

# Product Spotlight

By Tanya Kenevich

## A Rebirth in the Mausoleum Market

**Usually, good ideas for products and services are thought up, experimented with and, if successful, become available to the public through extensive marketing and community outreach. But what happens when a good idea doesn't get all the marketing and attention that it deserves?**

That's what happened to **Kryprotek**, a division of Norwalk-Wilbert Vault Co. in Bridgeport, Conn. Kryprotek, which is a system that protects the casket in a crypt as well as the mausoleum itself, has been around for the past 20 years, but the nonstop educational marketing of the product didn't start until about four years ago, when Mark Bates became owner of Kryprotek.

"From a very practical business side, when I entered the business four years ago, I saw a problem that the entire vault

dry, accessible nature of mausoleums and that the economics are typically better to build up rather than build out. Kryprotek is a product that is very beneficial to mausoleum owners (and) operators and having a product that addresses that growth market is very exciting."

### Two Beginnings for Kryprotek

The story of Kryprotek starts even before the product was invented. Norwalk Vault was founded in 1932 by the Pirozzoli family. Since that time, the company has been serving the death-care industry from New Hampshire to New Jersey with high-quality concrete products. With the company's distribution partners throughout the Northeast, Norwalk Vault serves more than 20,000 families each year.

By the 1980s, a new innovation in mausoleum protection was being developed. "The company was approached in the late-1980s by a few cemeteries and asked to develop a product that would provide all the durability and protection of a zinc mausoleum liner but without all the cost, weight, soldering and other hassles that are inherent characteristics of working with a sheet metal box. Working with these cemeterians, (the company) developed the very first Kryprotek," Bates said. "Over the past 20 years, the product has undergone several upgrades and revisions and we now offer two versions: a top-loading version that is ideal for disinterment, re-entombments and other potentially complicated situations, and an end-loading version that is installed in a

crypt prior to entombment, providing for the simplest, most dignified service and installation for the family and cemetery staff."

As unique as this idea was to the then-expensive mausoleum industry, Kryprotek somewhat fell to the wayside because of rapid changes in the vault industry; in addition, Norwalk Vault also became the Wilbert licensee for both the Boston and New York City markets. "Unfortunately, Kryprotek didn't get all the sales and marketing attention that it deserved," Bates said.

When the Pirozzoli family made Bates the owner in 2006, he saw major potential in a product that hadn't been used to its full capacity. So Bates did what he was best at: He went right to work and traveled to as many death-care conventions and conferences as possible to educate the industry on the reawakening of Kryprotek and what it could offer mausoleum owners.

### Taking Over an Existing Project

So why did Bates decide to take over Kryprotek? "I'm a problem solver, and this product solves two problems at once: Declining vault sales and the need for dignified entombments," he said.

"As the mausoleum market grows, it has naturally become more sophisticated, and expectations for clean, dry, insect-free, stain-free facilities have increased. With crypt spaces ranging as high as \$50,000, mausoleums are being built as destinations, facilities that welcome families and encourage visitors to appreciate the beauty of the architecture and surroundings," Bates added. "As a result, the experienced, well-



**Photo: The Top Loading Design from Kryprotek**

industry was facing: the long-term decline in casketed ground burials," Bates said. "While much of the decline we are experiencing is due to cremation, some of those ground burials are being lost to above-ground entombment. Most cemeteries realize that there is a demand for the clean,



Photo: The End Loading Design from Kryprotek

educated mausoleum operators have become attuned to the fact that in order to sell their crypt spaces, they must protect their facilities from the natural implications of caring for human remains: phorid flies and potential leaks. The reality is that while the buildings are better designed than ever, the caskets that are entombed in their buildings cannot be relied upon to control these issues.”

In order for Bates to get his ideas out to the death-care industry, he often traveled to various conferences and conventions, large and small, local and far, to get the purpose of Kryprotek out there and continue to strengthen customer relationships.

“I believe that this is a very personal business, and it is important to have a solid, trusting relationship with your customers, vendors, partners – and even your competitors. Having grown up in a small town in rural Maine, I believe I come by this perspective naturally. Where I grew up, you did business with the plumber down the street. This was someone you were likely going to see every Saturday morning on your dump-

run. This was not the random plumber you find in the Yellow Pages or on the Internet who is offering a discount product or service,” Bates said. “With this product, I am asking cemeteries and funeral directors to put their trust in me, and I feel it is important that they know that I personally stand behind the product, and that if they ever have a question or the slightest concern, they can either call me on my cell phone or know that they are going to see me at the next conference or convention.”

Although some death-care professionals might see Kryprotek as a newer product and company, Bates wants the industry to understand that the company has paid its dues. “I think that many folks have that impression because we’ve historically done a pretty poor job of promoting the product,” he said. “However, with 20 years experience and more than 30,000 units in the field, we have one of the longest track records of reliability and are one of the most knowledgeable firms in the industry.”

### One Product, Two Designs

The Kryprotek system is not just a “one size fits all” product; the company is very accommodating to supplying oversized or custom units. In addition, the unit itself has two designs: the End Loading Design and Top Loading Design. Both have been created for different situations.

“The Top Loading Kryprotek is ideal for risky, potentially messy situations such as disinterment, relocations and re-entombments,” Bates said. “The unit comes in two pieces: a rigid, ribbed base with 8-inch-deep sidewalls and a rugged cap that once sealed to the base provides a solid, durable containment of the most challenging situations.”

The End Loading Design has a bit of a different focus. “The End Loading Kryprotek is designed to make the entombment process simple for the staff and dignified for the family,” Bates said. “The unit comes in four pieces: a top and bottom half of a tube and two end caps. To facilitate the installation, the top and bottom half and rear end-cap are assembled and installed prior to entombment. During entombment, the casket easily slides on the smooth plastic inside surface, and the staff simply attaches the front end cap.”

Both designs are constructed of heavy-gauge acrylonitrile butadiene styrene plastic – the same material but significantly thicker than the plastic used to line high-end burial vaults. “(The units) have a one-way pressure release valve in the rear that allows gases to escape into the mausoleum ventilation system without allowing insects to get in or out,” Bates added.

### Plans for the Future

Kryprotek has gained momentum in the death-care industry, especially in the past four years. One of Bates’s main focuses is to gain and spread as much education about the mausoleum industry as he possibly can. “I am currently working on a ‘best practices’ project – gathering information from customers, competitors and other experts in the field relating to issues ranging from facility design and maintenance and to crypt pricing and marketing,” he said. “My intention is to consolidate a core of knowledge that will allow mausoleum operators to manage their facilities efficiently and effectively – enabling them to provide families with an aesthetically pleasing facility at a good value.” ❖

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