

**PRENEED
SYSTEMS**

*Taking
Funeral
Service
One
Step
Further*

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THE COACHMAN

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PreNeed Systems Salutes Graham Cook

By: Mark Iles

I first met Graham in 1988 when he was Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Homesteaders. I was 25 years old and moving from Dallas, Texas back to Des Moines to assist my dad with his funeral business. My role was to help him manage and further develop his prearrangement division. As a newly minted General Agent with Homesteaders, Graham would be my primary contact. Candidly, my initial thought after meeting Graham was what aberration occurred in biology to create someone who looked like Graham? Holy cow - I thought my arms were long, relative to my height!

In all seriousness, from the very beginning Graham was great to work with. He was sincerely interested in me and my career and was instrumental in helping me start and build what would become one of Homesteaders largest marketing partners – PreNeed Systems. While Graham's background was in journalism, it comforted me to know he had a deep appreciation for the importance of sales and marketing for the overall success of Homesteaders. In those early days he would say to me how important it was to build a funeral home's preneed program one at a time by not taking on too many customers too fast. He forgot to coach me on what to do when the Funeral Home owner won't work with us exclusively, wants his secretary or Funeral Directors to write the walk-ins, or directs our newly hired sales counselor to answer the phones while he was out playing golf. Oh well – we

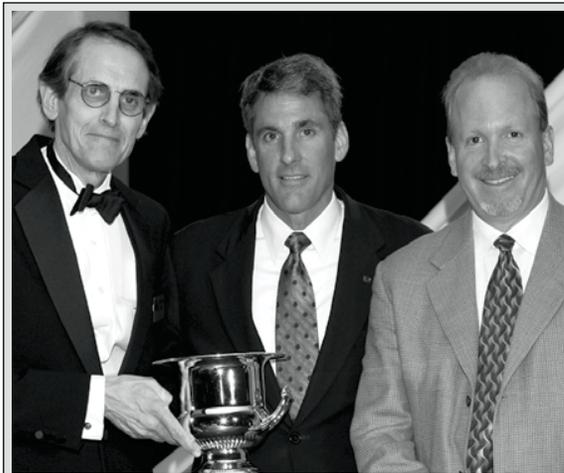
figured out how to deal with these issues as time went on and programs underperformed.

As we grew and became more successful Graham would emphasize to Mike and me the importance of reinvesting profits back into the business for the benefit of our customers and ultimately our continued growth. Many of the value added programs we created through the years (and continue to create today) were born from his counsel. As Graham

advanced in his own career at Homesteaders, Mike and I always felt good about it. This is because it was apparent to us Graham's unwavering commitment to fairness and creating a decision-making culture at Homesteaders that would be good for all stakeholders, especially their funeral home customers. While I didn't agree with all the decisions he made through the years, history would show he was usually right and I was usually wrong

(not that he ever asked my opinion!)

When I look at where we are today compared to when I started 26 years ago, I wouldn't have predicted it in a million years. So Graham – from all of us at PreNeed Systems we wish to thank you for your role in this. We also wish to thank you for creating a strong management team to succeed you as we knew you would. This gives us comfort that the best years for Homesteaders and for us as one of your Marketing Partners is yet to come.



Graham presenting an award to Mark and Mike Iles at Leaders Conference

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