

AMISH WAYS - NOT ALWAYS PLAIN & SIMPLE

Natural Transitions

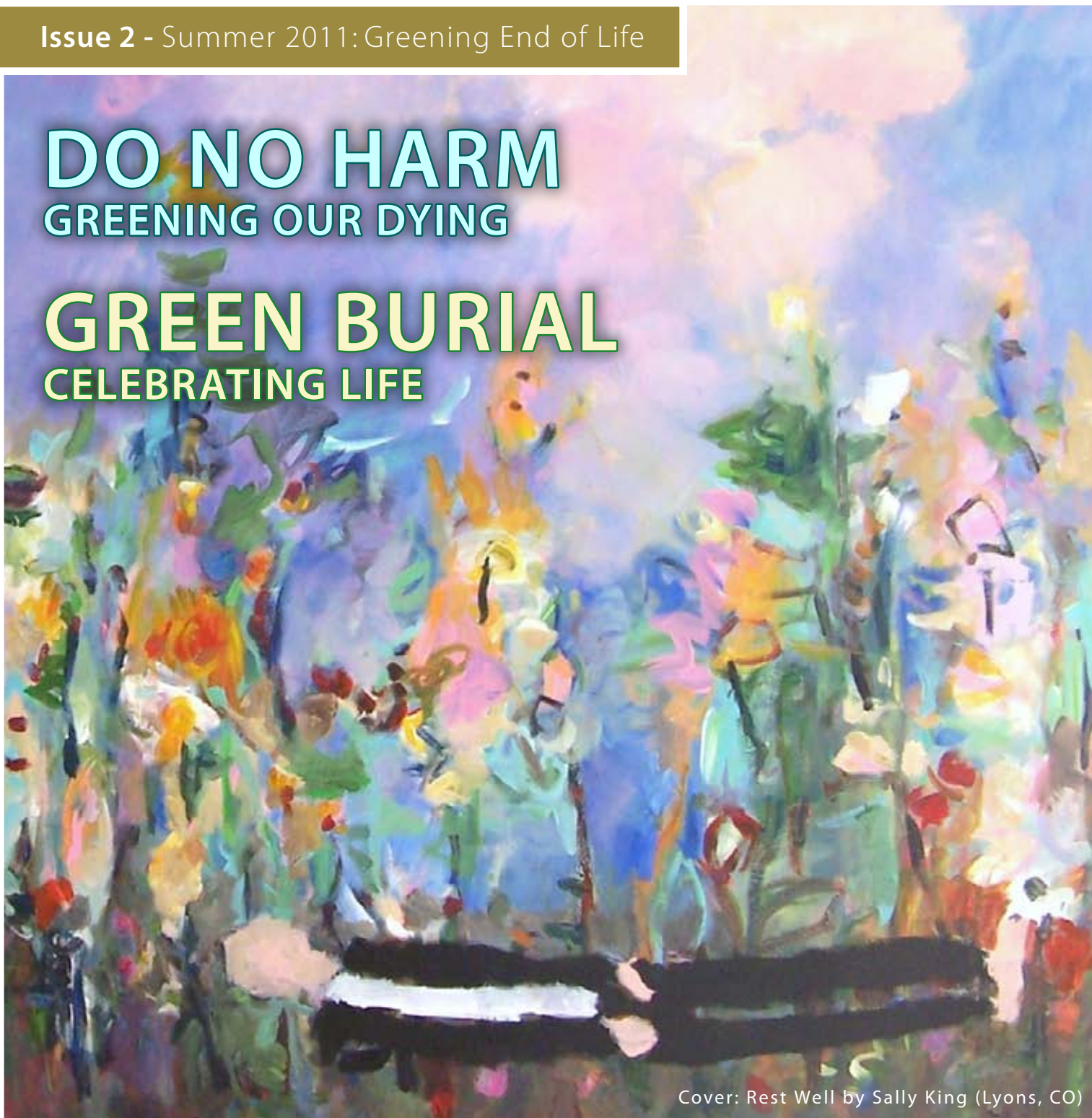
Sharing holistic approaches to end of life

Magazine

Issue 2 - Summer 2011: Greening End of Life

DO NO HARM
GREENING OUR DYING

GREEN BURIAL
CELEBRATING LIFE



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Jerrigrace Lyons, Founding Director of Final Passages, is a trailblazer in the new field of "home funeral guidance". Since 1995, she has trained hundreds of students in a sacred approach to conscious dying, natural death care and family-centered funerals. Many of her graduates are now leaders in the home funeral movement. Jerrigrace also serves on the board of the National Home Funeral Alliance, and is featured in the acclaimed PBS documentary "A Family Undertaking".

Final Passages is a non-profit educational 501c3 dedicated to compassionate choices in conscious dying, natural death care, family-directed home funerals and green burial. Our work has appeared in major newspapers, television and in film. www.finalpassages.org

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The greening of death is part of my personal spirituality. My instructions for my own disposition are given in this poem.

By Terra Rafael

When Death is now-
My body bereft of the Living Me is
Still sacred, though scarred-
Still divine, though diminished-
Still me, though mortal-

DO NOT give my body to a stranger, hired.
Don't zip me up in body bag, like leftovers,
soon to be forgotten in the back of the refrigerator.
No draining of my blood.
No filling my vessels with formaldehyde.
No trochanters piercing and sucking out my once-vital organs.

Some who love me PLEASE
Gently wash me, anointing me with sandalwood & rose.
Dress me in my favorite clothes.
Spritz everyone with rose water.

Surround me with my familiar objects, still telling my story.
Sweeten my death bed with rose petals, homegrown if possible.
Say goodbye, as much as you each need to.
Laugh & cry over this flesh that laughed and cried with you so many times.

And then, let this Beloved Corpse rest -
nestled in Mother Earth's womb-
wrapped in the shroud I've already embellished-
enfolded by Her, shovel-full by shovel-full-
this clod returning to clod.

Dance and sing on my grave, but leave soft entrance
For the native rose bush planted there--
My monument will be
flowers in the summer
rosehips & thorns in the winter.

May this issue lead you to more clarity on your own final wishes.

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Our Vision

- Acceptance of death, loss and grief as a natural part of life

Our Mission

- To provide a forum for end-of-life care-givers and educators

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Natural Transitions' Mission

- Conscious, holistic education and support for dying, death and after-death care - including green, home funerals

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Natural Transitions Magazine has taken off and we're thrilled at its reception. Joanna Macy, eco-philosopher, activist, and Buddhist scholar, generously donated her time to support us by speaking at the magazine's launch. Her *Discourse on Death* presentation will soon be available on YouTube.

This April, NT offered the first level one workshop in our new, three-level **Certificate Program in End-of-life Transition Guidance**. One of our participants, Edward Leonard, traveled from Berryville, Virginia to learn more about end of life for his work marketing a natural burial ground for a monastery. Here's what Edward had to say:

"I signed up for Natural Transitions training with only a vague notion about the social phenomenon of reclaiming control and dignity over the dying process and low-environmental-impact funerals. The Natural Transitions' class was professionally executed and provided me with a framework that I am now using as I design and implement a 150-acre natural cemetery. The course introduced me to concepts that I plan to share with clients who want to manage their own death process, but who may not know what questions to ask."

That sort of feedback moved us to schedule another level-one training for July 29–31, and we're planning a level-two workshop later in 2011.

Our groundbreaking film festival **Life and Death Matters aka LADmatters** takes place September 2–4, in Boulder, Colorado. We had around 200 film submissions and a slew of original scripts for plays on how we journey through life. We'll be staging five mini plays and offering interactive, educational programming involving dancing, singing, and even clowning for joy. For more details, check www.ladmatters.com.

Once again, NT is hosting the **National Home Funeral Alliance Conference** in Boulder, September 22–24. This year's theme is *Peaceful Death: Music, Hospice, and Home Funerals*. Therese Schroeder-Sheker, founder of music thanatology, will be the keynote speaker. Josh Slocum, co-author of *Final Rights: Reclaiming the American Way of Death*, will give the plenary address. Join us in our beautiful Rocky Mountain city before the conference moves elsewhere in 2012.



ALL PHOTOGRAPH BY KRISTINE LAURIA

Amish Ways: Not Always Plain & Simple

By Kristine Lauria

The Amish are born at home and die at home. This is their way.

I began my midwifery apprenticeship in 1989, with Mary, who was serving the Amish in rural central Ohio. I had often heard the Amish referred to as “plain and simple.” But their lives are as complex as the exquisite quilts for which they are so well-known.

Mary and I did rounds on Mondays and Thursdays, driving to each family that needed a prenatal or postpartum visit. Impending births were kept secret from the children, who were not supposed to know why we were there. They were always shooed outside to play when we arrived. Once while peeking out the window, we caught a glimpse of several climbing the bumper of Mary’s Bronco. We overheard one say, “This must be where they hide the babies.”

The Amish are cordial but reserved when first meeting outsiders, or “English.” Even though I was with Mary, they still had to scrutinize and question me. Only after attending births in which I dealt appropriately with complications was I fully accepted, and trusted.

I met Mattie in mid-summer when she was halfway through her second pregnancy. A statuesque, sturdy, German-looking woman with luminous blue eyes and blond hair, she was 24-years-old, only two years younger than I was at the time. When she didn’t feel her baby

moving at 36 weeks of pregnancy, Mary and I confirmed what Mattie already knew: her baby had died. After some discussion, it was decided we would induce labor the next day at Mary’s house. Mattie did not want to wait for labor to start on its own; it could be weeks away.

The castor oil and herbs we used to induce labor worked quickly and a normal labor pattern was established by noon the following day. Around suppertime, Mattie was ready to push. It was difficult, I could tell. She later told me the baby did not help. No, it wouldn’t, I thought. There was no life force there. At 7 pm, Mattie delivered a girl, slack and still, into my hands. I cut the cord; there was no reason to allow it to pulsate. Reverently, I wrapped the baby in a blanket, and handed the bundle to her mother. The room was quiet as snowfall, unlike any other birth I had attended.

There was to be only a small, family-attended burial on the third day, which was customary. The little girl would not be named; she would be buried in the cemetery across the road from the family’s farm, in an unmarked grave. I was disappointed that I wasn’t invited to attend, and sad that the little girl’s brief life seemed to mean so little. But, having seen parental grief on several subsequent occasions, I have come to understand it better. I believe the grief is so private that parents do not want anyone else to bear witness to their agony. It is so profound and tender, no onlooker could ever begin to understand.

“...the grief is so private that parents do not want anyone else to bear witness to their agony.”

Aside from a few postpartum visits, I would not see Mattie again until she became pregnant with another baby. But at six weeks postpartum, she hemorrhaged so badly that Jacob, her husband, called an ambulance. Mary and I went to see Mattie as soon as she was home from the hospital. We found out her hemorrhage was due to *choriocarcinoma*, a rare cancer that sometimes develops after a pregnancy. It was growing rapidly, but was curable with chemotherapy and radiation. Not only could Mattie survive this, but she could go on to have more babies. I read all I could on the subject to help Mattie be better informed.

The autumn leaves were falling when I started driving Mattie and her mother back and forth to the oncologist at University Hospital in Columbus, where she could have blood drawn and start her treatments. The oncologist was kind and gentle. I probed him with questions and he answered every one, so I could help the family understand what was happening. But after the first chemotherapy treatment, Mattie was sick and vomiting. Her hair fell out in clumps. She refused further treatment and would not go back to the hospital. She asked me to inform the oncologist.

It was later decided that I would be allowed to do a weekly blood draw on Mattie to check her HCG level. Measuring this hormone was the only way to know if the cancer was growing. The oncologist also provided IV bags of chemotherapeutic drugs, which Mattie agreed I could administer to her at home. Without the localized radiation, however, he was doubtful that chemotherapy would help. But he was willing to do anything to keep Mattie from completely backing out of treatment.

All winter I made my weekly pilgrimages to Mattie's house. I would start her IV, hook up the bag, and Mattie and I would have tea and talk while the drugs dripped slowly into her veins. The treatment was not working. Lab tests revealed her HCG level climbing at an alarming rate. Mattie and her family decided on a hysterectomy, since the cancer originated in her uterus. The cancer had already spread to other parts of her body, however, so a hysterectomy would not help. But no amount of explanation would persuade them to let go of this idea.

The oncologist agreed to the surgery. He bartered two beautiful quilts for his fee; the family would only have to pay the hospital bill. He also agreed to return Mattie's uterus after it had been examined by pathology. The Amish do not leave body parts behind; they believe in a proper burial for all parts of the person. So, after the surgery, I retrieved the uterus from pathology and gave it back to Mattie.

The surgery did not help, and the family did not understand. They asked me to deliver a note to the oncologist. He greeted me in his office and I sat across from him as he read it. Tears welled in his eyes, and I didn't need anymore

than that to know what was written. This would be the last time I saw him. I thanked him for all he had done for Mattie, and for all he had tried to do.

I still visited Mattie every week. We were friends now. One clear and bright day in June I arrived while Mattie was weeding in her vegetable garden, her toddler at her side. Amish gardens are a thing of beauty because they're framed with rows of marigolds to keep the bugs away. It is clear they take much pride in them, even though pride is not a quality the Amish embrace. Mattie looked thin and frail. Her breathing was labored. By this time I had read enough to be an expert on this cancer, and I knew it had spread to her lungs. My heart sank. Until then I had held out hope for a miracle; who was I to doubt their faith? But this was the moment I knew for certain she was going to die.

“Until then I had held out hope for a miracle; who was I to doubt their faith?”

The months passed and Mattie got sicker. I visited her every time I did my rounds in her community. By December, snow was falling and Mattie was bedridden; her belly was filled

with so much fluid that she appeared to be in the ninth month of pregnancy. I said my final goodbye to her that day, because I knew I would not see her alive again. The call came a day later. Mattie had passed and the funeral would be in three days. I was invited to attend.

In the three days following an Amish death, the body is washed, and white clothes are prepared. For a woman, this is usually the shawl and bonnet she wore at her wedding. The body is never left unattended. A pine coffin is made by carpenters in the community. It is simple and unadorned, with no lining or padding inside. It takes the full three days to dig the grave, a job performed by men in the community. The task would be especially difficult for Mattie, because the ground was frozen. The women start baking and cooking for the lavish meal served after the funeral service.

On the third day, I drove to Mattie's parents' house. A sea of black buggies covered the huge yard, along with a conspicuous row of passenger vans hired by the Amish that had come from neighboring states. My red Mazda looked out of place. As I walked past the group of van drivers, they stopped their conversation, eyed me curiously, and nodded politely in unison. I heard one of them whisper "Mennonite." It was beyond their comprehension that an "English" would be at an Amish funeral; indeed, it was almost unheard of.

As I reached the house, an Amish woman came out to greet me. She had clearly been assigned to watch for my arrival. It would have been a huge *faux pas* had I gone into the house where the men were gathered. During community events men and women are separate. The women waited in another building.

Once we were called to enter the house, I followed the lead of the Amish women. There were rows and rows

of benches; everything else had been moved out of the room. We all sat sandwiched together on the benches designated for women, which were across from the men who had entered the house from a different door. The casket was in the center of the room.

“I had plenty of time to ponder what was, to me, the senseless loss of my friend.”

to other buildings, and, carrying copious amounts of food, went back into the house. When we were ushered back in, rows of tables and benches had been set up and food laid out. The women with whom I sat were kind and friendly towards me – everyone seemed to know who I was. After eating, we quickly moved

The preacher began the service. Not only was it three hours long, but was also in German. I had plenty of time to ponder what was, to me, the senseless loss of my friend. I didn't know whether the decisions about Mattie's health care were her own, or were made by her parents and the elders of the church. At the end of the service there was a pause, then some words that were repeated in English, just for me: Mattie's full name and the dates of her birth and death.

on so the table could be cleared for the next group to come in and eat. There were over 300 people. The whole event was orchestrated with expert precision and speed, although I never felt rushed. I marveled at this efficiency, just as I did for almost everything I witnessed among the Amish.

We all filed past the casket on our way out. Mattie was dressed in white, ready to be buried next to her baby daughter. The casket was carried out by four men and put in a black buggy, which would take her to the cemetery. Another brief service would be conducted there for the immediate family.

My experiences with the Amish forever altered my perceptions on death and end-of-life issues and choices. Although I did not understand the choices Mattie and her family made, I came to respect and honor them. And, after many years, I have come to realize that choices surrounding death, like birth, aren't always so plain and simple.

As soon as everyone had filed out, the women hurried

Kristine Lauria currently lives with her son and practices midwifery in Nederland, Colorado.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY Karen van Vuuren



Do No Harm: Greening Our Dying

By Karen van Vuuren

Kai Abelkis, Sustainability Coordinator, Boulder Community Hospital, Boulder, Colorado.

Bart Windrum, author of *Notes from the Waiting Room*, doesn't mince his words. "The best way to avoid a hospital death is not to go there." It's that simple. The same story applies to those who want to "green" their end of life by using fewer resources, minimizing their carbon footprint, and embracing natural, non-toxic treatments with little or no environmental impact. If these are your goals, stay out of the intensive care unit. When you're on institutional turf, medical professionals will employ all the artillery they have to win the battle against disease and defeat death.

This is why a living will, expressing your wishes about your end-of-life care, is vitally important, if you or your family want any control over the circumstances surrounding your death.

Seven out of ten Americans say they would prefer to die at home, yet only about a quarter get to experience a home death. When it comes to spending on the terminally ill, healthcare costs spike as the end of life nears. Nearly a third of Medicare money is spent on treating patients with chronic illness during their last two years of life. Americans enter the hospital system for acute care and access expensive technology and drugs to stave off the inevitable.

"...a living will, expressing your wishes about your end-of-life care, is vitally important..."

In the US, "embracing death" is synonymous with "giving up." We also believe that American prowess in scientific research and development will yield continuous treatment breakthroughs. We cling to the hope of immortality, however false it may be.

Almost 50 percent of Americans die in a hospital. Patients land in a system that consumes huge amounts of energy. Kai Abelkis, sustainability coordinator for Boulder Community Hospital (BCH) in Boulder, Colorado, speaks internationally on the ecological impact of the medical-industrial complex. "The healthcare industry is the second largest user of cheap, extracted fuels. We operate 24/7. We use a lot of electricity, the majority of it from coal. MRIs and CAT scans use a lot of energy. We use a lot of petroleum, whether in transportation, or in products like IV bags," he said.

Abelkis is a new breed of hospital employee, hired to help medical facilities "green up their act" and save money. In 1995, BCH hired Abelkis part-time to continue a fledgling recycling initiative begun by two eco-conscious nurses. They had passed the baton to a work-study intern from Colorado State University, who handed it over to Abelkis.



“...addressing the dangers of environmental pollution from waste pharmaceuticals...”

“After a couple of years, I started to make the hospital aware that this whole issue is more than just recycling,” Abelkis said. He wrote a proposal to create a full-time position as sustainability coordinator, to identify ways to reduce, reuse, and continue recycling.

The proposal was accepted, and Abelkis began to implement programs for waste reduction, choosing greener products, as well as reducing water usage. The energy efficiency of the hospital building itself came under his scrutiny. Abelkis also considered landscaping, transportation policies and practices, and conducted an environmental evaluation of all areas of BCH’s operations.

BCH was the first hospital in the country to employ a full-time sustainability coordinator according to Abelkis. Now a growing number of hospitals have followed suit, including institutions in Cleveland, San Francisco, Detroit, and New York.

Abelkis also emphasized the importance of creating a culture of sustainable practices in the workplace. “I have 2,400 people on my green team. It’s the whole hospital, but the basis of our efforts is individual responsibility. We still don’t have a policy that says, ‘You *must* recycle!’” Abelkis’s proudest claims include reducing overall waste by 48 percent since 1999, and mentoring other hospitals around the world in sustainability practices.

Not so long ago, most American hospitals had smoke stacks belching incinerated waste into the air, releasing dioxin, a potent carcinogen. “The beginning of this sustainability movement was really to shut down incinerators, as we used to burn a lot of things. A negative byproduct is that we have shipped some of

that burning off our shore to other shores. But we were successful in shutting down virtually every incinerator in the country,” Abelkis said. The website for Healthcare Without Harm (HWH), an international non-profit organization devoted to minimizing the ecological impact of modern healthcare, provides educational articles about safer and cleaner alternatives to incineration, and ways to deal with toxic chemotherapy waste.

Pharmaceuticals in the water supply and aquatic systems have concerned environmentalists for some time. Caregivers were once advised to flush old or unused pills down the toilet. This practice turned some of our water sources into chemical soups for wildlife and plants. An article on the HWH website says we still don’t know how pharmaceuticals in our water may affect us over time. What we *do* know is that there have been changes in the breeding patterns of fish, and that is enough cause for concern.

The HWH website makes sound recommendations for addressing the dangers of environmental pollution from waste pharmaceuticals. Most of us have no idea that we do not always fully metabolize the drugs we take, and the excess becomes part of our bodily waste. The HWH urges medical practitioners to avoid over-prescribing, and to select medications that have the least environmental impact. Another of their guidelines is that medical providers should offer frequent “take back” opportunities, to allow for the proper disposal of superfluous medications. The organization also calls for the development of “green drugs,” which quickly biodegrade into harmless compounds.

Abelkis of BCH asserts that his hospital only gives patients the drugs they need. “We are heavily regulated. If they only need half a pill, we only give them half a pill. And there’s a cost involved. What we don’t use, we dispose of. We have someone on staff whose responsibility that is. Whatever medication we don’t use or sell goes back to a third party, and then it goes



back to the distributor or the manufacturer. In this hospital, we have sponsored a lot of 'take-back days,' in which the public comes on a specific day and time to bring their stuff, and then we get rid of it through the city or county or the police."

It is ironic that our nation's centers of healing are also repositories for toxic materials. While there are regulations for dealing with pharmaceuticals and certain other wastes, the HWH folks argue that other toxins are in daily use, but are hardly regulated at all. For example, just walking into a hospital can trigger an asthma attack or induce sickness in those who are chemically sensitive. The worst culprits are cleaners, disinfectants, and fragrance chemicals. Medical devices containing mercury, and pesticides in the landscaping, are also potential hazards. Flame-retardant chemicals used in the manufacture of intravenous pumps, hospital beds, privacy curtains, and waiting room chairs are as well, and these chemicals can transfer to the skin on contact.

The polyvinyl chloride—also referred to as PVC or vinyl—used in medical products is another concern. PVC is most commonly used in IV bags and tubing, and is also found in examination gloves, plastic food wrap, and office furniture and supplies. Chemicals such as mercury, dioxin, and vinyl chloride monomer are released during the manufacture of PVC, and the incineration of PVC during the disposal process causes the release of dioxin, lead, and other toxins. According to Abelkis, BCH has switched to non-PVC bags. DEHP, used to make PVC softer, can leach from medical devices. DEHP is on HWH's toxic materials list because it is associated with reproductive birth defects.

Abelkis believes that American hospitals are becoming more environmentally conscious and sustainable, though he adds, "it's a journey." He encourages people to write to the president of their local hospital to ask what is being done to reduce the facility's carbon

"...creating a culture of sustainable practice..."

footprint. "Their moral obligation is to the community and the health of the community. If their operation is contributing to people getting sick, then they're not adhering to their mission statement."

Given the choice, many of us would not want to die leaving a legacy of pollution. Most of us don't even think about the environmental cost of healthcare. Educating the medical profession, especially medical researchers and medical funders, to focus on the environmental impact of care, is a gargantuan task. We, as healthcare consumers, must also learn more about the treatment we receive. Choosing preventive healthcare or wellness care will keep us hospital-free for longer. When we need care, we can consider holistic, environmentally conscious options, too.

In the lesser-industrialized world there are exemplary clinics, such as the Sambhavna Eco-clinic, in Bhopal, India, created to treat the victims of the 1984 Union Carbide toxic gas release. This green-built facility provides the best of Western medicine as well as traditional Indian medicine. It even has its own herb garden where patients cultivate the healing plants that are used to treat their ailments.

In the end, creating our advance directives to clearly communicate our wishes will let others know what we want at the end of life; hopefully, this will include avoiding the resource-intensive ICU. Choosing comfort-care when a cure is no longer possible, and signing up for home-based hospice services, are our best guarantees to "green" our death.

Karen van Vuuren is executive director of Natural Transitions, on the editorial board of Natural Transitions Magazine, and is co-director of the Life and Death Matters Film Festival. Van Vuuren also makes documentary films that focus on end-of-life issues.

Green Burial: Celebrating Life

By Donna Larsen



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY Donna Larsen

Larsen family time at Steelmantown Cemetery, New Jersey.

My daughter skips down the woodland trail chasing a butterfly. My son runs in the open grassland making train noises. I wander among the natural cedar bogs, enjoying how soft and comforting the ground feels beneath my feet, soaking in the dappled light that finds its way between the massive cedar and pine trees. We're at the Steelman Town Cemetery open house in New Jersey, on a nice family outing.

When it's time to leave, my daughter asks for ten more minutes and heads back down the trail with my husband to photograph a purple mushroom. I have to laugh. Most young people would not plead for more time in a cemetery. Steelman Town, the first Green Burial Council (GBC) certified cemetery in New Jersey, has abundant space for the living. This historic site, just outside Cape May, dates back to the early 1700s. It began as a green burial ground, before anyone had coined the term "green burial."

Steelman Town's owner, Edward Bixby, has re-envisioned the cemetery's layout, built a chapel, and added a woodland burial ground, connecting the cemetery to hundreds of acres of the Belleplain State Forest. It differs radically from a conventional burial ground. "There is so much life in this cemetery," Bixby says. He welcomes hikers and dogs, allows Eagle Scouts in to work on projects, and leads nature tours.

Each year, Americans bury tons of metal, cement, and hardwoods, laying their loved-ones to rest in graves

that, on average, receive only two visits. Steelman Town, on this open house day, is a joyous, beautiful place, where we can begin to heal the fear of our mortality, and see ourselves in the cycle of life.

Native American death rituals honored the natural world. The early homesteaders created simple burial grounds on their property. Then, with the Civil War, the funeral industry began to take over what was a family affair. Led by the chemical companies that founded the first mortuary schools, our final rituals emphasized the consumption of funerary products.

In 1998, Billy and Kimberly Campbell opened Ramsey Creek Preserve in South Carolina, the first green burial ground in the US. The modern concept of natural burial grew in popularity in the early 1990s, in the UK. The Campbells expanded the natural burial concept, applying the principle of restoration ecology (protecting and reviving natural habitat) to Ramsey Creek. In 2006, in collaboration with the Upstate Forever Land Trust and the Green Burial Council, Ramsey Creek Preserve became the world's first certified conservation burial ground. Since then, the GBC has certified nearly 30 burial grounds in 20 states, with more lining up to join the network.

"Most young people would not plead for more time in a cemetery."



Steelmantown Cemetery.

“...memorialization in a natural burial ground often involves the use of native trees or rocks.”

in New Jersey and Greensprings Natural Cemetery in Newfield, New York are natural burial grounds.

A “conservation burial ground” is a cemetery that furthers a legitimate conservation effort. A prospective conservation burial ground must undergo biological, geological, and cultural resource surveys and adhere to protocols aimed at preventing ecological degradation through burial. It must also involve an established conservation partner, such as a land trust or park service agency, which can enforce a conservation easement on the property. Besides Ramsey Creek, Foxfield Preserve in Wilmot, Ohio, Prairie Creek Conservation Cemetery in Gainesville, Florida, and Honey Creek Woodland, in Conyers, Georgia are all conservation burial grounds.

When is ‘Green’ really green?

From the movement’s early days, Joe Sehee, executive director of the GBC, was concerned about the “greenwashing” of green burial. He realized how easily green burial could become a gimmick; merely a way to make a profit. That’s why the GBC created standards to protect consumers looking for reassurance that cemeteries offering green options had true ecological goals. The GBC also began certifying funeral homes and products, as part of its mission to encourage environmentally-sustainable deathcare.

I came to appreciate the need for certification during the year I worked for a local funeral chain. I often spoke about home funerals and green burials with one of the head funeral directors. He seemed willing

What Makes a Burial Green?

Green burials avoid three things: embalming with toxic chemicals, cement vaults, and metal or non-biodegradable caskets. Green burial also protects workers’ health, reduces carbon emissions, conserves natural resources, and preserves/restores habitat. Apart from establishing standards for burial products and funeral establishments, the Green Burial Council has created standards for three levels of green burial grounds. A “**hybrid burial ground**” is a conventional cemetery that allows for burial with any biodegradable burial container (including a shroud) anywhere on its grounds or within a specific section designated for this purpose. Riverview Cemetery in Portland, Oregon and Wooster Cemetery in Danbury, Connecticut fall into this category.

According to GBC criteria, a “**natural burial ground**” prohibits the use of markers that are not aesthetically natural, and has in place a legally enforceable instrument to prevent future operators from changing established policies. (Non-profit and municipal cemeteries already have the oversight of boards of directors and council officials to ensure they adhere to their stated mission and purpose.) A natural burial ground requires an ecological review by an independent entity to ensure that burial will never degrade the local eco-system. Along with communal markers, memorialization in a natural burial ground often involves the use of native trees or rocks. Steelman Town





to embrace this new concept until the day I spoke with him about my father's green burial plans. He told me that he didn't mind assisting my family with a green burial, but there was no way he would have "an unembalmed body stinking up his funeral home." I became aware that there were shades of green and deception in the funeral industry.

Another time, Sehee and I were touring a casket manufacturing facility. The plant manager showed us his new green caskets of simple pine, but refused to disclose the ingredients of the glue. Fumes from the paint and the finishes made our eyes and throats burn as we watched hundreds of caskets pass through the different production lines. Few of the workers wore any ventilation support, nevertheless the plant manager assured us that OSHA (the Occupational Safety and Health Administration) did not require that workers wear masks, only that the factory "make them available for their use." We did not certify his caskets.

As a home funeral guide, I support families caring for their own. To make green burial a viable option, all segments of the deathcare community must work together. Once a junior funeral director I knew knocked on my door, stood on my porch, looked sheepish, and said, "I love what you are doing. It makes so much sense. I want to help people have green burials, but I was only trained to embalm. I don't know any other way to care for a body." The GBC offers training to funeral directors, so they can help families with green options and learn natural ways to preserve the body.

"The beauty of the whole experience was allowed to unfold in its own time..."

A green burial

Each of the graves at Steelman Town Cemetery represents a story, a celebration of a life.

I stand before the grave of a woman who died suddenly in Jamaica Queens. Cemetery owner Bixby and funeral director Fertig share her story with me. When this woman died, her daughter was thousands of miles away in California. The daughter had never planned a funeral before, but knew she wanted as much control over it as possible. She found Steelmantown Cemetery on the GBC website, and could tell it adhered to strict ecological principles. She felt it would remain protected as a natural area, which would have meant a lot to her mother. Bixby connected her to GBC-certified funeral director, Bob Fertig. He says of his work, "When people ask me to take care of their loved one, it is a sacred responsibility."

The daughter stayed near Steelman Town for several days, designing the stone marker for the grave and painting beautiful artwork on the casket. She watched Bixby dig the grave and held a vigil in the white clapboard chapel on the cemetery land. He left her in privacy when she first unwrapped the muslin covering her mother's face. She then helped to carry her mother outside, lower her into the grave and cover her with earth. The rest of the day, she and her husband walked around the property, deep in thought, collecting sticks and twigs to decorate the grave. "The beauty of the whole experience was allowed to unfold in its own time," the daughter said.

A Call to Action

If there is no green burial ground near you, speak to your local cemetery and let them know your wishes. Although not required by law, many cemeteries require that you use a vault (an enclosure for the casket in the grave, often made of high-strength concrete or plastic). Ask if they will waive this policy. Let them know you will take your business elsewhere if they won't. Starting an open dialogue with your local cemetery might encourage them to consider greener options in the future.

For more information about green burial, visit www.greenburialcouncil.org.

Donna Larsen is the Communications Director for the Green Burial Council (see sidebar). She is also a founding member of A Natural Undertaking, a Pennsylvania resource center for green burial and home funerals.



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GREEN BURIAL COUNCIL

OUR VISION

We want to see eco-friendly end-of-life rituals become a viable option for honoring the dead, healing the living, and inviting in the divine.

We want to protect the legitimate benefits of environmentally sustainable deathcare such as the reduction of carbon emissions, toxification, and waste.

We want to use burial as a means of acquiring, restoring, and stewarding natural areas.

We want to bring about a new ethic in the field of funeral service; one rooted in transparency, accountability, and ecological responsibility.

We want to make our deaths make a difference.

WHO WE ARE

The Green Burial Council is an independent, tax-exempt, nonprofit organization working to encourage environmentally sustainable deathcare and the use of burial as a new means of protecting natural areas.

Through a mix of evangelism, economic incentives, and solid science, our mostly volunteer organization has become the standard-bearer in this nascent field and the conduit for conservation at an intersection that's never been crossed.

The GBC has been stewarded wby individuals representing the environmental/conservation community, consumer organizations, academia, the deathcare industry, and such organizations and institutions as The Nature Conservancy, The Trust for Public Land, AARP, and the University of Colorado.

Funded by contributions from individuals, certification fees, honoraria, and a grant from the Roy M. Hunt Foundation, we are represented by 300 (and growing) "approved providers" operating throughout North America, with offices in the US and Canada.

WHAT WE DO

The GBC has adopted an integrative, four-pronged approach for making available more ecologically responsible deathcare.

First, we rely on certifiable standards for our approved providers; these standards are evolving as we come to better understand issues ranging from the science behind green burial to legal/compliance matters.

Second, we inform the public about the need for environmentally sustainable funeral/cemetery/cremation options, in part to help create economic incentives for the deathcare industry.

Third, we ensure that funeral directors, cemeterians, and product manufacturers are made aware of our most pressing environmental concerns and can competently serve families seeking greener options.

And finally, we provide new ways of bringing together conservation entities with representatives from the field of funeral service to create burial/scattering programs that aid in the restoration, acquisition and/or stewardship of natural areas.

Excerpt with permission from Green Burial Council, www.greenburialcouncil.org



SUM

Book Review

Sum: Forty Tales from the Afterlives by David Eagleman

By Terra Rafael

I found out about *Sum: Forty Tales from the Afterlives*, when I read a *New Yorker Magazine* profile on the author, David Eagleman, PhD. Eagleman is assistant professor of neuroscience at Baylor College of Medicine, in Houston. Although Eagleman wanted to be a writer when he was young, his parents dissuaded him. Despite his scientific career, however, he's writing plenty: scientific articles, *Sum*, and, in August 2011, a book about the unconscious mind: *Incognito*.

Sum is a series of vignettes illustrating forty possible afterlife scenarios. Eagleman himself doesn't believe in a particular afterlife, but calls himself a possibilian. "I'm just celebrating the vastness of our ignorance," he told *New Yorker* staff writer, Burkhard Bilger. The stories in *Sum* range from shocking to comforting, illuminating life's realities, as well as afterlife

possibilities. The treatment of God is equally diverse. Many depict God with human feelings; some have no God at all. One of my favorites is "Quantum." In this vignette, a friendly angel helps the deceased adjust to an afterlife in which all possibilities exist simultaneously. The mind-bending "Apostasy" intrigues me even though it condemns me to the "down escalator" by twisting the idea of what kind of orthodoxy pleases God.

This book is a refreshing cleanse to the palate, and will spark some new taste possibilities in your after-life beliefs.

Terra Rafael writes, comforts, and plays in Lafayette, Colorado. She is also managing editor for Natural Transitions Magazine.

Greener Than a Standard Burial: Cremation and Alkaline Hydrolysis

By Terra Rafael

Cremation: popularity increases impact of downsides

Across the US, cremation is growing in popularity. In 1999, one in four people in the US chose cremation. In 2009, that number rose to 37 percent, and by 2023 the number of cremations is expected to reach 59 percent.

The cremation process involves placing the body, usually contained in a cardboard or simple wood casket, into a cremation chamber. The chamber—called a retort—is heated to between 1400 and 1600 degrees. Within a few hours at this temperature, only bone fragments remain, which are known as the cremated remains, or *cremains* for short. The bone fragments are crushed to fine particles and usually packaged in a plastic bag and cardboard box for the family. The cremains of an average human body usually weigh from four to eight pounds.

For a fresh look at cremation see cremate-me.net. It is based in the United Kingdom and titled: *An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Cremation*. There's a page on resomation (alkaline hydrolysis) also.

Mortuaries will often suggest the purchase of an urn for the cremains, but this is unnecessary, especially if they will be scattered outdoors. A vase, cookie jar, or pottery of sufficient size will work just as well.

Scattering cremains

The scattering of cremains is legal and won't have a negative impact on the environment, though it's polite to ask before you scatter on private property.

The Funeral Consumers Alliance (FCA) asked a spokesperson from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to explain the laws about scattering ashes at sea. This official told the FCA that anyone in the US can dispose of remains (including ashes) at sea, as long as they take them three miles off shore and report the burial (or scattering) within a month to the closest EPA office.

Burials or scatterings that take place within three miles of shore fall under the Clean Water Act, rather

than under EPA rules. States (and *not* the federal government) enforce the Clean Water Act, but the EPA spokesperson added that he'd never heard of state officials concerning themselves with seashore scatterings, so families who choose the beach for their loved one's cremains are not likely to be prosecuted.

Crematories can recycle metallic medical implants, such as joint replacements, that remain after cremation. Implant Recycling LLC, a Detroit-based metal processing company, advertises such recycling services to environmentally aware crematory owners. Crematories already require the removal of pacemakers, which can explode and damage the cremation chamber.

Ecological downsides of cremation

Cremation involves the burning of fossil fuels, which releases carbon dioxide into our atmosphere. Cremation produces about the same amount of carbon dioxide as driving a midsize car approximately 500 miles. However, a study commissioned by the largest cemetery in southern Australia found that standard burial actually produces more carbon dioxide than cremation. The standard burial produces around 86 pounds of carbon dioxide on the day of the burial, and if you add the carbon dioxide produced through landscape maintenance, burial produces 10 percent more greenhouse gases than cremation. On the other hand, burial at a conservation burial ground leaves a smaller carbon footprint than a typical cremation. Conservation burial uses fewer resources, since the casket or shroud is biodegradable, there is no burial vault, and no conventional resource-intensive landscaping practices are used at the facility.

The most hazardous pollutants released into the air by the cremation process are dioxins and mercury. Dioxins are carcinogenic toxins, and during cremation, they can enter the atmosphere, if the burn temperature isn't within the optimal range. Dioxins are created as products of incomplete combustion in the range of about 400-850 degrees Fahrenheit. Maintaining temperatures above 850 degrees Fahrenheit in a

“The ‘ick’ factor in AH makes it a difficult sell, but the touted environmental benefits could win people over.”

secondary combustion chamber can eliminate dioxin production.

Another pollutant released by cremation is the mercury contained in amalgam tooth fillings. Most crematories do not have “scrubbers” (filtration systems) to remove vaporized mercury as it leaves the smokestack during the burning process. When Fort Collins, CO funeral director, Rick Alnutt, investigated his plan to build a new crematory, the city required him to install a \$500,000 scrubber, or to remove amalgam fillings from cadavers before cremation. Alnutt refused to pay for a filter, claiming it was an expense his competitors had not incurred. He also declined to remove any teeth on moral grounds. He told the city he would rather leave the cremation business than pull teeth from dead people.

A dentist can replace your amalgam fillings while you’re alive, and dispose of the mercury in an ecologically-sound manner. However, there are probably few, if any, dentists willing to remove amalgam fillings from a corpse. Luckily, the use of amalgam fillings is being phased out.

Cremation is a less expensive, as well as more eco-friendly final disposition than conventional burial. Up until now the relative amount of mercury and dioxins released has been minimal compared to other sources, so there has been little regulation. The environmental concerns could be addressed by proper regulation of all facilities, as cremation numbers soar.

Alkaline Hydrolysis (AH) - green or ghoulish?

I first heard of AH at the Fall 2010 National Home Funeral Alliance



An Alkaline Hydrolysis Chamber.

conference. Ed Gazvoda, of Cycled Life, an AH company, and Joe Sehee, director of the Green Burial Council, went head to head on the greenest form of final disposition. At the time I was still adjusting to the idea of AH. Rapidly breaking down the body using moderate heat, water, and alkaline chemicals sounded like a science experiment, not a respectful way to dispose of the body. The equipment used for AH looked industrial (a big metal cylinder), not as natural as my preference for green burial in a conservation burial preserve.

After further investigation, I consider AH an ecologically sound possibility. I’ve learned that cremation is no less industrial. Furthermore, graphic description of decomposition after burial in a conservation cemetery would offend some people. The breakdown of the human body just isn’t pretty, no matter how it’s done.

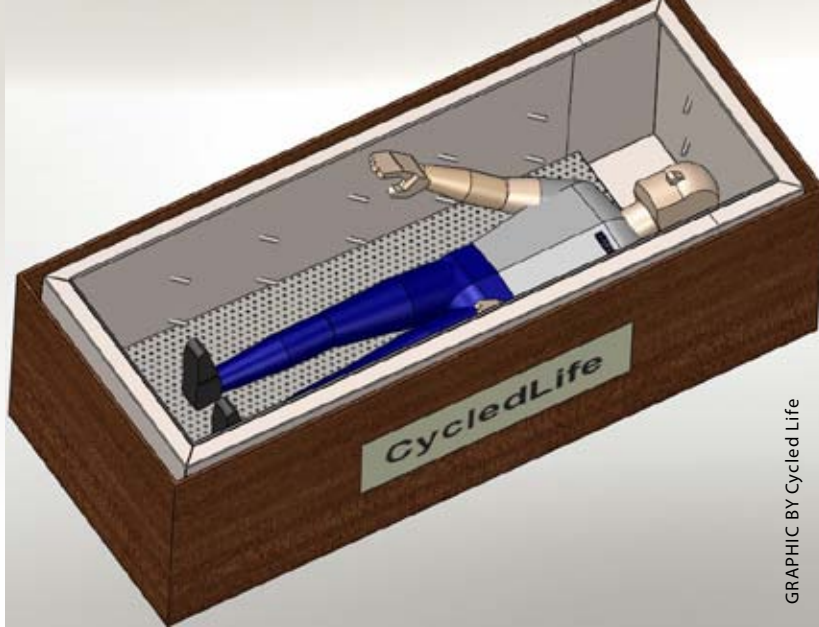
The AH process

In AH, remains are placed in a metal rack in a metal cylinder. Sodium hydroxide and potassium hydroxide are dissolved in water to dissolve the body. The ratio of water to tissue weight used by Cycled Life is 1:1.5. The fluid is heated (Cycled Life brings the temperature up to 200 degrees, which is one-tenth the energy used for cremation), and in some systems, pressure is also used. The process takes several hours and breaks down proteins and tissues into more elemental components. It’s possible to recycle any metal fillings and prostheses that remain. By bubbling carbon dioxide through the coffee-colored liquid effluent, it is possible to bring it to an acceptable alkalinity for disposal in a

municipal sewage system. White, sterilized bone fragments are what remains. They are free of DNA, and can be easily broken into a powder, which can be used like bone meal for plants. More bone fragments remain after AH than after a cremation. Families, can, if they wish, keep these fragments as mementos rather than disposing of them.

Gazvoda has dubbed his latest AH design, the “Coffin Spa,” reflecting its size and shape. For optimal eco-consciousness, Gazvoda prefers the idea of pouring the liquid remains back into the earth, either on the family’s property or onto fields. Sterilized water treatment sludge is often used in this way to add nutrient value. As with the scattering of cremains, it is a way of returning us, in some way, to the earth, and paints a different picture than one of “flushing grandma down the drain.”

Three hundred AH systems exist around the world. Major



A Cycled Life Coffin Spa.

corporations as well as smaller companies, such as Gazvoda's are involved. AH was invented to dispose of radioactive rabbits, and has been used for animal disposition for some time. Only three systems exist for human disposition. The Mayo Clinic and the University of Florida-Gainesville medical program both make use of AH to dispose of bodies and tissues donated for medical and research. Terry Regnier, director of anatomical services at the Mayo Clinic, told AOL News that alkaline hydrolysis has been extremely useful: "There's an environmental benefit to the machine in that the heat sterilizes the remains," Regnier said. He added that he knew of "no pretty way to exit the planet," but he'd use AH for his own parents.

Enter politics

Jeff Edwards of Edwards Mortuary in Columbus, Ohio, owns the third AH system for human disposition. The first funeral director to offer AH to the public, he completed his first AH disposition in January, 2011. The bodies of nineteen people have undergone "aquamation" (Edward's term for AH's water-based process). Then the Ohio State Board of Funeral Directors told him to stop. Aquamation didn't fit neatly into state law and regulations.

When Edwards presented AH to the funeral board, they advised

him to work towards changing the statutes to include AH. He chose not to wait, offering AH as soon as he got approval from the Columbus municipal water and sewage regulators to operate his system. Linda Betzer, consumer representative on the Ohio Funeral Board, said, "It boiled down to the fact that we have no statutory authority to allow this. Our statute, as archaic as the funeral industry itself, sets forth the permitted methods of disposition, and those are burial and cremation." The Ohio funeral board is expected to continue its deliberations on authorizing AH this summer.

Edwards reported that families were "in love" with the AH process. Once they understood the process, he said that they always chose it over cremation, preferring it in all respects. Edwards was charging the same price for AH as cremation.

How "green" is AH compared with cremation?

Amalgam, mercury tooth fillings, remain after the AH process and it's possible to collect these and deal with them as hazardous waste.

There have been some questions regarding the production of the alkali and the fact that some such processes use mercury. Ed McHam, Funeral Consumer Alliance board member,

commented, "While I have no way of knowing what grade of sodium hydroxide is being used . . . my guess is that mercury-contaminated alkali is probably not used, as it is more expensive than other grades and mercury cell alkali plants are being phased out in the US."

Green burial hazards?

Gazvoda bases his arguments against green burial on disease-producing prions and mercury. Prions are proteins "gone bad" that cause diseases such as chronic wasting disease in elk and mad cow disease. These survive after burial, according to Gazvoda. A report, "Public Health Impact of Prion Diseases" from the Center for Disease Control, states that these diseases are extremely rare in humans in North America. They are transmitted through blood, surgical contamination, or eating contaminated meat. It seems misleading to target green burial on this issue, especially since most AH studies are based on sick animal disposition.

When it comes to mercury contamination from burial, NTM found no evidence in World Health Organization or Environmental Protection Agency literature that they considered burial a significant contributor to mercury pollution.

The "ick" factor in AH makes it a difficult sell, but the touted environmental benefits could win people over. Cremation had negative connotations for many when it reappeared as a cost-saving, space-saving option in the industrialized world. If AH makes it onto the menu of disposition choices, states will have to change their laws and regulations to embrace it. If they do, then its fate will lie in the hands of consumers interested in a greener way to go.

Terra Rafael writes, comforts, and plays in Lafayette, Colorado. She is also managing editor for Natural Transitions Magazine.

A Shroud from Walmart

By Olivia Bareham

I was recently called to do a home funeral for Ahmad, a Muslim man who lived with his wife Susan in their beautiful home in Malibu, CA. Neither Susan nor her family was practicing Muslims, but they wanted to honor Ahmad's last wish—to be wrapped in a shroud and buried in a Muslim



ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY Sacred Crossings

Sewing two sides of the folded queen-sized sheet to form a bag.

cemetery. No ceremony, no prayers, no decorative casket. They just wanted to shroud his body and keep him at home for a few days while they got the paperwork in order. Could I please help?

Though certified as a Home Funeral Guide, I had no experience in Islamic after-death-care protocol. The family assured me that it couldn't be that difficult. They would just buy a sheet from Walmart for the shroud, and if I could teach them about the dry ice and the paperwork, that would be enough.

When I got the call that Ahmad had passed away, I downloaded the directions for two different shroud-winding techniques from the Internet, and drove to Malibu with a cooler of dry ice, my massage table, and my home-funeral supply kit.

Ahmad had been ill for many months. His limbs had drawn up and were already rigid, even though *rigor mortis* had not yet set in. Susan, her daughter and her daughter-in-law were eager to get started, because mourners would soon be arriving.

I filled bowls with warm water and guided the women as they "washed the dust of the earth" from the body with rough cloths. I learned that the people of the desert used sand to do the same job, since water was scarce. I also learned that strict Islamic faith forbade women to gaze upon the body of a Muslim man. Tarek, Ahmad's son, was the only male in the group, and he was on his way to Walmart to buy a sheet. Susan assured me that Ahmad hadn't been to a mosque in years, and that a strict observance of the rules wasn't necessary. When the bathing was finished, we covered Ahmad's body with a blanket and went into the kitchen to have some tea.

It was strange to be assisting at a home funeral and have no flowers, no music playing, no candles burning, and no altar adorned with pictures of the deceased to celebrate his life. These were the familiar elements of a home funeral—the ingredients that set the tone and helped anchor the sacred. But Ahmad was leaving this world the way he had come in: naked and with nothing. It felt deeply sacred.

When Tarek returned with the queen-sized sheet and pillowcases, we all gathered around the kitchen table to decipher the shroud-winding instructions. I decided to go with the simple bag version; winding the body with eight-inch strips in mummy fashion seemed daunting for a first attempt. The family agreed, so while Susan and I folded the sheet in half and hand-sewed the edges

to form a bag, Tarek and his wife cut the pillowcases into four-inch strips for the binding ties. As we drank mint tea and ate stuffed date cookies, I listened, enchanted, to the stories that had woven this unique family together with Ahmad at the helm. When the shroud was complete, we carried it into the bedroom.

Other family members began to arrive, and they watched from the bedroom doorway as we carefully transferred Ahmad's body to the bag. The women knelt at the end of the bed, folded the shroud over his feet, and sewed it shut. They tied the pillowcase strips around the neck, torso, legs,

and ankles, and finished each with a decorative knot. It was breathtakingly simple and evoked a land far removed from Malibu, California.

Edited excerpt from Bareham's upcoming book: Sacred Crossings – Bringing Funerals Home.

Reverend Olivia Bareham, founder of Sacred Crossings is a certified Home Funeral Guide serving the Los Angeles area. For more information, please visit sacredcrossings.com or call 310-968-2763.



Sewing up the final edge after transferring the body into the shroud bag.



Binding the shroud.



Tying the knots to hold the shroud.



The completed bag shroud.



Funeral Directors Going Green

By Marcie Cole

Over the past few years, some funeral directors have begun to participate in the green burial movement. Their customers can select shrouds, biodegradable urns, and coffins made of natural materials, as part of funeral arrangements for a loved one. They've searched near, and usually far, to find cemeteries that perform green burials. They've done their research, changed their brochures, and now they are waiting to see if the green movement will take root.

Outside San Francisco, Joseph Stinson embraces the changes happening in after-death care. He suggests that hospice is the catalyst, explaining, "With the advent of hospice, we are with our loved ones during their death. It doesn't make much sense to have a natural death and then turn around and have someone embalmed and put in a casket." Stinson is the director of Colma Cremations and Funeral Services, which was established in 1985. He sees that the shift towards green is a social issue. Families have the right to more

choices and more information. "The more the family participates, the better it works for everybody. And that is what green does, it gets everybody involved."

"...the generation that we are selling to right now is much more traditional..."

Elizabeth Ross from Ackely and Ross Funeral Home in Cambridge, NY is one funeral director who anticipates a growth spurt based on the green movement. Five years ago, before the word green was associated with death, she was asked to organize a home funeral and a natural burial for a friend, who explained, "This is how we've been doing it in Europe for years." After that eye-opening experience, Ross went to California for a green burial conference in 2010. "I [now] have a whole wall that is dedicated to green. You can't miss it." On the wall she displays both certified pine and willow coffins. Though she hasn't sold many yet, she notes "There is a lot of interest, but the generation that we are selling to right now is much more traditional." Ross is optimistic that the green movement will see its growth over the next few decades.

“...the environmental aspect wasn’t the main attraction. It was more the intrinsic simplicity...”

Her optimism is realistic if we consider the natural and green trend that has spread into other facets of our lives. As consumers become more aware, businesses are often forced to shift.

In New Jersey, Bob Fertig, owner of Fertig Funeral Home, is doing what he can to germinate the green seed. Over the last two years, Bob estimates that he’s done 20 green burials. Although this is less than 25% of his total, he is amazed by the positive reaction he receives from the families who choose to go green. “What we’ve realized in doing these [green burials]...is that the environmental aspect wasn’t the main attraction. It was more the intrinsic simplicity. It is really beautiful to watch a family take care of their own.”

Janice King in Austin, TX follows a similar hybrid ideology. After several years working at a conventional funeral home, she saw the need for something different. In January, King launched Solace Eco-Friendly Funeral Services. So far she is averaging about one green service a month. “There are so many shades of green. Everyone has their concept of how natural they want to be. I just try to be there for every family, provide the services they desire, and try to make it as beautiful as they expect it to be.”

To their advantage, both King and Fertig have green cemeteries within close proximity. Steelman Town Cemetery is New Jersey’s only green burial preserve, and it is only 40 miles from Fertig’s funeral home. Burials at Steelman Town, established around 1700, are strictly green. That means no chemical embalming and no vaults. Only shrouds, pine boxes, or wicker coffins are allowed, and the graves must be dug by hand. In Texas, King is fortunate to have Our Lady of the Rosary Cemetery, just north of Austin. Like Steelman Town, the administrators of Our Lady of the Rosary require biodegradable caskets or shrouds, no embalming fluid, and no concrete or metal vaults.

Unfortunately, most cemeteries in the US are not turning green as fast as the funeral directors are. There are less than two dozen natural burial grounds, according

“...using green as another business tactic to lure customers.”

to NaturalBurialUSA.com. Most funeral directors, therefore, can’t provide a totally green burial. For example, there are no green cemeteries close to Los Angeles, so funeral director Shari Wolf of Natural Grace, must look for alternatives. The focus of Natural Grace is on greening cremation. Their solution is to offset pollution and energy consumption, both issues of environmental concern. Natural Grace has established a system in which families “receive an official carbon neutral cremation certificate, which lists details of a contribution made by Natural Grace to alternative energy sources on behalf of the deceased loved one and family.”

Although the green movement is finding pockets of support, there are also funeral directors who are wary of the green buzz. In San Diego, Threshold’s funeral director and co-founder, Eric Putt, is attuned to the green pulse, though he is hesitant to join the movement if it is going to become just another way for funeral homes to increase their revenue. More than being green, Putt wants to be an advocate for families, which means working with them to make funerals more economical. He strongly condemns any organization using green as another business tactic to lure customers.

Most green-edged funeral directors agree that education is the life force that will bring this movement to fruition. Families need to know they have options and rights to create funerals that are greener, more natural, and more meaningful. Is it likely the green movement will grow? Joseph Stinson compares it to green products at a grocery store: “It started out small—a few little green items on the shelf. After awhile it expanded into more shelves, then an aisle!”

The green funeral movement is still in its infancy. Time will tell if it will mature from a seedling to a fully flowering tree, and provide a truly viable option for all Americans.

Marcie Cole is a volunteer at Natural Transitions Magazine, exploring the possibilities of a career as a funeral director offering home funerals.

GREEN STANDARDS FOR FUNERAL HOMES

Any funeral home can offer environmentally sensitive merchandise and services.

Here are some questions to help you rate your local funeral homes.

- **Does** the funeral home offer the option of body preparation without embalming (setting features and cleansing only)—as an option to be selected by the family, NOT as a requirement?
- **Does** the funeral home offer the opportunity for viewing without embalming—private family viewing at a minimum?
- **Does** the funeral home offer some sort of viewing for a larger group after refrigeration perhaps or within a state's mandated time-line?
- **Does** the funeral home have biodegradable caskets included on the casket price list?
- **Among** the biodegradable caskets, are there low-cost options (to serve all income levels)?
- **Is** at least one of the biodegradable caskets locally made?
- **Does** the funeral home offer burial shrouds made of natural material?
- **Does** the funeral home offer an economical van for body transport rather than requiring the use of a hearse?
- **Does** the funeral home provide information on local cemeteries that permit green burials?
- **Is** the price for a green option a lot more expensive than the price for an Immediate Burial?
- **If** so, what additional goods and services are included? Are those goods and services the family is likely to want?
- **Are** package prices being offered for "green" options that do not allow a family to reduce costs by declining certain services or merchandise they might not want?
- **How** are the prices at this funeral home compared to the prices at other funeral homes in a 35-mile radius if cost is a concern to the choices a family will make?
- **If** the family needs a service that requires embalming such as out-of-the-country shipping, is the funeral home staff trained in using and have on hand non-formaldehyde, non-toxic chemicals?
- **Does** the funeral home have a website that includes itemized pricing—both the general price list (GPL) and casket price list (CPL)—so the family doesn't have to drive to get the needed information, saving printed paper as well?

Excerpt with permission from Funeral Ethics Organization.
www.funeralethics.org/green.htm

After Death Home Care

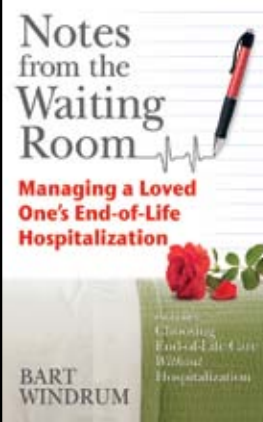


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www.HospitalPatientAdvocate.com



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Affordability, Simplicity, Dignity,
Environmentally Friendly
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<http://www.eeternity.com>

Know the Impacts of **Final Disposition**

Disposition Technique	Eco positive	Eco negative
'Standard' Burial		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • toxic embalming fluid usually used • fossil fuel equipment often used to dig & cover grave • buried metal, cement vaults, and precious woods • toxic lawn care in most cemeteries
Hybrid Burial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biodegradable coffin • natural decomposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may include toxic lawn care • may use fossil fuel equipment to dig grave
Natural Burial Ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biodegradable coffin • natural decomposition • bound by legal agreement not to change their cemetery standards • eco-review verifies that cemetery won't degrade the environment • prohibits use of markers not aesthetically natural 	
Conservation Burial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • biodegradable coffin or shroud • natural decomposition with shallow grave • preserves natural areas from development with legal protections in place • must have an established conservation partner to administer 	
Cremation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no cemetery land needed • bone nutrients may be returned to soil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most nutrients from remains burned up • some still bury cremains in toxic lawn care cemeteries • burns fossil fuels • some vaporized toxins released into air – mercury, dioxins (levels not monitored or regulated)
Alkaline Hydrolysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no coffin or shroud needed • no cemetery land needed • most nutrients returned to water or land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses water (2/3 of body weight) • very small amount of mercury in alkaline production (and being phased out)
Burial at Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no cemetery land needed • feeds the fishes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navy requires embalmed remains • most companies and the Navy require metal coffins with concrete inside and drilled with holes for quick and sure sinking to the bottom
Open Air Cremation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no cemetery needed • burns renewable wood rather than fossil fuels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • with slower, lower temperature burn is dioxin released? • most nutrients from remains burned up
Promession (freeze drying)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no cemetery needed • composts remains rather than putrefaction • recycles liquid nitrogen from industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not yet tried commercially and no independent study of greenness

Creative Dispositions: What To Do with the Cremains

By Deedee Carr

We dug a deep planting hole, placed the box of my father's ashes at the base of it and planted a persimmon tree upon them. (Persimmon blossoms and fruit were high on his favorites list.)

That was many years ago. In today's language, cremated human remains are cremains.

Currently there exists a rapidly growing field of options for creative and personal ways to keep, scatter, sink, bury, or even explode cremains.

Scattering cremains is customary but where and how invites creativity. Beaches, oceans, gardens, mountains, and personal favorite places are common choices. I have asked that I be spread to rest among trees, preferably in a forest (but not of pine trees-I don't like them much.) A dear friend of mine had her husband's remains divided among four containers, two large ones and two very small ones. She took the large ones, well documented and permitted, to Australia, his native land: one to scatter herself in his favorite spot, and one for his family. The two small packets she kept for herself, one tiny box for her purse, one for a Mexican wedding vase he had bought for her. Unfortunately her bi-monthly housekeeper insisted on using that vase as a pencil holder when she cleaned up my friend's desk.

Besides scattering by airplane, boat, or hand, you can choose a biodegradable balloon. Away you float, into the air. Eventually the balloon

dissolves, somewhere, and the cremains float back to earth. You can choose a "happier way to say goodbye" or "go out with a bang" with firework displays that have cremains within. This can be arranged and executed with all licenses, insurance, permits, ceremony, firing and even catering provided by the funeral home. Or, fireworks can be made for friends and family to launch themselves.

Family and friends can help embed cremains within human-made reefs. The reefs are then ceremoniously sunk, settling on the ocean floor and providing a sustaining haven for sea life, lasting up to five hundred years. Another option for underwater disposition is in a time capsule containing cremains and personal memorabilia to rest at the bottom of the sea for a very long time to come.

"a happier way to say good bye..."

Urns come in all shapes, sizes, and intended uses. All containers for cremains are referred to as urns. We are all familiar with traditional tall urns kept reverently on a mantle or in a mausoleum. But did you know there is an artist creating translucent ghost-like heads for urn use? Another company offers to make a facial cast of the departed into an urn. One artist works cremains into a painting. There are urns made into tear bottles, in Victorian as well as modern styles. Some are striped in gold, and some nested in silver baskets. Crystal ornaments serve as urns: heart shaped, round, and oval with a selection of designs like pressed flowers, angels, or a fisherman. There are photo urns and urns

made into pencils.

Many styles of jewelry are made to house cremains. Solid pendants come round, oval, heart shaped, opaque and crystal clear. Some have etchings of flowers, or angels, or crosses, or even starfish. There are pendants with open centers, bejeweled, in metal or crystalline. Although many choices are offered, hearts, crosses, and angels are the most popular. Cylinder pendants of crystal, glass, metal, and wood are found in many sizes and styles. The carbon in cremains and locks of hair can be pressed into artificial diamonds, which can be used for rings. These gems can be red, blue, yellow, or crystal clear.

I personally like the outdoor options best. In this category urns are fashioned as rudimentary stone slab garden benches, bird houses, sundials, wall fountains, memorial stones, candle holding stones, bird baths, and my favorite, wind chimes. Engraving is an option on most of these.

My cousin had her parent's cremains incorporated into an alto wind chime. Later, her daughter's cremains were placed in a soprano chime. The garden is filled with their lovely music when breezes whisper past. I asked her how she felt about that.

"Who gets to visit their loved ones every day in a graveyard or mausoleum? I have mine right here. Singing to me!"

Experience provided a bit of this information, and there are pages and pages of possibility on the Internet. So many creative dispositions are now available!

Deedee Carr is a UCI writing fellow, retired teacher, member of writing groups in Colorado and California and continuing her family heritage of writers who write for the sake of writing.



Organ/Tissue/Whole Body Donation – the Ultimate in Recycling

By Terra Rafael

- ▶ More than 110,000 people nationwide are currently waiting for lifesaving organ transplants.
- ▶ Every ten minutes, another name is added to the national organ transplant waiting list.
- ▶ An average of 18 people die each day from the lack of available organs for transplant.
- ▶ Recoverable organs include: heart, lung, liver, kidney, pancreas, and small intestine.
- ▶ Tissues that are recoverable include: bone, tendons, corneas, veins, valves, and skin.
- ▶ One organ donor can save up to eight lives through organ donation, and more than 100 lives through tissue donation.
- ▶ Every year, the lives of about 500,000 Americans are saved by organ and tissue donation.
- ▶ Ninety percent of Americans say they support donation, but only 30% know the process for becoming a donor.

As Eco-conscious people,
we do our best to recycle.

Why stop when we're dead?

Organ/Tissue Donations

Recycling organs and tissues can save or greatly enhance the lives of many people, of all ages, races, and lifestyles.

To ensure organ donation, it is best to designate yourself as an organ/tissue donor before you die. That way there are no doubts about your wishes, and the process is more likely to be carried out. Some states, like Colorado, are "first person consent" states, which means that when an individual registers to be an organ and tissue donor, he or she is making an advance directive that will be honored at the time of death (based on eligibility).

Go to www.donatelife.net/register-now/ to register in your state. Many states also allow individuals to sign up as part of their driver's license registration.

Dying in a hospital makes organ donation simple; for those who are lucky enough to die at home, the body might not be fresh enough by the time it is transferred to a hospital to be considered for organ or tissue donation.

There is a pilot program in New York City to send two ambulances to 911 calls—one specifically set up for organ donation. The EMTs in the “responding” ambulance do all they can to save the person. If death occurs and the donation is offered, the people staffing the “recycling” ambulance go to work. This program, if successful, could help fill an urgent need.

In a hospital situation, a member of the medical team alerts the Transplant Coordinator (TC) when there is a designated donor who might die soon. The TC can then evaluate the individual’s medical conditions and what organs might be eligible. When the attending medical team declares that the person has died, the TC talks with family members. For those who haven’t registered, the TC will ask the family to consider consenting to donation. However, waiting until the emotional after-death moments can consume precious time.

It may be possible to have a home funeral handle the body after an organ donation, perhaps with a closed coffin. An intact body deteriorates more slowly than one from which organs have been removed. This issue must be considered as part of postmortem care, and, ideally, the decision made prior to death.

For more details about the process of organ and tissue donation at the time of death, see <http://www.donors1.org/learn/donorprogram/> or contact your local donor program for their specific protocol.

Whole Body Anatomical Donation

If an individual is not eligible for organ or tissue donation, another option is whole body anatomical donation. This is when a whole body is used for medical research or education by public institutions, such as medical schools, or by private, for-profit medical research companies. A person who chooses this option should register ahead of time. However, one program, Anatomy Gifts Registry (www.anatomicgift.com), which is the largest national program in the US, allows the next of kin to give permission on the phone if it hasn’t been given previously.

Anatomy Gifts Registry staff is available by phone 24/7, and can arrange to transport the body and file the death certificate, without the involvement of a mortuary. After the body is used for medical research or education, the family receives the remains, without expense to them (besides the cost of shipping, which is \$15). Families also receive a follow-up letter letting them know which research or educational programs benefited from the donation.

The lesson on whole body anatomical donation is to plan it ahead for the most trouble-free results.



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Rev. Olivia Bareham
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Los Angeles, CA

www.sacredcrossings.com

Strange and Unusual Facts About Death

Presidential passings,
post-mortem jewelry,
and old age cured

- **It was a golden anniversary that ended in death.** On July 4, 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, founding fathers John Adams and Thomas Jefferson passed away. While they differed politically, they became the best of friends later in life. In fact, Adams' final words were "Thomas Jefferson survives," but Jefferson had passed a few hours earlier.
- **Good food doesn't always make life better.** When the body begins its final shutdown during the dying process, patients refuse food and drink. They don't need or want it, but well-meaning family members encourage them to eat. At this stage, the body shuttles energy toward vital functions, and digestion isn't one of them—in fact, food or drink can make the dying patient uncomfortable.
- **When is a picture worth more than a thousand words?** When it's a picture of a deceased family member. Child mortality rates were high in Victorian times, and often the only photo the family had was one taken after death. Today, postmortem photographs are collector's items.



PHOTOGRAPH courtesy of www.thanatos.net archive

- **Ever wondered how fast bodies decompose under certain conditions?** According to Casper's Law, a body exposed to the air will decompose twice as fast as a body in water, and eight times as fast as a body buried in the ground.
- **Looking for a new way to keep your loved ones close after death?** LifeGem uses the carbon from a lock of hair or a cup of cremated remains to create high-quality diamonds in your choice of colorless, blue, red, yellow, or green. Locks of hair from long-dead family members can be used. For example, LifeGem has created diamonds from the hair of Ludwig van Beethoven.
- **Say what?** Some of the strange and unusual euphemisms for death include: becoming a root inspector, joining the choir invisible, gone to the place people are dying to get into, and basting the formaldehyde turkey. When asked about his job, a man who tended a cemetery in Colorado said "I'm over 350 people."

If you know any strange and unusual facts about death you'd like to share, please email them to us at naturaltransitionsmagazine@gmail.com. Thanks!

Grave Matters - with a Decided Greenness

Terra Rafael Interviews Mark Harris

Terra Rafael: *How did you come to write Grave Matters. A book about the disposition of human remains is an unusual topic.*

Mark Harris: I used to write a weekly column on environmental issues for the Los Angeles Times Syndicate, and had to file 750 words every week. In the course of keeping my ear to the ground for story ideas, I heard about this cemetery in South Carolina, Ramsey Creek Preserve, where the dead were buried, essentially, in the woods; where the body went directly into the ground, sometimes wrapped in nothing but a bed sheet. There was no burial vault, no chemical embalming. The whole purpose of the place was to allow the body to decay naturally and become part of the natural cycle of life—to become part of the soil. To push up a tree and become part of that cycle that makes life for all of us possible.

So I spent the afternoon there, walking the grounds with Kimberly Campbell, who is the wife and business partner of Billy Campbell, a medical doctor who conceived this idea of a natural cemetery. I came away quite moved by this natural burial option. I thought it was very powerful and oddly new, given its historical antecedent. It's the way we used to bury people for thousands of years. I felt it represented a real possible alternative to modern burial.

I came home and wrote my stories about Ramsey Creek, but the more I researched what the Campbells were doing, the more I saw how it was tied up with a larger recreation of the death scene. There was the rising cremation rate, which was fueled in part by people wanting not to use land to create more cemeteries. There was the burgeoning movement of home funerals. I'd always thought home funerals were an interesting historical fact. But when I researched them, I found there were people like Beth Knox and Jerrigrace Lyons teaching people how to do home funerals; more and more people were adopting the practice. And

"I came away quite moved by this natural burial option."



coffins made from a whole range of biodegradable materials were appearing. So I felt it represented a new wave of how the baby boomers would be approaching death.

As I was working on *Grave Matters*, there was lots of discussion about the baby boomer generation moving into retirement and starting to consider how we want to move into the great hereafter. This generation always brought a do-it-yourself attitude to living; a decided greenness, having launched the first Earth Day, and ushered in the home birth movement. They would bring that same attitude to end-of-life issues, as they had to all aspects of their life. They would change funeral practices.

TR: *Have you worked on creating your own advance directives and wishes for disposition after you die?*

MH: Some of my first blogs were about my efforts to help my family navigate the death care where we live. I found out about all pertinent statutes and laws in Pennsylvania. My family does have the right here to care for my remains, which is what I do want them to do. I wrote all those statutes down for them. I called the people at the state just to make sure. I located the two officials in

“my efforts to help my family navigate the death care where we live...”

charge of death certificates, so my family knows where to get them. And I made sure that those two officials were aware that it was possible for my family to procure a death certificate form and submit it themselves. Interestingly, only one of the officials was aware that home funerals were legal, so I had someone from the state call and inform the one who wasn't aware.

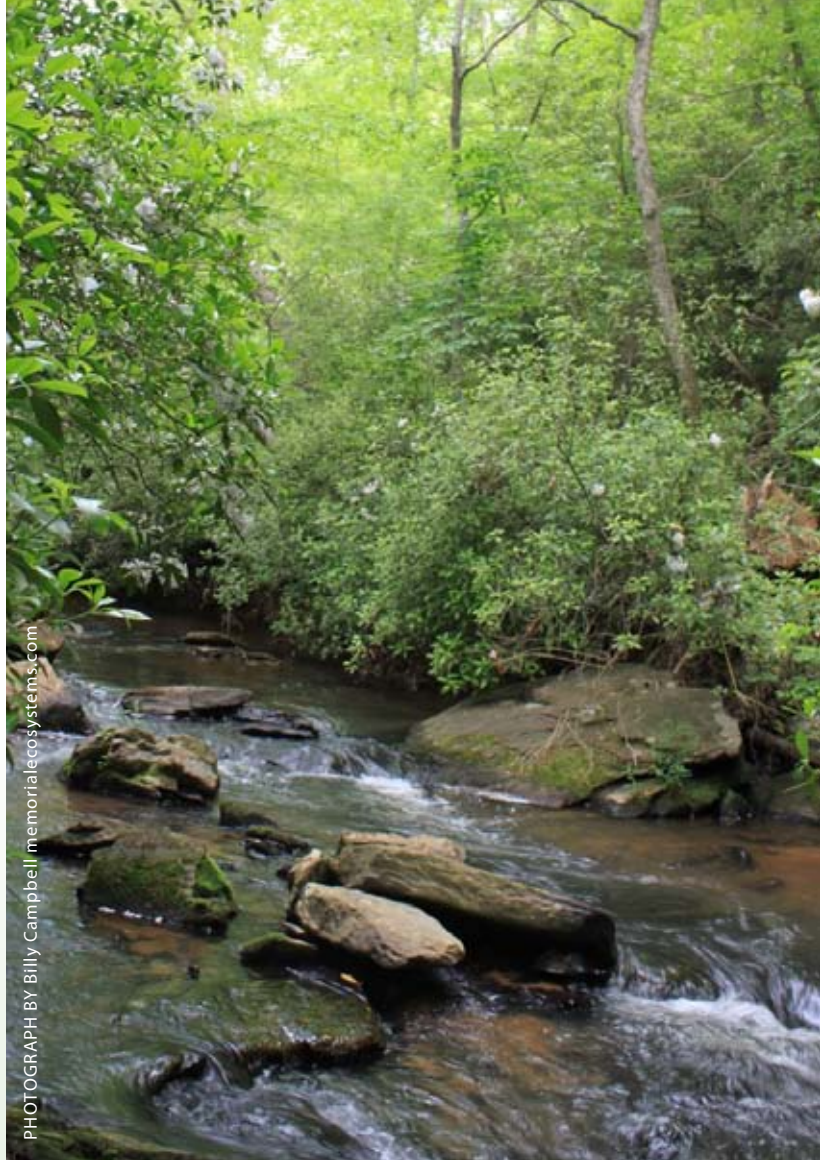
I called the local hospitals, asking if there was a problem with my family removing my remains if I should die in the hospital setting. (This is assuming I died locally.) That's when I ran into my first roadblock. They didn't really understand home funerals, didn't have any policies on the books, and weren't really interested in talking about it. Since then I've gotten together with a local home funeral guide and we're planning to do a presentation at the hospital, educating them about what a home funeral entails and that family members or loved ones should be able to remove the remains. Ideally, hospitals should have a policy on the books that allows people who want a home funeral to do it in a simple, dignified way that doesn't disrupt the hospital system.

I have written and filed advance directives—my family knows where they are. As for my final disposition, I've been on hold with that. I'm waiting for a natural cemetery opportunity. Now I'm working with a local cemetery to create a green burial section, which we hope will be open this summer.

Depending on the situation and officials in charge, the whole process post mortem can become excessively bureaucratic. I've told my family that if it becomes more challenging than anticipated, they can call a friend who is a home funeral guide and she could help. There's also a nearby funeral director who knows me from committee work, has read my book, and is another back-up I would trust to help them.

TR: *There's a new disposition technology, alkaline hydrolysis. What would you like to know about it before you decide if it's green or not?*

MH: I'd like to know more about the actual chemical components used to dissolve the remains. I've heard there can be problems (depending on the temperature of the fluids used in processing) which could cause coagulation of the body fluids. I have questions about how green alkaline hydrolysis really is.



PHOTOGRAPH BY Billy Campbell memorialecosystems.com

Ramsey Creek, South Carolina.

I always ask how green a process really is compared to the greenest, which is the natural decomposition that happens when you just bury an unembalmed body one-and-a-half feet under the ground, without a vault. That is the simplest, easiest, and cleanest of all burials. Alkaline hydrolysis unnecessarily complicates this simple and natural process. Proponents would argue that it is a better alternative to cremation.

There will be lots of new technologies being touted as green. The green funeral movement will have to determine how each of them compares to the standard of how Mother Nature might break down a body by herself. These processes might be great, but they tend to be more expensive and more involved, and I wonder, in the end, how necessary many of them really are. I'm all for choice, but if they are being sold as green, they're going to have to make a pretty good case.

For more about Mark Harris and Grave Matters, go to his blog at gravematters.us.



Crestone: open air cremation

By Karen van Vuuren

Crestone open air cremation pyre.

The residents of Crestone are blessed with some of the greenest ways to “go.” This small Colorado town, flanked by the poetically named Sangre de Cristo mountains, offers both natural burial and what some might call “natural cremation.” Crestone is a former mining town that, over the past few decades, has evolved into a thriving New Age and spiritual center. Crestone boasts a Carmelite monastery and a Zen center, as well as Hindu and Tibetan Buddhist temples. The town of Crestone runs and operates a small pioneer cemetery that allows vault and casket-free burial in an un-landscaped setting, while the Crestone End-of-Life

Project (CEOLP), a non-profit, volunteer-run organization, facilitates open-air cremation at a stunning location beneath 14,000-foot Rocky Mountain peaks.

CEOLP was started in 1998, in response to the growing number of private open-air cremations being performed by devotees of Eastern spiritual traditions in Crestone. The need arose to address both legal and environmental concerns, while, at the same time allowing individuals freedom to honor their spiritual beliefs concerning how to care for the body after death. In 2008, following lengthy meetings with local county and



state agencies, CEOLP performed its first cremation using the newly designed community pyre, which is located on land donated by a local spiritual group.

CEOLP's funeral pyre consists of a metal grate sandwiched between two walls built with heat-retentive fire-blocks. There is a small air vent to aerate the fire and feed it wood. The wood is harvested locally and is a renewable resource, unlike the gas that fuels conventional cremation chambers.

Paul Kloppenburg, a hardy, pragmatic Dutchman and long-standing Crestone resident, is the creator of the CEOLP pyre. Kloppenburg was a mobile cremation attendant for friends in need before the community constructed its permanent pyre. "He's continuously experimenting to make the pyre more efficient," said Anna-Louise Stewart, whose primary role with CEOLP is to assist families with the care of bodies during home vigils and wakes. Kloppenburg's devotion to perfecting the pyre led him to craft special fire tools for moving coals under the grate for a more ef-

ficient flame. Stewart explained that the goal is to use as little wood as possible, usually about one-third of a cord.

Families arrive about a half-hour before cremation time. The body of the deceased, wrapped in a shroud, arrives on a wooden stretcher built by a local carpenter who charges for the materials but not for his labor. There is a procession to the pyre and community members and families carry the body clockwise around the pyre before placing the deceased on the metal grate. The assembled then place juniper boughs on their

loved-one (prized for their fragrance and spiritual significance) and cover the body entirely with wood. Cremation generally takes three or four hours. Kloppenburg's team has a way of "closing up" the pyre toward the end of the burn to increase the heat and condense the ashes, said Stewart. This results in fewer large bone fragments. A typical cremation produces approximately five gallons of ashes from the body and wood.

The Crestone End-of-Life Project's team of volunteers facilitates much more than cremation -- its goal is to help families consciously prepare for death. It encourages community members to consider cremation while they are alive and gather the information necessary to file the legal paperwork in advance.

CEOLP is a model of community organizing. Volunteers are divided into teams to step in as needed when a death occurs. Different teams help families prepare the bodies, obtain the cremation permits, prepare and tend the fires, and oversee various ceremonial aspects of the cremation.

Weather can upset the best-made plans: High winds or a fire ban might necessitate conventional cremation at a regional crematory. CEOLP team members often recommend dawn cremations because the valley's winds typically whip up later in the day.

The Environmental Protection Agency has approved the Crestone pyre. Nevertheless, Stewart concedes that burning wood has an ecological impact. The number of cremations per year is small: since 2008, there have been approximately seven or eight per year. "Open-air cremation is obviously not a solution for a high-density area, but, because we are doing as little as we are, pollution is absolutely of no concern," Stewart added.

The Crestone End-of-Life Project has attracted national attention. Its founders are clear that its mission is to serve the resident population who originally sought open-air cremation for spiritual reasons. It is available to consult with other communities that wish to start their own project.

Open-air cremation may appeal to some as a greener option, but Stewart believes that the Crestone pyre is more often "a choice of the heart."

Karen van Vuuren is executive director of Natural Transitions, on the editorial board of Natural Transitions Magazine, and is co-director of the Life and Earth Matters Film Festival. Van Vuuren also makes documentary films, focused on end-of-life issues.

ntm resource directory

Sacred Crossings

Olivia Bareham
sacredcrossings.com
olivia@sacredcrossings.com
310-968-2763

CycledLife, Inc.

Ed Gazvoda
CycledLife.com
303.459.4953

Threshold Care Circle of Viroqua, WI

thresholdcarecircle.org
info@thresholdcarecircle.org
1-608-606-8060

Rayne Johnson

tearcups.com
rayne@tearcups.com
780-642-8703
Grief Coach/ Educator on EOL issues.

Merilynne Rush, Home Funeral Guide

AfterDeathHomeCare.com
info@AfterDeathHomeCare.com
734-395-9660
After-death home care in SE Michigan.

Funeral Ethics Organization

funeralethics.org
info@funeralethics.org
Informing about and promoting ethical
business regarding funerals.

Minnesota Threshold Network

mnthresholdnetwork.wordpress.com
mnthresholdnetwork@gmail.com

Holly Blue Hawkins

LastRespectsConsulting.com
831-588-3040

near and dear

Anita Garcia
nearanddear@vpweb.com
drgarcias1100@msn.com
520-896-0516 / 520-307-0028

Green Burial Council

greenburialcouncil.org
Setting standards, offering training and
technical assistance, and certifying
providers of green burial options.

Natural Transitions

naturaltransitions.org
info@naturaltransitions.org
Trainings and support with Advance
Directives, Home Funerals and more.

Life and Death Matters Film Festival

www.ladmatters.com
info@ladmatters.com
Sept 2-4th, 2011 in Boulder, CO
A project of Natural Transitions.

Eternity Cardboard Casket

eeternity.com
Affordability, simplicity, dignity,
environmentally friendly-perfect for
green cremation and green burial.

Final Passages

finalpassages.org
finalpassages@softcom.net
707-824-0268

Manena Taylor

heartmemorials@gmail.com
Heart Centered Memorials in the Pacific
Northwest.

Blessing the Journey

info@blessingthejourney.com
Olympia, WA
Sacredly guiding families through
the home funeral journey.

Life Quality Institute

lifequalityinstitute.org
Advancing Palliative Care Through Education
Offering trainings on palliative care.

Compassion and Choices

compassionandchoices.org
info@compassionandchoices.org
Rights of individuals to choose their
end of life scenario.

National Organization for Hospice & Palliative Care

nohpc.org
Find a hospice, learn more about
palliative care.

Funeral Consumers Alliance

funerals.org
Consumer friendly information on all
aspects of funerals, including consumer rights.

A Natural Undertaking

naturalundertaking.org
A Pennsylvania resource center for home
funeral care.

Sacred Ceremonies, Ltd

sacredceremoniesltd.org
Webster, Wisconsin
715-866-7798
715-566-2462

To be included in the Directory, please contact adsnaturaltransitionsmag@gmail.com.

ntm calendar

July 29 - 31st

Natural Transitions Training- Colorado

naturaltransitions.org

Attend level I, for basic end-of-life and
after-death care, including writing your
own advance directives. Levels Two and
Three follow for those who wish to be-
come an End-of-Life Transition Guide.

September 2 - 4, 2011

Life and Death Matters Film Festival - Colorado

ladmatters.com

A project of Natural Transitions.
LADMatters is staging five mini plays and
offering interactive, educational program-
ming involving dancing, sings, and even
clowning for joy, besides showing the
best of over 200 submitted films.

September 22 - 24, 2011

National Home Funeral Alliance

homefuneralalliance.org

Second Annual Conference in Boulder, CO.

Focusing on *Peaceful Death: Music, Hos-
pice, and Home Funerals*. Therese Schro-
eder-Sheker, founder of music thanatology,
will be the keynote speaker. Josh Slocum,
co-author of *Final Rights: Reclaiming the
American Way of Death*, will give the ple-
nary address.

Fall-Winter, 2011

NT LEVEL TWO TRAINING INFO

Natural Transitions Level Two Training, date
to be announced
naturaltransitions.org

NT Level Two Training focuses on honing
skills in preparation for internship as a Tran-
sition Guide. Qualification is completion of
Level One or instructor's permission.

Ongoing

Life Quality Institute- Colorado

lifequalityinstitute.org

Offering series of monthly talks regard-
ing palliative care and end-of-life issues in
these locations:

Reality of Care - Denver, CO

Called to Care - Pastoral issues -

Cherry Hills, CO

Prepared to Care - Denver, CO

See website for topics, times, and locations.

To be included in the Calendar, please contact adsnaturaltransitionsmag@gmail.com.



PHOTOGRAPH BY Dave Sander

Dedication for Another Plot of Ground

*Inspired by a William
Carlos Williams' poem*

By Abigail Templeton-Greene

This plot of ground
wedged between brick
and statue, tucked away
in a neighborhood of churches
and front lawns,
is now home to Florence
Nightingale Templeton,
born 1913, in Newark,
New Jersey, rode in trains
to Tampico, Mexico, where she spoke
no Spanish, watched father
shake hands with Pancho Villa,
followed father to Brazil, made beds
for mother, tied shoes
for younger siblings, fought
off flies, fought off red
fever, dreamed of Van Gogh,
of throwing cups at the Mona Lisa,
made it to New York, but never
to school, made it to the altar,
in love with colors, painted
the Atlantic ocean
with wooden fences and sailboats,
married a photograph
of a man, kissed him off
to war, waited with baby
in her belly, read letters

from a soldier, read an atomic bomb—
a stationary of bones and mud,
birthed and raised the daughter,
was wife to a man who was a husband,
hid sketches of steeples
and pointed arches,
bore three boys
cooked while cleaning,
washed the wash,
built a house to look
out of, lay earth on casket,
fought off cancer and cigarettes,
believed life was wonderful,
sipped her coffee black,
loved cashmere and silk,
wore rain jackets and head scarves,
smiled at the presence of grandchildren
and great-grandchildren,
found companionship
in the quiet hum of museum walls
with Madonnas hanging from plaster.

If you should enter this courtyard
cemetery, this plot of ground,
tread lightly when stepping on shadows,
read this plaque as if it is more than
an etching of dates and letters.

When not voraciously writing, Abby can be found teaching life skills classes at a Denver high school for teen moms and pregnant teens. Abby recently received her MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University, Los Angeles. Her poems can also be found in Rattle, Two hawks Quarterly, Pear Noir, and Splinter Generation.

Natural Transitions' Upcoming Events



LADmatters FESTIVAL

EXPLORING LIFE AND DEATH

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Sept. 1-4, 2011
Nomad Theatre,
Boulder, CO.

More than an
international
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Incorporating
5 NEW plays
and inspirational,
FUN, educational
programming on
navigating the
journey through life.



Photo by Rosalie Winard

Sept. 3, 2011. Special Guest, **TEMPLE GRANDIN** - author, educator, whose life as an autistic woman is featured in the Emmy-award-winning film *Temple Grandin*.

www.ladmatters.com to find out more.

Level One Training in End-of-life Transition Guidance

July 29, 30, and 31, Boulder, CO

For lay people and professionals seeking practical knowledge of working with dying, and preparing for green, family-led home funerals.

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