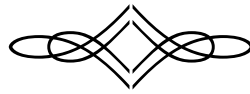




## THE PASSION OF

# Consumer Advocacy



Talk with Carolyn Jacobi for more than two seconds and you will become overwhelmed with her passion...a passion for life, and for death. The President of Eternal Justice is the leading activist for the deathcare industry in North America, and is passionate about protecting the rights of the consumer and the rights of the retailer monument dealer.

“Due to the problems that came about with my own father’s burial, I became a strong activist in my home state of State of Maryland for the deathcare industry following 18 years of experience as a cemetery director for two of the major death industry corporations,” said Jacobi. “Local members of MBNA saw me on television while activating and fighting for new legislation in Maryland, and said they wanted to talk.

“The result of the fight in Maryland gave the consumers of the state protection from the evil-doers in cemetery industry. Even though this issue had been before the legislature 18 different times, it was the actions of Eternal Justice that gave victory with the passage of HB559, which erected the Office of Cemetery Oversight.”

“I was asked to attend the MBNA Convention in Indianapolis in 1997 so that the members of the

association could hear what I had to say,” said Jacobi. “The breakfast meeting, at which I spoke, was filled with people interested in protecting the rights of the consumer and their service companies.

“Outgoing MBNA President John Hakola and incoming President Linda Marsh advised me that it was very possible that the officials of MBNA would like to speak with me later that year. We did talk, and I agreed to a six month contract to aid MBNA in their crusade to educate the industry and marketplace on the need for maintaining these rights.”

“Now, 12 years later, I am still plugging away due to the successes we have had, and the great need for even more effort,” added Jacobi. “Providing reasonable rules and regulations to protect the rights of the consumer is paramount. Hand-in-hand is the right of the monument retailer to perform their trade under reasonable rules and regulations.

“We must remain vigilant. I truly believe God empowered me with knowledge, power and need, and now we have open rights to many cemeteries. That keeps me afloat!”

### EARLY LEGISLATION

Whether wearing a business suit and participating in legislative roundtables with elected officials at all levels, or wearing blue jeans and protesting the activities of



*Paul DiMatteo, CM, and long-time MBNA member and leader from Maine (left) was denied the right to come into Maryland in 2001 to perform his trade after selling this private mausoleum. The Movement was able to force the hands of the cemetery authority, and Paul was allowed to sell and install his profession under reasonable rules and regulations. The consumer (far right with Jacobi on left) has become a supporter of the Movement as well a personal friend.*

a cemetery on the front line, Carolyn practices her passion. And all members of the deathcare industry have benefited from this work.

"I am constantly educating funeral homes, crematories, cemeteries and other elements of the deathcare industry beyond monument retailers, in order to ensure the consumer gets fair and just treatment," said Jacobi. "And I can be their best friend or their worst nightmare in pursuing legislation to assist monument builders and their consumer's at this most vulnerable time in their life.

"Mack Moore/ Rosenbrough was the landmark



*A former member and Jacobi showing the victory sign after successfully completing a force install without the cemetery authority blessing in Peoria, Illinois in 1998.*

case that has set precedent and educated the monument retailers as to their rights, and which provides the catalyst to fight the abuses of these rights by cemeteries."

"The first test in supporting these rights that I was involved in came about from my requested activism in Freeport, Illinois,"

added Jacobi. "A cemetery was reportedly not allowing monument retailers to perform their trade, and they were allegedly conducting bonfires and burning up who knows what.

"The operators of the cemetery reportedly vocalized that I was just one person, who was I to question their practices and what could just one person do. I showed them!"

"The local monument retailer rented a church that held 200 people," noted Jacobi. "The church was filled to over capacity long before the scheduled meeting. Cars were blocking traffic. People showed up, including representatives of the City Council as well as representatives of the State's Attorneys office and the State Comptrollers office.

"I educated them on their rights, the situation was resolved, and thus the Movement was born. I am proud to say I still get letters and emails from that area to this day thanking me."

## ADDITIONAL ACTION

"Following the Freeport, Illinois action, it was exposed that the State Comptrollers office never

fulfilled their duty to the people, and some incorrect operations were exposed," noted Jacobi. "Then came Peoria Illinois.

"A local cemetery had denied access to a retailer, and

was taken to court with other abuses. We went before the City Council on number of occasions and met numerous times with the Illinois Comptroller."

"We educated the Council, Comptroller's office and the State on the need for legislation to set up an oversight committee," added Jacobi. "And the people won victoriously, and we have been running full force ever since.

"Though many other areas and people have been greatly supportive, Illinois was really the birthplace of what we call 'The Movement.' The Illinois Monument Association has been instrumental in support of this advocacy since day one with computer hardware, moral and financial support."

"Our success then led to Birmingham, Alabama, where a local Fox TV affiliate retained me and brought me into town," added Jacobi. "After the initial town meeting, the consumers were mobilized and organized.

"The Movement exposed many irregularities in one cemetery in particular. We exposed opened graves, along with bone particles. We exposed illegal recycling of graves, as well unauthorized use of care fees. After much activism, the cemetery was shut down and the court system became very involved."

"The cemetery was later closed to any further burials, and the owner was reprimanded," said Jacobi.

"Today that cemetery is in the hands of the consumers who manage and maintain it.

"The Movement was featured on the TV program 20/20 after many victories in the City of Milwaukee and the State of Wisconsin. The airing of this segment gave a new awakening to the Movement."

*(Continued on page 35)*



*The ILMA (Illinois Monument Retailers) has been very supportive of the Movement from the very beginning.*



*Jacobi with two happy consumers in the State of Michigan.*

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## GETTING EDUCATED

"Today, we have the same problems, relative to the same old story," noted Jacobi. "Equal access remains mandatory in order to allow qualified monument retailers to perform their trade under reasonable rules and regulations.

"Invariably we get the cemetery to do right thing, but the problem continues to reoccur due to the lack of local legislation in many areas. So we have to start all over again each and every day."

"Our focus remains to activate, mediate, legislate

and litigate if necessary. It is a tried, tested and true system that has proven to work in assisting all members," said Jacobi.

"Some in the deathcare industry don't feel this advocacy is important to them because of solid relationships

and no intrusions with fees. Some don't even think it is necessary. But that opinion changes quickly when this oppression hits a new geographic area."

## WHAT TO DO

"When these situations arise, an individual retailer should contact The Movement as soon as possible to get educated on their rights, and to follow through with educational tools," noted Jacobi.

"The first is to understand the 'Standards of Agreement' between the American Cemetery Association and MBNA. Be aware of your rights. Just because a cemetery is privately owned and

maintained, it doesn't mean access can be denied."

"Once a plot is purchased, cemeteries are obliged to exceptions like no other property has,"

noted Jacobi. "It mandates equal access, is considered a public entity, and must apply with fair rules and regulations per antitrust agreements.

"We must continually educate our legislators on the rights of the consumer, and in doing so introduce legislation to protect constituents and monument retailers. This regulation is essential because everyone must be protected. And The Movement has experience in drafting, previewing and working with elected officials on the need for such legislation."

## FUTURE ACTIONS

"Maintaining The Movement is essential to support monument retailing operations," noted Jacobi. "Until the day we get Federal legislation on board, changes in personnel and attitudes will always make the power of The Movement essential.

"MBNA members must not be in a state of denial. We will always have reoccurring problems, and people will always trying to pull the same old tricks.

Human nature says that they will try to get away with whatever desires until get caught."

"We have come a long way, yet we have a long way to go. Oppression may not be in you back yard today, but it will be coming down road," added Jacobi. "We all must act before it affects

us directly, involving monetary support and active participation.

"My great passion keeps me going, as I have vowed never to allow again what happened to my fathers grave. Individuals must be treated with respect. In their time of psychological need, people must have understanding and care. They don't need to fight a system, they need a system that works with and for them." **MB**



*The official signing of the State of Maryland law.*



*The Movement was very instrumental in the clean up of a cemetery by ministers and activists, which led to the incarceration of the owner.*



*Even when local law authorities were called in at Pascagoula Mississippi, Jacobi made them an educated friend, which led to victory.*