



Funeral Education Foundation & Funeral Consumers Alliance **In Touch**



A nonprofit organization educating consumers in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties

463 College Avenue, P.O. Box 60448, Palo Alto, CA 94306 • (650) 321-2109 • office@FuneralConsumerInfo.org Fall 2006

Preliminary Results From Mortuary Survey

This fall, we sent a questionnaire and request for price lists to mortuaries in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties and to our cooperating mortuaries in Alameda County. Response time varied widely, but eventually we had responses from almost all the funeral homes.

In this year's survey we added some questions, including; how many people could be seated in the chapels, whether the price lists were available in languages other than English and whether the mortuary would accommodate a funeral without embalming.

As one would expect, prices have gone up at nearly all the homes, with a 12.5% to 15% increase in packaged (no casket) funeral costs.

Survey results will be available by sending a self addressed envelope with the county required to the FEF/FCA office.

Translations Needed

Do you speak and write a language other than English? The Funeral Education Foundation has many forms, pamphlets and brochures that would benefit more of our members and neighbors if they were available in Spanish, Tagalog, Chinese, etc.

If you'd like to help us provide materials and information to a wider audience, call Paula at the office (650) 321-2109 and she'll be happy to send you some materials to work from.

On Estate Planning

Members, relative and friends are invited to a Funeral Education Foundation/Funeral Consumers Alliance meeting for San Mateo County on Saturday, December 2 at 1:30 P.M. at the Peninsula Community Foundation, 1700 El Camino Real, San Mateo (first floor meeting room).

Janet Brewer, estate planning attorney will talk about "Documents You Need for End-of-Life Planning" and be open for questions. Marjorie Bridges, FEF/FCA board member will help people with their actual funeral planning forms and bring useful free brochures. Refreshments will be provided.



At the Adult Services Resource Faire in San Jose on Oct. 5. Jane Hillhouse, FCA board member, speaks with Rodney Jones of San Jose who stopped by the FEF/FCA booth to pick up information.

Office Managers Die at Two Affiliates

Ernest Landauer, office manager of Bay Area Funeral Society in Berkeley, and Al Alfieros, director of the San Diego Memorial Society, died unexpectedly over the summer, pointing up the need for training other people to the office tasks to carry organizations through unsettling times. Palo Alto has an office manual, computer backups, and a few trained volunteers, but more volunteers are needed. If you would like to be trained to be a backup for the occasions when our office manager is ill or on vacation, please call the office at 650-321-2109.

FEF Keeps file of Celebrants

If you have experience with planning memorials or leading funeral and memorial services, perhaps you would like to put your name on a list of Ministers, Celebrants, and Funeral and Memorial Planners that Funeral Education Foundation maintains.

Some families need help through the process of planning a personalized service, and some need a person to act as an officiant or master of ceremonies. We will keep up a card file of people who can help in some fashion. You can email your contact information and information about your background to office@funeralconsumerinfo.org, or phone 650-321-2109.

Transformations

*Portion of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.
These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I often tried to know
May be entering this rose
So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and vein abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they are.*
—Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

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Office Manager; Paula Troncone
Office open M-Th from 9am to 1pm

Betty Dickman (left), president of Channel Cities Funeral Consumers Alliance discusses office procedures and educational materials with Paula Troncone on a visit to the Palo Alto offices.



New Office Manager

The Funeral Education Foundation and Consumer's Alliance welcome Paula Troncone, our new office manager. Paula comes to us with a background of non-profit and funeral home work, along with a customer service orientation and familiarity with technology. One of her primary goals is to bring our member files up to date, so make sure we have your most current information; If the mortuary you listed on your planning sheet is no longer a cooperating mortuary, if you've changed your mind about the type of arrangements etc., call, drop by or use the form below and mail it to the office.

New Information for My File (I Already Have a "Planning Form" in My File)

Name #1 _____
Name #2 _____
Date _____ Memb. No. _____
Old Address _____
Old City, Zip _____
New Address _____
New City, Zip _____
New Phone _____
Current Email Address _____
New Mortuary _____
New Next of Kin _____
Kin's Address _____
Kin's Phone _____

(A new wallet card will be automatically sent to you with changes of kin or mortuary.)

I (we) now desire

- C1—Direct Cremation
- C2—Cremation & Scattering at Sea
- B1—Direct Burial
- B2—Direct Burial with Graveside Services
- B3—Traditional Funeral with Simple Casket

Signed #1 _____
Signed #2 _____

Books to Own

There are many books that prepare us for death, from planning your own funeral arrangements, to handling the loss of a loved one and helping them gracefully to the other side. We have many here at the office that you can borrow, but there are a few you might consider owning as a permanent resource;

Dealing Creatively with Death – A Manual of Death Education and Simple Burial by Ernest Morgan. Subjects covered include death education, living with dying, bereavement, and simple funerals and cremation.

Helping Children Grieve – when Someone They Love Dies by Theresa Huntley. Children's ideas about death and ways of grieving can differ substantially from adults, but are no less real. This book can facilitate their families approach to their children's loss.

Handbook for Mortals – Guidance for People Facing Serious Illness by Joanne Lyn, M.D. and Joan Harrold, M.D., covers the questions surrounding illness before death like discussing the process of illness and death with your loved ones, pain relief, choosing your spokesperson and comforting the dying.

You Only Die Once – Preparing for the End of Life with Grace and Gusto by Margie Jenkins covers both the personal, spiritual and practical sides of end of life planning.

Caring for the Dead – Your Final Act of Love by Lisa Carlson. A comprehensive guide to funeral arrangements that includes funeral law, home funeral guidelines and state by state information.

Books, cont.

Last Wishes – A Handbook to Guide your Survivors by Lucinda Page Knox, M.S.W. and Michael D. Knox, Ph.D. is an organizer that puts information your family will need; your vital statistics, funeral instructions and location of your financial & insurance information in one place saving your family the stress of guessing what you wanted and where to find what they need to settle your affairs.

A Graceful Farewell – Putting Your Affairs in Order by Maggie Watson. Ms. Watson is a professional organizer that has put together this workbook along with a cd with fill-in forms to help you with your pre-planning.

These and other books and videos can be borrowed from the FEF office (though of course we ask you not write in the workbooks). Drop by to check them out!

Several books about death have been popular sellers. If you decide to buy one, would you donate it to our FCA/FEF library after you finish, so others can borrow it?

Humor

A distraught senior citizen phoned her doctor's office.
"Is it true," she wanted to know, "that the medication you prescribed has to be taken for the rest of my life?" "Yes, I'm afraid so," the doctor told her. There was a moment of silence before the senior lady replied, "I'm wondering, then, just how serious is my condition because this prescription is marked 'NO REFILLS'."

Living wills

While I was watching the final round of the Masters this weekend, my wife and I got into a conversation about life and death, and the need for living wills. During the course of the conversation I told her that I never wanted to exist in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and taking fluids from a bottle. She got up, unplugged the TV and threw out all my beer.

Online Resources

Web Site for Baby Boomers

Take a look at the new networking website, <http://www.eons.com>, which is designed for baby boomers. Baby boomers are the 77 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964.

It has news on entertainment and hobbies geared to older folks, a personalized longevity calculator, games to keep your brain active, and tips to live longer. They plan to tap into a nationwide database of obituaries to which you can add photos and comments. You can sign up to receive an alert when someone from your town, school, or company dies. They have some information about planning funerals but erroneously state that "pre-need" planning includes pre-funding. Our FCA/FEF forms and brochures are much more complete than what this site offers.

Online Obituaries

Right now, www.legacy.com provides online obituaries for about half the people who die in the U.S. each day, taking the information from funeral homes and newspaper obits. The personalized tribute pages cost the family \$29, and obit alerts cost \$15.99 a year on legacy.com. Eons.com tributes run from free to \$15.99 a year.

Last Words

Stein, Gertrude (1874-1946)

Just before she died she asked, "What is the answer?" No answer came. She laughed and said, "In that case what is the question?"

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The Meaning of Memorialization

By Lamar Hankins
Former President, National FCA

The term "Memorialization" has varying meanings, depending on one's perspective:

To a funeral director, it may mean a big funeral service.

To a cemeterian, it may mean a lawn crypt.

To a seller of gravestones, it may mean a big granite or marble monument.

To the head of development at a university, it may mean a large contribution to an endowment established in the name of the deceased.

To an SCI cemetery salesperson, it may mean placing the deceased's name on a wall plaque or the purchase of a memorial bench for placement in the Garden of the Angels.

To a new-age funeral director, it may mean adding the deceased's name to the list on the funeral home's internet memorial page.

To a minister, it may mean buying a memorial pew in the name of the deceased.

To some of us, it may mean saying a few words about the deceased at a memorial service.

To others, it may mean writing a piece for publication somewhere about the deceased.

To still others, it may mean having an iron cross placed at an appropriate location in memory of the deceased.

To lovers of the sea, it may mean buying one of those artificial reefs made partly from the deceased's cremated remains.

For others, it may mean planting a tree or some flower or herb seeds in honor of the deceased.

But every time I hear or read a funeral director use the term memorialization, I always think of spending about \$6,500. But that's just me.