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### ICCFA MAGAZINE AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

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### MORE FROM THIS AUTHOR & ON THIS TOPIC



► Go to [www.iccfa.com](http://www.iccfa.com) to the **Cremation Coaching Center**, where you can post a question for Burn to answer.



► Turn to page 35, check at [www.iccfa.com](http://www.iccfa.com)

or call 1.800.645.7700 for information about the Cremation Arranger Certification Program to be held at the **2010 ICCFA Convention & Expo, March 10-13**, San Antonio, Texas.



► To learn more about adding value to cremation graveside services,

attend the **Wide World of Sales Conference**, January 13-15, Hilton New Orleans Riverside, where Vickie Zimmerman, sales and marketing manager for Arnold Wilbert Inc., will present "Cremation Sales: Adding Value Through Graveside Celebrations."

## CREMATION

Do you tell every cremation family that ground burial is an option? Just as important, do you offer the kind of personalized, meaningful graveside services that interest cremation families?



A cremation graveside service can be as meaningful for the family as one involving full-body burial, as long as the funeral director or cemeterian has provided a set-up such as this one, with a personalized urn vault, floral tributes and photos and mementos of the deceased.

PHOTO COURTESY OF WILBERT

# Cremation graveside services: Providing families with a good final impression

As the number of families who choose cremation rises, we continue to face the challenge of providing value through meaningful services, whether the family chooses a basic memorial service or an elaborate funeral. The same can be said about providing significant cremation graveside services.

I recently reviewed an article I wrote in 1998 regarding the importance of a meaningful graveside service. The article indicated that after seven years in the profession, the one element of funeral service that had made the strongest impression on me was the graveside service.

At that time, I said I had witnessed some very appealing services that had given me a model of what a beautiful, dignified service should be, and that I also had seen some graveside services that were not what I felt they should be.

Eleven years later, I still see great value in graveside services, whether it is for a traditional

burial or for a cremation interment. And I still feel there is room for improvement, especially with regard to cremation graveside services.

CANA's 1996 Container, Disposition and Service study indicated that 36 percent of the cremated remains "returned to family" were going to be buried in a cemetery, while almost 16 percent of the families chose to have a memorial service for their loved one at the cemetery.

It is my belief that cremation families deserve the same type of graveside service given to traditional burial families. Too often, the setup for a cremation graveside services has an urn and urn vault sitting on a grass cloth, while a traditional burial graveside service includes a tent, chairs and lowering device.

While in some cases it may not be possible to erect a tent for the burial of cremated remains due to space requirements, one can still set up a table on which the urn and urn vault can be placed

## CREMATION



This bowl and medallions from Trigard are designed to be used at a graveside service, with a poem read as people take a keepsake from the bowl.

along with items that reflect the deceased's life, such as personal photographs and mementos (similar to what was present at the funeral or memorial service). Add floral tributes and music selections chosen by the family to create a meaningful service.

When an urn vault is used, you can also suggest that family members and friends participate in placing small items such as photographs, cards, letters, drawings and other mementos that speak to their personal connection with the deceased into the vault along with the urn. This gives family and friends an opportunity for additional meaningful ritual and ceremony at the graveside.

We all know cremation families who are not aware they can bury cremated remains. We also know there are cremation families who are not sure what type of final disposition they will choose for their loved one's cremated remains.

Therefore, it is vitally important that

funeral professionals properly communicate to the family the choices available for final disposition. When communicating the benefits of burial, make sure your graveside service is one families will value.

### Showing families value

Tips for merchandising a cremation graveside service:

- **Use photos that depict what will take place at the cemetery.** Make sure you have 8-1/2-by-11-inch photos (such as the ones shown here, which your vendors may be able to provide) to use in the arrangement conference.

Display larger versions on a slat wall in your selection room. People will "get it" much more effectively if they can see photos of graveside services than if you just try to explain it to them, or give them a written description.

- **In your selection room, set up a table with an urn and urn vault as they would be at graveside.** The most powerful way is to display a customized urn along with customization on the urn vault carapace. Photographs of the deceased as well as sentimental belongings from the loved one complete the merchandising set-up.

- **Encourage a service in which families and friends participate** in readings and in sharing memories of the deceased.

- **Offer balloon and/or dove releases** at graveside.

- **Include music options** for the graveside service, offering families recorded or live music.

One of the most important things to



A cremation graveside set-up.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DORIC VAULT

remember is that funeral professionals need to create and execute a cremation graveside service in first-rate style. It is the responsibility of the entire profession to provide every family with dignified and memorable personalized services, whether the family has chosen traditional full-body burial or cremation.

It has been said that the "moment of truth" is "any episode in which a customer comes into contact with any aspect of an organization and thereby is able to form an impression of the quality of the service."

Make your final moment of truth at the graveside one that cremation families truly remember. □