors for their community and industry activities.

Doric Products, Inc., a leader in the burial vault industry since 1955, boasts over 130 dealer locations in the U.S. and Canada and continues to grow. Doric, committed to quality products and services, offers double-wall, triple-wall, and quad-wall burial vaults choices. Doric also offers a full line of urns, urn vaults, and air seal Classic Metal Vaults. For more information, please visit the newly redesigned Doric website, www.doric-vaults.com, or call 1-800-457-0671.



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Covington Casket Company Celebrates 90 Years in Business



Covington Casket Company, celebrating its 90th anniversary in 2014, is led by Eddie (left) and Alan Williamson.

Covington Casket Company was started in December of 1924 when a casket company from the nearby neighboring town of Opp, Alabama, was combined with a casket factory in Andalusia, Alabama. This new company, originally named Andalusia Casket Company, later became incorporated in 1945 and the name was changed to Covington Casket Company.

The company is still located in the original spot from which it began in downtown Andalusia. As a matter of fact, the main part of the building which houses the interior department was once used as an Army hall. Covington began like most companies, manufacturing cloth-covered woods. Caskets were then packed in wooden boxes and shipped throughout the southeastern United States by rail. In 1959, Covington began manufacturing metal caskets.

The late Johnny Williamson began working at Covington in 1971 as a sales representative, and he later acquired 50% of the company in 1977. Current President Eddie Williamson began working with his father in 1978. Eddie's brother, Alan, joined the company in 1987, and later that same year Johnny acquired the balance of the



stock and became sole owner of Covington Casket. During the years under Johnny's direction, Eddie and Alan both worked in the plant, drove delivery trucks, and learned the operations of day-to-day business.

In December of 1993, Johnny lost his battle with cancer and the brothers took over as owners of the business. To-day, Eddie takes care of production and day-to-day operations of the company, while Alan runs the casket design and sales side of the business. Alan admits that working so closely with his brother for the last 21 years makes for some interesting days at work, but wouldn't have it any other way. "All in all, we're on the same page, and that's to take care of the customer," Alan said.

When asked about his company's secret to longevity, Alan was glad to share what he thought contributed to the company's success. "First of all, we give all the glory to God. We know where our blessings come from. If it were not for the good Lord, we wouldn't be here." Second, would have to be their committed and quality-driven employees. Third, would be customer relations. "Eddie and I take about 50% of the calls that come in. It makes for a hectic day, but in this day of emails and Internet sales, you can't beat that type of personal service," Alan said. "The big boys can't offer that. That's what keeps them coming back".

Covington currently serves about 250 funeral homes from its corporate headquarters in Andalusia, Ala., and has two warehouses in Mississippi, one in Louisiana, and one in Georgia. Covington also sells caskets to select distributors in the South. For more information about Covington Casket, please contact Alan Williamson at 800-726-5570 or awilliamson@covingtoncasket.com, and visit their company website at www.CovingtonCasket.com

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Funeral Service Foundation Announces 2014 NFDA Professional Women's Conference Scholarship Recipients

Brookfield, Wis. – The Funeral Service Foundation has awarded five scholarships for attendance at NFDA's 2014 Professional Women's Conference (PWC), which will be held April 25-27 in Atlanta, Georgia. The PWC scholarship program aligns with the Foundation's mission to fund projects and programs that support all of funeral service in building meaningful relationships in the community.

The five 2014 PWC Scholarship recipients are Jorida Mihali-Allison, mortuary science resident trainee, R.J. Funeral Home, Wyandott, Mich.; Christine Bushby, mortuary affairs specialist, 42nd Air Force Support Squadron, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.; Isabel Espinosa, location manager, Ourso Funeral Home, Donaldsonville, La.; Terry Parrish, CFSP, registrar and director of admissions, Dallas Institute of Funeral Service, Dallas, Texas; and Kavita Pavamani, consultant, Covington Business Solutions, LLC, Parkville, Md.

Scholarships cover the recipients' conference registration fees, and provide a \$1,000 travel and accommodation stipend. During an awards luncheon, Foundation Executive Director Kathy Wisnefski will recognize the recipients, who were selected based upon their answers to questions about the influence women have in funeral service; why they chose a career in the profession; and reasons for wanting to participate in the continuing education program.

“Supporting the Professional Women's Conference has been a Foundation priority for over a decade. Our donors recognize that professional development opportunities are a cornerstone to the funeral service profession's success,” said Wisnefski. “This year's deserving candidates will have the opportunity to network with women from across the profession, learn best practices from some of the profession's finest, and apply that knowledge to enrich the communities they serve.”

The Professional Women's Conference Scholarship Program is made possible through the generous support of American Funeral Financial, LLC, Messenger, Nomis Publications, and Wilbert Funeral



Services, Inc. Foundation Partners will sponsor the Foundation's friend-and-fund-raising program, “Now You're Cookin'!,” an event that supports both the PWC Scholarship Program and the Foundation's Women's Fund.

Along with professional development scholarships, the Funeral Service Foundation also administers academic scholarships for full- and part-time students of funeral service enrolled in (or accepted into) a mortuary science program at an ABFSE-accredited school. Academic scholarship applications are currently being accepted. Since 2002 nearly 350 funeral service professionals have received Funeral Service Foundation scholarships to pursue academic and professional development opportunities. Please visit FuneralServiceFoundation.org for more information on how to contribute to, apply for or establish a scholarship fund. Applications for scholarships to attend the 2015 NFDA Professional Women's Conference will be available online early next year.

About the Funeral Service Foundation – FuneralServiceFoundation.org

The Funeral Service Foundation is the leading public foundation dedicated in perpetuity to serve the funeral service profession. In alignment with its mission, the Foundation supports all of funeral service in building meaningful relationships in the community by commissioning innovative research, funding programs and professional development, administering scholarships and assisting communities in crisis.

NFDA Professional Women's Conference

Nearly 100 women attended the 2014 National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) Professional Women's Conference, which took place April 25-27 at the JW Marriott Buckhead in Atlanta, Ga. The annual Professional Women's Conference brings together funeral directors, educators, expert presenters and suppliers in a unique, intimate gathering to generate new ideas, foster professional growth and create lasting friendships. The conference began on Friday, April 25 with a complimentary welcome reception for all attendees. It gave conference participants an opportunity to reunite with old friends and meet new ones.

Immediately following the reception, conference attendees had the opportunity to participate in the Funeral Service Foundation Fund Day event, Now You're Cookin'!. Led by the JW Marriott Buckhead's Executive Chef Robert Mitchell, attendees were treated to an evening of fine cooking and dining.

Attendees worked with Mitchell and his team to prepare the first and last courses of a three-course New Orleans-style dinner: shrimp remoulade on a bed of bibb lettuce; roasted chicken stuffed with Andouille cornbread stuffing, dirty rice and seasonal vegetables; and chocolate bread pudding with bourbon sauce. This event supported the NFDA Professional Women's Conference Scholarship Fund and the Foundation's Women in Funeral Service Fund.

Throughout Saturday and on Sunday morning, attendees participated in engaging conference sessions covering a wide range of topics and led by funeral service experts:

- Four Ps of Cremation presented by Michael Nicodemus of the National Funeral Directors Association
- ABCs of Building Loyalty presented by Valerie Wages of Tom M. Wages Funeral Service LLC in Snellville, Ga.
- Conversation Café facilitated by Valerie Wages and Jessica Koth of the National Funeral Directors Association
- The Basics of HR: How to Properly Hire, Manage and Terminate Employees Without Breaking the Law presented by Jamie Hasty of SESCO Management Consultants
- Ship-in and Decomposition Transformations and Closure Techniques for the Cranial Autopsy presented by Sharon L. Geemascarello of Wayne State University in Detroit, Mich.
- Taking Control of Your Financial Future presented by Meredith Moore of Moore & Associates Wealth Management in Atlanta, GA.



FSF, Executive Director, Kathy Wisnefski donning her new Chef Jacket with Chef Robert Mitchell preparing for the Foundation's "Cooking School." The theme of the night was a New Orleans style "Cajun" dinner



Professional Women's Conference Scholarship recipients names



PWC recipients being recognized during the annual "Awards Luncheon"

The 2015 NFDA Professional Women's Conference will take place April 24-26, 2015, in Chicago, Ill., at the Loews Chicago Hotel located two blocks north of the legendary Magnificent Mile.

The 2014 NFDA Professional Women's Conference is generously supported by the following sponsors and contributors: Dignity Memorial, Funeral Service Foundation, Implant Recycling, Nomis Publications Inc., Homesteaders Life Company, Kelco Supply Company, ASD – Answering Service for Directors, The Dodge Company, Messenger and National Mortuary Shipping. NFDA thanks the Foundation Partners Group for sponsoring the Funeral Service Foundation Fund Day event. (Conference supporters have been listed alphabetically.)



PWC Scholarship winner, Christine "Chrissy" Bushby, Prattville, Alabama with Sherri Stahl



PWC Scholarship winner, Isabel Espinosa, Donaldsonville, Louisiana



PWC Scholarship winner, Terry Parrish, CFSP, Mesquite, Texas



Chef Steven Johnson putting the finishing touches on the groups Shrimp Remoulade and Bread Pudding that they personally prepared table-side



PWC Scholarship winner, Jorida Mihali-Allison



(L-R) Pam Stephens with daughter Mandi Marlin, Williamson Memorial, Franklin, Tennessee



PWC Scholarship winner, Kavita Pavamani, Parkville, Maryland



(L-R) Patty Hutcheson, CFSPA, Executive Director of Academy of Professional Funeral Service Practice, Inc., and Valerie Wages, CFSP, Tom M. Wages Funeral Service, Lawrenceville, Georgia



(L-R) Gail Smith and Casey Mims, Cherokee Casket Company, Griffin, Georgia





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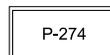
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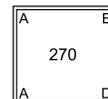
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