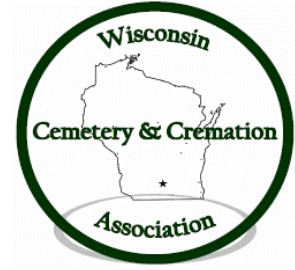


The WCCA Reporter

A Wisconsin Cemetery & Cremation Association Publication



Executive Director's Message

By Michael Welsh

Happy Holidays!

While 2007 has yet to come to a close, the WCCA is already looking forward and preparing for the New Year.

But before we start focusing exclusively on the future, it's important to pause and look back at the events of 2007 - and what it meant to the WCCA and our members.

As you know, earlier this year, Christine Toson Hentges stepped

down as president of the WCCA after four years of service.

Her hard work and dedication set the table for the success we enjoyed this year.

Our most visible achievements in 2007 have been in the legislative arena, where we continue to obtain results and raise the profile of our Indus-

try in the State Capitol.

We have taken the lead on and our deeply involved in a number of

high-profile legislative issues that will greatly

benefit both our members and the industry as a whole (see page 5 for a full legislative update).

Of course, we also unveiled our much-anti-

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Suppliers



Speak Out

Geese Control: Take steps to evict your "neighborhood" geese

By Susan Kinney, President—Geese Police of Wisconsin

Cemeteries today are works of art with manicured lawns and beautiful roads to drive through. Many people visit today's cemeteries to visit their loved ones, to take a quiet and peaceful stroll, to jog, or to walk their dogs.

What is worse than to see a cemetery full of geese and all of the

waste they leave behind?

It's probably not something you think about very much - at least I hope not - but one Canadian goose defecates 28 times a day. Of course, this creates the potential for environmental prob-

lems and risk to human health. In addition,

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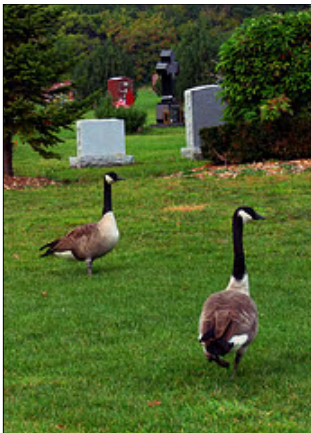
Woodlawn Cemetery

Continued from page 1... Geese

geese can pose a physical threat, as they are known to display noisy and sometimes aggressive behavior.

Their mere presence also attracts other geese. They destroy lawns and ponds... and basically will disturb a quiet, peaceful and beautiful cemetery.

Since geese have very few predators, one of the most effective tools in riding a cemetery of geese is to introduce a predator. In fact, the Geese Police of Wisconsin utilizes a highly trained working border collie to herd geese out of cemeteries and other locations. These dogs are trained specifically for goose control. They actually stalk the geese and use a



wolf like glance called "the eye" to mesmerize their prey into flight.

Under the "predator" program, trained handlers accompany a dog to the client's grounds several times a day at different times each day, seven days a week. Times of visits are staggered so that the geese think the "predator" is there waiting for them. Once the cemetery appears to be an unsafe haven, the geese will go somewhere else where they feel secure and out of danger.

After the "predator" program is completed, a previously geese-infested cemetery returns to the peaceful haven it was intended to be - without the noise and the mess.

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Continued from page 1... Director's Message

ated website this year. The site (www.wicemeteries.org) serves as a communication tool for members and an information portal for the general public and government officials on the cemetery industry. We would urge all members to make use of the site, especially as we continue to add upgrades.

As you know, the WCCA decided not to hold an annual meeting this year. Instead, we held a Lobby Day in Madison to meet with legislators and share our legislative priorities. While the Lobby Day was a great success and enjoyed by all, members made it clear they missed the annual meeting and the opportunity to network with fellow members and mingle with suppliers.

I'm happy to report that the WCCA Annual Meeting will return in 2008. It will likely be held in late spring or early summer, so mark your calendars and stay tuned for more details.

So while 2007 has been an terrific year for the WCCA, 2008 holds even greater promise - for both the association and our members!

Have a happy Holiday Season and a prosperous New Year!

WCCA leadership opportunities

For the past six months, since Christine Toson Hentges stepped down after two successful terms in office, the WCCA has been without a President

While Association's day-to-day operations and key programs haven't suffered, it remains important to have a leader to serve as the official "face" of the WCCA

In addition to the position of President, there is also an opening on the WCCA Board of Directors.

If you're interested in serving as the next WCCA President or on the Board, please contact Michael Welsh at (608) 310-8833 or memberservices@wicemeteries.org.



Industry News

A funeral fit for a Chihuahua: Pet burials

By Allison Manning

Printed in the **Boston Globe** on December 16, 2007

When Ed Hildebrandt bought Pleasant Mountain Pet Rest in Plymouth, MA in 1980, fewer than three dozen pets were buried there. Today, more than 4,000 animal companions - from cats and dogs to a boa constrictor - are laid to rest in the 3-acre tract.

Business is booming, there and at other pet cemeteries in the region, as more people choose to give a human-like memorial to deceased pets. Grief is grief, specialists say, whether for a lost pet or a lost human companion.

Eighty percent of Hildebrandt's clients are choosing to have their pet cremated and returned in a wooden box (average cost: \$150). The rest choose private burial (up to \$450, depending on the pet's size).

"It's a matter of wanting to do something for the pet so that they know it's not being disposed of in a manner that's distasteful," Hildebrandt said.

Mary Hicks of Halifax is among the pet owners who feel that way.

When Lilly, her pug, and Nacho, her Chihuahua, died within three months of each other in 2001, Hicks, 62, turned to Pleasant Mountain to have a full burial and

memorial service.

"It just felt right to me," said Hicks.

"I didn't want cremation and I didn't want a public burial. I wanted something private. It seemed

to work." She visits the site regularly.

"There's a tendency to think it's strange," she acknowledges.

But for veterinarians and others who understand the human-pet bond, it makes perfect sense.

"The grief process is exactly the same," whether the deceased loved one is a human or a pet, said Dr. Stefanie Schwartz, a board-certified veterinary behaviorist for more than 20 years. "But our society does not recognize it to the same degree."

"Losing a pet can be more impactful and more emotionally profound than losing a family member," said Schwartz, who runs a pet loss support group at VCA South Shore Animal Hospital in Weymouth. "There are unresolved emotional issues with people, but the relationship with the pet can be very pure."



Schwartz said a pet can symbolize the "ideal" relationship the owner may be lacking with parents, siblings, or spouses.

"When that pet goes, it's shattering all the hopes and dreams and securities," she continued. "The relationships we have with our pets are sacred in a different way."

The loss of a pet can also be more devastating because of the potential insensitivity toward the pet-owner relationship. Schwartz noted that owners most often have to take a personal day from work for the loss of a pet, but are given weeks for the loss of a family member or friend.

Other veterinarians, including Dr. Lisa Barber, who oversees the pet loss support hot line at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University, agreed

Continued on page 4...

Continued from page 3... **Pet burials**

that the pet-owner bond can eclipse that of some human relationships.

"There are always going to be people who say, 'It's just an animal. Get over it,' " she said. "They just think of it as a lesser relationship than a person."

Owners feel solely responsible for their pet's well-being, more than for another human, Barber said, and not being able to save the pet from illness or age can be difficult.

"They feel so responsible for the pet, doing every thing for them, and they feel a lot of grief and sometimes guilt," she said, "although it's not necessarily that they did anything wrong."

"Your pet, who you spend every day with, passes away," Barber added. "There's really no formalized way of acknowledging that or making it acceptable" in society.

Kim Hardej of Hull said that when she was growing up, pets were considered part of the family. She still feels that way, so when her dogs Molly, Lucy, Cody and Muffy died, it was not a hard decision to have them cremated.

Some owners go as far as choosing to bring their pet with them to the grave, interring their ashes in their own casket or burial plot.

Bob Biggins, owner of Magoun-Biggins funeral home in Rockland, said it is not unusual for a family to ask to put the cremated remains of a pet in the deceased person's casket. He said he receives the request a couple of times a year.

"It's nothing special," he said. "Just following the family's wishes. That's what we're about, is helping families celebrate life."

Hildebrandt recounted a phone call he received from a family a few years ago, asking for an expedited cremation of a pet that died just a day after its owner. The family buried the pet with the owner, placing its ashes in the casket at the funeral.

Pleasant Mountain is not the only pet cemetery in the region that is experiencing the boom in "pet after care."



Alan S. Orling for the New York Times

At Pine Ridge cemetery in Dedham, Mike Thomas, who has overseen the 27-acre cemetery for 37 years, said he's gone from performing about 70 burials and 100 cremations a year to up to 300 burials and 450 cremations annually.

Pine Ridge, which is operated by an animal welfare agency, is more expensive than Pleasant Mountain, charging up to \$190 for cremations and \$900 for upright burial markers and plots. The cemetery also offers upgrades for urns, headstones, and other memorial options.

At Angel View Pet Cemetery in Middleborough, owner William Morgan said a better knowledge by pet owners about services available to them is the biggest factor in increasing the industry's business.

Back at Pleasant Mountain Pet Rest, Hildebrandt says that despite his 37 years in the pet business, and even with seven of his own pets buried on his property, he can't explain the bond between animal and owner.

"The only definitive answer that I have is that the pet is the only thing that we all know will give unconditional love, be it a pit bull or the most docile Labrador," he said. "And that's something you can't buy."



Capitol Update

WCCA government affairs - by Michael Welsh, WCCA lobbyist

2007 has proven to be an extremely busy year for the WCCA, especially on the legislative front. In fact, the WCCA has been involved in more legislative issues this year than at any other time in recent memory.

More importantly, we have been successful in advocating the interests of our members and the cemetery industry as a whole. Listed-below is a list of legislative issues the WCCA has been working on as well as a status report on each issue:

Sales and use tax exemption for non-profit cemeteries: This measure, which was signed into law as part of the state budget bill, creates a sales and use tax exemption for tangible personal property or services purchased by non-profit cemeteries. The tax exemption will go into effect on July 1, 2009.

Status: Signed into law

The Cemetery Registration Act (AB 547 / SB 288):

The WCCA's top legislative priority for the 2007-08 legislative session, this bill would broaden the regulatory scope of the Cemetery Board at the Department of Regulation and Licensing.

As you recall, two years ago, the WCCA was successful in creating the Cemetery Board as part of the 2005-07 state budget bill. Prior to creation of the Board, the cemetery industry essentially had no voice over how it was regulated by the state. The Board, which is made-up of cemetery professionals, oversees the regulation of Wisconsin cemeteries.

This legislation will increase the role and responsibility of the Board in regulating cemeteries. The bill will help cemeteries comply with state law and regulations, while at the same time protect consumers from any "bad actors" in our industry.

Status: Both the Assembly and Senate versions of the bill have received public hearings. The Senate Bill

was voted unanimously out of committee.

Final Rights Legislation (AB 305): Assembly Bill 305 would create an *Authorization for Final Disposition* – a legal document that will allow individuals to express special instructions for disposition after death. The authorization would include directives, to be carried out by an appointed representative, on such matters as religious observances, graveside services, funeral arrangements and burial.

In addition, AB 305 establishes a priority list of individuals authorized to determine the disposition of a deceased family member's remains – if the deceased failed to appoint a representative in an *Authorization for Final Disposition*. The bill also establishes a procedure for resolving any disputes that may arise between family members.

Status: AB 305 was passed unanimously out of the Assembly. The bill has received a public hearing in the Senate, where it enjoys widespread support.

Scrap Metal Legislation (AB 560): The WCCA is working as part of a broad coalition comprised of electric and telecommunications utilities, beer distributors and others on legislation that would increase penalties for scrap metal theft. The legislation would also impose numerous record keeping and reporting requirements on scrap metal dealers to make it more difficult for individuals to sell stolen metal.

Due to the increase in the theft of cemetery items such as bronze vases and markers, the WCCA worked to include a provision in the bill to better protect cemeteries and families.

Under the bill, "a metal grave marker, sculpture, plaque, or vase, if the item's appearance suggests the item has been obtained from a cemetery" would be considered a proprietary metal article and subject to the new record keeping and reporting requirements.

Continued on page 6...

Continued from page 5... **Capitol Update**

Under the bill, Wisconsin scrap metal dealers would be required to do the following to purchase a proprietary metal article:

- Obtain photographic identification from the seller.
- Record in a ledger the seller's identifying information, the license plate number of the seller's vehicle, and certain descriptive information about the scrap metal article.
- Obtain the seller's signed declaration that the seller is the owner of the items being sold and obtain documentation establishing that the seller lawfully possesses the article.
- Submit a report describing the article to a local law enforcement department.



The bill would also require a dealer to make the ledger available to law enforcement and to maintain the information in the ledger for at least two years after recording it.

Status: AB 560 has been referred to the Assembly Utilities Committee and has received a public hearing.

Veteran Cemetery Legislation (AB 578): This legislation would provide a court with statutory authority to require an individual convicted of stealing, from a cemetery, an object that indicates that a deceased was a veteran, to reimburse the cost of replacing the object.

Status: AB 578 has been referred to Assembly Corrections Committee and has received a public hearing.

2007-08 WCCA LEGISLATIVE BILL TRACKING

Bill #	Author(s)	Bill Description	Position	Bill Status
AB 305	Rep. Kerkman (R)	Final Rights Legislation – would create a legal process that will allow individuals to express special instructions for disposition after death. It would also establish a priority list of individuals authorized to determine the disposition of a deceased family member's remains, if the deceased failed to appoint a representative.	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referred to Assembly State Affairs Committee • Passed by Committee on 9-0 vote • Passed by Assembly on 10/24/07 on 96-0 vote • Referred to Senate Health Committee • Passed by Committee on 5-0 vote • Available for full Senate vote
AB 547	Rep. Kaufert (R)	Cemetery Registration Bill – would broaden the regulatory scope of the Cemetery Board at the Department of Regulation and Licensing to help cemeteries comply with state law and regulations and protect consumers from any "bad actors" in the industry.	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referred to Assembly Small Business Committee • Public hearing held
AB 560	Rep. Montgomery (R)	Scrap Metal legislation – would increase penalties for scrap metal theft, including a metal grave marker, sculpture, plaque, or vase, if the item's appearance suggests the item has been obtained from a cemetery. In addition, the bill would impose numerous record keeping and reporting requirements on scrap metal dealers to make it more difficult for individuals to sell stolen metal.	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referred to Assembly Energy & Utilities Committee • Public hearing held
AB 578	Rep. Musser (R)	This legislation would provide a court with statutory authority to require an individual convicted of stealing, from a cemetery, an object that indicates that a deceased was a veteran, to reimburse the cost of replacing the object.	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referred to Assembly Correction and Courts Committee • Public hearing held
SB 288	Sen. Plak (D)	Cemetery Registration Bill – would broaden the regulatory scope of the Cemetery Board at the Department of Regulation and Licensing to help cemeteries comply with state law and regulations and protect consumers from any "bad actors" in the industry.	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referred to Senate Labor, Elections and Urban Affairs Committee • Passed by Committee on 5-0 vote • Available for full Senate vote

Funeral industry attacks competition

Effort to restrict competition hurts Wisconsin consumers, cemeteries

The Wisconsin Cemetery and Cremation Association values educated consumers and their right to seek alternatives in the market place.

As such, the WCCA believes consumers deserve access to affordable choices when dealing with their final arrangements or those of their loved ones.

Unfortunately, a collection of funeral homes in Wausau, WI do not share our values and do not believe local residents are entitled to consumer choice.

The group is running disingenuous ads (see right) in local newspapers advising consumers to purchase caskets, cremation urns and burial vaults only through funeral homes, despite the availability of more affordable options.

The ads, disguised as consumer alerts, are targeting non-funeral home businesses in the Wausau area that provide quality funeral merchandise at much lower prices. This effort to eliminate competition ignores the interest of consumers and the spirit of the free market.

It appears these Wausau area funeral homes fear losing their monopolistic grip on the local market and the prospect of competing with other providers. Their campaign to discredit their competitors is in response to the recent decision by a local cemetery to sell caskets and other products to Wausau area consumers at a much more reasonable price.

In fact, the cemetery in question, like other non-funeral home providers, can save consumers thousands of dollars over what they would pay at a funeral home. For example, a basic metal casket that would cost consumers \$3,200 at a funeral home can be purchased from other suppliers for a little over \$1,200 – a savings of more than 60%! Unfortunately, some businesses in the funeral home industry resist consumer choice and try to prevent the success of lower-cost competitors.

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CONSUMER ALERT

Recently, a Wausau area cemetery and other funeral product providers have begun contacting families in an attempt to sell them funeral service merchandise such as caskets, burial vaults, and cremation urns.

*** CONTACT YOUR FAMILY FUNERAL DIRECTOR FIRST.**

Our licensed Funeral Directors and staff are the same familiar faces that have served families for generations. We have years of experience and education to help your family design a meaningful ceremony to remember your loved one. Be confident knowing we are not an inexperienced commissioned cemetery sales force with weeks of training.

*** COMPARE QUALITY, CHOICES AND PRICE.**

The caskets we offer are not imported from China. We provide only the highest quality American made caskets, burial vaults, and cremation urns with prices to fit every budget. We are committed to customer satisfaction.

*** COMPARE FUNERAL TRUSTS VS. CEMETERY TRUSTS.**

Who can predict your financial future? Our funeral home has refunded funeral trust money back to families who have fallen on hard times. Remember, this is still your money. Be sure to ask the cemetery salesperson if your pre-funded cemetery money could be refunded if hard times should occur.

*** IMMEDIATE AVAILABILITY.**

All of our caskets, burial vaults, and cremation urns are immediately available so you can schedule funeral ceremonies at the time and day you want. Merchandise purchased outside the funeral home can easily result in shipping delays due to product damage, weather, product availability, weekends and holidays.

*** NO SALE PRESSURE.**

Unlike a commissioned sales force, we are licensed funeral professionals. You can count on us for honest, reliable information and education.

*** PLACE YOUR TRUST IN YEARS OF SERVICE.**

There is a reason why funeral service is considered to be one of the most trusted professions today. We are a private, family-owned business that has been serving our community with pride for generations. Our funeral directors, licensed by the state of Wisconsin, are here to serve you 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Turn to us for honest service. You will be glad you did.



Funeral home ad that ran in the Wausau Daily Herald

Odds & Ends

(AP) A man widely believed to be the model for the smiling chef on Cream of Wheat boxes finally has a grave marker bearing his name.



Frank L. White died in 1938, and until recently, his grave in Woodland Cemetery bore only a tiny concrete marker with no name.

A granite gravestone was finally placed at his burial site. It bears his name and an etching taken from the man depicted on the Cream of Wheat box.

When White died Feb. 15, 1938, the Leslie, MI Local Republican described him as a “famous chef” who “posed for an advertisement of a well-known breakfast food.”

White lived in Leslie for about the last 20 years of his life, and the story of his posing for the Cream of Wheat picture was known in the city of 2,000 located about 70 miles West of Detroit.

The chef was photographed about 1900 while working in a Chicago restaurant. His name was not recorded. White was a chef, traveled a lot, was about the right age and told neighbors that he was the Cream of Wheat model.



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Continued from page 7... **Funeral industry**

Wisconsin is not immune to these activities, as some funeral homes in the state are making the delivery of caskets purchased from third-party retailers difficult. Many funeral establishments also increase their service prices for consumers who don't purchase caskets from the funeral home itself.

Left unchecked, the efforts of Wisconsin funeral homes to insulate their industry will severely harm the cemetery industry. With that in mind, the WCCA Board of Directors is currently discussing strategies to respond to the events in Wausau and similar situations occurring across the state.

If Board moves forward, the general strategy to combat the efforts of funeral homes to prevent cemeteries from selling caskets and other "funeral" merchandise would be to implement a strong consumer education program.

The effort would include press releases, letters-to-the-editor, op-ed pieces and possibly editorial board visits to make sure consumers understand their rights under the law..

In addition, WCCA members should attempt educating their customers on a personal level and encourage them to make informed decisions when making final arrangements.

Educate your customers!

FTC Funeral Rule

All consumers should be aware of the strict Federal Trade Commission laws governing funeral homes and their interaction with customers who choose to buy their caskets or other "funeral" products from third-party retailers, including:

1. **Funeral homes MAY NOT refuse to accept caskets purchased from another retailer.**
2. **Funeral homes MAY NOT charge a handling fee for caskets purchased from another retailer.**
3. **Funeral homes MAY NOT require consumers to be present when a casket purchased from another retailer is delivered to the funeral home.**
4. **Funeral homes MAY NOT make slanderous statements about buying caskets from another retailer.**
5. **Funeral homes MAY NOT require consumers to buy certain funeral goods or services as a condition for furnishing other funeral goods or services.**