

The Advocate

FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF THE PIEDMONT

May, 2012

A New Idea for Green Burials

As more and more people are seeking ways to honor and protect the environment, there are increasing alternatives available for our physical remains after death.

Perhaps the newest idea for an ecological burial involves a process called Promession. This is, in effect, freeze-drying the body by immersing it in liquid nitrogen. This process renders the body quite brittle. Then, the frozen body is literally shaken inside a vacuum chamber, which breaks the body into small pieces and which causes water to be evaporated. Finally, a mechanical separator is used to filter out such things as surgical implants or mercury tooth fillings, so that the powdered remains are totally pure. The powder can then be placed in an urn as with a standard cremation, or mixed with soil to become a perfectly effective compost.

Promession is not yet available in the US, but has recently been introduced in the United Kingdom. The goal, as with most of the “green burial” alternatives is to avoid polluting the environment while providing a totally respectful way to deal with the physical remains.

For more information about Promession, we recommend a visit to:

http://promessa.se/index_en.asp



Neolithic Burial reconstruction, Hutchinson and Hutchinson, Creative Commons License used by permission

Resources for Planning

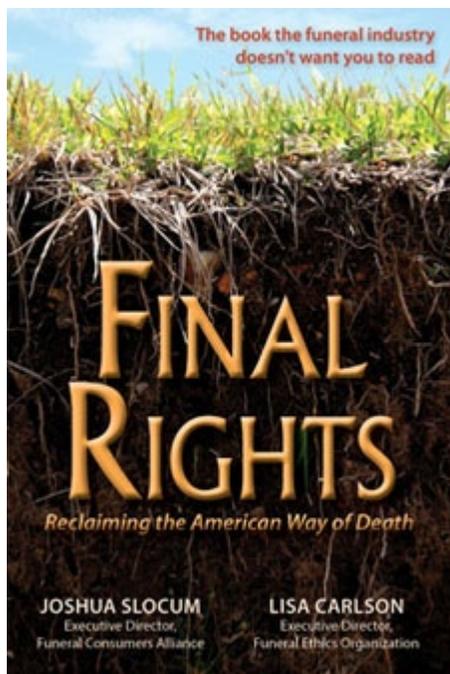
There are many excellent resources available for those who wish to plan a more dignified, ecological, or less expensive burial for themselves or for their loved ones. Following is a list of some of the best:

The Natural Burial Company provides biodegradable caskets and ash urns. They are also a great resources for books and other planning materials.

Natural Burial Company
PO Box 11204
Eugene, Oregon 97440
Telephone: 503-493-9258

www.naturalburialcompany.com

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Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death, by Josh Slocum and Lisa Carlson, both of the national Funeral Consumer's Alliance, is a wonderful book that is chock full of practical consumer advice for funeral/death planning. In addition to lots of general advice, *Final Rights* includes a review of funeral laws for each of the 50 states. The book is available from the Funeral Consumer's Alliance:

33 Patchen Road, South Burlington, VT 05403

Telephone 802-865-8300

www.funerals.org

When planning for a burial, keep in mind that in North Carolina local jurisdictions have rules that may limit where a body may be laid to rest. Contact your local health department for guidance before making plans for a private burial outside a formal cemetery. North Carolina law does not require that a body be embalmed, nor does it require a casket, much less a vault.

Thoughts...
about death, dying, funerals, and burials
by Vance Arnold
FCA of the Piedmont Board Member

As I took on my new role as a board member of this organization I thought about what could I do to be of some value. I don't participate very much in the electronic/internet world so a lot of possibilities were eliminated immediately. But I have always been, and continue to be, curious... so I decided I could write a series of articles, relating, of course, mostly, hopefully to the topics referred to above. This is the first, so I hope it is interesting, thought provoking, and, in some way, useful.

My Father died 26 years ago. It was, in my thinking, a "good death"; I think my only sibling, my brother Kelly, agrees, except that it came "...10 years too soon." It was pretty quick:- a heart attack that he didn't tell anybody about until a week later, when he decided, at 2 in the morning, that he needed to go to the hospital. Although he seemed to be recovering nicely and was scheduled to be discharged, after a cardiac catheterization in a few more days, he suffered a "massive" second heart attack, with a nurse in the room, and all attempts to revive him failed.

I came down, for the third time in 5 days, to help with the funeral preparations. They were pretty standard; we used the same funeral home that my brother, father, and I had used 10 years before when mama died. We picked the same coffin for daddy that we had picked for mama- a cloth covered pine box, about \$700 if memory serves. The funeral director was very nice, taking us in to the preparation room to see our father laid out on a table. Except for the fact that they had drained the "wen" which he had rather proudly worn on

his forehead for years, he looked like Daddy. We were told that "Yes, of course, you can put things in the casket to be buried with him; people do it all the time." And we did, Kelly and I, and various members of his second family with Lucy, whom he married after mama died. Another thing that I really remember from then occurred during the viewing we had at the funeral home the evening before the funeral and burial on April 15th. I walked over to the casket, while nobody else was close by to have a private moment with daddy; to my surprise I distinctly heard his voice, inside my head, say 2 words: "It's okay!" and it was and it has continued to be. Probably pretty standard for the day and time, and I really have no idea how much we spent.

Since then a variety of friends, family, and members of my community have died. In future articles I want to share a bit about:

- A man who died at home, where his body remained for 72 hours, with various friends and/ or family present, sitting with him continuously as his spirit took leave of his body. I attended for the last two hours of the vigil, and will report on some of that experience.
- A woman who elected to discontinue dialysis and die at home with her family and friends by her side for the entire time.
- A man whom I never met, but certainly wish I had, who was cared for in his dying days by friends and students in the home of one of those students; and whose entire expenses for burial were \$350.



How to Dress for the Funeral

Living in an increasingly diverse society, sooner or later, we are all likely to find ourselves attending a funeral for someone whose religious tradition is different from our own. Following are some very simple guidelines on appropriate dress for the more common religious groups in central North Carolina:

Jewish Funeral – dignified business attire is appropriate. Women should wear a dress instead of slacks, especially at a conservative synagogue. Men will be expected to cover their heads with a kippah or yarmulke, which will likely be available for those who do not own their own. At an orthodox synagogue, both men and women will cover their heads. Women would use a scarf. Note that sending flowers is not a Jewish tradition.

Protestant or Catholic Christian Funeral – dignified business attire is appropriate, especially when the funeral takes place in a church. It is still traditional to wear black, especially at Roman Catholic funerals. Women should avoid wearing flashy jewelry. Pearls are OK. Sending flowers or donations in memory of the deceased is appropriate.

Muslim Funeral – men and women will likely be seated separately. All should dress conservatively, but women in particular should avoid short sleeves and short skirts. Women will need a scarf to cover their heads. Shoes will need to be removed before entering the Mosque. Do NOT bring flowers to a Muslim funeral.

Buddhist Funeral – there is a lot of variation among cultures. For example, many Asian

Buddhists do NOT wear black at a funeral. White is considered the color of grieving. For all Buddhist traditions, avoid wearing anything red. Remember that no shoes may be worn in a Buddhist temple. Flowers are acceptable, but food offerings are not considered to be in good taste at a Buddhist funeral.

Hindu Funeral – As with Buddhists, Hindus consider white to be the color of grieving, so the family of the deceased will be dressed in white. However, non family members attending the funeral will be expected to dress in dark colors. Generally, if the service takes place in a temple or worship center, shoes will be removed.

Baha'i Funeral – Baha'is tend to be less formal than many other religious groups. There are no strict guidelines concerning appropriate dress at funerals, and indeed, Baha'i funerals are often very casual. Obviously, flashy or undignified dress should be avoided. One specific rule of the Baha'i Faith prohibits non-Baha'is from making contributions to any Baha'i related cause.

Mormon Funeral – While dress for a Mormon funeral may be rather casual, colors should be muted, and women are advised to wear skirts no shorter than their knee.



Funeral Consumer's Alliance of the Piedmont

The Advocate is the periodic newsletter of the Funeral Consumer's Alliance of the Piedmont. At Funeral Consumer's Alliance of the Piedmont, we work together for after-death arrangements that embrace our need, preferences, and rights. In addressing this aim, we use advance planning, information gathering, education and advocacy. We welcome Piedmont Triad funeral consumers without regard to their religion, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, or income level.

FCAP

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www.fcapedmont.org

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Save the Date

Funeral Consumer's Alliance
of the Piedmont
Annual Meeting
Sunday, September 16, 2012
3 p.m.

More information in our Summer Issue