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Wilbert.
 updater
News, stories, and ideas for funeral professionals

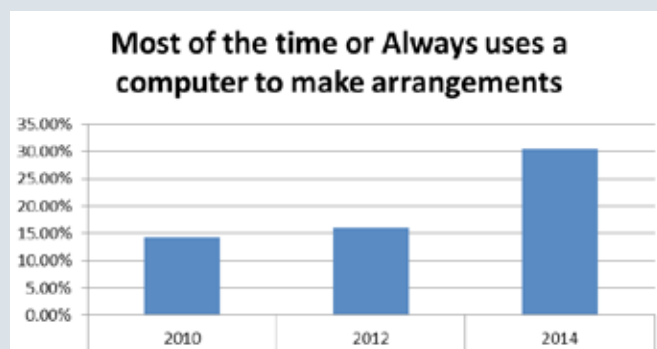
We all want ESP

By Mark Klingenberger



Take a moment and think back through all of the buying decisions you made for Christmas. As you debated different product features and the price differences, you were engaged in making an “Educated Selection Process” or ESP for short. The more you understand; the easier it becomes to make the decisions that are the best for you and your family. This raises your confidence level which in turn increases your satisfaction with the decision.

Thinking of how Funeral Professionals educate families in their time of need it is interesting to see how the tools used are evolving. Peacock Marketing Group, an independent organization based in Greenville, SC, has done a survey for Wilbert every 24 months for the last 6 years in an effort to track changes in the selection room environment. As you can see below; the rate of growth in the use of a computer in making arrangements is rising rapidly.

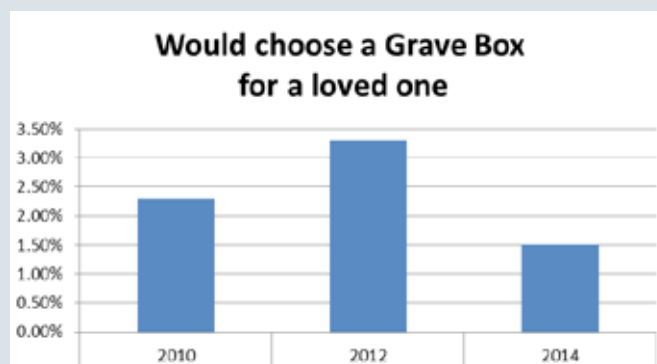


The move to using a computer in the arrangements conference grew slightly between 2010 and 2012 but has almost doubled in the last 2 years.

With the rise in the electronic showroom the question now may be if we are just automating accounting processes or are we also improving the education side for the family? When it comes to Outer Burial Containers it seems we still have a ways to go. There is a tremendous gap between what the Funeral Professionals choose themselves and what families are selecting – It may well be that **education** is the difference.

Consider the responses of the Funeral Professionals when asked in the Peacock Marketing Group survey which OBC they would select if they personally had to make

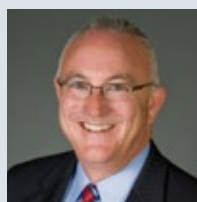
arrangements for a loved one. What is interesting is that Funeral Professionals are the most educated group to make arrangements and they chose a grave box for their family members only 1.5% of the time. Most industry estimates are that about 50% of all Outer Burial Container purchases by families are unlined products such as a grave box.



If you were to personally lose a loved one today and burial was chosen, what outer burial container would you select?

When the most-educated families (Funeral Professionals) select a product class (lined burial vaults), nearly 100% of the time and the least educated group only select it 50% of the time it indicates a significant opportunity to improve communication and education. Families need concise and timely education on the options they have and the differences between them.

Wilbert is committed to helping Funeral Professionals by continuously developing the next generation of tools to help families through their time of need. Every family wants ESP.



Mark Klingenberger is Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc.

Wilbert Funeral Services to Implement ESOP

To Benefit Employees, Wilbert Licensees and Customers

In a significant move within the industry, Joseph U. Suhor, III, Chairman of the Board, Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc., informed employees and the Wilbert Licensee network of his intention to initiate an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) for the sale of his stock and the stock of the controlling group of shareholders.

“Wilbert employees fully understand and appreciate the funeral service industry and as owners will be motivated for the long term,” stated Joe Suhor. “In a certain respect this continues the legacy established by company founder Wilbert Haase, who in 1947 chose to sell ownership in the company to the Licensee network to strengthen the entity and engender growth. Putting the future



Joseph U. Suhor, III, Chairman of the Board, Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc.

Putting the future of the company in the hands of those who have made it successful just seemed like the right thing to do...


While providing a variety of important tax benefits for companies and their owners, ESOP rules are designed to assure the plans fairly benefit employees. As a tax-qualified deferred compensation plan, ESOPs cannot discriminate in their operations in favor of highly compensated employees, officers, or owners. This move by Wilbert Funeral Services allows employees to share in the company’s growth and success while also ensuring long-term commitment to its Licensees and customers.

This structure will distinguish Wilbert Funeral Services as the only known ESOP in the funeral service industry and ensures continuation of the company as an independent entity with a solid focus on the industry.

of the company in the hands of those who have made it successful just seemed like the right thing to do for them, for our Licensee network, and for customers.”

Suhor added, “I believe funeral service will always provide a valuable and vital role in society and the Wilbert Group of organizations is dedicated to provide products and services that will serve those needs, whatever they may be. As employee-owners, the people that comprise Wilbert will be even more passionate about doing that.”

Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc. and its soon-to-be employee/owners are the leading providers of burial vaults through its network of nearly 200 Licensees throughout the United States and

Canada. They provide cremation urns, mementos and other cremation-related products through their North American network. Additionally, other Wilbert Group divisions provide caskets, cemetery construction, monuments, lawn crypts, columbarium niches, mausoleums and various services. Their Pierce group offers fluids and various products, and the Pierce Mortuary Colleges are noted as an industry-leading educational institution. By sharing in the equity growth of the company, Wilbert Funeral displays a lasting devotion not only to its employees but to those it has served these many years. 



Toronto Wilbert Helps Provide Fitting Tribute to Slain Soldier

The shooting of a Canadian soldier on October 22nd in the country's capital city of Ottawa made international news and left the country's citizens feeling stunned, angered and vulnerable. The soldier, 24-year-old Corporal Nathan Cirillo, had been guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Canadian National War Memorial at Parliament Hill in Ottawa when a gunman shot and killed him, then entered the Parliament building where he was killed by security personnel.

As word spread about the killing of Cpl. Cirillo, David Roseborough, of Century Wilbert Vault in Toronto, knew he wanted to help. "My initial thought was I hope the funeral is in a territory that we can offer First Responders. I immediately sent out emails to the regional managers in that area," David said. The regional managers forwarded the message to the manager of the funeral home overseeing the arrangements, Markey Dermody Funeral Home in Hamilton, Ontario. Hamilton is Cpl. Cirillo's hometown and is about 40 miles away from Century Wilbert.

Usually, the Commemorating First Responders Program applies to members of law enforcement, fire departments or

emergency medical personnel who are killed in the line of duty—not members of the military. David said his mind was made up to cover the cost regardless of whether Cpl. Cirillo was covered under the program or not. "I sent (WFSI VP of Licensee Relations) Terry Whitlock an email and advised we were going to do this regardless but asked that it be considered to qualify under the First Responder program. With Cpl. Cirillo being an Honour Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, we felt strongly that since he was killed on Canadian soil, we especially needed to take care of this family. Terry had the same mindset and immediately advised he would support us," he said.

As the procession carrying the young soldier's body made its way from Ottawa to Hamilton, the usual Friday afternoon business of Toronto temporarily came to a halt. "We had some employees request to leave early on Friday so they could stand on the overpass on what we call 'The Highway of Heroes' to pay their respects as Cpl. Cirillo's body drove by. And the number of people who came out was incredible. The procession went through

Cpl. Nathan Cirillo's funeral procession stopped traffic during the busy Friday afternoon rush hour in Toronto, but only the soldier's regiment of 200 and his family of 10 were allowed at the cemetery.

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Toronto at 6 p.m. on a Friday, and traffic was completely stopped with people out of their cars, waving flags, taking pictures and filming,” David said.

The next step for David was getting the vault prepared. “The funeral home sent me the picture of Cpl. Cirillo at 4:45 p.m. Friday. I mocked up and sent them a proof of the image by 7 p.m. that evening. It was immediately approved and printed on Saturday. The picture was applied to the vault on Monday for the funeral on Tuesday,” he said.

The picture was printed on clear vinyl but David said, “Our Mimaki printer is a little different in that I can use white ink, which makes the picture ‘pop.’ That way, you get the beauty of the picture and the beauty of the stainless steel.” As an added touch, David also put the logo from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Cpl. Cirillo’s regiment) in the upper right corner.

Only the soldier’s regiment of 200 and his family of 10 were allowed at the cemetery. Century Wilbert had brought the vault early to

the cemetery and prepared the graveside set-up. “We wanted to set the vault up using the Ovation device, but because the military wanted to do a shoulder-carry, they didn’t allow us to do that,” he said. David noticed before the service there was a line of people taking pictures of the cover of the vault. “Numerous, soldiers, police, cemetery staff and funeral directors approached me to say they thought the vault was beautiful,” he said.

In addition to the beautiful vault David created, Victoriaville Caskets provided the Dominion Maple Casket for Cpl. Cirillo. This was especially meaningful since he was guarding the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, whose remains are also buried in the Dominion Maple from Victoriaville.

In addition to a 21-gun salute, there was also a B-52 flyover with a tip of the wing during the graveside service, adding to the sense of importance of the ceremony. “We were honoured to be involved in this funeral and it is an experience I will never forget. Across Canada, it touched so many people,” David said. 🌀🌀

The logo from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada (Cpl. Cirillo’s regiment) was included in the upper right corner of the custom vault cover.



Building a Search-Friendly Website: 2 Quick Tips

Series 1 of 4

By Lisa Anderson

Building a website is a lot like building a funeral home. You try to make it welcoming to visitors. You figure out the best way to serve customers with the space and resources that you have.

Now, imagine that nobody found your facility. While this is a rarity, it may be happening with your website.

Today, when families relocate or want to evaluate new products and services, they usually turn to friends and to search engines, particularly Google. In this series of articles, I'll outline ways to help Google "find" your website so that it appears and ranks when visitors go online to collect information.

Be as clean and crisp
as you can to get the
best Google ranking.

Let's start with some elements that you can refine to better optimize your website. You should be able to complete these steps through your website's Content Management System (CMS) — or simply pass the punch list to your web developer to implement.

1 Be specific with your page titles, and include keywords and location.

Each page on your website has a title, and it's one of the biggest things that Google evaluates. Sometimes known as the "meta title" or "title tag," it is the large, blue, text seen when Google displays results. It's not a long piece of text; Google shows just the first 50-60 characters of a page title in search results and will "ding" your site if it is longer than the allotted characters or if the exact same title is repeated on another page. The title shown below is exactly 55 characters.

[Asheville Wilbert | Burial Vaults | Urns | Asheville NC](#)

www.ashevillewilbert.com/

Asheville Wilbert offers burial services to 15 counties in North Carolina, catering to the needs of families through funeral home professionals. Products include ...

continued on page 7

Tip

Since your titles aren't visible on the front-end of your website, here's an easy way to view them if you do not have access to your site's CMS. Right mouse click anywhere on the webpage and select "View Source." Near the top, look for a bit of text that says "<title>." The text that follows is the page title for that page. You can do this on competitors' pages also to see the words they may be trying to optimize. 🕸

```
<head>  
<title>Cremation Urns, Greenwood SC | Harley Funeral Home & Crematory</title>  
<meta name="description" content="Harley Funeral Home & Crematory in Greenwood SC
```

continued from page 6

For page titles, it's important to think about what your prospects and customers would type into Google. And, Google often knows a searcher's location and gives preference to local results. So, for example, your page titles should include a key product or service (such as "Crematory," or "Funeral Home") followed by your city and state. Keep in mind that the more words you use, the less weighting each word carries. If you use 10 words, each word has a 10% weighting. If you use 5 words, that jumps to a 20% weighting. Be as clean and crisp as you can to get the best rank.

2 Be specific with menu naming and navigation drop downs. Another basic element of your website is the menu that helps visitors navigate your site. The wording for these menu items helps Google assess the content on the webpage and it prioritizes your site's focus based on the order that they appear (so put most important items first).

home.com/products/cremation-urns



Similar to page titles, the advice here is to get keyword specifics into the menu. If people type "burial vaults" into Google, then you should have the same terminology in your menu, not just the word "products" or "vaults." I see so many sites that just use generic phrases like "Services" and have no keywords in the main menu or dropdowns. They wonder why they don't rank. When this is done, Google has a difficult time determining your site's focus and the type of industry in which you reside. By using keywords in strategic places such as titles and menus, this indicates to Google that your website has the content that aligns closely to the search term and your site is more likely to get priority over other sites.

These are only two of the many elements that can help you improve your search rank. In the next article, I'll look at more specific elements of a page, such as headers, and how you can use them to boost your search results. 🔄



Lisa Anderson is the founder of Peacock Marketing Group in Greenville, SC and manages websites, SEO, and email campaigns for over 50 Wilbert licensees and funeral homes. www.peacockmarketing.net

An Ounce of Prevention

Make a New Year's Resolution to Take Better Care of Your Prep Room

By Lance Ray

Studies show that 23 percent of us have broken our New Year's Resolutions by the middle of January, which doesn't speak well for our desire for change. Most of us make some sort of health resolution to take better care of our bodies by watching what we eat or maybe exercising more or getting an annual physical, which are all tough resolutions to keep. Trust me, I know; I make these same resolutions each year and tend to break them myself by the end of January.

{ 23%
of resolutions
are broken by mid-January. }

I want to suggest an easy resolution to keep and that is to take better care of your prep room. Preventive maintenance on a regular schedule is an often-neglected function, not only personally, but in our businesses. By creating a plan for routine maintenance,

funeral directors can realize cost savings in efficiency and lessen the possibility of unexpected equipment failure.

The easiest and most often overlooked preventive care is the use of a quality machine and instrument cleaner, which should be run through your machine monthly or quarterly, depending on the use of your machine. Embalming machines will last you a long time if you take care of them.

The use of machine cleaner will reduce the build-up from the harsh chemicals used in your machine and prevent unexpected and costly repairs. Most manufacturers recommend keeping an inch of water in the tank to keep the gaskets from drying out if there is extended time between use. Please remember that embalming machine repair should be left to the experts and not your maintenance person on staff. Generally speaking the skills required to repair your machine far exceed those found in your maintenance staff member.

Just remember "an ounce of prevention" will result in longer equipment life and at the end of the year, you will be able to say you kept one of your resolutions. 🌀



Lance Ray is COO of
Pierce Chemical in Dallas, TX.





The Forgotten Mourners: How Children Deal with the Loss of a Loved One

By Terry Parrish, CFSP

The loss of a parent, friend, or even a pet has strong impact on emotional and physical well-being of a child. As surviving parents are focused on their feelings and dealing with their loss, mourning experienced by a child is frequently unnoticed. Moreover, it is a common assumption that young children, particularly preschoolers, are not mature enough to fully comprehend the meaning and impact of loss. But children who do not receive sufficient support in the process of grieving and mourning are at risk of developing serious psychiatric disorders and behavioral challenges.

Mourning and Grief

Mourning and grief are normal reactions of a person experiencing emotional distress following the loss of a beloved one. The normal grieving process includes periods of sorrow, numbness, guilt/anger, acceptance, and adaption. In addition, the loss of a beloved one is frequently accompanied with physical symptoms, including weight loss, insomnia, and/or difficulty with concentration.

In discussing mourning and grieving, it is necessary to be familiar with several terms. In particular, *bereavement* is the experience of loss; *grief* is a psychological reaction to loss (includes thoughts, behaviors, and feelings); *acute grief* is an emotion characterized with separation and traumatic distress; *integrated grief* is a permanent condition of feeling of loss;

mourning is adjustment to life following the loss of the loved one and transformation of pain into a memory. Relationships with others play an essential role in life of every person, giving joy, purpose, and overall satisfaction. Parents are exceptionally important individuals in lives of the majority of people and, thus, loss of a parent is highly stressful event.

The most common reaction of a person to the loss of a loved one is a sense of void and disorientation. They are entirely focused on thoughts about the one who died, and grief becomes the main emotion. Even if a person continues to engage with others and performs daily tasks, emotional and behavioral changes are rarely absent.

Mourning is the process of adapting to a loss. Because both parents play critical roles in a child's normal development, the loss of one parent has an immediate effect on the life of a child. Most professionals agree that children not only mourn but also understand the finality of death. When a surviving parent, educators, and therapists do not help a child go through all stages of grieving and mourning, a child is at risk of developing life-long. When a surviving parent is struggling to cope, the role of therapists and educators in helping a mourning child becomes very important.

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Children are never ready for the death of a parent, including when a parent has been ill for a while. Many adults are reluctant to discuss death with their children, partially due to their own fear and inability to explain it. As early as the age of 4-6 years, children perceive death as a reversible event. It is not an uncommon reaction of children to blame themselves for being the cause of a death or illness. If not supported in mourning and grieving, a child may develop a fear that someone else may die. In other instances, a child may express anger toward a surviving parent, sibling, or peer.


Children frequently remain the “forgotten mourners.” It is widely assumed that children recover from the loss of the loved one quickly. If children are not supported during their grieving and mourning, the psychological effects of the experience of the loss of a parent tend to reemerge for years. The process of grieving among children depends on age, culture, ethnic beliefs, etc.

Children aged 3 to 5 years do not have a clear understanding of death and may repeatedly ask a surviving parent when a deceased mother or father is coming back. They are at risk of becoming anxious or aggressive toward others. The reaction of a surviving parent to repeated questions of a child may

intensify their own feeling of anger and pain. Surviving parents are often in need of professional assistance on how to interact with a child who experienced the loss of a parent because their grieving and mourning processes are different and require different approaches.

Children aged 6 to 8 years already possess the ability to understand death. During this age, the most common reaction is a feeling of blaming themselves and guilt. In addition, a grieving child may exhibit such behaviors as school refusal, suicidal thoughts, and regressive emotions. Nine to 11-year-old children’s reaction to death of a parent is marked with more-informed understanding of the event. Specifically, a child may want detailed information about the death. Unlike younger children, a 10-year-old child may avoid expressing negative emotions such as sadness or anger, and yet gather such feelings inside, which eventually may result in serious mental-health complications and behavioral patterns.

Children aged 12-14 years exhibit an entirely different set of emotions in response to the death of a parent. Children in this age group tend to be indifferent about the loss and yet strongly feel the presence of the person who died. Children may continuously hold mental conversations with the deceased parent or find comfort in clothing or other possessions of the lost loved one. Grieving children in this age are at high risk of developing clinical depression, drug use, and delinquent behavior.

The response of a child to the death of a parent is age-specific and requires an individualized approach in helping a child successfully go through all stages of mourning and grieving. In the conclusion of this article, which will run in the summer *Updater*, we will look at the needs and responses of teenagers to the death of a parent and some of the models counselors use to help all children deal with their grief and mourning. 

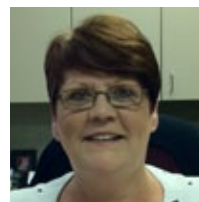


WILBERT
FOUNDATION

Editor’s Note

For children coping with grief, The Wilbert Foundation provides crucial funds and resources for supporting them and their families as they deal with the trauma of grief, death, or preparation for surgery. When a family

member dies, surviving children often struggle with the meaning of life and death. Without proper grief counseling, a child’s wounded emotions can develop into lifelong problems. The Wilbert Foundation pledges grants to hospital Chaplaincy programs that are used for volunteers, counselors, ministers, and awareness initiatives that help guide children back to peace, hope, and comfort after their ordeals.



Terry Parrish, CFSP, is Registrar/Director of Admissions for Dallas Institute of Funeral Service in Dallas, TX.

Commemorating First Responders Program Helps 114 Families This Past Year



The families of 114 fallen first responders were served in 2014 by Commemorating First Responders, a philanthropic program of Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc. and its licensees. Through the program Wilbert and its Licensees were honored to donate burial vaults, urns, and a graveside service to first responders who died in the line of duty.

Families of firefighters, law enforcement officers and emergency medical personnel received, at no charge, a Wilbert Stainless Steel Triune burial vault when traditional burial was chosen. If cremation was chosen, Wilbert offered families a choice from four high-quality urns; if the cremains were to be buried, a Stainless Steel Triune urn vault was also provided. Each vault came with a Wilbert Legacy Custom personalized carapace, donated by vendor partner Legacy Prints.

The nearly 200-strong network of Wilbert Licensees shared in the contribution of the vault and urn, but also provided, where permitted, a Wilbert Way graveside setup. The final sealing and lowering of the vault was also part of the WilbertWay service.

“The First Responder community has been extremely appreciative of the help the Wilbert network is providing to the families who are experience a line of duty death,” said Terry Whitlock, WFSI vice president of Licensee relations.

Visit www.wilbert.com and the Commemorating First Responders Facebook page at www.facebook.com/WilbertFuneralServices for more information on the program and the brave men and women who left us all too soon while in service to their communities. 🙏

Wilbert Funeral Services Inc
Company


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5.0 ★ 5.0 of 5 stars
7 reviews

5 star ————— 7
4 star
3 star
2 star
1 star

STAR RATING | MOST HELPFUL | MOST RECENT

5 STAR REVIEWS

 **James Strickland** — 5★ Beautiful excellent work would recommend to any family
Like · Comment · about 2 weeks ago

No Pain, No Gain

By Jerry J. Brown

As I recall, the phrase “No pain, no gain” was coined during the marathon craze of the 1970s, 80s, and early 90s.

Elite long distance runners like Bill Rogers, Rosa Mota, Alberto Salazar, Joan Benoit, Al Walqui and many other “fleet-of-foot” (some more fleet than others) runners took to the highways, byways, trails and the rugged desert and mountainous terrain en masse.

Worldwide running has become more than a trend. It is an obsessive, unbridled passion. Why, even Forrest Gump decided one day to “go for a run” and



four weeks later realized he had just reached the West Coast. At that point he had enough running and jogged home.

At the pinnacle of the running era, numerous psychologists, psychiatrists, medical doctors, sports medicine and holistic pundits began to question the origin and sociological legitimacy of the slogan “No Pain, No Gain.”

Certainly the physiological stress, fatigue and energy depletion of running 26.2 miles, or even 10 kilometers will produce “pain.” So too is the mental and the emotional equivalent of “pain” vis-a-vis the depressive and hallucinatory anguish of “How much farther? I’ll never make it! The ‘gain’ ain’t worth it!” or, “To hell with finishing!” So where, some non-runners may ask, is the “gain”?

Even if or when we finish, we have borne the “pain” and the “gain” emerges from self and peer congratulations and simply the pride of ending the seemingly endless miles of the run. Call it endorphins, freedom or just the love of running. Quite possibly, it just might not really matter.

Question? What if a runner cannot finish? Certainly the runner experienced “pain” but is there “gain” for the non-finisher? Of course!

Moving away now from the finish line, cheering fans, staggering runners bent over, some sick, others cramping and the rancid odor of sweat that permeates the venue, what other societal endeavors does the slogan fit (or not fit)?

World-renowned philosopher, poet and author, Khalil Gibran wrote in his book *The Prophet*, “There is no unblemished joy without the experience of sorrow.” He also wrote, “One cannot truly

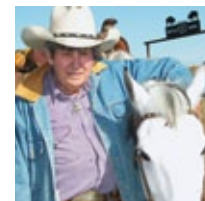
celebrate the elation of achievement and success without the despair and disillusionment of failure.”

Upon the death of my parents in the early 1980s and late 1990s our family naturally suffered the “pain” of sorrow and loss. They both had died at a time in my life when I was running marathons. I recall thinking that losing a mother and father is terribly debilitating “pain.” How, I wondered, can there be any “gain”? What a ridiculous saying I thought during the time of my misery and sense of loss.

Later in the midst of the wake and funeral activities and with the compassion and care of the people, the memorable ceremonies and the auras of hope and healing that were slowly eradicating the “pain,” I sensed a palpable presence of the beginning of “gain.”

The memories of love and familial closeness would prevail for the rest of my life.

As Funeral Professionals go about the daily duties of assisting families, they should take a moment today and consider the importance of the work they are doing in the community to help families move through the pain they are experiencing. Without their care and support it would be more difficult for families to endure the grieving process and the burden of the loss. 🙏



Jerry J. Brown is a former President of Brown-Wilbert in Roseville, MN.

The Wilbert Updater Puzzle Contest


Fax This Page!
Print! Solve! Fax!

Solve the puzzle for a chance at a \$25 American Express® Gift Card.

Print out your puzzle, complete and fax to: 708-865-1646. The first person to correctly solve the puzzle and fax the solution will win. The 100th correct fax will receive a \$25 American Express® Gift Card, too! And, to make it even more interesting, we will draw a fax from all those sent to receive a third \$25 American Express® Gift Card. The winners will be announced in our next edition of the *Updater*. Good luck!

Updater Summer 2014 Puzzle Contest Winners

Congratulations to the winners of the Summer 2014 *Updater* Puzzle Contest:

Gordon Mair of Hart Funeral Home, Tahlequah, OK was the first to fax in a completed, correct puzzle. Rick Silva of Skinner-Silva Funeral Home, Pharr, TX was the 100th correct responder and Joe D. Harrison of Crisswell Funeral Home, Ada, OK was our randomly-chosen winner. Each will receive a \$25 American Express® Gift Card. 

Name: _____

Company: _____

City and State/Province: _____

Phone Number: _____

E F A V B T R W Z S D O V E T
T N V M O M E E E B T L I V G
A K T L U I O P P C R F S I G
T T P O V I U C E O K F I T C
S B Y U M L R U A C S U T A B
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ASHES

CHURCHTRUCK

DISPOSITION

INSTATE

REPOSE

SHROUD

VISITATION

CATACOMB

CORTEGE

ENTOMBMENT

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WAKE

CEMETERY

CREMATORIUM

EULOGY

PLOT

SEPULCHER

VIGIL

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Editor – Wilbert Updater
2913 Gardner Road | Broadview, Illinois 60155
888.WILBERT (945-2378) | 708.865.1600

All Wilbert employees, Licensees, and their families are ineligible to enter the *Updater* Puzzle Contest.