

# Southern

◆ FUNERAL DIRECTOR ◆

MAGAZINE

November/December 2017

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## Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays

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Homesteaders Names Justin Baxley V.P. of  
Strategic Markets



**Jennifer Kaset**  
*Vice President, Trust 100*

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## notes from the editor

by John Yopp

### Notes from the Editor: A Dozen Christmas Roses

Bobby was getting cold sitting out in his back yard in the snow. Bobby didn't wear boots; he didn't own any and he didn't like them anyway. The thin sneakers he wore had a few holes in them and they did a poor job of keeping out the cold. Bobby had been in his backyard for about an hour already. And, try as he might, he could not come up with an idea for his mother's Christmas gift. He shook his head as he thought, "This is useless, even if I do come up with an idea, I don't have any money to spend."

Ever since his father had passed away three years ago, the family of five had struggled. It wasn't because his mother didn't care, or try, there just never seemed to be enough. She worked nights at the hospital, but the small wage that she was earning could only be stretched so far. What the family lacked in money and material things, they more than made up for in love and family unity. Bobby had two older sisters and one younger sister, who ran the house hold in their mother's absence. All three of his sisters had already made beautiful gifts for their mother.

Somehow it just wasn't fair. Here it was Christmas Eve already, and he had nothing. Wiping a tear from his eye, Bobby kicked the snow and started to walk down to the street where the shops and stores were. It wasn't easy being six without a father, especially when he needed a man to talk to. Bobby walked from shop to shop, looking into each decorated window. Everything seemed so beautiful and so out of reach. It was starting to get dark and Bobby reluctantly turned to walk home when suddenly his eyes caught the glimmer of the setting sun's rays reflecting off of something along the curb. He reached down and discovered a shiny dime. Never before has anyone felt so wealthy as Bobby felt at that moment.

As he held his new found treasure, a warmth spread throughout his entire body and he walked into the first store he saw. His excitement quickly turned cold when the salesperson told him that he couldn't buy anything with only a dime. He saw a flower shop and went inside to wait in line. When the shop owner asked if he could help him, Bobby presented the dime and asked if he could buy one flower for his mother's Christmas gift. The shop owner looked at Bobby and his ten cent offering. Then he put his hand on Bobby's shoulder and said to him, "You just wait here and I'll see what I can do for you." As Bobby waited he looked

at the beautiful flowers and even though he was a boy, he could see why mothers and girls liked flowers. The sound of the door closing as the last customer left jolted Bobby back to reality. All alone in the shop, Bobby began to feel alone and afraid. Suddenly the shop owner came out and moved to the counter. There, before Bobby's eyes, lay twelve long stem, red roses, with leaves of green and tiny white flowers all tied together with a big silver bow. Bobby's heart sank as the owner picked them up and placed them gently into a long white box. "That will be ten cents young man," the shop owner said reaching out his hand for the dime.

Slowly, Bobby moved his hand to give the man his dime. Could this be true? No one else would give him a thing for his dime! Sensing the boy's reluctance, the shop owner added, "I just happened to have some roses on sale for ten cents a dozen. Would you like them?" This time Bobby did not hesitate, and when the man placed the long box into his hands, he knew it was true. Walking out the door that the owner was holding for Bobby, he heard the shop keeper say, "Merry Christmas, son," As he returned inside, the shop keeper's wife walked out. "Who were you talking to back there and where are the roses you were fixing?"

Staring out the window, and blinking the tears from his own eyes, he replied, "A strange thing happened to me this morning. While I was setting up things to open the shop, I thought I heard a voice telling me to set aside a dozen of my best roses for a special gift. I wasn't sure at the time whether I had lost my mind or what, but I set them aside anyway. Then just a few minutes ago, a little boy came into the shop and wanted to buy a flower for his mother with one small dime. "When I looked at him, I saw myself, many years ago. I too, was a poor boy with nothing to buy my mother a Christmas gift. A bearded man, whom I never knew, stopped me on the street and told me that he wanted to give me ten dollars.

"When I saw that little boy tonight, I knew who that voice was, and I put together a dozen of my very best roses." The shop owner and his wife hugged each other tightly, and as they stepped out into the bitter cold air, they somehow didn't feel cold at all.

**Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and a Prosperous New Year from the Staff at SFD Magazine!**

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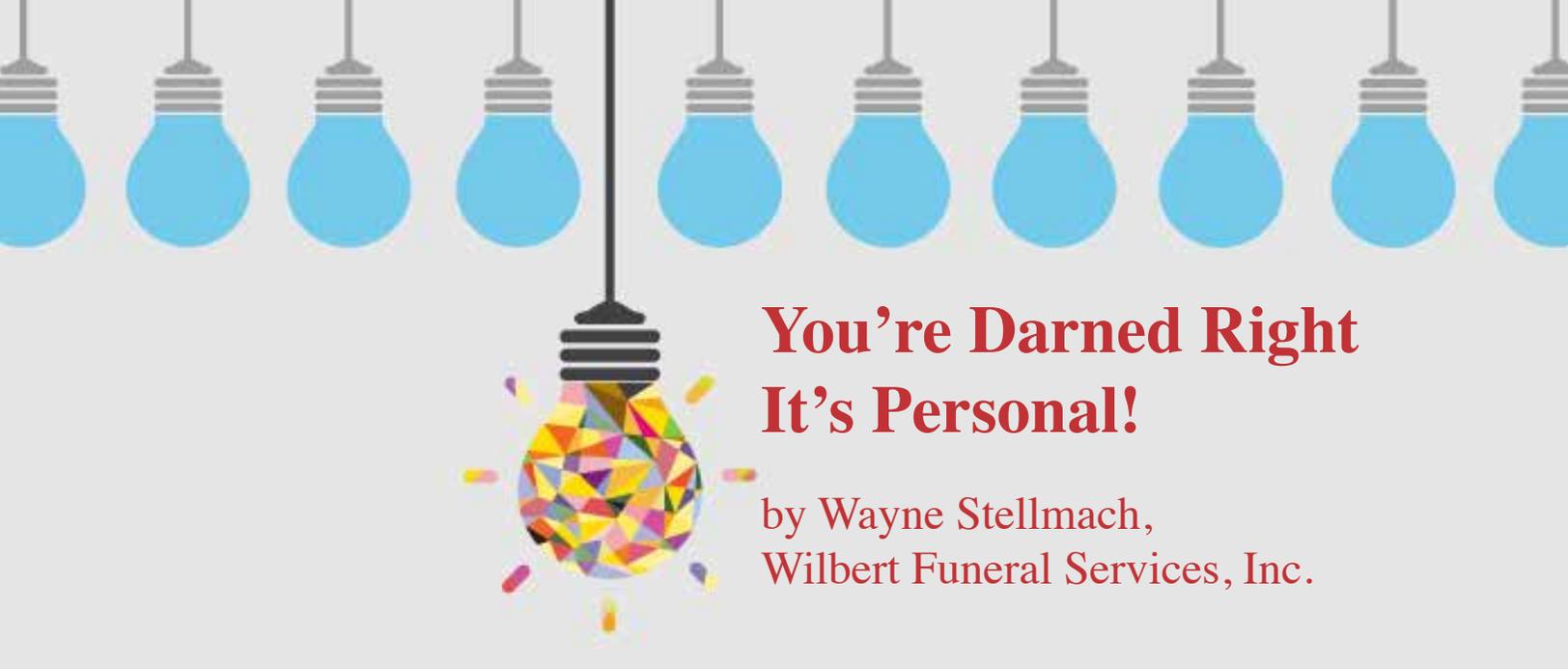
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# You're Darned Right It's Personal!

by Wayne Stellmach,  
Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc.

A funeral is about a person.

That statement is so patently obvious that it almost borders on the ridiculous. "Of course it's about a person!" you might shout back. And yet there are a number of areas where a funeral service can be made more personal which are often not applied. While personalization is certainly not new, it continues to be a topic of discussion in industry publications and at conferences because it is under-utilized even though it is proven to enhance the experience for the family. The more personal the funeral experience, the more satisfied the family. The more satisfied the family, the greater the chance that they will return to your funeral home for future services.

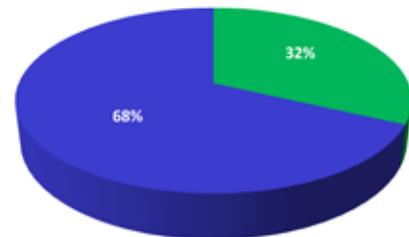
Given that personalization of funeral services and merchandise isn't really new, why is it so often not utilized? There may be myriad reasons from the unfortunate mechanical approach of some funeral directors, i.e., just going through the motions and checklist, to genuine unawareness of what can be done to transform something from functional to meaningful.

Perhaps there is no product to which this pertains more than the burial vault. Personalizing a burial vault is still a foreign concept to many funeral professionals, let alone families. "I didn't know this could be done" is a response I continue to hear from funeral professionals admiring a customized vault carapace on display in our booth at trade shows. That same phrase is uttered by people who attend a graveside service made even more powerful by a beautiful image on the burial vault

carapace with photos of the person and her family reflecting a full life that had meaning. While more families are being offered burial vault personalization by progressive funeral professionals who have witnessed the impact it can make, I don't believe it is a stretch to state that the majority of consumers remain unaware that it is available. And yet when they are made aware of it, a good percentage opt for it. After all, today's consumers desire unique experiences and disdain cookie-cutter products or services...why would that be any different when it comes to funeral selections made for a loved one

An independent study confirms that personalization of the burial vault would indeed be selected by a majority of families. **Sixty-eight percent expressed interest in burial vault personalization** yet today we are nowhere near that level. Where is this disconnect happening? Are families who are actually making arrangements

Majority of those choosing a burial vault are interested in personalization



■ Not Interested ■ Interested



Q. Please indicate your level of interest in personalizing the burial vault with words and symbols of what your loved one had a passion for (such as in the photo above) for display at the graveside service.

being offered personalization and declining? Or are they not being told about personalization by their funeral professional? Given the reaction mentioned earlier when funeral professionals see examples of burial vault personalization at our trade show booth, I suspect in many cases it is the latter.

We need to do more to raise the awareness of burial and urn vault personalization and it begins with vault providers equipping funeral homes with tools that better explain and visually show what can be done. If you haven't had a discussion with your vault provider about updating your selection room or arrangement conference room with visuals and other tools to depict examples of personalized vaults, it is time to do that. Traditional visual aids such as wall graphics, table signs, brochures and printed presentation materials can show the array of beautiful images that are available along with some examples of loved ones' photos, names, dates and even collages that can be done to commemorate a singular life. Even better and more impactful are videos, slide shows and other digital tools that can engage today's consumers. Videos can not only be shown in a selection or arrangements room but also embedded on your funeral home website so that families can get a head-start on understanding their options before they even come in for the arrangements conference. Placing educational videos on your website is also a fantastic method of reaching prospective customers who may be researching who they want to work with when it comes time to making arrangements for themselves or a loved one.

In addition to simple unawareness, there may be other hurdles that funeral professionals face in offering personalization of burial vaults or urn vaults. One is not knowing whether their burial vault provider is even able to make a customized carapace or whether a short turnaround requirement can be met. Over the past couple of years, technological advancements have made large-format printers more accessible for vault providers to acquire, giving them the ability to produce carapace prints locally. Not only does this accommodate getting photos to them and makes it easier to communicate directly about other things that would truly make it personal, having local production also eliminates any concern of swift turnaround. It's worth asking your burial vault provider if they have this capability. Even if not, most are able get prints overnight from other sources who understand the quick

response needed in the funeral service industry.

Another significant hurdle that not only applies to offering families personalized vault options but transcends across other services and products is the worry about being perceived as a pushy salesperson, especially with sensitivity to the occasional jabs by media or on social platforms that funeral providers are taking advantage of people in a time of grief, confusion and vulnerability. STOP IT! A funeral director is precisely that: directing and guiding families through their choices. If you don't educate families on what is possible, how in the heck will they even know?

Allow me to make an analogy with choosing a cell phone and service plan. I don't know of too many people who relish the thought of spending hours at a cell phone store when it comes time to select a new phone or carrier. It can be an exhausting experience, given all the options and weighing what's right for each individual. Yet I suspect that most of us want to be educated on all those options. Most of us appreciate a well-informed sales associate who walks us through the plans and features and lets us make our own informed decisions. A professional cell phone sales rep doesn't assume what each customer wants but rather takes time to patiently explain all the options to every single one. A few customers may still choose a basic model with no frills, but it's pretty safe to say that they are happy having made an informed decision.

Similarly, one cannot assume what a family wants when it comes to an outer burial container. From the level of protection to the availability of personalization on the cover, if a family understands their options and makes decisions based on their perceived value of what they are getting, they will be satisfied. Educate, don't sell. You may be surprised by the decisions they make.

Another reason personalization options may not be discussed with families is simply "out of sight, out of mind". If you don't have visuals to show personalization examples and selections to your families, it's easy to forget to even talk about it. Again, ask your vault provider what they have.

How big of an impact can something as simple as a personalized burial have? Huge. I have heard numerous stories from funeral professionals about families who are so touched by the visual tribute to

their loved one on a carapace that they gather around, recount even more stories and happy times, take pictures and commemorate a life well lived. One story in particular that stuck with me was told by a funeral director remembering the family whose loved one was a motorcycle fanatic. The vault cover included a wonderful photo of him and an image of a winding, open road as seen from the perspective of a motorcycle driver, complete with the handlebars and dashboard visible. Their only “complaint”, she recalled with a smile, was that the speed shown on the speedometer wasn’t fast enough. Do you think that family will return to her when it comes time to make another funeral arrangement? I think it’s a pretty safe bet.



As you look at the many examples of burial or urn vault images shown below, think about how they would be enhanced further with photos, poems or passages, even words of love literally written with a marker by family and friends at the committal service. Think about other things that can be done for the family including framed prints of the carapace or bookmarks that can be provided as mementos. Think about how you would feel if this type of personalized tribute were made for one of your own loved ones. Think about the families you serve would feel.

*Wayne Stellmach is Director of Marketing for Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc. since 2011 and provides marketing support for other Wilbert Group organizations. Wayne has 40 years of marketing, sales and management experience in various industries. He currently serves on the boards of the International Memorialization Supply Association (IMSA) and the Funeral and Memorial Information Council (FAMIC) and chairs the marketing committees of both.*



You’re darned right it’s personal.

The following are examples of images that can applied to a Wilbert burial vault:

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<p>The family chooses a background image and photo(s) to be printed.</p>			
<p>The entire image is placed on the vault.</p>			
<p>The personalized burial vault is a central element of the graveside service.</p>			

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## Wilbert Releases New Cremation Choices Catalog

Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc. has released the Cremation Choices™ Volume 8 catalog, featuring over 300 cremation products including urns, mementos, jewelry, and urn vaults. Designed to make it easy for funeral professionals to help families with selections, Cremation Choices is organized by product type such as cultured marble, glass, wood, eco, and metal. High-quality photos illustrate intricate details that make cremation urns or other products special and personal.

“Personalization is extremely important to many families today,” points out Michael Devaney, Merchandising Manager, Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc. “Seeing examples of urns engraved with names, dates and phrases – or even on some of our products an engraving of their loved one’s photo – makes an incredible impact on families and helps them understand how uniquely personal these products can be.”

A tangible catalog that families can browse together at the funeral home is a powerful tool even in the face of

online options. However, Cremation Choices Volume 8 is also available as a digital flipbook that can be embedded on a funeral home’s website.

“Embedding the Cremation Choices catalog on your website is a great way to get families thinking about what they would want before they even come in for the arrangements conference,” Devaney says. “The embed code is readily available on the Funeral Professional section on wilbert.com and it can be on a funeral home’s own website within minutes.”

Wilbert cremation products are also available on WilbertDirect.com, an ecommerce website exclusively for funeral professionals. To obtain copies of the Wilbert Cremation Choices Volume 8 catalog and for any assistance in cremation products or services, contact your local Wilbert Licensee.

Additional information can be found at [www.wilbert.com/funeral-professionals](http://www.wilbert.com/funeral-professionals).



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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.

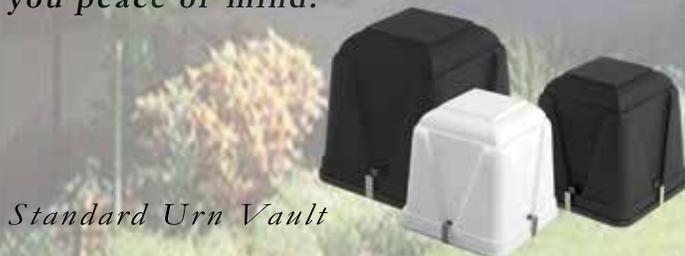
Initially, manufacturing was small and included custom furniture parts, door skins and burial vaults, but the company grew very rapidly, and over time dropped other products to focus on the funeral products industry as their expertise and market share expanded. Vantage owns huge injection molding machines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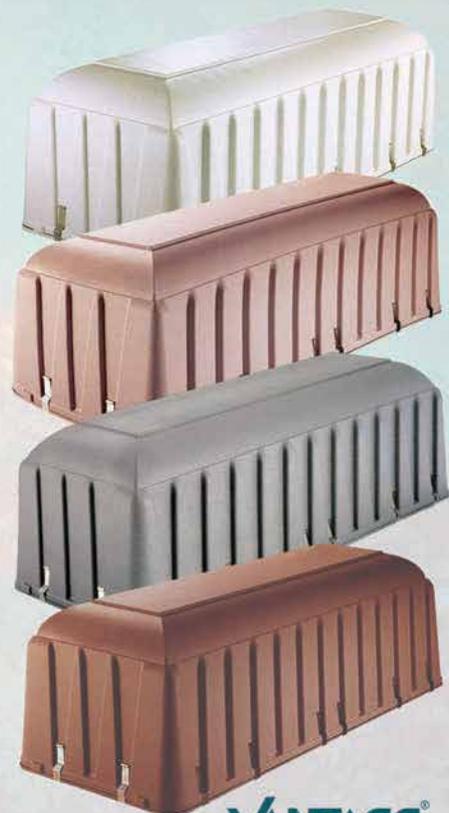
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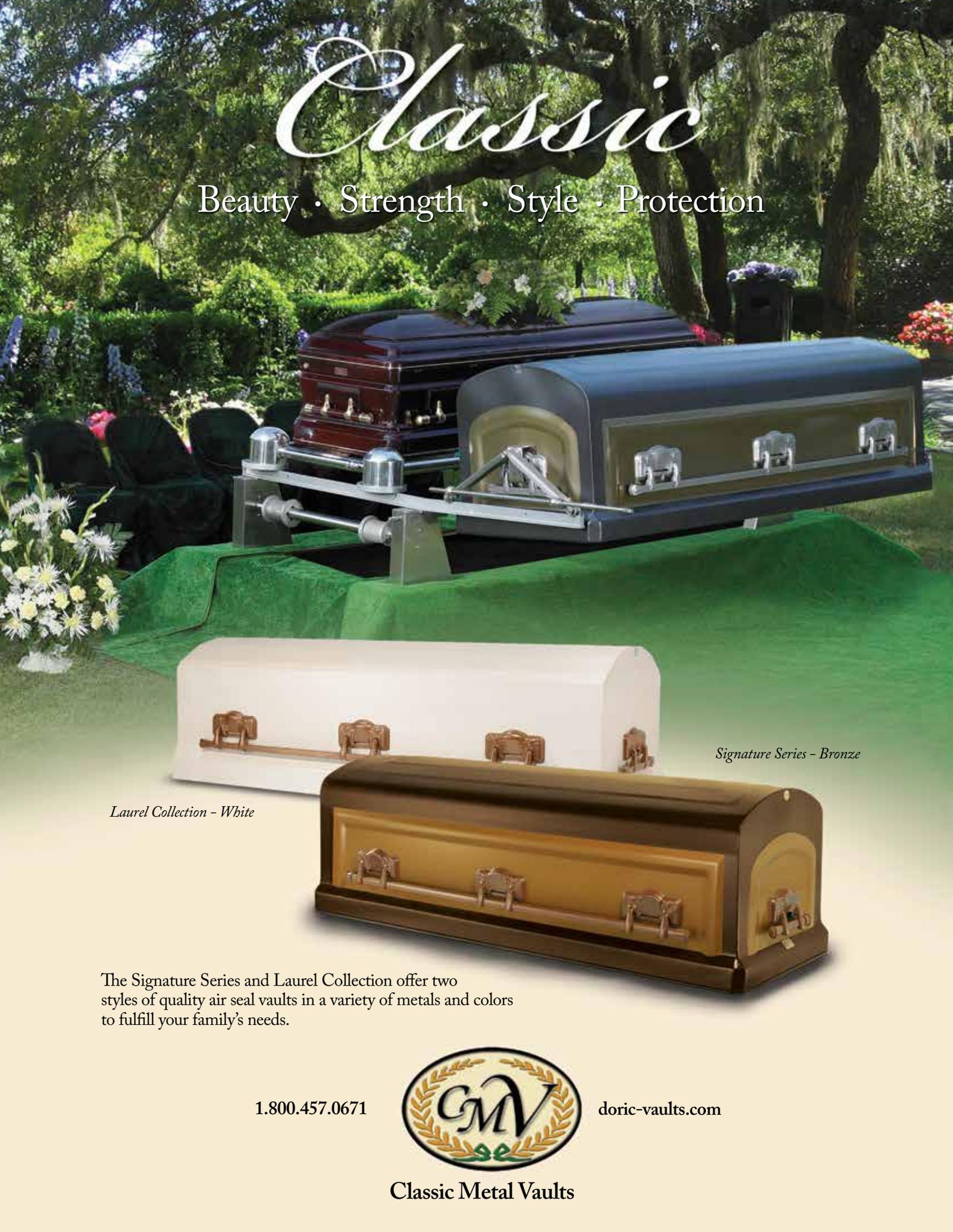


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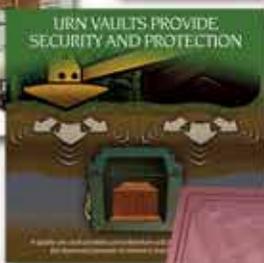


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## Justin Baxley joins Homesteaders



“I have been privileged to know Justin Baxley for many years, and I have rarely seen such a deeply rooted dedication to families and the profession,” explained Homesteaders Chief Operating Officer Steve Shaffer. “Justin’s experience will prove invaluable as Homesteaders continues to develop products and services that help our funeral home customers and partners grow their businesses.”

November 13, 2017, West Des Moines, Iowa — Homesteaders Life Company Vice President of Strategic Markets Will Bischoff announced today that Justin Baxley is joining the nation’s leading pre-need company as Director of Strategic Markets. Baxley will assume his new role on January 1.

“Justin brings a wealth of experience as an owner and operator of many very successful funeral businesses,” Bischoff affirmed. “Homesteaders is a great company, in large part because of the team of people we have supporting the business. Justin’s unique perspective will enhance that team and continue to support the exceptional service experience and depth of knowledge we offer funeral professionals.”

In his role as Director of Strategic Markets, Baxley will work with the Homesteaders sales team to expand the company’s footprint and develop customized solutions for funeral homes throughout the country.

“As a long-time Homesteaders customer, I have seen first-hand the quality of their products and their people,” Baxley observed. “In joining the Homesteaders team, I look forward to continuing my life’s work with a company that shares my passion for supporting funeral directors as they serve families.”

Prior to joining Homesteaders, Baxley owned and operated five funeral homes and one cemetery in central Florida. Justin joined Foundation Partners in 2012 and has since served the organization in a variety of roles – most recently as Senior Vice President of Business Development. A second-generation funeral director, Baxley has worked in funeral service for more than two decades and has been an active member of the Florida Board of Funeral, Cemetery and Consumer Services and the Funeral Service Foundation Board of Trustees.

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## The Media and Questions

### Dealing with the Media:

### When the Questions Come, III of III

By: Todd Van Beck, Director of Continuing Education, John A. Gupton College, Nashville, TN

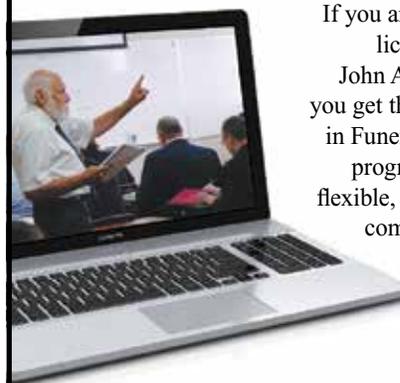
Before we get into some hopefully helpful suggestions on dealing with questions and the media I need to say one more word about questions. A question is a question no matter how, who or where it is generated. The questions asked of my boss in Nebraska which he did not answer were the same as the questions that the little Webelos Mr. Roland Henry asked, as were the questions Phil Donahue fired at my funeral director buddy. However there was a world of difference in how all these questions were handled, and the consequences of the differences can and do make a world of difference.

The following suggestions on dealing with questions apply to ALL types of media interviews, human interactions, tours and formal question sessions. Here they are:

- First make sure the first and last things you say in response are clear statements of your message. This is what messed up my funeral director buddy when he failed at linking up the profits of a funeral with buying a pair of shoes. It made sense to him, and even made sense to me, but not to the media. His answer was muddled with insider information. Be crisp and concise, and try valiantly to make the answer simple. In fact the simple answer is 80% of what reporters and audiences will remember about your answers.
- Silence is not always golden, but a well timed pause can be a life saver. If a response does not come immediately to mind, relax and take a few seconds to phrase one. I know full well if my buddy had it to do over again he would not have equated funeral profits to buying a pair of shoes – he was making it up as he went. Buy time for yourself by rephrasing the questions – **TO YOUR LIKING**. Remember you are in charge of your own performance, no one else. Also don't talk while you are thinking, or sound like you are thinking about loud, this too often is the cause of long, confusing answers – just take a look at many politicians and/or economists on television.
- Before the interview and early in your interview summarize your main points in one sentence, that way when answering questions you can easily refer back to these points continually and reiterate them as you proceed. For instance my old boss in Nebraska might just as easily told the giggling girl group right away that certain rooms in the funeral home were not accessible to the general public. By doing so he may well have reduced the temptation of the girl to ask the question in the first place.
- Remember you are in control of yourself. No one has the power to take that away from you, so when questions are coming at you two at a time – either from the same person or two people, just answer only one question at a time, and if the person whose question you are not answering challenges you just be polite and admit that you cannot possibly listen to two people at the same time, let alone answer two questions at the same time. In others words you selected and decided to answer the other persons questions.
- Do not be a shrinking violet. My funeral director buddy was just such a truly gentle, kind and quiet person that he was never able to get his dog in the fight. If you find yourself as one of several people being questioned put your best foot forward and use every opportunity to get your points across. This is NOT a synonym with being rude or being bullish, what it is saying is that YOU have something to say, and people like convictions and when people share their convictions. Use phrases like “I'd like to comment on that, too, if I may.....” or “May I add a comment to that that will be helpful?” or “And on that point I would just like to add...” This helps to tie into remarks made by the other speakers, and if you are the only funeral director in the group you definitely need to get your points said. You need to get your dog in the fight.

- Don't interrupt other people who are commenting on funeral service, but certainly take full advantage of natural pauses in their remarks to add your own views.
- Never lose your temper or appear to be ruffled or upset at any question – that means just that – any question. No one had a gun to your head to consent to do the interview and volunteer to answer questions. As hard as this is don't take interview questions personally, even when and if they have asked you a personal question.
- When confronted with the antagonistic and or personal questions you might respond with: "Let's put that into perspective..." or "Let's think about that situation for a moment..." You want to appear to take on the voice of reason in the face of tough questions. I once was tossed a bizarre question about decomposition. The audience looked at the interviewer like she had lost her mind. However decomposition is certainly fair game when interviewing a funeral director/embalmer and I directly answered with this: "Let's put that into perspective. Decomposition is extremely unpleasant, but it is the end in the normal course of what happens to all deceased persons over time. Our funeral home is fully trained and is able to assist families in dealing with this distasteful situation."
- Do not be derogatory about an opponent or other persons in the interview, and never mention or bash a competitor. I have never once seen anything positive result from one funeral director bashing another funeral director anywhere anytime. It just does not work. Never take personal issue with interviewers, no matter how antagonistic the questions. I once had an interviewer make the accusation that all funeral directors were "crooks, creeps, and con men." I complimented the interviewer on her excellent use of alliteration, the audience laughed and the interviewer stopped her nonsense immediately and we got down to serious meaningful funeral work. I mean folks, funeral homes that have been in business since say 1882 serving the same families in the same communities for generation after generation cannot be crooks. The public is not that stupid.
- Give direct answers to questions. Anybody who tries to dodge and dance around questions appears evasive – politicians, economists, and lawyers make this mistake constantly – do they ever learn? If answers to the questions must be "no," don't wait to say "no" at the end of your answer. Say "No" first and then give your explanation.
- Avoid using the editorial "we" and time-wasting phrases such as "That's a good question..." and "I'm glad you asked that." They are risky as to the sincerity of such remarks. Most times to the listener they sound judgmental and insincere. How many times have you watched someone on television be asked a question and the first response is "Oh, I am so glad you asked that question." Sitting in your living room you know good and well that the question asked was the last question on earth the person being interviewing wanted to address. What came out of their mouths did not match the look on their face.
- One helpful idea in answering media questions is to think of your answers in terms of actual news items. First give the headline then give more pertinent information. People generally tend to remember the first thing you say. I have discovered that interviewers appreciate getting news up front. Also beware of editing. Most editors are fair and judicious, but some are not. You want your positive newsy answer to follow the question immediately. Remember the early bird gets the worm.
- Here is an important one for funeral service and cemetery work. Dispel misconceptions immediately.

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Never, ever allow the interviewer to ask a negative or just downright wrong question and get away without you correcting them. Once you have dispelled the misconceptions then you can go on to make a positive point so that the reporter will not have an easy time getting back to the mistaken information. In my limited experience I have found that usually I spend a lot of valuable interview time correcting the interviewer's misconceptions about our profession. While I would rather move onto more substantive issues, I cannot, and will not in good conscience allow just wrong information about funeral service to go unchecked and unchallenged. Way too much of this has happened to us for way too long a period of time.

- It is wise to use the loaded ambush question to your full advantage. This type of question makes a direct charge and is intended by design to throw you off balance put you on the defensive. It is a technique of aggressive interviewers. In fact we see it all the time on political oriented programming to day. Here is an example: "Father "so and so" a noted funeral critic and priest from Arizona said that every family in every community in American is getting ripped off by every funeral director in America. What have you got to say about that one, Mr. Funeral Director?" Respond to the implied charge immediately with a strong rebuttal, citing examples to back up your response (and there limitless examples to back up your response that funeral directors are honest) and hence correcting any unfounded allegations.
- Do not repeat hostile questions or negatives phrases, and never let someone put words in your mouth. Instead rephrase the question in your own terms. Try to rephrase an irrelevant or hostile question in a manner you can answer. For example, you might say, "I believe what you're asking is..." and fill in your own version of the question.
- Avoid questions that suggest an either/or response. Such a question to a funeral director might be: "Do you follow a public relations policy of maintaining a low community profile during unfavorable publicity concerning funerals, and we have been told that you have tried to dodge hostile questions about the high cost of funerals?" Don't choose either alternative; instead immediately state your policy concerning public relations in positive terms.

At the end of the interview thank the host/hostess/reporter for the chance to explain your views. Even if the questions have been challenging or non-productive

or even offensive, always be gracious – it is the hallmark behavior of a professional funeral director. Send a follow-up thank you letter to the host/reporter

The follow-up letter is important even though they typically go into a file. However when reporters want to remember you for another story your letter will be in their file to remind them of you. Also reporters and interviewers almost always move on to other jobs, they don't seem to stay in one place long. They are an extremely mobile group. Your letter in the file will acknowledge and prove your existence to a newcomer. Also always offer to make yourself available for other questions and/or appearances.

Remember my little Webelo friend Roland Henry? His questions and the answers that he received helped his family in a tremendous way. People asking funeral directors questions is a good thing – a wonderful thing, more questions the better and the answer we give possesses the potential of changing a life.

*Next Month's article "Dealing With the Media Who Already Have a "Dislike" for the Funeral and Cemetery Industry*



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# The Funeral Directors Association of Kentucky Celebrate 135th Expo in Louisville, KY

The Funeral Directors Association of Kentucky celebrated their 135th Anniversary at the Annual Convention at the Crowne Plaza Hotel and the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville on June 6-8, 2017. During this three-day meeting, 50, 125 and 150 year-old firms were honored; 50 & 60 year Kentucky licensed funeral directors were honored; and funeral directors received continuing education awards. There were **79** exhibitors displaying their different businesses in the Exhibit Hall. Several educational seminars/presentations were given. The 2017-2018 leadership was elected as follows

OFFICERS		DISTRICT DIRECTORS	
President	John Jones, Harlan, KY	Central	Greg Lakes, Berea, KY
President-Elect	Rob Riley, Carrollton, KY	Eastern	George Sparks, Grayson, KY
Vice President	Rusty Preston, Paintsville, KY	Northern	Bill Mullins, Covington, KY
Secretary/Treasurer	Marty Jones, Morgantown, KY	Southern	John Hill, Owensboro, KY
Sergeant-at-Arms	Grant Bolt, Georgetown, KY	Southcentral	Brandy Harwood, Tompkinsville, KY
Chairman of the Board	Robbie Brantley, Brownsville, KY	Southeastern	Wesley Rominger, Manchester, KY
Immediate Past President	David West, Nicholasville, KY	Western	Chad Townsend, Dixon, KY



John Jones (left) was sworn in as the new President of the Funeral Directors Association of KY by FDAK Past President, John Muster, of the Muster Coach in Calhoun, KY



John Jones (right) was presented his gavel as the new President of The Funeral Directors Association of KY by Immediate Past President David West



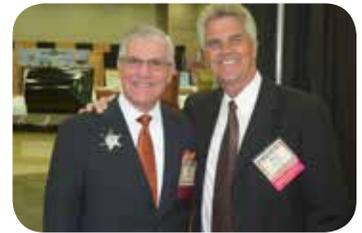
(l to r) front row – Central District Director: Greg Lakes from Berea; Chairman of the Board: Robbie Brantley from Brownsville; Southern District Director: John Hill from Owensboro; Southcentral District Director: Brandy Harwood from Tompkinsville; President: John Jones from Harlan; Immediate Past President: David West from Nicholasville; Vice President: Rusty Preston from Paintsville; Eastern District Director: George Sparks from Grayson

(l to r) back row – President-Elect: Rob Riley from Carrollton; Southeastern District Director: Wesley Rominger from Manchester; Sergeant-At-Arms: Grant Bolt from Georgetown; Secretary/Treasurer: Gerald M. “Marty” Jones II from Morganfield; and Western District Director: Chad Townsend from Dixon

Absent from photo: NFDA Policy Board Member: Shannon Combs from Richmond; and Northern District Director: Bill Mullins from Covington








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## A New Chapter for S&S and Superior

Lima, OH – S&S/Superior Coach Company, Inc. is pleased to announce that it has purchased the assets of Accubuilt, Inc. and will resume production of the prestigious S&S and Superior Coach product lines at their Lima, Ohio facility. The new company will be owned and operated by industry veteran Mr. Sean Myers, of Kansas City, Missouri who has over of 25 years' experience in the professional vehicle market. Myers also owns Armbruster Stageway and several other industry related companies. "I am very excited about being part of the S&S and Superior team", said Myers. "S&S and Superior are the most distinctive and prestigious nameplates in the history of funeral vehicles".

The Superior Coach Company has called Lima home since 1923 and the renowned S&S product line dates back to 1876. The two entities were merged in 1981 by Tom Earnhart, owner of Armbruster Stageway in Ft Smith, Arkansas. Over the years the company has been bought and sold several times by various groups, but this recent asset purchase marks the first time since 1985 that the industries oldest brand names will be collectively owned.

The new company plans to focus on introducing new products and innovative features that will continue to position S&S and Superior as market leaders. "There is a lot of opportunity to capture additional market share, which we will achieve by listening and quickly responding to our valued customers and dealers", continued Myers. "If there is a special vehicle need or niche product for the funeral vehicle industry, we will build it".

Myers noted that he is optimistic about the future. "As we start this new chapter for S&S and Superior, we appreciate the support we received from our industry partners and dealers. When looking to the future, we are poised for continued growth, and we believe that our best days are ahead of us", Myers concluded.

### S&S...A Tradition of Excellence

S&S was founded in 1876 as the Sayers and Scovill Company by William Sayers and A. R. Scovill. In the early 1900's, the internal combustion engine was revolutionizing the funeral carriage trade. Unsurpassed



A Legacy of Excellence



Superior In Every Respect

quality and engineering ingenuity enabled S&S to be the only firm to accomplish the motor car changeover and continuously maintain its position in the marketplace. The succeeding years saw the design of the professional car assume various appearances – from ornate, lavishly-carved body panels to towncar and limousine concepts – and all along the way, the S&S nameplate denoted leadership in quality, innovation and refinement. Today, the S&S brand is still recognized as the leader in professional car design and quality. A legacy that has been built on an unrelenting tradition of excellence.

### Superior Coaches...Superior in Every Respect

In 1923, a group of local Lima, Ohio businessmen formed the Superior Motor Coach Body Company to produce deluxe motor coach bodies. A short two years later, the company introduced a line of hearse and ambulance bodies that were contemporary in appearance and constructed to high quality standards which set the stage for Superior's future. With more than 90 years in the funeral coach business, Superior has made significant contributions to the advancement of the modern hearse, and has built more funeral vehicles than any other brand. Today, Superior is known for the designing and manufacturing funeral coaches and limousines with superior style, superior quality and superior value.

### About S&S/Superior Coach Company, Inc.

S&S/Superior Coach Company, Inc. is the industry's premier specialty vehicle manufacturer that traces its roots back to 1876. With two distinctive and prestigious funeral vehicle brand names – S&S and Superior – and a range of distinctively styled, high quality products, the company is poised for future growth by aggressively meeting the needs of the professional vehicle market. For more information on S&S/Superior Coach Company, Inc. and its extensive vehicle offerings, please visit [www.ss-superior.com](http://www.ss-superior.com) or call the company at 888-324-7895.

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## ICCFA Elects New Officers, Directors

The International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association elected new leadership during its 2017 Annual Convention & Exposition, April 5-8 in Nashville, Tennessee.

ICCFA officers for 2017-2018 are:

- President— Scott R. Sells, CCFE, Service Corporation International, San Jose, California;
- President-Elect— Christine Toson Hentges, CCE, The Tribute Companies Inc., Hartland, Wisconsin;
- Vice President, Education—Mitch Rose, CCFE, CCrE, Vice President, Membership & Marketing— Paul Goldstein, Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary, Los Angeles, California;
- Vice President, Internal Affairs— Andres Aguilar, Los Parques, Guatemala City, Guatemala;
- Vice President, External Affairs— Jay Dodds, CFSP, Signature Group, Houston, Texas;
- Treasurer— Gary M. Freytag, CCFE, Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum, Cincinnati, Ohio; and
- Secretary—Robbie L. Pape, Service Corporation International, Houston, Texas.

Members elected to serve three-year terms on the ICCFA Board of Directors are:

- Thomas P. Daly, CCE, Cedar Knoll Cemetery, Taunton, Massachusetts;
- Mathew Forastiere, Johnson County Memorial Gardens, Overland Park, Kansas;
- Keenan L. Knopke, CCFE, Curlew Hills Memory Gardens, Palm Harbor, Florida;
- John T. McQueen, CFSP, Anderson McQueen Funeral Homes & Cremation Centers, St. Petersburg, Florida;
- Rick Miller, CCFE, Inglewood Park Cemetery, Inglewood, California;
- Gwen M. Mooney, CCFE, Cave Hill Cemetery, Louisville, Kentucky;
- Blair H. Nelsen, CFuE, CCrE, CFSP, Nelsen Funeral Home, Richmond, Virginia; and
- Stephen L. Schacht, CCFE, Service Corporation International, Seal Beach, California.



Elected to serve a one-year term on the Board:

- Stephen E. Bassett, Legacy Funeral Group, San Antonio, Texas.

Past presidents elected to serve a one-year term on the Board:

- Ray Frew, CCFE, Green Hills Memorial Park, Rancho Palos Verdes, California;
- Richard T. Sells, CCE, San Diego, California; and
- William L. “Bill” Wright, CCE, Greenwood Funeral Homes & Cremation, Fort Worth, Texas.

The International Memorialization Supply Association appointment to the Board is Jordan Yearsley, Ensure-A-Seal, Brooklyn, New York.

The presidential appointments to represent the ICCFA on the Cemetery Consumer Service Council are:

- Thomas P. Daly, CCE, CHS Consulting Group, Westwood, Massachusetts; and
- Stephen Burrill, CCE, CCrE, Mount Hope Cemetery, Bangor, Maine.

Members of the 2017-2018 Executive Committee are as follows:

- ICCFA President Scott R. Sells, CCFE, Service Corporation International, San Jose, California;
- ICCFA President-Elect Christine Toson Hentges, CCE, The Tribute Companies Inc., Hartland, Wisconsin;
- ICCFA Immediate Past President Michael R. Uselton, CCFE, Gibraltar Remembrance Services, Palmetto, Florida;
- Arlie T. Davenport, Jr., Greenwood-Mount Olivet, Fort Worth, Texas (president’s appointment);
- Richard T. Sells, CCE, Johnson Consulting

Group, San Diego, California (past presidents' appointment);

- Jeff Kidwiler, CCE, CSE, Blackstone Memorial, San Clemente, California (ex-officio);
- David J. Shipper, Futura Group, Buckingham, Pennsylvania, (ex-officio); and
- ICCFA Treasurer Gary M. Freytag, CCFE, Spring Grove Cemetery & Arboretum, Cincinnati, Ohio (ex-officio).

Founded in 1887, the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association is the only international trade association representing all segments of the cemetery, cremation, funeral and memorialization profession. Its membership is composed of more than 9,100 rooftop locations and 20,000 professionals in the cemetery, funeral home and crematory industries, as well as supplier and related businesses worldwide.

## INDUSTRY NEWS

### South Carolina Funeral Home sells to Greg Rollings



Lenoir, NC – Rollings Funeral Service, Inc is proud to announce its recent acquisition of Evans Funeral Home, located in Lenoir, North Carolina. The funeral home, which was founded by Chris Evans, has grown quickly to be one of the largest and most respected business in the Lenoir area and surrounding towns.

Greg Rollings, President and Owner of Rollings Funeral Service, Inc, stated “We couldn’t be more excited for Evans Funeral Home to join our growing family of firms that want to sell but remain family owned. This acquisition begins what we believe will be the first of many acquisitions in the state of North Carolina. Rollings added, “I’m extremely excited that Reggie Green is staying with the business to continue the long tradition of quality service to the people in the Lenoir area.”

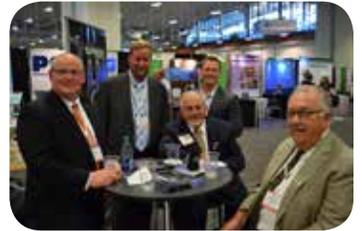
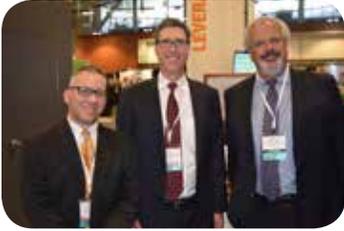
Chris Evans, founder and owner of the Evans Funeral Home, interviewed several possible buyers before

deciding that Rollings Funeral Service would be the best successor to his business. The business, operating from a large and beautiful farmhouse on the north side of Lenoir serves more than 300 families annually and was one of the first in the region to install its own crematory.

With more than 25 locations, Rollings Funeral Service, Inc is one of the largest private funeral home owners in the eastern United States. Rollings plans to continue to be very active in acquisitions, giving retiring owners a great alternative to selling to a publicly traded company.

For more information please contact Greg Rollings at 770-833-4778.







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## ASD's Suicide Telephone Operator Patch (S.T.O.P) System Recognized With 2017 NFDA Innovation Award

Boston, MA—On Monday, October 29, ASD – Answering Service for Directors was named the winner of the National Funeral Directors Association's 2017 Innovation Award. The company was recognized for its Suicide Telephone Operator Patch (S.T.O.P) System, a feature that was created by ASD solely to help those in crisis.

When someone is feeling hopeless or alone, there is no telling who they might reach out to and, in some cases, they contact a funeral home. ASD created the STOP System to give our staff a way to seamlessly connect a caller with a suicide prevention hotline, ensuring these individuals receive the immediate counseling and guidance they need. In the past 11 months, this solution has helped to save six lives.

According to funeral director, James Delaney of Delaney Funeral Home in Walpole, MA: "ASD handled a call for our funeral home from a gentleman who would have potentially taken his own life. They

re-routed him over to the Suicide hotline and I couldn't have been happier with the way the call was handled. It was absolutely spot-on perfect. The gentleman got the help he needed and he got to talk to someone who was a knowledgeable resource that helped him through the crisis."

The S.T.O.P System was designed by ASD's technical team to ensure callers never have to wait to receive support. Call Specialists can press an emergency button on their keyboard to immediately alert a Suicide Hotline when they are speaking to someone in crisis. The call can be made without the ASD Call Specialist interrupting the caller or placing them on hold. The hotline operator will hear a recording alerting them that a distressed and possibly suicidal person is on the line speaking to ASD. This alert will instruct the hotline operator to press any key to be 3-way connected into the call.

While ASD Call Specialists are trained extensively on



how to handle difficult calls, in the past operators have been deeply affected and troubled by conversations they have had with those who stated they were contemplating suicide. This led ASD's Tech Team to invent a telecommunication tool that would support its staff, give directors added peace of mind and, most importantly, help those in distress receive the help they need.

ASD is pleased the funeral service community recognizes the S.T.O.P System as a life-saving solution that can help them to better support their communities. The company was honored to receive their third Innovation Award during this year's convention. Established in 2009, the NFDA Innovation Award is given annually to a funeral service vendor whose product or service was introduced during the previous year and exemplifies creativity, innovation and excellence. The award represents the pinnacle of achievement for a funeral service vendor.

While no other company has received the NFDA Innovation award more than once, ASD has now won three out of the past six years. In 2012, ASD received the award after introducing the powerful ASD Mobile app, which has revolutionized how funeral directors handle their on-call communications. ASD was recognized again in 2015 for its MobileFH™ feature, a patented feature that allows directors to call any number from their cell phone and display their funeral home's number as the outgoing Caller ID.

ASD Family-Member Owner, Kevin Czachor, was on stage to accept the prestigious award from NFDA Past President, Ashley Cozine, at the Opening General Session of the NFDA's International Convention & Expo.

"We are humbled to be recognized by the NFDA with our third Innovation Award and for an opportunity to raise awareness about suicide prevention," Czachor said. "The STOP System was created by ASD with a specific purpose of helping those who are at risk of taking their own life. By linking ASD staff to qualified, suicide prevention operators, we can help ensure that those who are suffering receive immediate support."

#### About ASD

ASD – Answering Service for Directors has created a new class of answering service for the funeral profession.

*"Our family owned business protects your reputation for excellence in the communities you serve. Like our funeral director clients, we are committed to fostering a business culture of absolute integrity and transparency."*

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**The Answering Service in a Class of its Own**

Family owned and operated since 1972, ASD blends state-of-the-art technology with an extensive, 6-month training program focusing on compassionate care. The company's custom-built communication systems and sophisticated mobile tools were designed solely to meet the needs of funeral professionals. By offering funeral directors unmatched protection for their calls, ASD has redefined the role of an answering service for funeral homes. For more information, visit [www.myASD.com](http://www.myASD.com) or call 1-800-868-9950.



## Marching Forward, Making Sales at the 2018 ICCFA Wide World of Sales

The International Cemetery, Cremation & Funeral Association (ICCFA) has announced its program schedule for the 2018 Wide World of Sales (WWS) Conference that will be held January 10-12, at the New Orleans Marriott in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The WWS Conference is designed for counselors and managers working in funeral home/cemetery marketing and pre-need or at-need sales. This year's program centers on the actual act of selling, with proven strategies from experts in their field. Attendees will learn innovative sales and marketing techniques that will have their businesses marching forward and passing the competition.

On Thursday morning, January 11, keynote speaker **Dave Brown** returns to the WWS with **"The Answer Lies Behind the Next Door: Part 2."** This follow-up to last year's session will address how call reluctance can affect you and your organization's sales. Brown's presentation will help strengthen your persistence and enthusiasm and create a plan to tap into your selling potential.

Thursday afternoon keynote speaker **David Hooker**, head of Evangelism and creative services for Prezi, takes the stage with his presentation "Conversational Presenting." Hooker will show how the use of visual storytelling is more engaging, more persuasive and more memorable during the sales process.

Friday morning, January 12, keynote speaker Shari Levitin presents her talk "Heart & Sell." Today's buyers often avoid the dreaded "sales process." Use the science of selling with the human connection to reach more buyers and close more deals.

- **"Does Your Exhibit Program Have a Killer Strategy to Win the Attendee Engagement Battle?"**, *Nancy Drapeau, PRC, Senior Research Director, Center for Exhibition Industry Research (CEIR)*: When your company spends the time, money, and resources to display a booth at a trade show, you want to be able to maximize the effort by being engaged throughout the entire process. Drapeau will share her insights on how to make the most of your trade show investment.

- **"Don't Let Your Aftercare be an Afterthought"**, *Ben Upton, Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Harpeth Hills and A Family Legacy*: Join Ben Upton as he shares a step-by-step guide to aftercare. He will take you through how to begin and the keys to long-term success with any aftercare program.
- **"Cremation: Refocus is a Must"**, *Kyle Incardona, Managing Partner, Hillier Funeral, Cremation & Bereavement Specialists*: How many of your families choose a direct burial? Now ask yourself the same question about direct cremation? The fact of the matter is that there are just too many! Kyle Incardona will share a formula that will shrink the gap between your burial average and your cremation average, give you a competitive advantage in the profession and help you understand that your competition is not the funeral home up the road or the local cremation society, but the local event coordinator.

Returning to the WWS is the **Sales Boot Camp**. This program is designed to give those new to sales the inspiration, education and understanding, to be successful in presenting to new clients, closing sales and getting referrals. The Sales Boot Camp is taught by proven industry professionals and is based off ICCFA's sales training tool, The System. For an intimate and collaborative atmosphere, space is limited to 60 people.

The complete program, hotel and registration information is available at [www.wideworldofsales.com](http://www.wideworldofsales.com). Registration fee discounts are available for multiple attendees from the same company, as low as \$495. The New Orleans Marriott will be offering WWS attendees a discounted room rate of \$149 per night. Register before December 11, 2017 and save with the early bird rate!

Founded in 1887, the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association is the only international trade association representing all segments of the cemetery, cremation, funeral and memorialization profession. Its membership is composed of more than 9,100 rooftop locations and 19,000 professionals in the cemetery, funeral home and crematory industries, as well as supplier and related businesses worldwide.



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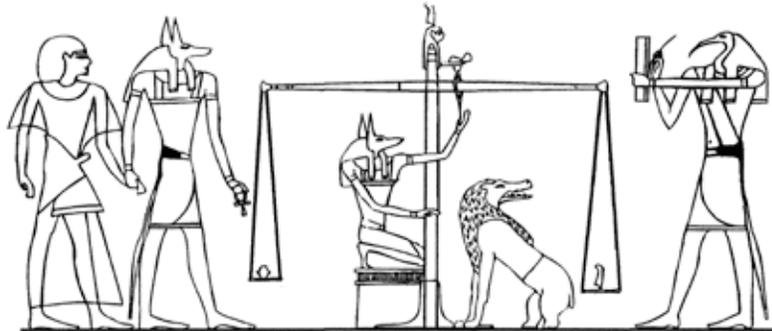
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