



In Touch

FUNERAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Associated with Funeral Consumers Alliance of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties

You'd best save up because (*breaking news*)



You Can't Die for Free

Even if there is no funeral or memorial service and no medical expenses associated to dying, there will always be costs for dealing with the dead body. In California, there are as yet only three legal ways to deal with human remains. These are, in descending order of cost: burial, cremation, and pre-arranged whole body donation. (Bodies of organ and tissue donors will be returned to the families for burial or cremation.) Whole-body burial at sea is also available for service members.

Burial, even green burial, will always be the most expensive way to deal with human remains, because there is an obligation for cemeteries to be tended in perpetuity—lawns mowed, trees trimmed, flowers planted—jobs for which people must be paid. In some countries, grave space is rented for a finite time and families are expected to do the upkeep. In the US, families can decorate the grave with flowers, but mowing the lawn (or monitoring the ecosystem in a green cemetery) is a paid job. Forever.

Cremation, on the other hand, does not involve paying for anything in perpetuity, unless you bury or store the ashes in a cemetery or columbarium, in which case, see above. So the price of cremation can be quite a bit less than the price of burial. Of course, there are a lot of ways to spend your money doing something with the ashes—scattering them at sea or from airplanes, storing them in columbaria in elegant urns, making them into jewelry or concrete reef balls—but there is no requirement to do anything at all with ashes.

Whole body donation—if the body is accepted—comes with the smallest price tag, usually consisting only of paying for copies of the death certificate. The institutions that accept

donated bodies will usually pick them up at no charge, and will pay for cremation when they are done with the body. But whole-body donation requires advance planning by the donating individual—it is not something your cash-strapped family can choose for you after you die. And even if you sign up to donate your body, there are numerous reasons why the donation might not be accepted when the time comes, such as infectious disease, over-sized body, excessive trauma, etc.

Our FCA/FEF office receives calls every day from people trying to figure out how to pay for someone's death, because nobody made any advance plans or saved up any money. We can help out with member discounts, but there is no free lunch. Or free death.

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FALL 2012 Issue

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DID YOU KNOW?

FCA/FEF Board meetings are held the first Monday of each month from 11am-1pm at the Friends Meeting House, 957 Colorado Ave., Palo Alto. ALL ARE WELCOME!

Death is not the end. There remains litigation over the estate.

~ Ambrose Bierce ~



FCA/FEF had a table at the Senior Showcase Information Faire at Little House in Menlo Park in August where we provided information and answered questions about death care choices and consumer rights.

Totten Trusts? POD Account??

When we recommend not to pre-pay your funeral arrangements, we usually recommend saving up for the necessary expenses using a Totten Trust, also known as a POD (payable-on-death) account. Your bank may never have heard of these. A POD account is a simple savings account with a beneficiary. You have sole control of the account when you are alive; your designated beneficiary uses the money for your death care.

Board Members Tour Local Vault Manufacturer

Educating ourselves in order to educate the public. That was the thought when three members of the FCA/FEF board of directors recently toured the Christy Vault Company facility in Colma, where concrete vaults of various types are produced right on the premises.

We saw the whole process of how vaults are constructed starting with the computer-managed mixing of the concrete from quality components, pouring it into molds, painting the vault exteriors, installing the waterproof linings and hardware, to the final products ready to deliver to northern and central California cemeteries.

These 3,000-lb. vaults are the underground boxes used by most cemeteries to enclose the caskets and prevent the indentation that would otherwise form in the earth over a decomposing casket. These indentations, often seen in old graveyards, cause the tombstones to lean or topple, and hinder efficient lawn mowing.



Worker pours concrete into a mold for these locally-produced vaults.

We also learned that high quality vaults are valued by families hoping to keep beautiful caskets dry and longer-lasting.

Christy sells only to cemeteries and funeral homes, not directly to the public. The company was formed in the 1940s by the Christensen family as an expansion of their former business of making concrete fountains and other lawn ornaments. Hal Wilkes, executive director of sales, led the tour, aided by Allan Hutty, a member of the FCA/FEF Advisory Council. Others in the group were Deborah Meckler, Roberta Bailey, and Marjorie Bridges.

Wilkes showed the group other products that Christy Vault Co handles, including a new kind of columbarium niche that provides subtly-lit cubicles for displaying the urns while excluding dust and insects. We saw displays of elegant full-size urns, smaller “keepsake urns,” and jewelry made to enclose bits of cremated remains, all handmade by local artists and artisans.

We will be happy to arrange a tour for our members if there is sufficient interest. Call our office at 650-321-2109, email us at office@fcapeninsula.org, or mark your remit envelopes to indicate your interest in a tour of Christy Vault Company.



Allan Hutty, FCA/FEF Advisory Council, Hal Wilkes of Christy Vault Co, Bobbi Bailey and Deborah Meckler of the FCA/FEF Board, view sample vaults.

FCA State Meeting October 27

A conference for representatives from the 12 California FCA affiliates will be held on Saturday, October 27, 10:00am to 3:30pm, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 330 Ravenswood Ave. , Menlo Park. Lunch will be served. All local FCA members are welcome. There is a registration fee. Registration deadline is 10/25. Speakers include:

John Eric Rolfstad, Executive Director of People’s Memorial Assn., the original FCA affiliate, formed in 1939, will speak on “Changing with the Times: How the Oldest FCA Has Survived and Grown”.

Terri Montgomery, CPA and specialist in tax accounting for non-profits, will speak on “Exempt Organizations’ Tax Issues.” She is a graduate of CSU Hayward and holds an MBA.

Richard M. Fisher, greater Bay Area Field Representative of the California Cemetery and Funeral Bureau, will speak on “Routine Compliance Inspections.”

Call the office or sign up online at www.fcapeninsula.org.

Death by the Numbers for San Mateo & Santa Clara Counties

Death rate per year:	~6 per 1000
Number of deaths/year:	15,000
Acres of grave space per year if everyone is buried: (using 4’x8’ grave plots)	11
Pounds of CO ₂ released per year if everyone is cremated:	8.1 million
# of households whose annual energy needs could be met from cremation energy used:	312

Mollie Stone’s supermarket’s Community Card will donate a portion of what you spend to FCA. Sign up for painless giving! Details at www.fcapeninsula.org.

Bill Streamlines Surplus Drug Distribution

A bill that would make it easier for surplus, unopened medication to be donated to uninsured Californians is on Gov. Brown's desk.

The State Senate recently passed Senator Joe Simitian's (D-Palo Alto) SB 1329.

Counties have been allowed to establish such programs since 2005. This new bill would streamline the process. Since 2009, drug redistribution programs in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties have helped thousands of uninsured patients and redistributed 230,000 pills with an estimated value of \$600,000.

According to Simitian's office, billions of dollars worth of unused medicine and supplies are wasted in the United States each year.

"This is a creative, commonsense way to get perfectly good medicine – medicine that might otherwise be thrown out, or dumped in our water supply – into the hands of the people who need it the most," Simitian said. "This is particularly important during this tough economy when many Californians are struggling."

Specifically, SB 1329 allows a greater number of health care facilities to donate surplus, unopened, unexpired medications to Californians in need; permits non-profit community clinics and certain pharmacies to receive the donated medications; and makes it easier for county boards of supervisors or county public health officials to initiate a drug redistribution program.

The bill was sponsored by SIRUM (Supporting Initiatives to Redistribute Unused Medicine), a nonprofit founded at Stanford.

The Governor has until September 30 to act on the measure.

Search Your Memory...

Okay, all you very-long-time members, time for a trip down memory lane. Our organization has been around for 60 years—since 1952—and we would like to celebrate our founders for their energy and foresight in creating such a long-lasting community service organization. Can you tell us anything about any of these first 30 members (listed below) of Peninsula Funeral Society (now Funeral Consumers Alliance)? Are any still alive? **We especially want to know more about the very first member, Londa S. Fletcher.** Do you have any pictures of these folks? Newspaper or newsletter articles? Any personal memories? If you can tell us anything, indicate on your remit envelope or call or email the office so that we can follow up.

Things were different in the beginning years. Multiple family members at the same address could share a \$10 membership. All record-keeping for the organization was on paper, and all business was conducted via telephone or postal mail. Technology has made some stuff easier, but extracting information about the past will require your help.

What can you tell us about these 30 founding members?

Bartholomew Family
 Albert H. Bowker
 Ernest A. Brittain
 Gordon I. Cook
 Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Duncan
 Frank B. Duveneck (died 1986)
 Londa S. Fletcher (died 1965)
 George A. Forrester
 Etta Gibson
 Louise Wilson Gordon
 E. Pearl Hannah
 Grace A. Higbee
 Zenna E. Higgins
 Hartley V. Houseman
 B. F. Jakobsen

Dorothy A. Kimball
 Theo J. Krepes
 Mabel W. Lichtgarn
 Otis L. Linn (wife went to L.A.)
 Mrs. John McDowell
 Menlo Funeral Home
 Adeline C. Nevin (died 1968)
 Willie H. Rich
 William D. Shreve
 Robert Simpson
 Martha B. Sirgo
 Warner M. Skiff
 Sherman D. Thacher
 Ingegerd Uppmann
 Ruth Vredenburgh

Board/Personnel Matters

Due to recent health-related resignations, the FCA/FEF board of directors is at a low level and needs interested members who would be willing to serve for 6 months until the next election, possibly running for a full elected term in April. Phone immediately to Deborah at 650-878-4835. We are so sorry to lose Katoko Sax, Jim Reese, Ann Nola, and Carl Ditmore who served us well and faithfully.

Currently serving Board members are Deborah Meckler, Marjorie Bridges, Bobbi Bailey, Allan Behr, Byron Chan, Nora Nolden, Dick Roe, and Ray Sowards.

Also, the board is looking for some specialists to volunteer to be on our Advisory Council: a physician, a hospice employee, a PR/marketing person, and an accountant.

Finally, we are looking for a librarian. This will be someone who can come into our office to organize and catalog our brochures, books, and audio-visual materials. Ideally this person could also help consolidate and update some of our outdated and duplicative brochures.

Call us or send an email to president@fcapeninsula if you are interested in any of these opportunities.

Help Wanted

The 2012 survey of mortuary prices has begun. We are looking for volunteers to telephone or visit a few (3 or so) funeral homes to get information and prices. We provide instructions and a script. Each call, with prep time, takes about 20 minutes.

We need more people to help in the 408 and 415 area codes. When we finish Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco Counties and get the prices posted on our website, we will start on East Bay and Marin-Sonoma prices (area codes 510, 925 and 707) so will need volunteers in those areas, too.

If you can help, mark the remit envelope or phone the office.



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Visit us on the web! www.fcapeninsula.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Dedicated to protecting the right to choose meaningful, dignified, affordable death care, and to providing information to help make these choices.

New Cemetery

A new **Veteran's Cemetery** is in the planning stage for the Bay Area, on 53 acres at Alameda Point. It will be only for cremated remains, placed in outdoor walls. The niches will be low enough for people to touch the cubicles in which their loved ones are interred. The opening date has not yet been announced.

The two nearest national veterans cemeteries in the Bay Area are now closed to new burials, so space is badly needed for the other 322,000 local veterans. The two closest options are in Dixon and at Santa Nella in San Joaquin Valley. Check our web page for all VA cemeteries in California.

A friend of mine stopped smoking, drinking, overeating and chasing women all at the same time. It was a lovely funeral.
~ Unknown ~

News You Can Use

Governor Jerry Brown has signed SB 661, which bars protesters from demonstrating within 300 feet of a funeral venue. Violators would face a fine and up to six months in jail. Brown vetoed a previous bill that would have kept demonstrations back 1000 feet.

On August 17, the California Department of Public Health (DPH) issued a permit to the UCLA Donated Body Program for the first alkaline hydrolysis unit in the state of California. The process uses only 1/8th as much energy as cremation. Legislation to make alkaline hydrolysis more widely available in California is currently stalled.

Gov. Jerry Brown signed AB 1777 that establishes an industry-wide standard for environmentally-friendly cremation urns or "scattering urns"—containers that dissolve within four hours of being placed at sea. Assemblywoman Fiona Ma (D-San Francisco) said the bill was needed because beachgoers, surfers and swimmers throughout California were finding urns that were intact or only partially dissolved.

Recommended for adults who want to laugh is a British film called "Death at a Funeral," released in 2007 and available through Netflix and other sources. It will give you belly laughs as you see how a typical home funeral could go awry. There is a 2010 American remake out there, too, featuring stars you will recognize. Roger Ebert of the Chicago Sun-Times gave the film 3 1/2 out of 4 stars, saying "Here's the best comedy since The Hangover," and that "a lot of Death at a Funeral is in very bad taste. That's when I laughed the most."

At the time of death whole body, organs, skin, bone, and eyes are priceless human contributions. Time is a factor but age is not. Organs must be removed before the kidney and heart cease function, eyes within 12 hours and other tissues within 24 hours of death. Organ and tissue donation does not alter funeral arrangements. There is no greater gift than the "gift of life". www.donatelifecalifornia.org

What will happen to your pets if they outlive you? If your pet doesn't have a "god-parent,"

consider a pet retirement home or pet sanctuary, or set up a pet trust. A local organization can help you make plans for the continuing care of your pets: 2nd Chance 4 Pets in Los Gatos, www.2ndchance4pets.org.

Our FCA office recently changed over to a new, less expensive internet-based phone system. During the transition we missed quite a few calls and messages. We apologize and ask that you try again. And because we are no longer with AT&T, we won't be listed in the White Pages and won't receive any phone books. SO...will some kind souls provide us with their old San Jose, Sunnyvale, Gilroy, San Mateo, Oakland, Berkeley, San Francisco and Marin, etc., area directories when you get your new ones? Call first before bringing them over. Thanks!

Jennifer Harris and Margie Bridges of the FEF Speakers Bureau will present "Are You Good To Go" for the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Sunnyvale at 11:30am Sunday, Oct. 14, 1112 S. Bernardo Ave, Sunnyvale. The public is welcome.