They've Attacked Funeral Directors and Cemeteries
Will Monument Dealers Be Next?

In the light of adverse publicity about the funeral business and cemeteries, what does the future hold for the monument manufacturer and the retail monument dealer? This question is being asked throughout the monument industry.

The nation's funeral directors, and to a lesser extent the cemeteries, have been attacked through the press, magazines, radio, books and television. The intensity of these attacks seems to have increased and there is no indication that they will diminish in the near future.

Adverse publicity that is directed toward any segment of the interment industry could have a bad effect on the monument business. Yet, we can feel fortunate that the organized vilification of the funeral and cemetery business has not been specifically pointed toward the monument dealer and his manufacturer.

It is true that no segment of American society is without its less desirable aspects. You can recall that not too long ago the drug industry was viciously attacked not only in print and via television but also through a series of Congressional investigations that were widely publicized. The drug industry had always been accepted by the public as a progressive industry that had created drugs which have saved millions of lives and helped to make a more healthy and happy society. Yet, when this industry came under attack it did not panic. It did not answer its critics with the same invective and publicity that its critics were forcing upon it. The drug industry knew that on principle it played an important part in our society and that it had admirably served and is serving the American public. It knew that in the final analysis any group or organization will prosper if it is providing the public with a service or a product that is needed and wanted.

We can also point to the steel industry and the public relations problems it has experienced over the past several years, when charges of price fixing and collusion were made against it. Also, price fixing and immoral business practices were made about several of our largest and most respected manufacturing corporations in this country. Several officials of these large corporations were even sentenced to prison terms.

But those corporations remained reasonably calm, tried to clean their own houses and at this date seemed to have weathered this storm of adverse publicity reasonably well.

Can the interment industry and more specifically the monument business continue to prosper in its present form in the light of the present onslaught? It is difficult to make an accurate judgment while we are so close to the problem.

We do feel, however, that there are some points to remember that will be helpful to the monument business both now and in the future.

1. The monument industry must always realize that public sentiment and public desires will in the final analysis be the most important factor in whether we prosper or we fail.

2. The majority of people in this country accept memorialization as desirable, even though there is a growing interest to merely identify rather than memorialize.

3. Monument dealers and their salesmen have direct contact with the public. They sell the monuments which stand in the cemeteries. Therefore, they are the greatest force in creating either a favorable or an unfavorable opinion about traditional memorialization in the minds of the public. Of almost equal importance are the cemetery men and how they operate their cemeteries.

4. The showcase of the monument industry is our cemeteries and our retail monument dealers places of business. Within the limits of cemetery restrictions we must keep uppermost in mind that our monuments will visibly and permanently identify our service and, therefore, we will be judged by the public for something that cannot be changed, remodelled or updated. Quality memorialization is the key to continued public acceptance of the monument dealer and his product.

5. Whatever you say or do as a retail monument dealer will in the eyes of the public reflect upon the whole monument industry. Therefore, you as an individual hold great power to help or hinder. This means that each of us, individually, has a responsibility to our fellow memorialists to conduct our personal life and our business in a manner that will do credit to the whole field of memorialization.

6. Because the monument industry is small by any business standard, we must rely upon how we personally serve the public and how we personally operate our businesses as the most effective means of creating a proper image about memorialization.

7. When different segments of the interment industry make charges or countercharges at each other, it creates an unfavorable impression of memorialization in the public's mind. Petty squabbling among ourselves should be avoided.

If we adhere to these practices, then our entire industry will be less vulnerable to attack. Let us all hope that our sense of responsibility to the public and to our fellow workers will keep for us a secure and respected position in every community throughout the land.
IRRESISTIBLE FORCE MEETS IMMOVABLE OBJECT

The power of new epoxy setting compound is graphically demonstrated in this photograph. Bud Cain, BGA Manager of Dealer Services, is applying his weight and strength to the turned piece of Barre granite which has been reset with epoxy adhesive.

Recent tests by the BGA show that epoxy adhesive has great strength and is ideally suited for repairing natural stone. Its limited use in the setting of monuments thus far has proved most effective.

The art of listening has sold thousands of monuments. No prospect is going to buy a monument from you unless he is convinced it will help him get something he wants. But how can you tell for sure what he wants unless you ask questions and listen keenly to his comments?

Monument salesman who first believe in themselves and the value of memorialization will always find it much easier to convince others. There is magic in believing; it is a powerful psychological force that affects others as well as yourself.

Trade associations provide many useful services which can be furnished more effectively through the united effort of those comprising a particular field of business.

These services meet important needs of the man who is in business for himself; needs similar to those listed below. To obtain this list we asked monument dealers the following question: What is your chief reason for considering your monument dealers’ association membership valuable?

• It provides our monument business with strong leaders who can act as the official spokesmen for our monument dealers’ craft in dealing with matters pertaining to monument and cemetery legislation, allied industry and inter-industry problems, relations with the general public and other matters pertaining to the general welfare of the monument business.

• I joined in order to help upgrade the conditions in the monument business.

• My greatest benefit is the opportunities it furnishes me for self-education.

• Association meetings inspire me to do a better job. It is now easier to work with my competitors rather than against them.

• The Association affords me the opportunity for self-expression and to make a personal contribution to the profession through which I earn my livelihood.

• The Association gives me helpful ideas as well as specific benefits such as: cemetery assistance, sales institutes and insurance which I use to good advantage.

(There were other reasons received but in our opinion these pretty well cover the field.)

We all know that in order for a trade association to operate effectively — in order for it to exert real influence and power — it must have a large portion of its eligible people within its membership. All of us realize that each new member brings to the Association an increase in its influence and power.

Monument Dealers and Their Trade Associations

Over the years, monument dealers have expressed to me opinions both pro and con about the value of monument dealers’ trade associations. During this period I have attended hundreds of monument dealers’ trade association meetings. I’d like to pass on to you some thoughts about this subject that I have gained by my observations. A good place to begin our discussion is to examine the purposes of the typical monument dealers trade association:

Its purpose is to uphold the status of the Monument Builders’ Craft; promote his interests, discourage those forces opposing memorialization; and furnish members with help and advice.

Today, the trade associations which exist in all the important fields of business supply their members with an official voice that can be heard whenever it is necessary.
Monument Selling with Bud Cain (continued)

To obtain new members Associations will have to contact the good people in the monument business who do not now belong. Many of these non-members are just waiting for an invitation to join. They are ready to contribute a share to the "purposes" of their Association.

Others of those good non-member people can be classified as "holdouts." They are usually harboring some mis-conceived idea about some phase of their Association’s program. To convert these "holdouts" to membership, the misconception has to be explained away and replaced with an appreciation of the Association's real value. The "holdout" then will see the small membership cost as a wise investment and will join.

I hope you have found these thoughts informative and that it has convinced you that in being a member of a trade association you are helping yourself, your business and your craft.

If you are not now a member, join at your earliest opportunity!

Good monument salesmen say that first, create interest and then come in with your best sales arguments. It is like lighting the kindling to start a fire. The best sales arguments in the world rarely catch fire unless you’ve first succeeded in arousing interest.

President Johnson Receives Barre Granite Desk Pen Set

President Lyndon Johnson was the happy recipient of a specially designed Barre granite desk pen set recently given by the Barre Granite Association when he, as Vice-President, was in the Barre-Montpelier area last October.

Made of Select Barre Granite, it was designed by Jones Brothers and manufactured by the North Barre Granite Company.

Cemetery Lot Promotions

Sooner or later retail monument dealers in nearly every community are faced with the problem of cemetery lot promoters. These promoters come into the community, buy up property for a flat marker cemetery and then organize their sales campaign.

As small businessmen all of us are inclined to feel somewhat inadequate to the task of competing with this type of promotional activity that hurts our business. This is particularly true when "high pressure" tactics are utilized by cemetery lot promoters.

**Better Business Bureau Can Help**

With this issue of the Select Barre Newsletter your Barre friends are enclosing a folder on the subject of cemetery lot promotions.

The folder is entitled "Questions You Should Ask About Cemetery Lot Promotions." In plain language it describes how certain cemetery property is sold and what the buyer should look for whenever he is approached to purchase cemetery property.

The monument manufacturers in Barre who belong to the Barre Granite Association have for many years seen the fortunes of these cemetery promoters rise and fall in various parts of the country. Because we, too, are small businessmen, we also become pessimistic and discouraged because we are not able to solve a problem that has been created by a flat marker promotion in a community many hundreds of miles away.

*How to Use the Folder*

If you should suddenly be faced with cemetery lot promoters in your area you and your fellow dealers should work quickly. Give a copy of this Better Business folder to your chamber of commerce office, every one of your city and county officials, your bankers and loan companies, your cemetery commissioners, and any person who might in any way be related to the establishment of a promotional cemetery.

Time is of the essence and you must work quickly. The first step for promotional cemetery operators is to become established in the community so that they can obtain proper credit and make as many contacts as possible. Obviously you must cooperate with your fellow dealers in your area to distribute these pamphlets and to talk to those people who may be in a position to have something to say about the establishment of a new cemetery.

It has been our experience that when retail monument dealers are well organized on a local level, they can more effectively combat the establishment of a promotional cemetery and the subsequent sale of its lots.

These valuable folders are available through the American Monument Association in Olean, N. Y., as well as the Monument Builders of North America in Evanston, Ill. We hope that it will not be necessary for you to use these folders, but is well to be prepared for any eventuality.

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**RETAIL SELLING TIPS**

Don’t be fooled by objections voiced by your monument customer. Sometimes they are just convenient excuses for postponing action. The good retail monument salesman will find out the real reason why your customer doesn’t want to buy and then will do his best to overcome that objection.

Good retail monument salesmen make sure that they are not using industry expressions in their sales talks that are meaningless to the customer. Always make sure to use terms that are immediately understandable when you are talking monuments and memorialization.