



**FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF PRINCETON**  
**Princeton Memorial Association**  
**NEWSLETTER**



Promoting informed advanced planning for funeral and memorial arrangements

53rd Year

Spring 2009

No. 13

## Green Burial

Mark Harris, author of "Grave Matters: A Journey Through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial," will be the featured speaker at the annual meeting of the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Princeton (FCAP).

In his talk, Mr. Harris will explore the topic of "Green Burials." The meeting will be held on Sunday, April 19, at Erdman Hall, Princeton Theological Seminary, 20 Library Place in Princeton, NJ, at 2 pm. The meeting is free and open to the public.

Green burial looks to return one's remains to the elements thus avoiding chemical embalming, fancy and expensive caskets, and elaborate and costly funerals. It takes a natural, economic and highly personal approach to death and burial that was once standard practice. Harris's presentation will be a visual tour of this country's growing green burial movement and is drawn from his research and travels to backyard grave sites, the sea, artificial reef sites created by ashes of the deceased, and "natural" cemeteries.

Harris is a former environmental columnist for the "Los Angeles Times." His articles have appeared in the "Chicago Tribune," "Readers Digest" and "Hope." He is a member of the Society of Environmental Journalists. He has been a guest on Terry Gross's NPR show, *Fresh Air*, and has been interviewed by CNN, MSNBC, ABC World News, and many other national publications and national broadcasts. His web site is [www.gravematters.us](http://www.gravematters.us)

## Thank you

We are very grateful to the 171 donors who contributed \$5,405 to FCAP in response to our fall fundraiser to help us to help consumers and spread the good word about funeral planning. Haven't returned your envelope yet? It's never too late. All donations are fully tax deductible.

## Annual Conference

## Green Burial

## Mark Harris

*"Grave Matters: A Journey Through The Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial"*

**Sunday, April 19th, 2009, 2:00 PM**

★ Princeton Theological Seminary ★

20 Library Place

Princeton, NJ

609-921-8300

Free parking is available across the street behind the Luce and Speer library.

Bring a friend!

## The Green Issue

Typical burial and cremation practices have significant negative environmental consequences, but you can lessen the impact by using green funeral methods and products. Being true to your ethical beliefs and concern about the environment while taking care of end-of-life arrangements can create a meaningful and lower-impact send-off. After all, if you gotta' go, why not go green?

Green burial has yet to be embraced by all funeral directors due to psychological and possibly financial reasons. However, there are signs that the industry is awakening to the concept since the home birthing, cloth diaper using, recycling, hybrid driving, environmentally conscious baby boomers are making it clear that they want to leave the world in a similar manner to how they have tried to live in it.

**Educate yourself.** Ask funeral directors about more sustainable options and choose the funeral home that is most open to working with you to arrange the most green arrangements. Ask the cemetery what your greener options are. Many will allow no vault if it's for religious reasons and most will let you use a vault with an open bottom so that your body can return to the earth. Call us to discuss your options and answer questions about greener funeral planning.

**Plan ahead.** We can never say it often enough; talk to your family and friends about your wishes. If you want green, remember that most people will not think to consider the environment in making funeral arrangements. Complete your *Expression of Personal Wishes* form (ask us if you need a new one) and include wishes regarding green options.

**Is cremation green?** It's not a clear yes or no. At first glance, cremation certainly doesn't seem like a particularly green idea. There's the fuel used to run the crematories, and burning creates pollution, especially if there are toxic substances present such as embalming fluids. It is estimated that 600 pounds of mercury come from crematories in the U.S. every year. That's less than 1% of all mercury emissions and our cremation rate is only 32%, but it's rising quickly. In the U.K. cremations account for 16% of mercury emissions and the cremation rate is over 70%. While U.S. crematoriums have made significant reductions in emissions, there's more to be done, and there's conflicting data on just how big the cremation footprint is in the grand scheme of things. In addition, modern burial isn't generally as green as it sounds.

**So, how green is burial?** Unfortunately, many modern burial practices are highly resource-intensive. There is a lot of mess associated with making and distributing all that metal and concrete (across very long distances if you choose an exotic wood like mahogany for your casket). Caskets, vaults and embalming are designed to slow the decomposition process, so not only do you not return to the earth, you create additional pollution by planting embalming chemicals and all that metal and concrete in the ground. The Green Burial Council estimated that every year Americans bury more metal than was used to make the Golden Gate Bridge and enough concrete to build a two-lane highway from New York to Detroit.

Though these practices have become standard in the American funeral industry, standards change in response to consumer pressure. If you don't want to be embalmed, say so (if you knew what was done during embalming, you probably wouldn't want it done unless it was absolutely necessary). In New Jersey you have to be buried, cremated, embalmed or refrigerated if you plan to be around for more than 48 hours after death. If you want a green burial but don't want to rush to do it within the 48 hours, make sure you choose a funeral home with refrigeration.

**Choose a green casket.** There are loads of green coffin options including wicker, bamboo, jute and cardboard and we've yet to hear of a cemetery that has a problem with them (see the resource list at the end of the article).

**Choose a green cemetery.** There are 14 green burial grounds currently operating in the U.S. and several more under construction (there are over 200 in the U.K.). For green burial, the body is prepared without chemical preservatives and is buried in a simple shroud or biodegradable casket and returned to the earth to decompose naturally.

Green cemeteries often use natural grave markers like shrubs, trees, an engraved flat stone, or a centralized memorial structure. Some plant only native trees, shrubs and flowers and form a wildlife preserve. Americans are loathe to disturb cemeteries so these preserves are protected in perpetuity from future development.

If there isn't a green cemetery nearby, you can green up your local one by not being embalmed, using a biodegradable casket, and asking for an upside down grave liner instead of a vault. It will still keep the grass flat for mowing, but your body will be able to return to the earth.

**Other ideas.** We've mentioned these before. A seemingly truly green option is the Promessa System where you are flash-frozen in liquid nitrogen, vibrated into a fine pink powder and then can be used as an excellent, nutrient rich compost. It's not available in the U.S. yet, but it's coming!

Or, become part of a human-made coral reef. You're cremated first, so you haven't avoided that waste of energy and fossil fuels, but you get to (literally) be part of helping to revive reef habitat.

If doing good with your body is what you're after, you can always donate your organs and tis-

sue or even your entire body to science. While you will be embalmed at the beginning and cremated at the end, you will do a lot of good in between.

## Resources

### Green Urns

[www.ecourn.eu](http://www.ecourn.eu)  
[www.gerardmoline.com/en](http://www.gerardmoline.com/en)  
[www.econatur.com](http://www.econatur.com)  
[www.earthurn.com](http://www.earthurn.com)

### Green Caskets

[www.ecocoffins.com](http://www.ecocoffins.com)  
[www.creativecoffins.com](http://www.creativecoffins.com)  
[www.cardboardcasket.com](http://www.cardboardcasket.com)  
[www.wickerwillowcoffins.co.uk](http://www.wickerwillowcoffins.co.uk)  
[www.wovenwickercoffins.com](http://www.wovenwickercoffins.com)  
[www.ecoffins.co.uk](http://www.ecoffins.co.uk)  
[www.uono.de](http://www.uono.de)  
[www.ecopod.co.uk](http://www.ecopod.co.uk)  
[www.kinkaraco.com](http://www.kinkaraco.com)

### Green Burial

[www.memorialecosystems.com](http://www.memorialecosystems.com)  
[www.greenburialcouncil.org](http://www.greenburialcouncil.org)  
[www.greenburials.org](http://www.greenburials.org)  
[www.naturallegacies.org](http://www.naturallegacies.org)  
[www.naturalburial.coop](http://www.naturalburial.coop)  
<http://immarama.faithweb.com>  
[www.crossings.net](http://www.crossings.net)

### Other

[www.promessa.se](http://www.promessa.se)  
[www.eternalreefs.com](http://www.eternalreefs.com)  
[www.sharenj.org](http://www.sharenj.org)  
[www2.umdj.edu/donorweb](http://www2.umdj.edu/donorweb)

### Books

*Grave Matters: A Journey Through the Modern Funeral Industry to a Natural Way of Burial*, by Mark Harris [www.gravematters.us](http://www.gravematters.us)

*Caring for The Dead: Your Final Act of Love*, by Lisa Carlson [www.upperaccess.com](http://www.upperaccess.com)

*Exit Strategy: Thinking Outside the Box*, by Michelle Cromer [www.michellecromer.com](http://www.michellecromer.com)

*The Natural Death Handbook*, by The Natural Death Centre [www.naturaldeath.org.uk](http://www.naturaldeath.org.uk)

## Can't get Enough Death & Funerals?

**Obit Magazine.** An online magazine (founders are in Princeton) that covers death from a variety of angles with feature stories, obituaries and business stories relating to the death industry.

[www.obit-mag.com](http://www.obit-mag.com)

**The Checkout Line.** Tagline: Advice, when sympathy isn't enough. Judy Bachrach, a Vanity Fair contributing editor and hospice volunteer, writes this online advice column for friends and relatives of the dying in an appealing, no-nonsense style.

[www.thecheckoutline.org](http://www.thecheckoutline.org)

**The Daily Undertaker.** He's a funeral director, so won't always be in agreement with us, but he's got a lot of interesting material on his blog.

[www.dailyundertaker.com](http://www.dailyundertaker.com)

**The Funeral Consumers Alliance Listserv.** Information about funeral practices, laws and regulations, funeral humor, how FCA affiliate groups function and more. Join by emailing: [join-deathcare@sparky.listmoms.net](mailto:join-deathcare@sparky.listmoms.net)

### Spread the Good Word

How about sharing this newsletter with a friend when you're done with it?

## Silly Product Watch

Here is another deathcare product that few of us will be able to do without: The ThoughtKeeper is a box in which one can store keepsakes that are related to your departed loved one, as well as store your ThoughtKeeper journal "filled with encouraging words to calm the heart and renew the spirit." It can be erected on a post at graveside or placed on the gravestone with a special mounting attachment. It looks like a cemetery mailbox. The retail price: \$249. Hurry, supplies may be limited!



## Treasurer's Annual Report

Submitted by Betty Fleming

### 2008 Income:

Contributions/Bequests	\$6,449
Membership Dues	1,210
Interest	210
Book sales	72
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 7,941</b>

### 2008 Expenses:

Dues to National Association	\$ 962
Gift to National Association	1,500
Printing	1,895
Postage	599
Advertising/promotional events	200
Board member training	29
Annual Meeting/Room Rental	125
Office Supplies	53
Telephone	305
Legal or Accounting Expense	175
State Taxes	25
Travel	676
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 6,544</b>

Net Income: **\$ 1,397**

### Balance on hand as of December 31, 2008:

Checking account:	2,343
Savings account:	8,031
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$ 10,374</b>

## Save A Tree

Give us your email address so that we can send you a reminder for the annual meeting and our newsletter via email. We do not sell or share our addresses. Please note it on the form on the back of this newsletter or send an email to:

[fcap@uuprinceton.org](mailto:fcap@uuprinceton.org)

## Want to Help?

We could use people twice a year to help stick address labels on envelopes and newsletters. Join us. It's fun! Call 924-3320.

## Need A Speaker?

We'd love to speak to your organization, class, club or religious group. We can get you started on your funeral education, help you figure out what you want and get on the road to becoming a savvy shopper. Call 430-7250.

## Visit Our Website

We are at [www.princetonol.com/groups/fcap](http://www.princetonol.com/groups/fcap) and [www.princetons.org/fcap](http://www.princetons.org/fcap). While you're at it, check out the national Funeral Consumers Alliance site at [www.funerals.org](http://www.funerals.org). They are the watchdog over all Federal regulation of the funeral industry and help us monitor regulatory action in New Jersey. See the list of nationwide affiliates. Find loads of consumer information.

## Funeral Consumers Alliance of Princeton

50 Cherry Hill Road, Princeton, NJ 08540

(609) 924-3320

email: [fcap@uuprinceton.org](mailto:fcap@uuprinceton.org)

web: [www.princetonol.com/groups/fcap](http://www.princetonol.com/groups/fcap)

### Board of Directors

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## Moving?

If you are moving, please let us know. Your mail will only be forwarded for three months and after that we will lose track of your whereabouts. Not only does this cost us a bundle in postage (we have almost 100 returned items with every mailing), but it costs us hours of volunteer time re-mailing and updating our database. Another advantage to telling us is that we can assist in successful transfer of your membership to a cooperating FCA where you're going!

## Newsletter Editors

Henry J. Powsner & Laurie R. Powsner

## Funeral Consumers Alliance of Princeton FUNERAL DIRECTORS AND PRICES 2009

The funeral directors listed on the other side have given us prices for simple cremations and burials. We do not have a contract with any of them and the prices may change. Some of the funeral homes on this list give our members substantial discounts (reflected in listed prices). Others are included because the fees published in their General Price List are within the range of our cooperating funeral directors. These prices are for simple cremations and burials. The services are precisely defined below. Please read these definitions carefully.

Educate yourself about disposition options, speak with family, friends and clergy and decide what you would like for your final arrangements. If you want a direct cremation or burial, select one of these funeral directors and so indicate on your Expression of Personal Wishes form. If you want a full service funeral, call or visit one or more of these funeral directors and plan the details. Funeral homes are required by law to provide you with a price list for services offered. Have the funeral director provide you with a signed copy of the expense estimate for the arrangements. Attach a copy of this estimate to each copy of your Expression of Personal Wishes form and give to your family, friends and clergy. Whether or not you make your arrangements now, file this list with your expression-of-wishes form where they can be easily found. We do not encourage pre-paying.

We will send you an updated list once a year. We especially solicit your comments on your experience with the funeral directors. Your comments will enable us to serve our members better. If you have questions or comments please let us know.

**PLAN I – DIRECT CREMATION** - The funeral director will call for the body within the radius of miles specified, provide a death certificate and cremation permit, place the body in a minimum container acceptable to crematory, and arrange and pay for cremation. Cremation will occur within 48 hours if there is no embalming. Family may attend cremation if desired. Local delivery of ashes will be made in a simple container to family member or designated representative. Assistance with Social Security and veteran's benefits will be provided. **The following, if requested/required, may incur additional cost:** Mailing of ashes, urn, embalming, viewing, funeral service, disposal of ashes, vault or grave liner (sometimes required by the cemetery), grave plot and opening and closing of grave (charged by the cemetery), headstone or marker (charged by the monument maker), etc.

**PLAN II – DIRECT BURIAL** - The funeral director will call for the body within the radius of miles specified, provide a death certificate and burial permit, place the body in a modest casket of the funeral director's choosing and arrange for interment at a designated cemetery. Burial will be private and needs to occur within 48 hours of death if there is no embalming. Assistance with Social Security and veteran's benefits claims provided. **The following, if requested/required, may incur additional cost:** Embalming, viewing, funeral service, upgraded casket, vault or grave liner (often required by the cemetery), grave plot and opening and closing of grave (charged by the cemetery), headstone or marker (charged by the monument maker), etc.

**PLAN III – PREPLANNED FULL SERVICE FUNERAL** - The funeral director will call for the body within the radius of miles specified, provide a death certificate and burial permit, provide embalming, cosmetology and dressing if requested, place the body in a modest casket of the funeral directors choosing, provide use of funeral home for funeral service with one hour prior visitation, arrange for interment at a designated cemetery, transport body to cemetery for graveside service and burial. Assistance with Social Security and veteran's benefits claims will be provided. **The following, if requested/required, may incur additional cost:** Hearse, upgraded casket, additional visitation time, vault or grave liner (often required by the cemetery), grave plot and opening and closing of grave (charged by the cemetery), headstone or marker (charged by the monument maker), etc.

## COOPERATING FUNERAL DIRECTORS AND PRICES 2009

The prices quoted are for the minimum service cremations and burials described on the reverse. Mileage refers to the distance the funeral director will travel to reach the pick up site without additional charge.

FUNERAL HOME	PLAN I	PLAN II	PLAN III	MILES
-	\$450	\$700	\$2,000	50
-	\$695	\$930	\$2,246	30
-	\$825	\$925	\$2,200	30
-	\$850	\$1,000	\$1,970	60
-	\$895	\$1,270	N/A	20
-	\$950	\$1,300	\$2,246	40
-	\$1,095	\$1,160	\$2,246	10
-	\$1,135	\$1,150	\$2,246	35
-	\$1,400	\$1,970	\$2,246	25

Except in special cases, embalming is not required by New Jersey law, provided burial or cremation takes place within 48 hours. The charge for embalming is included in Plan III. The casket included in the Plan II and III package price is usually cloth-covered or laminate-coated fiberboard or minimum metal. Upgraded caskets may be purchased from the funeral home for an additional charge, starting at \$200 – \$810. Consumers may make their own or buy a coffin from another source or online. Caskets available online start at about \$400 plus delivery.

Ashes are generally returned in a cardboard or plastic container. Upgraded urns may be purchased from the funeral home for an additional charge, starting at \$70 – \$125. You may use a container you already have (e.g., a vase with a lid) or obtain one elsewhere.

Some funeral directors are willing to come to your home to discuss arrangements. For Plans I and II, it is often not necessary to visit the funeral home as arrangements and payment can be made over the phone.

Funeral directors can accommodate all religious needs and many are happy to work with those requesting viewing at home instead of at a religious institution or funeral home.

## Books for Sale

\_\_ ***Putting My House in Order*** We created this comprehensive workbook for you to fill-in-the-blanks with all the information your survivors will need when you're gone ..... **\$1.50**

\_\_ ***I Died Laughing: Funeral Education with a Light Touch*** by Lisa Carlson. Dear Abby says "This book proves that dying can be a laughing matter." softcover ..... **\$8.75**

\_\_ ***Dealing Creatively with Death: A Manual of Death Education and Simple Burial*** by Ernest Morgan. It's focus on the emotional and economic costs of death is unparalleled. (cover price \$12.95) softcover..... **\$6.00**

\_\_ ***The American Way of Death Revisited*** by Jessica Mitford. Almost unforgivably funny, this exposé of the funeral industry was a number one bestseller and is a model of muckraking (cover price \$25.00) hardcover ..... **\$20.00**

\_\_ ***Caring for the Dead: Your Final Act of Love*** by Lisa Carlson. Information-packed guide to working without a funeral director, includes state laws (cover price \$29.95) softcover . **\$20.00**

\_\_ ***You Only Die Once: Preparing for the End of Life With Grace and Gusto*** by Margie Jenkins. A handbook for preparing for the end of life. (cover price \$12.99) softcover..... **\$10.00**

- Enclosed, please find my/our tax deductible contribution of: \$50 \$75 \$100 \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- I am interested in supporting FCAP through planned giving. Please contact me.
- I am interested in having a speaker from FCAP at my group. Please contact me.
- I am interested in the possibility of serving on the board. Please contact me.
- I am interested in the benefits of membership in FCAP. Please send me a brochure.
- I would like to become a member. Enclosed please find my check for \$25 for an individual plus \$10 for each additional household member.
- I would like to give a membership as a gift. Enclosed please find my check for \$25 for an individual plus \$10 for each additional household member.
- Please send the books indicated above and the pamphlets indicated on the reverse.

Please make check payable to: *FCAP, Inc.*

Names: (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about us? \_\_\_\_\_

This membership is a gift from \_\_\_\_\_

## Free Pamphlets

- \_\_\_ *Ten Tips for Saving Funeral \$\$\$*
- \_\_\_ *Common Funeral Myths*
- \_\_\_ *Viewing and Visitation: The Difference*
- \_\_\_ *Prepaying Your Funeral: Benefits and Dangers*
- \_\_\_ *Veterans' Funeral and Burial Benefits*
- \_\_\_ *What You Should Know About Embalming*
- \_\_\_ *Cremation Explained*
- \_\_\_ *Earth Burial: A Tradition in Simplicity*
- \_\_\_ *Organ and Body Donation*
- \_\_\_ *How to File a Funeral or Cemetery Complaint*
- \_\_\_ *Death Away From Home*
- \_\_\_ *What Shall We Do With the Ashes?*
- \_\_\_ *Eco-Friendly Death and Funeral Choices*
- \_\_\_ *How to Read a General Price List*
- \_\_\_ *Recycle Your Medical Devices*
- \_\_\_ *Expression of Personal Wishes*
- \_\_\_ *Living Will/Advance Directive*
- \_\_\_ *Nationwide Directory of Affiliates*
- \_\_\_ *Beat the High Cost of Funerals: Benefits of Membership in a Funeral Consumers Group*
- \_\_\_ *"Simple and Cheap" My Father Said* by the daughter of Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black
- \_\_\_ *Membership brochures to share with friends*

### **Our Mission**

*To promote informed advance planning for funeral and memorial arrangements*

**Dated material — please deliver promptly**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Funeral Consumers Alliance of Princeton**  
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Princeton, NJ 08540

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