

# Cooperative Funeral Fund Inc.

If I Only Had a Brain

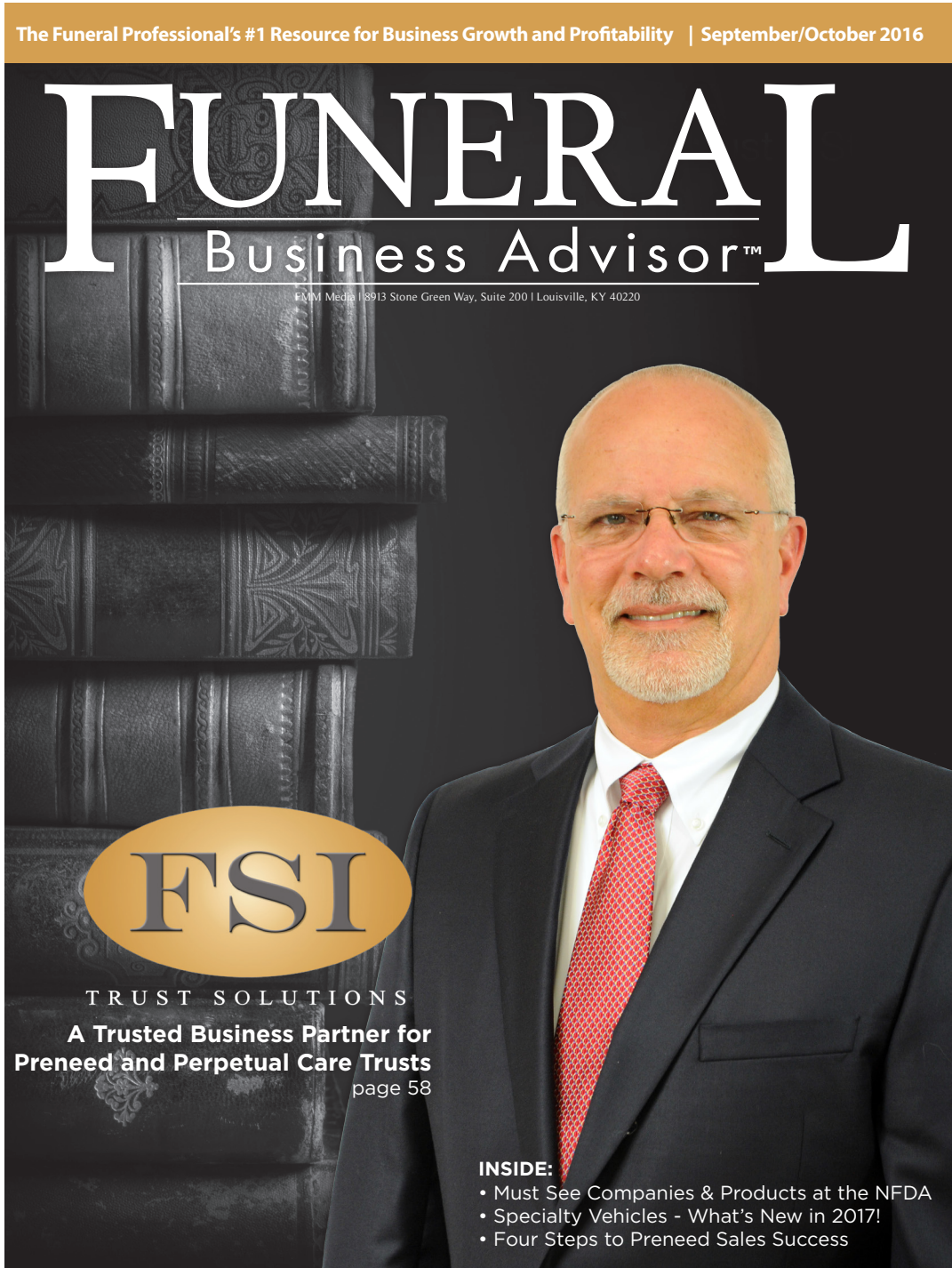
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# IF I ONLY HAD A BRAIN

by Ann Marie St. George



Everyone has to remember the mantra of my favorite character, “The Scarecrow”. “The Wizard of Oz” opened in theaters on August 25, 1939 based on the book, “The Wonderful Wizard of Oz” (1900) written by L. Frank Baum. Its classic charm and lessons learned can be shared across many industries. As funeral directors, can any of us forget the Coroner singing as he pronounces the wicked witch dead, “As Coroner I must aver, I thoroughly examined her, and she’s not only merely dead, she’s really most sincerely dead.”

Reacquainting myself with this American classic I found myself comparing these timeless characters to certain people I have encountered over the years who call themselves funeral directors.

Here are my 10 favorite:

**1. Scarecrow “If I only had a brain”-** Here is our ole time funeral director who when told the family would like cremation as a final form of disposition grumbles under his breath, “Oh crap they don’t want to spend any money they just want direct cremation.” Now if he had gone to any of the trade shows or really listened at some of the seminars he attended, he would have learned that there is a whole world of options out there that can make cremation more lucrative and not coincidentally more meaningful for the family’s experience in saying goodbye.

**2. Tin Man “If I only had a heart”-** This is the ever popular consumer-friendly funeral director who gives away everything and is unable to pay his bills and stay in business long enough to share his “heart” in other ways, like volunteering his time and energy in local charities. He is afraid the families may think he is charging too much so he doesn’t charge enough.

**3. Cowardly Lion “If I only had courage”-** This is the funeral director who never tries anything new because they are afraid to fail. They sit in their funeral homes day in and day out and mock the funeral home down the street that is doing all these “new- fangled” things. They are truly baffled as to why families don’t stick to the way we always did things.

**4. Dorothy “If I only had a better life”-** These are the funeral directors that blame everyone else for their bad situations. They can’t get out of their own way. Instead of getting out there and making improvements to themselves and their business, they just mope around and complain about all their problems, I also refer to these directors as “sad sacks.”

**5. Wizard of Oz “If I only wasn’t so awesome”-** This funeral director thinks that he can do no wrong and that families should just come to him for the sheer fact that he is the self-proclaimed best at what he does. He is the one that feels he is doing a family a favor by taking care of them. This funeral director is a “legend in his own mind.” Maybe a little humble pie would be in order.

**6. Wicked Witch of the West “If I only wasn’t surrounded by dumb people”-** This funeral director is angry at everyone, the stupid families never show up on time and then won’t leave after the wake. He is incensed when asked to do anything above and beyond. They feel they are surrounded with incompetence and irresponsibility. Maybe a good yoga class would help this character?

**7. Glenda the Good Witch “If I could only be the bad witch”-** This funeral director always seems to do the right thing. They seem to never do anything wrong and everyone loves them and they love what they do. They can truly just be annoying and deep down they probably envy some of us bad witches out there.

**8. The Munchkins “If I only could only think big”-** This funeral director is annoyed because all the funeral directors he knows are coming up with these “big ways” to better their businesses. They can’t understand why someone would step out of this group of like-minded unchanging funeral directors who all gather in the square singing about the good ole days and how prosperous they were, instead of maybe singing about what’s over the rainbow.

**9. Toto “If I only had a bigger bark”-** This funeral director who wants a bigger chunk of the market in



his community but doesn't know how to take a bite out of the competition. He keeps drinking from the same dog bowl and never changes his food. He just chases his tail around hoping to someday catch it.

**10. Flying Monkeys "If I only didn't have wings"-** The funeral director who has attended all these wonderfully educational seminars and conferences. Knowing they have all the tools to make their business and themselves successful, they chose to not use them. They are afraid of success and how it might make them fly above all their competition.

At some point in our careers we may recognize some of these characteristics or maybe we recognize them in other funeral directors we know. I chose the tongue in cheek side of these characters from the Wizard of Oz to illustrate where we don't want to be in our profession. We all have the tools we just need to

recognize how, when and where to use them. Get involved in your local associations along with the national ones. There is so much that you can take away from all these groups.

Stop and think about this exchange between Dorothy and the Scarecrow:

*Scarecrow: I haven't got a brain... only straw.*

*Dorothy: How can you talk if you haven't got a brain?*

*Scarecrow: I don't know... But some people without brains do an awful lot of talking... don't they?*

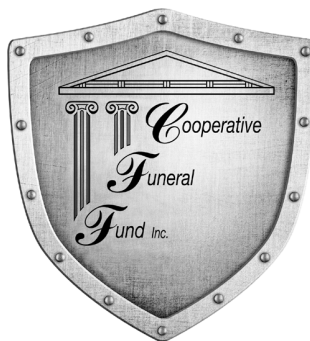
*Dorothy: Yes, I guess you're right.*

And in closing; "A heart is not judged by how much you love; but by how much you are loved by others" - *The Wizard of Oz* **FBA**



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