

# The WCCA Reporter

*A Wisconsin Cemetery & Cremation Association Publication*



## President's Message

*One last message by outgoing WCCA President Christine Toson Hentges*



**"Without deviation, progress is not possible"** — Frank Zappa

essary and definitely have benefited the WCCA and what we can offer to our members and the general public.

end of my term as President of the Association... and there is still an opening for someone else to fill that role.

Coming in as President of the Wisconsin Cemetery Association, the above-referenced quote was exactly how I felt I wanted to achieve the goals for the Association.

We needed to make important changes to provoke continuous improvement within our organization. Some of these changes felt dramatic at the time, but looking back on them now, they were all nec-

Although a great deal was accomplished during my term, there is always the hope for more.

There are still so many great ideas and goals ahead and a huge amount of momentum. It's important to note that June 15 was the

***"Although a great amount was accomplished during my term, there is always the hope for more."***

This creates a wonderful opportunity for one

of our members to fill the important role – and help represent our members, our executive directors and most critically, the cemetery and cremation industry in Wisconsin.

**Continued on page 2....**

### Suppliers



### Speak Out

## The importance of computerized records in the cemetery industry

*By Brandon Finley, Ramaker & Associates, Inc.*

### Why 2007 is the year to take action against outdated recordkeeping systems

It's an honor and privilege to work side-by-side with cemetery workers and giving them the tools they need to organize and run their cemeteries. The resources available for them today are more

cost-effective than ever before.

I've personally worked with two types of cemetery owners – the owners who have had tragedy strike and those who are preparing before any inci-



dents have occurred.

While computerizing records is still the aim and critical for both, it's no doubt

less painful to work with those who have

**Continued on page 2....**

44 E. Mifflin, Ste. 600  
Madison, WI 53703

Phone 608.310.8833  
Fax 608.310.8834

## Officers

**Christine Toson Hentges**  
President

The Tribute Companies

**Richard Majewski**

Secretary

Queen of Peace Cemetery

**Bill Hoffmann**

Treasurer

Graceland/Union Cemeteries

## Board of Directors

**Michael Baltus**

Hillside Cemetery

**John Okonek**

Diocese of Stevens Point

**Tom Greene**

Nielsville Municipal Cemetery

**Jeff Reinhart**

La Crosse Catholic Cemeteries

**Mary Lemirande**

Woodlawn Cemetery

Continued from page 1... **Computerized records**

prepared without tragedy striking.

**What will your reason be?**

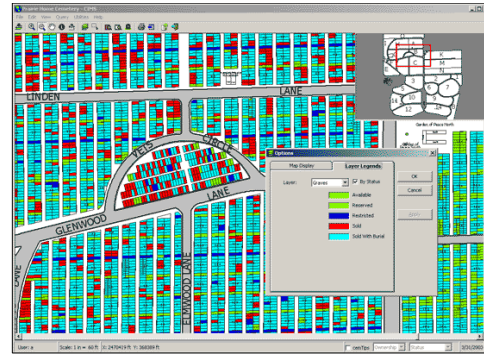
Cemeterians have many reasons why they've chosen to transfer their records to computer. The one we hear the most is 'time.'

Many realize that their time is better spent in other cemetery operations than in searching through books and file cabinets for a person who has stopped by to visit a loved one. Some cemeteries have five different record keeping systems that need

to be cross-referenced before an answer can be found. Or, the paper trail may not exist at all and many rely on persons who have tended the cemetery for years.

Have you ever evaluated how much time it takes you to find someone with limited information? Our clients repeatedly tell us that a computerized system is faster, less prone to error and lets them focus on other aspects of the job.

One benefit computerized cemeteries are discovering is they're now able to obtain an accurate account of the available or unclaimed plots in the cemetery.

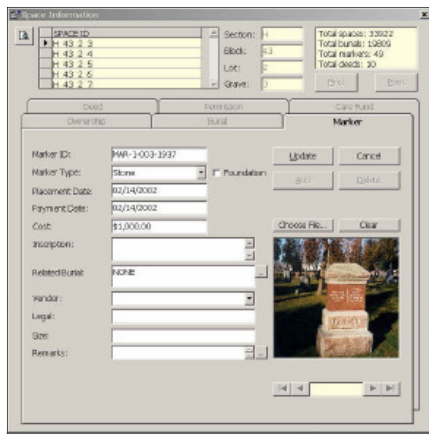


They can now, for the first time ever, get a clear picture of how much land is available and how much time they have before they

need to expand. The act of computerizing their records has become an unexpected tool in long-range master planning for cemeterians across the nation.

Ultimately, the one reason some cemeterians haven't updated their records is cost. They feel they don't have the resources needed to make this investment. If this is the case, there are still steps to take in protecting the cemetery. If entirely still on paper, make sure copies and records are kept in a

**Continued on page 5...**



Continued from page 1... **President's Message**

The association has a solid base of new members; financial stability and structure; a new website (which has been getting more "hits" and inquiries than originally anticipated); clear goals; a strong lobbying and executive director group; a new name; and increased recognition within the Capitol and among legislators.

To say I'm satisfied with what our members have done to get us to this point is a gross understatement... I'm elated! Thank you to everyone who has played a part in achieving so much in such a short amount of time.

The cemetery and cremation business is not an easy one. It is essential that we work together to improve professionalism, revenue, reputation, community involvement and most of all, pride in what we do in our unique business. The WCCA is by far the best way to create this bond, and I look forward to continue watching the Association's success and future growth.

It has been such a pleasure to serve as President, and I cannot express my appreciation enough for the support I received from all of you.

**WCCA opens search for new president**

Unfortunately, all good things must come to an end. After four years of exemplary service, Christine Toson Hentges' term as WCCA President has ended.

While it will be difficult to fill her shoes, the WCCA must now appoint a new president.

In the interim, the role will be filled by our executive director, Michael Welsh, in consultation with the Executive Board. However, it's important we fill the role permanently in the very near future.

If you are interested in serving a two-year term as the next WCCA President, please contact Michael Welsh at (608) 310-8833 or [memberservice@wccacemeteries.org](mailto:memberservice@wccacemeteries.org)

Also, keep in mind that the workload and time required of the position has been reduced significantly since the WCCA has brought an executive director on-board.



## Industry News

# Cemetery dispute isn't dead yet

By Jo Anne Kileen

Printed in the **West Salem Coulee News** on June 7, 2007

It might have seemed like the Burns Cemetery issue was laid to rest last week, but the controversy hasn't died down yet.

At a special town meeting, Burns residents voted 90-73, to convey title of lands of the Burns and Sand Creek Cemetery from the town to the Burns Cemetery Association by quitclaim deed.

Town Chairman Paul Kitzmann still has reservations regarding the legality of the decision and said after the meeting he won't do anything until legal issues are clarified.

Burns Town Hall was so packed for the meeting Thursday, some residents stood outside and showed their hands in the window when voting. And the contentious crowd tested Kitzmann's knowledge of parliamentary procedure.

When he finally restored order, Kitzmann opened the floor for discussion. Soon, Linda Saley, president of the cemetery association, took over answering questions.

After an hour's worth of questions, answers, accusations, airing of past grievances, clarifications and general civilized confusion, residents in attendance voted by hand, overwhelmingly, to close debate.

The vote for the resolution was called for and residents received a piece of paper to vote. A "yes" vote meant the town would convey the titles to and any interest in Burns and Sand Creek cemeteries to the association. A "no" vote meant the town would maintain title and interests in the two cemeteries.

Following the vote, Kitzmann announced the results, 90-73 in favor of the transfer to the association.

Saley, interviewed the next morning after being appointed as the June Dairy Days Parade Marshall in West Salem, said she was very happy with the vote.

"It was long overdue," she said. "It was something that should have been taken care of a long time ago to clear up all the problems. I hope the town board and the cemetery association can work together in the future."

"The townspeople voted and I will respect the townspeople," Supervisor Matt Hoth said. "I believe the Burns Cemetery Association has been doing a wonderful job over the years. The people voted the way they feel about it."

Hoth had recently received a citation for disorderly conduct resulting from an incident prior to the town meeting. According to the sheriff's report, Hoth had a verbal confrontation with the town chairman's mother during which he threatened Kitzmann, and called the women derogatory names. She had been distributing leaflets with information about the issue.

In the aftermath of the meeting, Kitzmann is questioning the legality of the vote. The language of the motion said, "...the Town of Burns, La Crosse County, Wisconsin, shall convey all its interest and title to the Burns and Sand Creek Cemetery lands to the Burns Cemetery Association by Quit Claim Deed."

Kitzmann questions the legality of the resolution because the town has no interest or title to the Sand Creek



Cemetery. Kitzmann said the town needs to address the legal ramifications of that first.

"I will respect the vote," Kitzmann said, "but I cannot do anything illegal or sign anything inaccurate or perpetrate fraud."

Kitzmann said he felt the quitclaim drafted by the cemetery association's lawyer is inaccurate.

Despite the fact the town board voted to drop the lawsuit that contested the association's legitimacy, Kitzmann said he is still hesitant to confer such legitimacy.

Until someone rules that the Burns Cemetery Association is a legitimate organization, Kitzmann said he won't deed it over, but he will once the legalities are complied with. He is waiting to hear a response from the state's Department of Financial Institutions.

Kitzmann maintains that the Burns Cemetery Association is not legitimate because it does not hold title to the land on which the cemetery sits. While a transfer of ownership would make it legitimate, Kitzmann said he also is uncomfortable deeding the property over since he feels association officials had provided false information for status as a cemetery association to the DFI.

# WCCA MAINTENANCE CORNER

*Tips for maintaining a beautiful cemetery*



## Tips for a luscious lawn

By Bob Batz, Jr.—Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

When it comes to cutting grass, Frank Wildauer is pretty sharp. He did things the right way, from keeping his blade honed to varying his mowing pattern.

Also, except for a slightly shorter end-of-season cut, he cut the grass at 3 inches. Experts agree: Cutting too short, or cutting more than a third of the leaves at one time, stresses the plants and makes it harder for the lawn to hold in moisture and keep out weeds and pests.

Three inches may seem high — it's the highest setting on most mowers — but Dave Middlemiss says he mows his at 3-1/4 inches, and even a bit more would be fine, as long as you mow it regularly.

"The way you mow the lawn is probably the most important thing," says Middlemiss, vice president of operations at Jefferson Memorial Park, a Pittsburgh cemetery. He oversees not only the cutting of the cemetery's 150 acres of grass, but also its L&M Lawncare division.

He says you can measure the distance from the ground to your mower's blade, or just drop a golf ball in your grass. If it disappears, "That is the proper height."

Basically, longer leaves mean longer roots which, along with proper fertilization, makes for a thicker, greener canopy.

He offers these additional tips:

- Mowing grass in the evening reduces stress on the plants.
- Water dry lawns deeply, especially in the summer.
- Watering in the morning minimizes evaporation and disease.
- Core aerating the lawn in the fall — pulling out small plugs of grass and dirt — loosens the soil and helps break down thatch.

## Cemetery Pest Control Dealing with grub problems



The Japanese beetle grub is generally considered the single biggest turf pest threat in the United States. The grubs feed below-ground and chew on the roots of grass and other ornamental plants, leaving in their path irregularly shaped patches of dead or dying grass — primarily in August to mid-October. A serious infestation will destroy your turf.

While most lawns have grubs, a small population won't damage your turf. However, if you have more than six visible grubs per square foot, you should consider applying a grub control product.

Timing is everything when it comes to grub control.

In July, female beetles spend several weeks laying eggs in the soil. Most eggs hatch in about two weeks, and the grubs begin to feed on grass roots for most of August. At this time, the grubs are small and vulnerable to insect controls.

From late August through October the grubs continue to grow and consume more roots. If grubs aren't eradicated in the early stages of growth, damage to your turf will begin to appear in late fall.

Grubs that survive the winter begin feeding on roots for a short time in the spring before they emerge as full-grown beetles in June.

Remember, grubs cause the most damage from July-September. It is also during this time that they are small and most susceptible to pest control. So, if you have a grub problem, act fast and take care of the problem sooner rather than later.

## WCCA Online: Check out our website!

One of the associations top goals for 2007 was a new website to better serve our members. In March, the site went live and can be viewed at [www.wicemeteries.org](http://www.wicemeteries.org).

The site is a great tool for members to communicate with each other, association leadership and suppliers.

It will also provide invaluable information regarding the cemetery industry to the general public and state legislators.

We will continue to update and improve the site, and look forward to your input and suggestions.





# Capitol Update

## WCCA government affairs - by Michael Welsh, WCCA lobbyist

The wheeling and dealing under the “marble big top” is in full swing as legislators scramble to craft a two-year, \$58 million spending plan for the state.

The budget bill, which is supposed to be completed by June 30, most likely won't be finished until late summer or early fall — as Democrats who control the Senate and Republicans who control the Assembly squabble over taxes, spending and the creation of new entitlement programs.

While the WCCA government affairs team will keep a close eye on the budget for policy changes that could affect members (e.g., modifications to the Cemetery and Burial Aids program; increased credentialing fees; etc.), our focus during the current legislative session will remain on the following items:

**Assembly Bill 305** — This legislation would allow individuals to control their own burial and funeral arrangements — and avoid the tension that sometimes occurs among surviving family members due to differing opinions. The bill creates a legally binding document to ensure the wishes of the deceased, including cemetery & funeral arrangements, are carried out as they directed. The bill also provides cemeteries immunity from liability in certain situations that may arise as a result of the legislation.

**AB 186** has received a public hearing and is awaiting further action by the Legislature.

**Assembly Bill 186** — This legislation would provide a sales tax exemption for non-profit cemeteries on maintenance equipment, supplies and services.

**AB 186** has received a public hearing and is awaiting further action by the Legislature.

**Cremation Transportation Act** — This legislation, which will be introduced as an official bill in the near future, would allow crematories registered by the state to transport deceased human remains for the purpose of cremation. Currently, only funeral directors, coroners and family members are authorized to transport a dead body for final disposition.

**Cemetery Registration Act** — This legislation is a “trailer” to a bill supported by the WCCA last session

**that created the Cemetery Board to regulate Wisconsin's larger cemeteries. The Cemetery registration Act, which is ready for introduction and legislative consideration, would provide the Cemetery Board greater flexibility to regulate cemeteries and the authority to register all cemeteries in the state.**

The WCCA has raised its profile in the State Capitol, and we have established a solid record of legislative success. But this is no time to rest on our laurels! In fact, it's more important than ever to roll up our sleeves and increase our role in the legislative arena. Remember, our continued success depends on a strong grassroots effort and member participation.

If you have any questions on WCCA legislative issues or would like more information on a bill, please do not hesitate to contact [memberservices@wicemeteries.org](mailto:memberservices@wicemeteries.org).

---

### Continued from page 2... Computerized Records

separate location and updated regularly. Also, just entering owners and burials on a computer spreadsheet would be helpful and the data could be transferred to a more sophisticated system at a later time.

### An Investment in the Future of Your Cemetery

During the process of computerizing your cemetery records, lot cards, plot books, and hand drawn maps, will all be uncovered. Through the stories and people you discover while computerizing your cemetery records, you will be gathering priceless historical information about your community. These records are valuable assets desired by genealogists and historians and there may be untapped revenue streams. In addition, do you know how many veterans, mothers or fathers are buried in your cemetery? Would their loved ones pay for remembrance of them on special occasions?

Taking action today doesn't mean that you'll be prepared for the spring celebrations this year, but it will mean that by Mother's Day, Memorial Day, and Father's Day in 2008, your cemetery can unveil to the public your new ways of record keeping and prove your investment in their future. They'll know that you will continue to honor their rich heritage.

# Cemetery e-mail scam on the rise

In the information age, e-mail and fax scams are a dime a dozen. But even we were surprised by a new credit card scam hitting fax machines and e-mail accounts across the country aimed at cemeteries.

One of our members recently received the fax seen below requesting numerous cemetery services. However, it amounts to nothing more than a scam under the guise of a business proposition. Generally speaking, the fax encourages unsuspecting cemeterians to participate in credit card and wire fraud.

If you receive a similar fax or e-mail, please contact the WCCA at (608) 310-8833 or [memberservices@wicemeteries.org](mailto:memberservices@wicemeteries.org), and we will report it to the proper authorities.

## Fax

To: From: peegy david

---

Fax: 12627867010 Date: Thu, 31 May 2007 02:26:52 -0700 (PDT)

---

Subject: Burial Space Needed

---

Hello,

I am Mrs Carol wills and please i will like to book a burial plot for the burial of my late Mum. Pls i will like you to email me with the costs for the single burial plots which u have available at this time.

I will like to have the space of about \$2000 and I will want a basic vault for about \$800 and I will like just a good Marker. I will pay for closing the grave and the headstone as well.

Please I will like you to email me the total costs which i am to pay at this time and i will have you run my credit card for 60% of the whole cost now while I will pay the balance when we come around for the final Internment.

Also you are to run an additional \$2000 on my credit card and you are to send this to the burial agent in the United Kingdom ( UK ) via Western Union Money Transfer. This this to be their cost to transfer the body from the United kingdom to Usa for the Final Burial and they will oversee the affairs of the burial to take place.

Here are some details you will need about the Deceased :

Name : Mrs Doris Fatmells .

Date of Birth : 03/08/1928

Date of Death: 29/04/2007

Marital Status before death: Widowed

Place of Death: London, United Kingdom

Please do email or fax me the total cost asap and I will get back to you with my credit card information for you to run asap.

I hope to hear from you soonest and I will wait for any further question you would like to ask.

You can email me directly on [carolwills04@yahoo.com](mailto:carolwills04@yahoo.com) if u have an email address or you send me a fax through my fax number : 206-202-4858...

Regards  
Carol Wills

## Cemetery Humor

The following are reported to be from actual tombstones in the U.S and England:

- Here lies Ezekial Aikle  
Age 102  
The Good Die Young.
- Ann Mann  
Here lies Ann Mann,  
Who lived an old maid  
But died an old Mann.  
Dec. 8, 1767
- Here lies  
Johnny Yeast  
Pardon me  
For not rising.
- Here lies the body  
of Jonathan Blake  
Stepped on the gas  
Instead of the brake.
- Sir John Strange  
Here lies an honest  
lawyer,  
And that is Strange.
- Here lays Butch,  
We planted him raw.  
He was quick on the  
trigger,  
But slow on the draw.

## We're trying to reach you....

As a member of the WCCA you receive regular communications from the Association, including industry news, legislative updates and upcoming events.

Out of convenience and efficiency, most of these communications are sent via e-mail. Unfortunately, we are re-



ceiving a growing number of return-to-sender e-mails that never make it to the desired recipients.

To ensure you receive these updates and get the most out of your WCCA membership, please help us update our records. Simply e-mail your name, title, phone number and the organization you represent to [memberservices@wicemeteries.org](mailto:memberservices@wicemeteries.org).