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Natural death and burial in Canada

New date for
London Green
Funeral Exhibition

Natural Burial Grounds

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General

- From **Mike Salisbury**: "Those interested in the development of natural burial grounds in Canada may find a recently completed Landscape Architecture Thesis - **A Feasibility Study of the Woodland Cemetery in Canada** - of interest. The thesis outlines the historical precedents leading to the development of green cemeteries and offers insight into design considerations relevant to the development of green burial grounds in Canada. In addition to the thesis, there is a **Woodland Cemetery Master Plan** that explores some of the unique opportunities of natural burial grounds. Both are available for free download on www.earthartist.com"
- **The Natural Burial Association of Canada** www.naturalburialassoc.ca. The Association's vision is to provide an environmentally friendly alternative to conventional burials in Canada. The non-profit Association promotes natural burials through advocacy, education and standards and act as facilitators to get natural burial grounds set up; as supporters of natural burial initiatives; and as leaders in establishing principles and guidelines. Members are individuals, corporations, non-profits, and all others dedicated to providing natural burials in Canada.

British Columbia

- **Cedar Boughs Natural Death Care Society, Victoria, BC**: Cedar Boughs, a non-profit society founded in 2004, provides education and support regarding alternatives to current North American Funeral Practices. Cedar Boughs was created to promote choice regarding all aspects of after-death practices including care of the body, casket options, transport of the body and end of life rituals and ceremonies. Cedar Boughs exists as a community resource to support those who wish to remain personally involved following the death of a loved one. We plan for 2005 a workshop entitled, **Caring for Our Own** - an experiential, educational and supportive workshop for those interested in choice regarding after-death care and practices: to explore our societal and personal relationships with death, and to introduce alternative yet age-old ways of being with life's final passage. Ffi, please contact Laurie Bayly (tel [250] 415-0296; e: cedarboughs@canada.com). *Cedar Boughs began in memory of Liann Hartley. Family and friends, assisted by Victoria Hospice, had the privilege of providing complete care throughout her dying in 2002. Following Liann's death, her body was wrapped in a quilt created by those who loved her and gently laid in a home-made casket upon a bed of cedar boughs...a final act of love and gratitude for a life so well lived.*
- The Memorial Society of British Columbia is working on a range of green burial options, as described on its website: www.memorialsocietybc.org (contact: Ellen Le Fevre, Executive Director, Memorial Society of BC, 212-

1847 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V6J 1Y6; tel: 604 733 7705; e: elefevre@telus.net).

Ontario

- **Fred Henderson** (e: tfh@sympatico.ca) would like to hear from anyone who is interested in establishing a non-profit organisation with the purpose of providing green burials in the Ontario area of Canada.

Natural burial in the States Ramsey Creek Preserve

The Natural Death Centre would like to hear about any natural burial grounds in the States. One of the first to open was Memorial Ecosystems' 'Ramsey Creek Preserve' nature park at the edge of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Western South Carolina. It is considerably more expensive (at \$1,950 for the plot) than most UK natural burial grounds - which is surprising as US land prices are no doubt generally lower than in the UK.

The Natural Death Centre is also in favour of the human scale and wary of those who set up branches in a number of locations or who franchise a concept - which is Memorial Ecosystems' intention.

But aside from these quibbles, the concept sounds to have been excellently thought through. The following details are extracted from their most interesting website (at www.memorialecosystems.com).

From Memorial Ecosystems' publicity material:

One of the advantages of using a Memorial Ecosystems preserve for burial is the potential for saving money while putting the money you do spend to work for the environment.

The cost of a space in a Memorial Ecosystems preserve will be about what you would expect to pay for a burial space in an urban area. That is where the cost similarities begin and end. Most cemeteries require leak proof vaults, durable caskets, and expensive grave markers. According to industry sources, the average cost of a casket runs around \$2100, and a vault over \$700. Even flush brass and granite markers can cost \$1,000. Elaborate ceremonies can cost thousands of more dollars more. Some chains will promote cheaper burial spaces as a "loss leader" to attract clients for the more expensive add on items.

Memorial Ecosystems does not require vaults and durable caskets. In fact, our "dust to dust", cycle of life approach does not allow such items (unless required by state law-not a problem in most states). Biodegradable caskets are much less expensive than durable ones. A lot of people are unaware that because of public health concerns, even cremation requires a simple casket. These same caskets can be used for burial. The least expensive ones, made of reinforced cardboard, cost dealers as little as \$20. Simple pine boxes are also much less expensive than average. Memorial Ecosystems is currently searching for a company that can guarantee that the wood and paper used to make the caskets comes from ecologically sustainable sources.

Our preserves will not create giant parking lots, and some of our more

sensitive burial areas will not allow large ceremonies at grave side. Such time and space limitations encourage small, simple (and less expensive) ceremonies, but certainly leave open the possibility of a more elaborate memorial service some time after burial.

The advantages of a burial in a Memorial Ecosystems preserve go beyond the cost savings. We are specifically designing our preserves to be real, scenic nature preserves. We earmark enough of the funds to land purchase and infrastructure development to ensure that interment densities are low, and that large areas of the preserve will have no interments at all. Your commitment to purchasing a burial space here ensures that this land will be protected, studied and enjoyed from now on. A part of the purchase price will be committed to conservation work in the watershed. In the case of Ramsey Creek, we hope to purchase an adjacent wetland complex with these funds.

The end result will be a functioning nature preserve that will be a pleasant place to visit. This is really a key point.

Not only does buying a space here help the environment, and provide open space for future generations, it is a place that you can enjoy with your family while you are alive. We are building trail systems with rest areas ideal for family outings, wildlife observation and quiet contemplation. After its construction, our beautiful all faiths chapel will be available for memorial services, but will also be available to clients for other appropriate uses such as weddings, sunrise services, etc. While we think that some public use-especially for education and research-is appropriate and desirable, the preserves will not be open for unregulated public use (see our Environmental and Social Commitment Plan, and our Rules and Regulations). This means that we will ensure that our clients and their families will be able to have a quality experience when they decide to visit. And when you purchase a spot at one of our preserves, it means that you will have preferential use of any of our subsequent preserves. If after you have bought a space, we open another preserve that is more convenient or more desirable to you, you may transfer your interment rights to the new park (if the new plot is more expensive, you might have to pay the difference).

We also think that our life history archiving service (included in the purchase price) is of great value. Every client can submit one page of biographical or other information, along with one photo for a permanently archived life history that will be maintained on paper and on durable computer media. For a fee, we will also create and maintain larger archives, including multimedia for those who might want to archive voice, music, or other interests, the fee depending on the size of the archive. All of the information will be put on CD, along with preserve information, photographs, etc. The CDs may be purchased by clients and families.

The visitor's center will also be equipped with a computer that will be able to show all interment locations given a name query. And while the \$1950 we charge for a plot might sound like a lot of money (about the cost of a mid-range PC), we can arrange for a payment plan to fit your budget. We do offer spots for cremation scattering (life history archiving included) for \$500.

Memorial Ecosystems will allow non-intrusive monumentation, but we do not require it. We encourage clients to see a healthy nature preserve as their real monument. Because the density of burials in Memorial Ecosystems preserves is so much lower than usual commercial cemeteries, finding the interment area will be much easier. Some will choose to forgo a traditional marker, and will choose a natural feature such as a boulder or tree. At the Ramsey Creek Preserve, former owners gathered rocks from the forest floor for building materials. At this preserve, we will allow engraved natural flat stones (from the same geological strata)-to mark the graves and as a component of

our restoration ecology program. We are also developing contacts with craftspeople that are interested in using the native stones to create natural, non-intrusive art pieces. Interments in Memorial Ecosystems preserves will be accurately mapped to ensure that all graves-even those with no hard marker-are easy to find. We will also store (on site) one page of biographical information on our clients. We are experimenting with a more comprehensive life history archiving system that will include multi-media (video clips, recordings of voice, etc.).

Update from an e-mail from Billy Campbell, MD, Memorial Ecosystems, January 31st 2000.

We won the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources' Stewardship Development Award in recognition of the Ramsey Creek Preserve (one of two for-profits to do so in the entire state). We have continued to expand our plant list, and have finally made arrangements for our fish survey.

We have joined forces with the Jessica Mitford Memorial Project (including the California-based Natural Death Care Project and Redwood Funeral Society). Mitford was a Brit who moved to the US, and wrote *The American Way of Death*.

To compete with the heavily marketed and entrenched funeral and cemetery establishment, we need to be able to make it very easy for clients to choose a service that is now out of the ordinary. I am pushing for JMMP to evolve into a not-for-profit that would coordinate services from various providers (provide the "one stop shop" that seems to be so important for Americans - apparently the free standing casket companies have not made the impact we had all hoped because of this problem). More over, JMMP would serve a monitoring function. No for-profit could be associated unless it demonstrated ongoing commitment to protecting the consumer and the environment, for example.

'Nature preserves providing cemetery functions, not cemeteries working hard to be greener'

MEI has also changed our focus a bit. While we still own land, we are interested in divesting ourselves of land ownership. We want to provide a service that benefits the "associated" non-profit nature preserve that we help create. It helps ensure that the preserves will continue to be preserves providing cemetery functions, not cemeteries working hard to be greener.

We recently made an offer on a 500-acre ranch that The Nature Conservancy are trying to protect. It is really pretty land, complete with panthers, golden eagles, coyotes, and a host of other bird life. It is in the oak-savanna country in the eastern part of the county.

Memorial Ecosystems, 113 Retreat Street, Westminster, SC 29693, USA (tel 864 647 7798; fax 864 647 7796; e-mail: www.memorialecosystems.com).

Blue Ridge Mountains proposal

Douglass Foster

The following are adapted extracts from an e-mail to the Centre.

I've been trying to think of a way to pay off my 260 acres in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, U.S.A, and the idea of 'green cemetery', necropolis and wildlife preserve, occurred to me. While researching the cemetery business on the web I discovered your pages and realised the idea seems to have occurred to others.

Douglass Foster (tel 001 540 552 2319).

Martin Kaufman who contacted him on behalf of the Natural Death Centre adds: "Douglass Foster is unlikely to do anything along these lines for a while, and he's more interested in the nature reserve aspect and less in the natural decomposition idea. He would basically let people be buried however they wanted to be."

District of Columbia

Historic Congressional Cemetery

Linda Harper

From an e-mail to the Centre (Nov 1st 2002).

"Historic Congressional Cemetery (HCC) was established in 1807, is 32.5 acres, is located within the boundaries of the District of Columbia, and is managed by a non-profit organization.

"There are 18,000 stones and markers and 60,000 interments. The land is one of the largest open spaces in the District and abuts the Anacostia River (a major tributary to the Potomac and one that is in dire need of cleaning up).

"The watershed remains a migratory bird flyway - about 1/2 mile from our boundary is an island with a proposed nature preserve and educational/nature center. A trail system is proposed to run along the river.

"We are approaching this from the opposite of having open land and using natural burials to maintain or enhance the site. In our case we are looking to a more natural environment to enhance an existing cemetery site. We are considering a new landscape plan to include native plant materials to attract wildlife, especially birds and butterflies. This will require a different mowing regime potentially using wildflower meadows. It may mean that we leave decaying tree stumps or large dead trees for insects and woodpeckers.

"The key issue for us is a major shift in interpretation - moving from well mowed and carefully maintained areas to a more natural view. I am most interested in your materials that explain to the public and potential buyers the natural wildlife habitat. Problems and solutions in generating interest or overcoming fears. With a growing environmental movement in the US, it seems that this concept whether taken from the initial stages as in your format or 'backing into it' as we hope to do would also provide a variety of new partners who would be willing to support and use the facility.

"Feel free to add this to your list of information - hopefully it will generate additional discussion."

Linda Harper, Chair, Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery, 1801 E Street, Southeast Washington, D.C. 20003 Phone: (202) 543-0539 FAX: (202) 543-5966 E-mail: CongressionalCemetery@mail.org

Florida

Glendale Memorial Nature Preserve

John Wilkerson writes:

"We have exempt cemetery classification which means we cannot take money pre-need in exchange for a burial plot. We can, and will, charge \$1,000 for the opening and closing of the grave space. We can ask for donations. The rules are: No embalming; caskets must be biodegradable (shroud or sheet is OK); flat markers or stones native to the area allowed if wished.

"We will pursue a full cemetery license from the State of Florida which will allow for pre-need contracts. Our current activities are building the all-faiths chapel and controlled burning, which is rapidly returning the eco-system to pre-white man conditions, mainly wildflower production that is awesome."

Glendale Memorial Nature Reserve, 297 Railroad Avenue, De Funiak Springs, Florida, 32433, USA; tel: 001 850 8592141; e: john@glendalenaturepreserve.org

Massachusetts

The Circle of Life Eco-burial Site

By Kevin Krueger, in the Babson Business Journal, October 13th 2003.

Budding Entrepreneur Kevin Krueger sees the light with cost-effective, eco-friendly burials

As I graduate this year, I intend to enter the restaurant industry primarily; however, as a 'background' secondary career I'm considering establishing my own cemetery called Circle of Life. But this cemetery comes with a twist - an eco-burial (green burial) ground where there's no granite markers, just trees.

Eco-burial sites are managed in a manner that focuses on allowing nature to biodegrade human remains quickly into a more natural setting than is found with traditional cemeteries and memorial parks (click [here](#) for a doctor's description of decomposition, inevitable but only delayed by embalming). Environmentalists that practise green burials disallow concrete tombs, elaborate coffins and immovable granite grave markers. This ashes-to-ashes and rebirth style of disposition illustrates the environmental benefits the land will receive. In lieu of granite markers, the planting of trees provides an obvious benefit to the habitat compared to traditional cemeteries and memorial parks - such as halting the pollution from cremation, capitalizing on trees' natural management of waste run-off, conserving land for wildlife habitat, and permanently restricting commercial development of the burial ground.

The Death industry in the U.S. is a \$25 billion per year industry dominated by very few players. Recently, ten years of consolidation among independent cemetery operators and funeral homes (respectively) in the U.S. has been the main story behind rising costs and increased regulation of the death industry. The average funeral and burial costs \$9,620, but can run up to \$20,000 plus. These expenses are often the largest layout a person can make during a lifetime, after a house and a car. Eco-burials cost less and therefore are priced less than \$3,000. However, I plan for a premium pricing strategy (which you

can discuss with me at BEG's November Pitching in the Bullpen).

Certain trends indicate the death industry is poised for growth, and eco-burials may find a significant niche. As an alternative to traditional burials cremations have been on the rise - from 5% of North Americans requesting cremations thirty years ago to 26.2% as of 2000. According to the US government, approximately 2.5 million people die each year in the US. The death rate is expected to double in the next few decades due to the Baby Boomer generation which is 76 million strong.

Babson Marketing Professor, David Hennessey, oversaw my Independent Research project and advised me in writing my first business plan: establishing an eco-burial business modeled after 12-year old UK operations. The effort to provide this alternative disposition is spearheaded by [The Natural Death Centre](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk) in London (www.naturaldeath.org.uk). The first week of October 2003 I sat down at The Centre offices for tea and conversation with Mike Jarvis and Stephanie Wienrich, two leaders of the green burial movement. They provided insights and contacts that I hope get me started in the States. Right now, there are only two such sites in the U.S. - Ramsey Creek, South Carolina (www.MemorialEcoSystems.com) and Glendale, Florida [Eds: see above]. Dr. Billy Campbell and his wife Kimberly of the South Carolina site are in the process of purchasing land in California, a more populated market they expect will embrace the green burial practice.

For my part, Circle of Life will foster partnerships with conservationist groups and the local municipality seeking a joint effort to share the capital expense burdens of land purchase and start-up costs as well as promotion and education of this "new" practice to the community. When I first heard of eco-burials, I considered simply establishing a not-for-profit organization and a website that educated American consumers and government regulators about green burials. However, after discussing the green burial movement with fellow Babson students, Professors Hennessey and Natalie Taylor, I decided to explore the profit potential of this endeavor given the high-cost alternatives available in the 'death-market'.

I know you're thinking, this is a strange business to enter. However, I came to Babson for the same reasons as many of you did - seeking a better role in life and perhaps this particular effort can be my small legacy. The advice and encouragement I've received from Babson professors has inspired me to really think globally and act locally. So to really encourage others to adopt this environmentally beneficial practice I would be most successful leading my cause by example. A major challenge is Americans' preference for more extravagant burial practices. 100 years ago Americans handled death at home, while decades of funeral service providers' efforts to sanitize our experiences with death have trained us to upscale and outsource the process of grief and burial. The late Jessica Mitford, a renowned consumer advocate, writes in her book *The American Way of Dying* that she and many of her fellow Europeans are disturbed when they attend American funerals with our open casket presentation of a made-up face and embalmed body. Conversely, European funerals are nearly always closed-casket. Due to land-use regulations, most U.S. municipal health agencies require some controls for the burial of embalmed bodies. I have chosen Cape Cod or Martha's Vineyard for my first location since this region has many conservationist groups and tax dollars set aside for land purchase that prohibits residential and commercial development. Additionally, would you agree, The Cape and Islands make a nice place for the living? If you have any interest in this topic or know someone who may, please send me an e-mail (kkrueger@babson.edu) or attend the BEG's November Pitching in the Bullpen session to discuss or critique my plan.

External link: <http://babsonbusiness.collegepublisher.com/news/526023.html?mkey=1041621>

New York State

Green Springs Natural Cemetery Association *Save a forest – plant yourself*

From an email from Mary Woodsen, the GSNCA president, 4 December 2004.

"Natural burial at Greensprings Natural Cemetery Association Greensprings is...

... an idea: that you can give as much in death as you do in life for the people and things you love. Through natural burial at Greensprings, you create a legacy of enduring stewardship and renewal. A legacy that provides a place of peace and beauty for generations to come.

... a place: 100 acres of rolling hilltop meadows south of Cayuga Lake in New York's lovely Finger Lakes region. Greensprings on Irish Hill is bounded by 4,000-acre Arnot Forest and 4,000-acre Newfield State Forest.

... a difference: Greensprings offers a sustainable and beautiful alternative to conventional cemeteries. It is a place of meadows and woodlands, where you may choose native trees and shrubs for planting on your gravesite, helping to restore the land to its natural state and providing shelter and food for wildlife.

"For those who love the earth, a choice in death that reflects your life. Natural burial means letting nature take its course: no embalming fluid. simple biodegradable caskets, environmentally responsible care of the land, low-density burials, a natural return to the earth, natural stone markers, flush with the earth, or commemorative plantings of native trees and shrubs."

The ecological cost of contemporary burial

"Each year, the US' 22,500 cemeteries bury about 827,060 gallons of embalming fluid, 30-plus million board feet of hardwoods (much tropical; caskets), 90,272 tons of steel (caskets), 14,000 tons of steel (vaults), 2,700 tons of copper and bronze (caskets), 1,636,000 tons of reinforced concrete (vaults). On average, a cemetery buries 1,000 gallons of embalming fluid, 97.5 tons of steel, 2,028 tons of concrete, and 56,250 board feet of high quality tropical hardwood in just one acre of green. And then there's the tons of fertilizers, pesticides, and water – not to mention emissions like CO₂, nitrates, ozone, soot, and more – that it takes to keep cemeteries looking well-manicured.

"The ecological cost of cremation each cremation releases between .8 and 5.9 grams of mercury as bodies are burned. This amounts to between 1,000 and 7,800 pounds of mercury released each year in the US. 75% goes into the air and the rest settles into the ground and water. Crematoriums may be responsible for as much as 12% of all dioxins in the atmosphere. You could drive about 4,800 miles on the energy equivalent of the energy used to cremate someone – and to the moon and back 85 times on the energy from all cremations in one year in the US. Cremation removes the body from the cycle of nature, keeping it from nourishing new life. Cremations of Tompkins County residents during the past year released between 1.2 and 6.8 pounds of mercury into the atmosphere. This estimate is based on a 20% statewide cremation rate – though the county's rate is probably higher."

Mary Woodsen [001] 607 272 4034; Susan Thomas [001] 607 936 6613; Joel Rabinowitz 607 898 5113.

San Francisco Bay Area

Forever Fernwood Cemetery in the Golden Gate National Recreation area of California is now open as a natural burial ground. Fernwood say:

"As pioneers in the green cemetery movement in the United States, we are excited about the developments we have made here so far. We have been working hard to get our natural burial cemetery mapped and ready for public use. Our Ecological Restoration Team has completed its first phase and the restoration process is well underway. In the past few months we have undertaken soils testing, removal of fallen and hazardous trees, hydroseeding with native grasses and wildflowers, trail building, prototype process documentation, and plans for entry and building enhancements.

There are now a number of beautiful burial areas available to the public. Fernwood is adjacent to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, offers views of Mount Tamalpais and is easily accessible from Highway 101. This is an opportunity for you to help restore and preserve this oak woodland and coastal prairie land for future generations. We also offer cremation options starting at \$985 and have a variety of scattering and burial options available for cremated remains. Natural burial at Fernwood uses no toxic embalming fluids, no vault, and only a biodegradable casket or a burial shroud. Natural rocks, wildflowers, shrubs and trees serve as markers and each grave is locatable via Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates."

Fernwood, A Forever Memorial Landscape 301 Tennessee Valley Road Mill Valley, CA 94941 (tel:+1 415.383.7100; fax: +1 415.383.7409; web: www.foreverfernwood.com)

Texas

The Ethician Family Cemetery

At Waterwood in San Jacinto County, Texas. From a press release (Oct 31st 2003):

"An 81 acre wilderness of ancient oaks, hickories, and pines has been donated to The Universal Ethician Church to serve as a traditional family burial ground, where earthly remains are naturally returned to nurture the earth. Although the **Ethician Family Cemetery** is the **third natural burial park in the United States**, it is the first that has been divided into family plots of up to 1/3 acre each. It is **also the largest** natural burial ground in the United States.

"Modern urban cemeteries may have as many as 3,000 graves per acre in sterile, toxic environments where embalmed bodies are sequestered in bronze, steel, or copper caskets or concrete vaults where they are kept from returning to the earth as God and nature intended. Modern American families spend many thousands of dollars for elaborate burials, wasting money that could have been used to send grandchildren to college, pay for health care for elderly family members, or for charitable causes.

"The spiritual philosophy of the Ethician Church is to follow the Biblical concept of 'dust to dust' which demands natural burial in God's wilderness, and thus protects, preserves and enriches a part of Creation. A pickled body encased in steel, bronze, copper and concrete is not in accordance with Biblical and Ethician principles. 'And the Lord God formed mankind of the dust of the

ground, and breathed into their nostrils the breath of life, and they became living beings.' (Genesis 2:7) 'Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.' (Genesis 3:19)

"Ethician Bishop and Prelate, George H. Russell had waited 35 years for his dream of creating a wilderness cemetery in America. In 1968, he and his wife Sue, were conducting field research in cultural ecology and linguistics in Toledo District, British Honduras (now Belize). As they had one of the few vehicles in that remote part of the world they were called upon to transport bodies into the lush rainforests for burial. 'I could feel the spiritual essence of the magnificent forest as created by God, welcome the mortal remains which would feed the forest, bringing forth orchids and other tropical flowers as well as fruits to feed God's creatures both great and small,' expounded Russell. 'I knew then that this time honored and ancient method of natural burial is what God intended.'

"The American 'death industry' consumes both money and the earth's resources. Natural burials cost little and enrich the earth. Embalming is not allowed as the chemicals are toxic to the environment, thus burial must take place within 24 hours of death or the bodies must be properly refrigerated in accordance with statute. Although simple pine coffins may be utilized, **shrouds are preferred**, which may be as simple as a favorite bio-degradable blanket or quilt. Cremated remains may be sprinkled or buried although the process of cremation wastes energy and creates air pollution and thus is discouraged. Graveside services may be conducted by family and friends or by a pastor, rabbi, imam, priest or other spiritual leader. Each family that acquires a plot will be encouraged to erect a historical marker outlining a brief history of the family along the forest pathways leading to the various plots. Individual graves may be marked with simple monuments and families are encouraged to use their plots for the burial of family pets as well. A bench may be placed on each plot to serve as a place for spiritual enlightenment, meditation or prayer. Large pets such as horses, tigers or elephants must undergo a 'sky burial' cleansing process at the vulture sanctuary on the grounds of the nearby Holy Trinity Wilderness Cathedral before their bones may be buried. Memorial services may be conducted at the adjacent Chapel of the Nativity, or at the gravesite. Graves must be dug with hand tools and must be a minimum of 24" deep to comply with Texas State Law. It is recommended that family members and friends perform the task of digging the grave and covering the bodies as part of the ritual.

"As the Universal Ethician Church is open to all faiths, it is possible to be consecrated as an Ethician, even after death, upon testimony by one or two witnesses that the deceased lived by the 'golden rule', loved and cared for Creation, and had a profound spiritual persona. Family burial plots may be assigned upon application based upon factors such as formal membership in the Ethician Church, life works to protect and preserve God's Creation, or other factors. Although there is no charge for the assignment of a family cemetery plot, a donation to the Church, based upon ability to pay and the anticipated savings of avoiding the tremendous costs of modern funerals, is expected. Donations above the actual appraised value of the plot are tax-deductible. 100% of the proceeds will be utilized to protect and preserve God's Creation as the Church has no paid clergy or staff.

"The **wilderness burial park** was donated through the generosity of Methodist Ethicians, Kenneth L. and Marjorie H. Russell. Dr. and Mrs. Russell have in addition donated several conservation easements to Natural Area Preservation Association, a Texas Land Trust, protecting over 500 acres along the shores of Lake Livingston in San Jacinto County. For information on how to be assigned a natural burial plot for your family send an e-mail to ghr@cyberclone.net

"George H. Russell, an outspoken opponent of the death penalty, is a resident

of Huntsville, Texas, known worldwide as 'The City of Death'. He is founder of The Patriot Network, and author of its 35+ web sites located at www.patriotnetwork.org, as well as founder of The Universal Ethician Church, an interfaith ministry with a worldwide following via the church's 275+ web sites located at www.salvationnetwork.org. Russell, 58, is an educational video producer, environmental activist, historic preservation specialist, photographer, art and antique collector, philanthropist, American patriot and ethician."

ETHICIAN NEWS NETWORK, 1401 19th Street Huntsville, TX 77340 (tel 936-295-5767; e: ghr@cyberclone.net www.salvationnetwork.org).

Two websites promoting natural burial in the USA

Dafydd

The following is summarised from an e-mail to the Natural Death Centre.

1. <http://woodlandburial.htmlplanet.com> is a newly formed society directed at furthering woodland burials in the US.
2. <http://immarama.faithweb.com> is directed at neo-Pagans, but applicable to all religious (and non-religious) faiths - covering natural burials, preparation of the body, shrouding, preparation of gravesite, concerns, etc.

"Memorial Reefs" create new marine habitats

Eternal Reefs An Eternal Reefs Memorial Reef is an artificial reef ball made of caste concrete that can include the cremated remains of a loved one. These Memorial Reefs are used to create new marine habitats for fish and other forms of sea life. The cremated remains are mixed into the concrete as the reef unit is being cast. The Memorial Reef is then placed where it is most ecologically needed. www.eternalreefs.com

Advance Directives & Ageing

The following is summarised from an article in The Seattle Times by Liz Taylor.

Advance Directives ("living wills") are essential to protect your interests should you become severely ill or injured and not able to speak for yourself about your wishes. But, where should you keep them? Group Health invites its members to lodge copies of the forms with them, giving each registered person a suitable identification card for his or her wallet. For information about Group Health's registration system contact its Resource Line at 206-326-2800 or 800-992-2279.

Those who don't belong to Group Health can obtain similar documents by calling Senior Rights Assistance in Seattle (888-435-3377).

Liz Taylor, a specialist on ageing and long-term care, counsels individuals and teaches workshops on how to plan for one's ageing - and ageing parents (growingolder@seattletimes.com).

Natural Death Centre USA Funeral Resources Page

*Adapted extracts from an article in the San Francisco Chronicle (January 13th 1997). Monitored for the Natural Death Centre UK by the **Natural Death Care Project** in Sebastopol, California.*

Resources for Funeral Arrangements Private groups

- **Affordable Funerals:** **Affordable Funeral and Cremation Services** based in Omro and run by Steve & Denise Kwiatkowski, claims to be able to halve the cost of a \$4,000 traditional funeral with in-home consultations and same-day visitations in churches or other non-funeral home sites. 'Our service charge is \$1,995 where many traditional funeral homes are \$3,000 and upwards for the same services,' Kwiatkowski says. 'What we're doing is offering options to people.'
- **American Association of Retired Persons:** For free publications titled "Funerals and Burials: Goods and Services" #D13496, and "Prepaying Your Funeral?" #D13188, write to AARP Fulfillment, EEO 1104, 601 E St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20049.
- **Bay Area Funeral Society :** For information about joining a memorial society in San Francisco, Marin, Alameda or Contra Costa counties call (510) 841 6653 or write to P.O. Box 264, Berkeley 94701.
- **California Funeral Directors Association:** For information about the California Master Trust call (800) 255-CFDA.
- **Casket Outlet:** <http://www.cardboardcasket.com> For information about discount caskets call (510) 893 6550 in Oakland, (415) 552 8766 in San Francisco or (408) 261 8856 in San Jose. **Consumer Casket USA** (800) 611 8778 and Direct Casket (800) 732 2753, will ship to the mortuary within 24 hours.
- **Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards:** Provides information on laws in various states, and accepts consumer complaints about funeral providers. Call (801) 392 7771 or write to the conference at 2404 Washington Blvd., Suite 1000, Ogden, Utah 84401.
- **Cremation Association of America:** For free pamphlets on cremation send a self-addressed, stamped business-sized envelope with 79 cents postage to the association at 401 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.
- **Father Wasielewski:** Will send information on fair prices. He says that in most cities you should be able to find a complete funeral, with metal casket, for under \$2,200; cremation for under \$550. Call (602) 253 6814 or visit the web site at www.xroads.com/funerals
- **Final Passages:** P O Box 1721, Sebastopol, CA 95473 (tel [001] 707-824-0268). "Final Passages is dedicated to a compassionate and dignified alternative to current funeral practices". Website: <http://www.finalpassages.org>
- **Funeral and Memorial Society of Palo Alto:** For information about

memorial societies in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties call (415) 321 2109 or write to P.O. Box 60448, Palo Alto 94306.

- **Funeral Service Consumer Assistance Program:** For help with resolving disagreements with your funeral director or a funeral home call (800) 662-7666.
- **Ghia Services:** For consumer information about funerals and cremations, and discount caskets and urns, call Ghia at (415) 282 2832.
- **International Order of the Golden Rule:** For information about independent funeral homes call (217) 793 3322, or write to the order at P.O. Box 3586 Springfield, Ill. 62708.
- **National Funeral Directors Association:** Call (800) 228 4332 or visit www.nfda.org. To read the NFDA Professional **Code of Conduct**, click [here](#).
- **The Natural Funeral Company** (e-mail: info@naturalfunerals.com): Sells environmental funeral products - including Ecoweave caskets and the Ecopod - in the USA and Canada.
- **Natural Transitions:** A new non-profit in Boulder, Colorado, promoting home-based death care including home funerals, wakes, and vigil: <http://www.naturaltransitions.org> (Karen van Vuuren, Executive Director).
- **Neptune Society of San Francisco:** For information about cremation and scattering of remains at sea call (800)445 3551.
- **Neptune Society of San Jose:** For information about cremation and scattering of ashes at sea call (800) 225 1593.
- **Redwood Funeral Society:** For information about memorial societies elsewhere in Northern California call (707) 795 7104, or write to P.O. 7501, Cotati 94931.
- **Funeral Help Program:** For information on where to locate funeral wares, and advice on the national average price of most models, call (800) 418 0471.

Government Agencies

- **California Department of Consumer Affairs:** To file a complaint about a funeral director or cemetery, or to get information about a funeral director's license, call the Consumer Information Center at (800) 952 5210.
- **Federal Trade Commission:** To file a complaint against a funeral director write to the FTC at Correspondence Branch, FTC, Washington, D.C. 20580. For a free copy of the FTC guide "Caskets and Burials" write to Public Reference, FTC, Washington, D.C. 20580. Check the Web site at www.ftc.gov

Websites

- **AARP Grief and Loss Centre:** articles, discussion boards, resources, etc.
- **Cardboard Coffins from only \$32 :** www.world-trader.com "Two inexpensive yet very robust cardboard coffins. Stress tested to 236lbs and assembled in 5 minutes. The more embellished version costs \$41" (Dovid Witkowski).
- **Cardboard Caskets from only \$49.95:** www.cardboardcasket.com
- **Carpenter Casket Plans:** For information about building your own casket, check the site at www.volcano.net/~johnstone/caskhome.html
- **www.casketxpress.com / www.caskets-to-go.com / www.funeraldepot.com:** discount caskets online.
- **Coping with Cremation:** For information about cardboard caskets check the site at www.cremationinfo.com
- **The Dougy Center:** For grieving children and families. "Through our National Center we also provide support and training nationally and internationally to individuals and organizations seeking to assist children in grief."
- **Funeral Help Page:** For information about funeral planning check the site at <http://dragonet.com/funeral/>
- **Funeral rip-offs.** For information on alleged practices see [Funeral Rip-Offs](#)
- **Funeral arrangements.** For information on alleged abuses and an FAQ, see www.casketstores.org
- **Funeral Consumers Alliance.** Vermont-based nonprofit with 150 affiliates. "Dedicated to protecting a consumer's right to choose a meaningful, dignified, affordable funeral." Provides educational materials on funeral choices, including how to care for your own dead; monitors the funeral industry trends and practices and exposes abuses; serves as a consumer advocate for reforms on the national level and lends support for changes where needed on the state or local level; serves as a credible source of information for media covering issues on dying and death; seeks to create partnerships of interest with national organizations sharing similar concerns; provides leadership support for local memorial and funeral planning societies; refers individual inquiries to appropriate societies and agencies supplying local services; provides a conduit for exchanging information between societies. Its website includes a funeral IQ test for consumers and an overview of the funeral industry entitled "Understanding the Tricks of the Funeral Trade: Self-Defense for Consumers." Email: info@funerals.org; website: www.funerals.org
- **Guide to death-related websites:** See this massive on-line aid at [Death, Dying and Grief Resources](#).
- **Internet Cremation Society:** For information about cremation check the site at www.cremation.org
- **In the Light Urns:** "Affordable and unusual cremation keepsakes and urns" www.inthelighturns.com

- **Mount Caskets:** "Funeral Home Caskets At Wholesale Prices"
www.mountcaskets.com
- **National Fraud Information Center:** For information about funeral fraud check the site at www.fraud.org or call (800) 876 7060.
- **The Natural Funeral Company** (e-mail: info@naturalfunerals.com): Sells environmental funeral products - including Ecoweave caskets and the Ecopod - in the USA and Canada.
- **www.online-funeral.com:** videos of funeral services, message boards, etc.
- **Ultimate Request:** For information about independent funeral consultants check the site at www.infomrt.com/Ultimate

Books

- **"Caring For Your Own Dead,"** by Lisa Carlson published by Upper Access Publishers, PO Box 457, Hinesburg, Vermont 05461, tel 802 482 2988, fax 802 482 3125). \$12.95.
- **"The Affordable Funeral: Going In Style, Not In Debt,"** by Dr R E Markin. F Hooker Press (Virginia Beach, Virginia, tel 757 427 0220). \$24.95.
- **"The Funeral Arrangement Choice Guide: Helping You Cope With A Loved One's Death"** by D. Allen Polen Jr. Vine Books. (Ann Arbor, Michigan). \$10.99.
- **"The High Cost Of Dying: A Guide To Funeral Planning,"** by Gregory W. Young. Prometheus Books. (Amherst, New York). \$14.95.
- **"Last Wishes: A Handbook Guide To Your Survivors, "** by Michael D Knox and Lucinda Page Knox. Ulysses Press(Berkeley). \$14.95.
- **"What To Do When A Loved One Dies: A Practical and Compassionate Guide to Dealing with Death on Life's Terms,"** by Eva Shaw. Allwon (Irvine). \$18.95.

Consumer Tips

- Be an informed consumer. Don't be reluctant to ask questions.
- Funeral directors offer a variety of options to meet your financial needs and wishes. Families should discuss all options before making arrangements.
- Choose a funeral director who is licensed and has a good reputation in the community.
- Avoid making a decision while under emotional stress by organizing details with your funeral director ahead of time.

- Pre-planning doesn't necessarily mean prepaying.
- The funeral provider must give you pricing information over the telephone.
- If you inquire in person about funeral arrangements, the funeral provider must give you a price list that discloses legal rights and requirements regarding funeral arrangements.
- Except in certain cases, embalming is not required by law.
- Funeral providers must disclose in writing if they charge a fee for paying for items in advance such as flowers, obituary notices, pall-bearers, and clergy honoraria. Some charge you their cost, others add a service fee.
- Cremations do not require a casket. Inexpensive containers made of pressboard, cardboard or canvas can be used.
- Funeral providers may not refuse, or charge a fee, to handle a casket you bought elsewhere.
- Funeral providers must give you an itemized statement of the total cost of the funeral goods and services you select before the funeral.

Sources: National Funeral Directors Association; Federal Trade Commission

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