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◆ FUNERAL DIRECTOR ◆

MAGAZINE

December 2018  
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**May Hope, Joy, Peace and Love Be Your  
Guide This Holiday Season and for the  
New Year to Come!!!**



\*Vault and Outer Burial Issue  
Happy 12 Days of Christmas  
31 Ways to Remember a Loved One at Christmas  
Wilbert Funeral Services Company Profile  
Doric Products Company Profile and 2018 Annual  
Fall Meeting  
Vantage Products Company Profile  
Trigard Wraps up Success Salt Lake City  
NFDA Expo  
Keys to Service = Respect

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### MAGAZINE

#### FEATURES

- 4 Notes from the Editor: What Are the 12 Days of Christmas by John Yopp
- 6 It's Time to Get Engaged! by Wayne Stellmach
- 18 31 Ways to Remember a Loved One During Christmas
- 22 Keys to Service - Respect by Todd Van Beck

#### COMPANY PROFILE

- 8 The Wilbert Group
- 12 Vantage Products Corporation
- 16 Doric Products, Inc.

#### INDUSTRY NEWS

- 14 Doric Products 2018 Annual Meeting held in New York City
- 26 Production Changes Hitting Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions
- 28 New President & Chief Executive Officer selected to lead NGL

December 2018

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with a Southern Accent Since 1919

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## notes from the editor

by John Yopp

# What Are the 12 Days of Christmas

## The Meaning of the 12 Days of Christmas

Christmas Day is the first of the Twelve Days of Christmas. The period is viewed by Christians as the amount of time it took the three magi, or wise men, to travel to Bethlehem for the Epiphany, the revelation of Jesus Christ as the savior and the son of God (“epiphany” is from the Greek word for “revelation”). While there’s a consensus on what Christmas commemorates, what the Epiphany honors varies between churches and cultures. Some churches believe it’s the day of Christ’s baptism, while others celebrate it as the day the three magi visited Jesus with gifts.

But there are also differences on when the twelve days are celebrated. Western churches, for example, celebrate Christmas on the Dec. 25, the Epiphany on the Jan. 6, and the period in between as the 12 days and nights of Christmas. Other cultures, however, have different customs.

Although most in the Eastern Orthodox Church now adhere to the Western calendar, those in the Greek Orthodox Church still use a different religious calendar, celebrating Christmas on Jan. 7, and the Epiphany on Jan. 19. Some Latin-American cultures celebrate the Epiphany as Three Kings Day, giving gifts on Jan. 6 instead of Christmas. Other cultures will give one gift per day from Christmas to the Epiphany. This tradition has never really caught on in America, where the celebration of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is most common.

The Twelfth Night, often celebrated on the night of Jan. 5, is considered the end of the Christmas season, before the Epiphany the following day. The Twelfth Night was a time for feasting in England (partly inspired by Shakespeare’s play of the same name) in centuries past. Some cultures, like the French and Spanish, celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany with



a King’s Cake, a coffee cake with purple, green and yellow icing to commemorate the visit by the magi to the Christ child. In western cultures, the King’s Cake is associated with Mardi Gras, and the season of Carnival [source: Burnett]. Churches also vary in their celebration of the Epiphany; some Protestant churches celebrate it for an entire season, lasting until the season of Lent, while many Catholics celebrate it as a single day.

But just because the song is associated with the holiday season, that doesn’t mean you can’t sing it the rest of the year. For more information about all things Christmas, visit the next page.

## How Much is that Partridge in the Window?

Since 1984, PNC Financial Services advisors have calculated the cost of the gifts from the Twelve Days of Christmas carol each holiday season. Everything is factored in, from eight maids to 10 lords to 12 drummers. You can find a chart of the cost of the Christmas Price Index (CPI) over the years. For those looking to get their true love these gifts, don’t come with chump change: The total cost of all the items in 2017 was \$27,673 [source: PNC].



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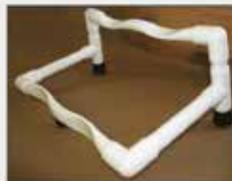
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# It's Time to Get Engaged!

Wayne Stellmach, Director of Marketing, Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc.

Although the holiday season is indeed a popular time for couples to get engaged, that is not the topic at hand. Rather, this article addresses engagement with families and breaking through the natural barriers of communication as you present merchandise and service options and work with families towards meaningful funerals for their loved ones. If you fail to connect with every individual, you can inadvertently create strife instead of creating a good experience. First, it's likely that nearly every person sitting in front of you does not want to be there. Their natural state in this circumstance is emotional stress and they are overburdened with everything that must be done. They are not in the best frame of mind to be making major decisions, yet they must. So you already have your work cut out for you in terms of clear, two-way communication.

On top of that, different people learn differently. Some do fine with just verbal communication but others may be more visual learners. Some may even learn best by hands-on experience. Ideally you will find a way to engage all of these different learning styles. But how do you know who might be one versus the other? There may be clues based on their behavior. One person may be intently watching and acknowledging you and it seems as if you are communicating well. However, another family member may be paying more attention to a brochure or looking around at wall graphics. Still another may already be wandering around touching merchandise. While you might think these last two appear uninterested, they may actually just be learning as they best learn.

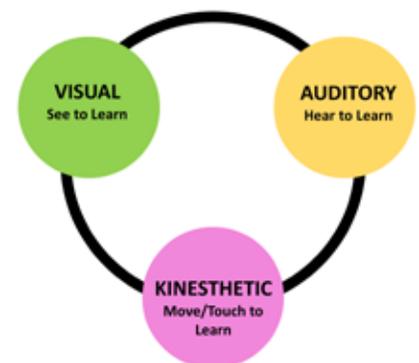
Research has found that there are essentially three different learning styles:

- Auditory Learners learn best through hearing information
- Visual Learners learn best when using pictures, graphs and other visual stimuli
- Kinesthetic Learners use touch and movement and learn best by "hands-on"

In addition to drawing on your professional expertise to counsel and talk to families, do you utilize additional tools that supplement what you are saying? Does your

arrangements conference room and/or selection room have up-to-date visuals, whether printed graphics or digital, or both? Are your burial and cremation merchandise displays attractive and reflective of today's trends and tastes, including the desire for highly individualized experiences that would be addressed with examples of personalized carapaces on your vault miniatures? Do you use the power of videos to educate families, in your arrangements room, your selection room, on your website?

Video merits particular consideration as it can engage equally with auditory and visual learners, and to a certain extent, even kinesthetic learners who can interact through starting and stopping the video. Forrester Research estimates that one minute of video is equal to 1.8 million words and according to the Insivia Consulting group, people retain ninety-five percent of content when they watch it on video compared to ten percent when reading it. Video also engages with all age groups and is perhaps the most popular medium for communicating information today. For example, video accounted for seventy-three percent of internet traffic in 2016 according to Cisco research, with projections to eighty-two percent by 2021. Funeral professionals who utilize videos while with families report that most people stop whatever else they may be doing or looking at to watch the video. Communicating all of the aspects and choices of outer burial containers can present particular challenges. Many families are initially confused about the need and function of OBCs, and then are faced with decisions on graveliner versus burial vault, differences between burial vault units, personalization options, and how burial vaults can even be an important component of a committal service. Added to confusion is fatigue, given that burial vaults are often one of the last items discussed with families. So



how do you effectively communicate all aspects and options of burial vaults with all of the family members who may have different learning styles? Here are some ideas.

1. Keep it simple. Explain OBCs and burial vaults in terms that everybody can easily understand: cemetery requirements, different levels of protection, product beauty, personalization options
2. Show and tell. Don't just talk but use video, graphics, and product samples to help convey the information. Invite family members to touch the vault miniatures to appreciate the exterior treatments and internal liners.
3. Involve the family. Ask them if they could think of special photos, images, poems or verses that they might like on the vault to create a truly treasured tribute to their loved one.
4. Slow down. It's tempting to rush through the burial vault presentation because you know the family is nearing fatigue, but this is an important component with financial implications and the family deserves time to understand everything. This is another area where a good video can help – for example, Wilbert has a purely educational (non-sales) video that explains everything in only two minutes. Some funeral professionals simply let the video do the vault presentation while they step away, which has the added benefit of taking pressure off the family and letting them learn and focus in private.
5. Don't assume. Ask the family, throughout your presentation, if they understand the information and if they have any questions. Also don't assume what a family might want – or don't want. Presenting complete information and giving them time to think about it will result in a more satisfied family because the decision was theirs.

Just as it is important for funeral professionals to engage all family members and educate them as efficiently as possible, it is also helpful to appreciate the factors that go into their buying decision. Regardless of the product or service, all basic buying decisions are made with three primary factors that combine to get to the core of **perceived value**.

Price is often believed to be the main factor in a buying decision, and it may be for some people, but surprisingly it is not the most important factor for a great many. Whether you are shopping for a major purchase such as a new car or a mundane purchase such as a toaster, there

is a certain level and expectation of quality. Even more important may be the third factor, experience. Experience that will be derived has an extremely powerful impact on the buying decision. Experiential factors include performance, comfort, convenience, enjoyment, safety, uniqueness, and individualism. When buying burial vaults, or any funeral products or services, families go through the same buying decision process leading to their perception of value. Many families see the value of the protective qualities of a vault versus an unlined graveliner box. Others see value in the memories and treasure the final tribute to their loved one that is reflected in a personalized vault cover. Cost is secondary.

In summary, appreciate that you may be presenting difficult information on OBCs to people who learn differently. Use available tools that can help you connect with the three different types of learning styles. Educate families so that they understand all their options and know that it is a combination of price, quality and derived experience that will go into their choices that are ultimately about perceived value. The better you understand learning styles and the common thread of buying behavior, the better you will connect with families – and potentially improve your revenue stream.

*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. Wayne can be reached at [wstellmach@wilbert.com](mailto:wstellmach@wilbert.com).*



# The Wilbert Group

The Wilbert Group is an umbrella group of organizations offering a variety of products and programs that serve the deathcare industry. Dedication to the industry drives our mission and diversification to maintain our focus on funeral professionals and our understanding of their needs.

At our core is **Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc.** (WFSI) with a foundation dating back to the 1880s, which develops burial vault technology and fabrication standards, licensing the manufacturing of the burial vaults to a network of nearly 200 Licensees throughout the United States and Canada. This makes transfer services between locations seamless for the funeral professional. A portion of the 200 locations are owned and operated by **Wilbert Funeral Services**.

We have the most rigorous quality inspection program of any company in our industry. Every Wilbert burial vault provider is held to strict standards of performance, covering over 300 components from fabrication practices to graveside setup.

Wilbert Licensees manufacture the burial vaults and provide delivery and set-up services at the gravesite. Gravesite service can include set up of a tent, chairs and greens for a comfortable, dignified service along with equipment to seal the vault aboveground and lower it into the grave. Wilbert Licensees can provide personalization of certain burial vaults with beautiful images and family photos printed on a vault carapace for a highly-individualized and meaningful treasured tribute.

WFSI and its network also provide cremation products including urns, mementos and keepsake jewelry, and offer urn vaults and gravesite services for cremation families who choose burial for the final placement of their loved one. In recent years we have greatly increased our cremation offering of services and products by adding a large array of urns, urn vaults, jewelry, online engraving design and exceptional printed and digital cataloging specifically designed to enhance presentations to families.

To further assist funeral professionals as they meet increasing demand for cremation products, we designed and built **WilbertDirect.com**, an ecommerce website strictly for funeral professionals to purchase cremation products. While only funeral professionals can order from the site, WilbertDirect.com provides a way for funeral staff to share cremation and customization options with families, including online design of urn personalization using the TRUView tool.

**Signet Supply** offers high-quality caskets at value pricing, delivered with uncompromised service. In 2009, we began serving funeral homes in the Midwest from five distribution centers and recently opened our 50th location in 27 states, making Signet Supply the fastest growing casket distribution company in the industry. Signet Supply strives to fill the gap between cost and quality, creating value for funeral home customers and ultimately the families they serve.

Columbariums, mausoleums, statuary, glass-front niches, and other cemetery enrichment products are offered by select Wilbert providers throughout North America under our **Granite Choices** program. An experienced design staff is available to help create beautiful, cost-effective solutions for undeveloped property.

**Pierce Chemical** is a leader in embalming fluids, equipment, cosmetics and a wide selection of prep room supplies. Innovation has been a hallmark of Pierce since its founding in 1935, continuing today with its exclusive Duotronic embalming machines and scented fluids to create a better working environment in the prep room. In a partnership with tech-leader FrontRunner Professional, Pierce also offers various technology and stationery solutions.

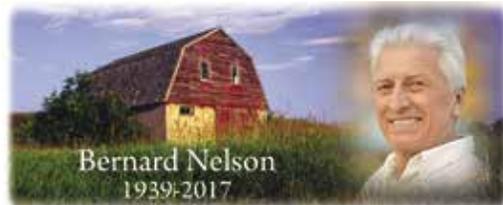
**Pierce Mortuary Colleges** operates three of the nation's finest mortuary schools, educating and preparing the future leaders of our industry with the skills and specialization of the mortuary business. Our schools are Dallas Institute of Funeral Service, Gupton-Jones College of Funeral Service, and Mid-America College of Funeral Service.

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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.

*Unlike other products, all Vantage burial products are engineered of state-of-the-art materials that effectively resist the forces of nature and man.*

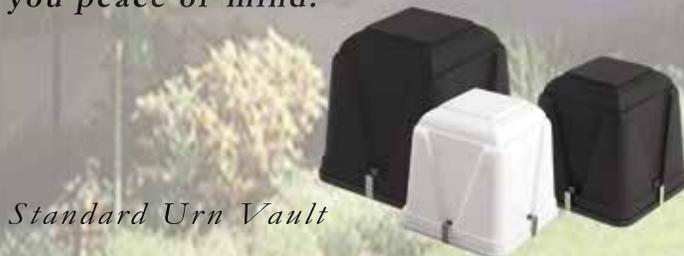


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# Doric Products 2018 Annual Meeting held in New York City



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John Hedbring, Treasurer of The Fort Miller Service Inc., receiving his award from Jim Wiens, President of Doric Products.



Doric 2018 Board of Directors presenting honors to Creter Vault family on 100th Anniversary



Karen and Carl Chastain along with Stephanie Chastain Smith of Superior Vaults – Grayson, enjoying their stay in New York.



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Distributed by highly trained professionals throughout the United States and Canada, Doric offers families burial vaults of exceptional quality, value and strength.

Although Doric is best known as a leader in traditional concrete burial vaults, the Classic Metal Vaults division features one of the largest selections of air-seal metal vaults available anywhere.

Well known for its modest price in relation to its strength, and durability; the Doric brand burial vault offers uncompromised security with tremendous value.

The people of Doric Products are dedicated to providing outer burial enclosures that will honor a loved one's memory while giving family members comfort and peace of mind.

## History of Doric

In 1955, a small group of vault professionals met in a hotel in Lexington, Kentucky to discuss a new kind of quality concrete burial product. On that day, Doric was born.

More than half a century later, Doric continues to engineer a broad range of industry-leading burial products, all while providing the greatest service of all: peace of mind for grieving families.

Doric supplies its family-owned dealers with certified materials and support. Our corporate governance is comprised of licensed burial vault dealers, assuring the strong, family-focused leadership Doric has enjoyed since inception.

The Doric family of dealers has committed itself to providing the best possible services and products to bereaved families, a tradition we will carry well into the future.

## Our Mission

At Doric Products, our mission is to provide materials

that enable our customers to manufacture the finest burial vaults available.

We are determined to provide the best burial vault possible while maintaining affordability. Doric is committed to stand behind our product and our dealers by offering the best sales, service and warranty support. We pledge to support the burial vault industry, maintain manufacturing facilities that are safe and to continue to better ourselves, and those we serve, through continuous education and personal development. As providers of burial products for our nation's loved ones, Doric pledges to be a good neighbor everywhere we serve.

## Doric: What's in a name?

When the founders of the company that would become Doric Products came together to discuss a name plate for their new concrete vaults, the administrative assistant of founder Elizabeth McCloskey suggested "Doric," a word familiar to her from growing in up in a Greco-American home. The founders gravitated toward the name, knowing that ancient Greek architecture embodied the same qualities they hoped to instill in their new product: durability, character, strength and grace.

Since then, Doric has christened each of its products with a Grecian name, harkening back to those original qualities built into the first Doric vault.

## Fallen Heroes

In recognition of Law Enforcement, Firefighters and Emergency Medical Technician personnel who make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, the Doric Family will provide a burial vault free of charge.

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# 31 Ways to Remember a Loved One During Christmas

A December's worth of ideas to help you honor a loved one

For those grieving the death of a loved one, the holidays can prove particularly difficult. Regardless of when the loss occurred, we often feel the absence of a beloved family member, friend or pet most keenly during the Christmas season because our holiday memories, traditions, and rituals involved him or her. Here are 31 ideas, one for each day in December, to help you honor and remember your deceased loved one and find some peace during the Christmas holiday season.

Whether on your computer or using pen and paper, journal about your favorite Christmas holiday memories with your loved one, and continue adding entries each year thereafter.

1. Purchase and light a special candle or small electric lamp to signify your loved one's presence in your heart and mind during the holidays.
2. Get out and exercise, particularly after a heavy holiday meal, by walking the route or visiting the park you associate with your beloved pet.
3. When you host a Christmas holiday meal, prepare your loved one's favorite dish and make this fact known to your guests as you serve it.
4. Make a special holiday ornament using items from around your house or purchased from a craft store, and then hang it in a place of honor on your Christmas tree or in your home.
5. Write a note to your loved one, attach it to a helium-filled balloon, and release it outside. (This generally proves more cathartic than you might think.)
6. Donate food or a meal to those who might otherwise go hungry during the Christmas season.
7. Create a "memory capsule" by placing significant reminders of your beloved -- such as cards, letters, photographs, souvenirs and other mementos -- in a sturdy container and burying it in the ground. Hold a small ceremony, if you wish, to honor the occasion after deciding upon a future "do not open until" date.
8. Visit your loved one's gravesite, share your feelings with him or her and leave a small holiday wreath, ornament or another memento.
9. Purchase a gift with your beloved in mind, wrap it and give it to someone less fortunate in memory of your loved one.



10. Create a tribute video using computer software that incorporates your favorite photographs and/or existing video of your beloved, set it to music and share it with your family members and friends during the holidays.
11. Make a financial contribution to a cause your beloved would champion, whether in his or her name or anonymously.
12. Sing along/out loud to your loved one's favorite Christmas carol(s)/song(s). You can do this by yourself or with family members and friends.
13. Take a road trip and spend the holiday in your beloved's favorite location, attending his or her favorite sporting or recreational event, or doing anything the two of you loved doing together.
14. Volunteer your time to help a local service organization or your place of worship fulfill its mission of helping others.
15. Create a memory board and display it in your home.
16. Clean out your closet or dresser and donate your gently used clothing in your loved one's memory (particularly jackets, coats, gloves, hats, etc.) to others who might benefit from them.
17. Watch your loved one's favorite Christmas holiday movie, whether by yourself or with other family members and friends.
18. Ask your family members and friends to quietly add a small memento, favorite photograph or personal note to a "memory table" you set up in your home in your loved one's honor.
19. Funeral homes, cemeteries, and hospices often hold holiday remembrance services for surviving families served in the past that incorporates music, inspirational and/or religious readings, and a special

memorial Christmas tree. Consider attending such a service this holiday season.

20. “Adopt” a less-fortunate family during the holidays, whether through your church or other local charitable organization and help make their holiday brighter in memory of your loved one.
21. Purchase a special holiday ornament in memory of your loved one, and continue doing so each year thereafter.
22. Hang a Christmas stocking and place a handwritten note to your loved one inside.
23. During a holiday meal with family members and friends, make a special toast in your loved one’s memory and/or ask everyone at the table to share their favorite holiday memory of the deceased.
24. Bake cookies, make candies and/or create other special holiday treats and then deliver/donate them to an area hospice, nursing home, shelter or another caregiving facility.
25. Create a “memory chain” by writing your favorite holiday memories, your present feelings or adjectives that reflect the deceased’s special qualities onto long, narrow strips of colored paper (about 8” long by 1” high). Form interlinking loops

with each piece to form a chain you can hang on your Christmas tree or use to frame a doorway.

26. Participate in a local walk/run that raises funds to support a cause your loved one would champion, or to help find a cure for the illness/disease from which he or she died.
27. Make a memorial wreath for your front door or above the hearth by adding ornaments, decorations and/or photographs of your beloved to a real/artificial holiday wreath.
28. Create and give memorial gifts to family members, friends and others who knew your beloved. Gift ideas include personalized silicone wristbands, memorial window decals, framed photos, memorial garden stones, handcrafted items, etc.
29. Purchase and decorate a small tabletop-size Christmas tree and deliver/donate it to an area hospice, nursing home, shelter or another caregiving facility.
30. If weather and the season permits, plant a tree in honor and memory of your loved one to serve as a living reminder of the love you carry in your heart during the holidays, and all year long, despite your loss.

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The general consensus was that people were excited about all the opportunities that recent changes in the industry have brought.

Some new products that were a big hit were our flower cart system, backseater, mausoleum trays, and first call trays. These are products we have had for a long time, but this was our first time highlighting them at a convention, and they were a huge hit! Other products that consistently bring traffic were the Healing Tree, our bronze Collages, and Serenities.

We had a great time in beautiful Salt Lake City, Utah for the 2018 NFDA Convention! We enjoyed hearing Laura Bush and Rudy Giuliani speak about their experiences in politics and with this great country we are all so blessed to live in.

We also sponsored a very successful corporate event along with Precoa, Live Oak Bank, Private Label, and Tukios. We ventured outside of Salt Lake City to a Top Golf, which was very entertaining! We have already begun preparing for our next national convention – ICCFA in Charlotte, NC. We hope to see you there!

We also had a lot of traffic at the Trigard booth. We ran into some old friends, and we also met many new ones!





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## Working with the Media

## Keys to Service - Respect

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

Has anyone noticed that it seems that culturally in 2015 the notion of respect for other human beings has changed? And not in a good way?

Not to sound negative, but it seems evident that culturally anyway our ability to be respectful to others is changing and has changed – and just possibly not for the good. Ever seen an elderly person who just can't seem to find anyone to hold a door open for them? Ever tried to make a lane change on the interstate and experienced numerous unmistakable non-verbal signals from other people using their finger digits? I suspect every reader knows precisely what is being addressed in this writing. I would like to suggest that one essential – there are hundreds of essentials in the funeral interview and funeral experience – but a major one, a vital one – is basic human respect.

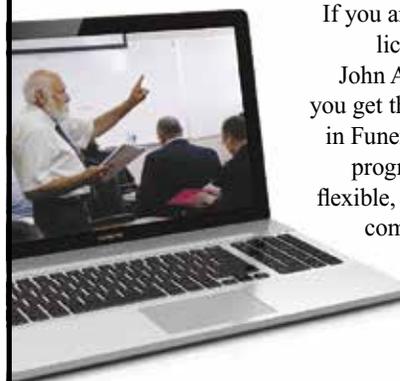
Interestingly I have concluded that having basic human respect is not a character trait that you can just magically develop by reading a book, or listening to a motivational tape, or even reading this article. Respect is a core character trait, and some people will never develop it and in these cynical times some people seem to have as a source of pride that they don't respect anyone. You know, the "take no prisoner's attitude." I would humbly like to suggest that having no respect for our bereaved client families is not just dangerous, in a caring profession like funeral service it is cruel, thoughtless and ridiculous!

Respect for the client family and their world involves a sincere interest both in them and in their world. We show this interest by the manner in which we attend to them, you know "fuss" over them. We show respect by carefully excluding outside interference as much as possible while we are there with them and exclusively for them, and by demonstrating that what is important to them is important to us. This last sentence sounds

good, in fact it sounds terribly attractive. However concerning respect there is a glaring truth: **Showing respect to the human race is not easy at times; many times it is simply near impossible.**

The insight concerning mutual respect is that we don't have to like all our client families – but we are expected to respect them, and that is most times the most difficult helping task of all, for respect means unconditional forgiving, unconditional patience, unconditional kindness, unconditional understanding and unconditional support – or at the very least the magnanimous attempt at giving this task our best possible effort at being "unconditional". This approach

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to respect is the diametrical opposite of judging a client family as being “weird” a “kook” or “impossible” or “high maintenance.” We don’t have to like them, we have to respect them.

Some thoughtful steps in respect:

### 1. Accepting the Client Family

All of us in this honored and beloved profession have thought about the important concept of acceptance and the role it plays in the funeral interview and funeral experience. As helping people funeral professionals cannot NOT think about acceptance. It is one of the core values that is inherent in our profession and has been a hallmark of our great profession for hundreds of years. Most funeral professionals are accepting people, but not all.

Basically, to me acceptance of others means treating the client family as an equal and regarding their thoughts and feelings with sincere respect, equal with my own thoughts and feelings. **BUT It does not mean agreeing with them; it does not mean thinking or feeling the way they do; it does not mean valuing what they**

**value.** It is, rather, the attitude that the client family has as much right to their ideas, feelings, and values as I have to mine, and that as a funeral professional, I want to do my utmost to understand their life in terms of their ideas, feelings, and values rather than in terms of my own. In reality this is not in the least a simple and task assignment, but it is an extremely valuable attitude to strive for.

As mentioned such an attitude is often difficult to maintain and even more difficult to communicate when confronted with the “difficult/dysfunctional” client family, which seems to be growing in numbers year by year. The naïve concept that all bereaved client families are like the “Walton’s” on television is simply a myth. The “Walton’s” was a television program, complete with make-up, costumes, memorized lines, props, and predetermined life situations. The “Walton’s” have ended up on celluloid which can be repeated time after time, year after year. There was nothing real about that program in the least. It is the rare 2015 American family that would mirror the ideal of the “Walton’s” – they are out there, many of us wish for this type of life, but it and they are rare.

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I have encountered many different family situations over the years. Some have inspired me as to the limitless possibilities of the human spirit to prevail against the greatest of odds and obstacles, and some have been so complicated, so dramatic, so dysfunctional, that I would just leave the funeral home shaking my head, and hoping that I was good enough to “get through this.”

Client families may be highly emotional or highly intellectual, or the stellar opposite; they may be crystal clear to me or not; they may seem “good” to me or “bad – or even ridiculous and incomprehensible. However as a professional I try (fail many times) to report to myself what I have received from the client family, and no matter what, I attempt to treat whatever they say with respect and the client family as of equal worth with myself. I don’t always succeed, but I make the attempt and many times the attempt is exhausting and just flops.

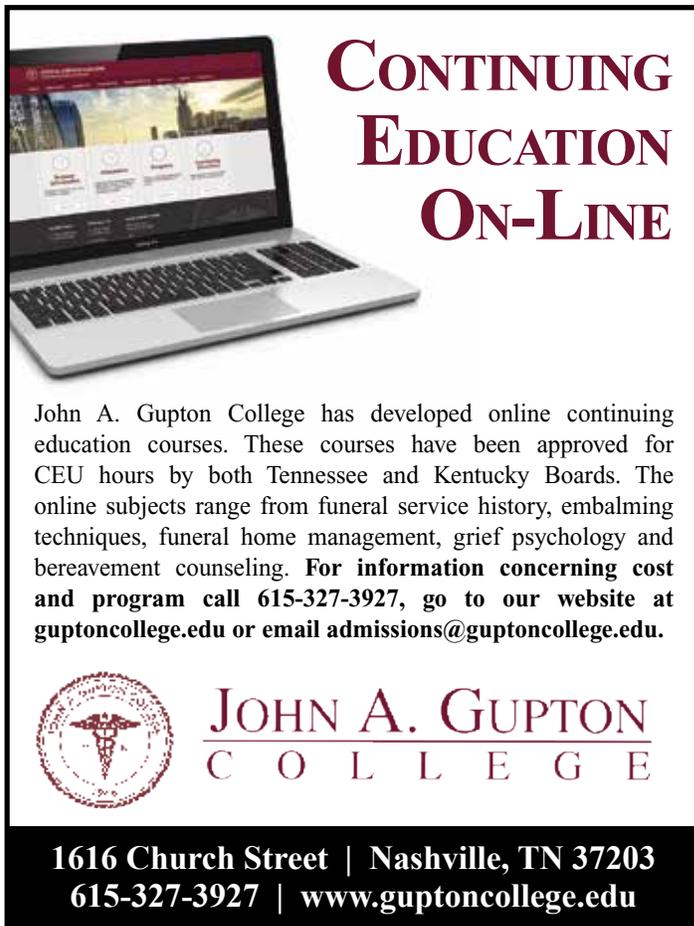
Another very important aspect of acceptance is the ability to treat as a respected equal someone of another culture, race, color, or faith. This funeral professional attribute and attitude of our hearts is all the more important and magnified as we watch the globe literally shrink before our own eyes. **Acceptance does not require strong liking, but acceptance is undoubtedly impossible when strong dislike is present.** We cannot truly help a person we cannot accept and/or strongly dislike, in my opinion, and there appears little of anything anyone can do to change the perverted world view of a bigot.

The inability to accept someone may occur even when cultural differences are absent. An honest, authentic, true incompatibility of personalities may exist – I know this has happened to me, and it still happens to me. In short, in the funeral experience we should strive to be able to first and foremost accept ourselves – our ideas and feelings as well – and to act accordingly (if we accept ourselves usually accepting others becomes much easier). Our range of acceptance may or may not broaden with time and maturity, we might well be stuck, but in the end the truth is we can help only when we can accept – there is no way around or a detour to this helping truth in respectfully accepting another person and their feelings.

## 2. Genuine Liking – A Key in Creating Respectful Rapport

A genuine liking for people is a gift from heaven. We are either born with it or we are not – it is terribly difficult to fake. Those upon whom the gift was not bestowed are neither better nor worse than other people but they do lack a trait highly valued in a helping profession such as funeral service. If our personal preferences lead us to great interest in say machines, plants, animals, abstractions, or whatever, but not to people, we should indulge and foster such preferences – but probably steer clear of funeral service. Some professions do not demand and some even exclude a genuine liking for people. However, for those of us in funeral service a genuine liking of people is essential and it is a real asset in establishing respect.

The funeral professional who genuinely likes people tends to be optimistic about humankind. They feel involved with those about them whether this is person to person or, indirectly, through service to the wider community. The genuinely liking funeral professional tends to be tolerant of people’s weaknesses and foibles but they are also convinced that people have it within



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them to act heroically and selflessly. The funeral professional who feels genuine warmth toward people likes to learn about them and their behavior, their motives and reflect upon their inner life.

The “people liking” funeral professional tends to delight in professional literature and human psychology. This type of respectful funeral professional stays clear of pettiness, gossip, and acrimony. If this funeral professionals liking for the human race is indeed genuine, he/she usually does not have a particularly strong insecurity to be liked in return, in other words this respectful professional has learned and accepted the wisdom lesson that you cannot be all things to all people – never under any circumstances, but we can try.

**CASE STUDY:** Throughout my career I have encountered some of the finest, most outstanding human beings imaginable. From this single aspect of a lifelong career I have been most blessed. One personality, one human being emerges as a true contender for the winner of Todd Van Beck’s most respectful human being award, and that person was the late **Mr. Ralph S. Turner**, who owned A.S. Turner & Sons Funeral Home in Decatur, Georgia. Ralph and I were good buddies and he and I spent many hours together discussing the philosophies of the world. Ralph Turner was a wonderful man and he genuinely liked but most importantly he respected all people. Here is an example – nothing earth shattering, nothing overly dramatic, but abundantly human.

Ralph and I were traveling together, going somewhere, and Ralph was driving. We were on a terribly busy street in Atlanta, and the traffic was horrendous. Down the street from where we were was a huge city transit bus that was trying to dodge traffic, trying to pick up passengers, trying to drop them off, and then trying in vain mostly to get back into traffic easily. The other drivers were shaking their fists at the bus driver, honking their horns, coming dangerously close to hitting the bus itself, cutting off the bus – it was just a mess, until Ralph Turner pulled up behind the bus.

Ralph flashed his headlights, and took his hand and waved the bus to pull out in front of us saying as if he was talking to the bus driver one on one; “Go ahead my friend, you’ve had enough trouble today”. I sat in the passenger’s seat and was witness to a great example of

simple, authentic, and free human respect take place. I looked at Ralph and said, and I quote, “Ralph, I will never be as kind and nice a person as you are.” Ralph said nothing in return, and we just continued on our journey letting the bus go in front of us for the rest of our trip.

When is the last time you have had someone be that respectful to you? Here is a challenge. Go purchase small note pads, hand them out to your work associate with a small pencil, and ask the group and yourself for one week to write down every respectful gesture or action that they do with another human being. In a week have everyone read their list, and see what is the outcome? Hopefully everyone will have pages of things they did to show respect to another human being. Hopefully that is.

We live in a very cold universe at times. We live in seemingly very cynical times. We live in a world that appears to be addicted to the negative and in proclaiming the negative in every which way possible.

Basic human respect in such a complicated impersonal climate, in these particular times in history is definitely a difficult task. However it is my firm conviction that our beloved profession has indeed encountered difficult times in our long and rich history of service to humanity, and in the end our beloved profession has always prevailed. To be sure we have prevailed with the scars and wounds, with some warts, and blemishes, but we have prevailed.

The prevalence of our beloved profession, in the end I believe firmly, is always, and has always been attributable to the basic respectful decency of the average, typical, funeral professional who holds tight to the worthy mission of being one and at the same time the caretaker of the dead and the caregiver to the living. It is indeed an honorable calling.



## Production Changes Hitting Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions

In a phone and email statement from Matthews Aurora on Thursday, the company announced that by the end of 2019 it would be closing its Richmond, IN casket production plant. The company is currently not answering questions regarding this closure, nor are they releasing a full press release. The closure is due to a multi-million dollar facility upgrade at the Aurora, IN plant and by moving casket production from Richmond to Aurora, the company can continue to provide the highest quality product.

Below is the full statement provided by Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions:

Today Matthews Aurora Funeral Solutions announced that it plans to close its Richmond, Indiana casket production plant by the end of 2019. The Company will shift metal casket production from the Richmond plant to its plant in Aurora, Indiana. Cremation casket production will shift from Richmond predominantly to the Company's plant in York, Pennsylvania.

Matthews Aurora has recently made multi-million-dollar investments at its Aurora facility to continue driving innovation and the highest quality standards, including a state-of-the-art paint finishing system and automation technology. The new paint system in Aurora produces a greater depth of image, more vibrant reflection, and more durable topcoat, delivering the same preeminent finishes as legacy Matthews facilities. Matthews Aurora has also invested millions of dollars in the York facility in recent years to continue its tradition of making the highest quality hardwood caskets in the industry. These production shifts position the Company to continue manufacturing the best caskets available.

When notifying its funeral home customers of the impending transition, Matthews Aurora leadership reiterated its long-standing commitment to ensuring they receive seamless service. Matthews Aurora's metal stamping plant in Richmond, Indiana is not affected by this transition.



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## New President & Chief Executive Officer selected to lead NGL

The Board of Directors for National Guardian Life Insurance Company (NGL) selected Knut A. Olson as its next President and CEO, effective January 3, 2019, succeeding Mark L. Solverud who announced his retirement for the end of April 2019.

“The Board conducted a nationwide search and established specific criteria to identify a leader who could build upon NGL’s growth, financial strength and connection with its customers and marketing partners. Olson is eminently qualified and has an outstanding reputation in the insurance industry. His many accomplishments and experience will provide NGL with strong leadership to guide us into the future,” stated David G. Walsh, Chairman of the Board.

Most recently, Olson was President of the North American Life and Annuity Division of Foresters Financial, and President of Foresters Life Insurance and Annuity Company, where he oversaw Forester’s life insurance business in the U.S. and Canada and also

had responsibility over annuities, investment products and insurance operations.

Prior to Foresters he worked at Thrivent Financial for more than 25 years, beginning as an insurance agent and advancing to General Agent, Managing Partner, Divisional Vice President, and then to the home office position of Chief Distribution Officer and ultimately Senior Vice President of Mission Advancement.

“I share the values that drive NGL’s mission and am impressed with the company’s past achievements. While remaining committed to its primary markets and policyholders, the Board is looking to expand NGL’s marketing and product focus in order to continue its path of growth. I have a background and passion for that challenge, and I look forward to working with the Board and management staff toward that goal,” said Olson.



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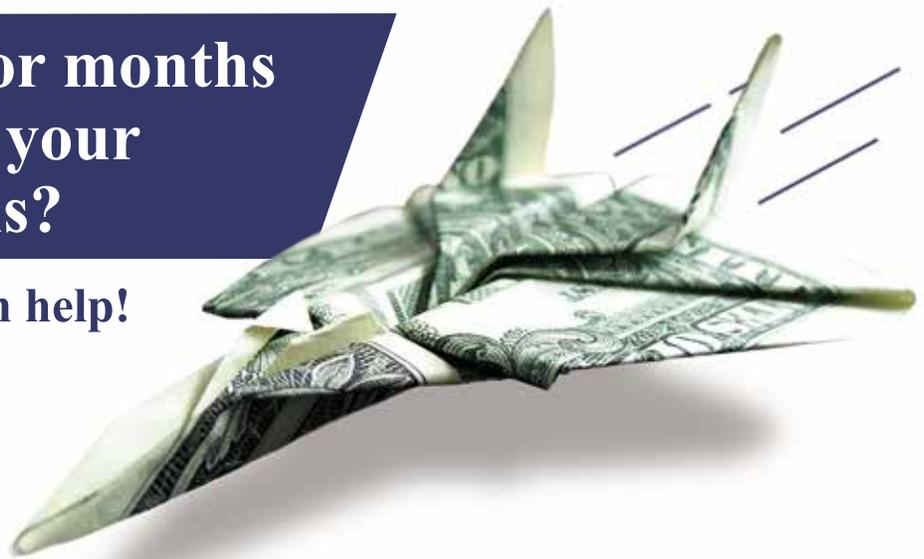
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Answering Service for Directors	<b>27</b>	<a href="http://www.myasd.com">www.myasd.com</a>
Cherokee Child Caskets	<b>23</b>	<a href="http://www.cherokeechildcaskets.com">www.cherokeechildcaskets.com</a>
C&J Financial	<b>29</b>	<a href="http://www.cjf.com">www.cjf.com</a>
Columbian Financial Group	<b>21</b>	<a href="http://www.cfglife.com">www.cfglife.com</a>
Custom Air Trays	<b>19</b>	<a href="http://www.CustomAirTrays.com">www.CustomAirTrays.com</a>
Doric Products	<b>15, 17</b>	<a href="http://www.doric-vaults.com">www.doric-vaults.com</a>
Express Funeral Funding	<b>30</b>	<a href="http://www.expressfuneralfunding.com">www.expressfuneralfunding.com</a>
Frigid Fluids	<b>21</b>	<a href="http://www.frigidfluid.com">www.frigidfluid.com</a>
FuneralCall	<b>3</b>	<a href="http://www.funeralcall.com">www.funeralcall.com</a>
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National Guardian Life Insurance Company	<b>32</b>	<a href="http://www.nglic.com">www.nglic.com</a>
Physicians Mutual/Precoa	<b>2</b>	<a href="http://www.physiciansmutual.com">www.physiciansmutual.com</a>
Service Casket/SICH	<b>28, 29</b>	<a href="http://www.sichcasket.com">www.sichcasket.com</a>
Shields Southeast Sales	<b>10</b>	<a href="http://www.myhearse.com">www.myhearse.com</a>
United Midwest Savings Bank	<b>11</b>	<a href="http://www.umwsb.com">www.umwsb.com</a>
Ward's Funeral Supplies	<b>5</b>	<a href="http://www.wardstransportservice.com">www.wardstransportservice.com</a>
Wilbert Funeral Services	<b>9</b>	<a href="http://www.wilbert.com">www.wilbert.com</a>
Vantage Products Corporation	<b>12</b>	<a href="http://www.vantageproducts.com">www.vantageproducts.com</a>

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