



# In Touch

Bay Area Funeral Consumers Association

[www.ba-fca.org](http://www.ba-fca.org)

463 College Avenue  
P.O. Box 60448  
Palo Alto, CA 94306  
(650) 321-2109

FALL 2016 Issue

## Digging into Cemeteries

You know about, and have been using (we hope), the mortuary price comparisons we post on our website ([www.ba-fca.org](http://www.ba-fca.org)) for the Bay Area Counties. Collecting comparable price information from funeral homes is no easy task, as you may know if you have ever attempted to decipher a General Price List, which mortuaries are mandated by law to provide to you upon request. But if mortuary prices are hard to compare, the effort to collect and compare cemetery prices is an order of magnitude more difficult. Not only are cemeteries not required to provide a price list, but there are so many wrinkles to the types of "product" they provide that finding ways to compare apples and apples, as it were, is quite a challenge. Single and double-depth graves, location of the plot within the cemetery, earth burial vs mausoleum interment for bodies, urn burial or niche enurnment for ashes.

But intrepid researchers at BA-FCA have started on that very project, and have now collected and analyzed enough information for Alameda County cemeteries to post up a report for public consumption on our website.

There were surprises. Some cemeteries are running out of land; some can only offer mausoleums for full body burial. We decided to include in the survey only those who had burial/niche space to sell.

Alameda has a lot of historic cemeteries, 11 out of the 17 cemeteries were formed before 1900. Six cemeteries are 5 acres or less. The largest is

Mountain View, with 226 acres. Holy Sepulchre is almost as large, with 200 acres.

Five are operated by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Oakland; three by Northstar Memorial Group, LLC; and two are operated by Jewish congregations. The rest are run by associations, corporations, a monument company, and a city. Municipal and religious cemeteries are not licensed, and are subject only to health and safety regulations.

The lowest priced full body burial plots for one will run \$4,000 to \$5,000 (including vault or liner, endowment care, opening and closing the grave, and transfer fee) according to information provided to us. But at some cemeteries the lowest cost plots available will be just under \$10,000.

Most had a variety of ways to inter ashes. Irvington Memorial had the lowest cost option; \$723, closely followed by Lone Tree with the \$980 wall niche. Several others had prices below \$2,000. For other cemeteries the lowest cost was \$4,900. These prices are for everything needed to inter one urn.

We counted seven cemeteries with crematories; only three cemeteries did not also sell monuments.

Thanks go to Demaris Thelemaque and Margie Bridges for helping with the Alameda survey. Watch the website for cemetery prices in other counties around San Francisco. The speed of completion depends on the number of volunteer hours available. If you can make a couple calls or more, sign up on the remit envelope!

## End of Life Options...or not

California's End-of-Life-Options Act took effect on June 9 of this year, allowing terminally ill patients to request a lethal prescription from their physicians so that they could control their own end. Turns out the hard part is to find a physician who will agree to write the prescription. Any physician can "opt out" of the program, i.e., refuse to prescribe the pills. Even in organizations like Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Health, and UCSF, that are writing policies to implement the new law, no physician can be compelled to participate. And whole organizations such as Catholic hospitals are simply opting out entirely.

Compassion and Choices, a non-profit promoting end-of-life choices, has listed participating hospitals and health systems, but finding a willing physician can still be a challenge. The San Jose Mercury News ([www.mercurynews.com/2016/09/17/terminally-ill-californians-struggling-to-find-doctors-to-help-with-aid-in-dying/](http://www.mercurynews.com/2016/09/17/terminally-ill-californians-struggling-to-find-doctors-to-help-with-aid-in-dying/)) has noted that a Berkeley physician, Dr. Lonny Shavelson, has a practice devoted to helping patients under the new law.

Among other complications is that a patient has to be of sound mind to qualify for life-ending medication, so the law does not apply to dementia and Alzheimer's patients.

So, some cautionary advice: talk to your physician soon and often about his/her position on writing the prescription. Do not wait until you are terminally ill. And make your request for the life-ending pills BEFORE you go on any pain meds (e.g., opiates) that could muddle your brain and call into question your soundness of mind.

### Inside this issue:

Digging Into Cemeteries	1
End of Life Options...or not	1
A Plot to Raise Funds	2
Funeral Complaint Phones	2
Volunteers Needed	2
Tributes	2
Euphemistically Dead	3
An Open Letter of Thanks	3
Changes to Price List	3
Outreach	3
(Amazon) Smile!	4
News You Can Use	4

### Welcome to our new friends!

Since we have recently expanded to serve the East Bay, some senior centers and hospices in the East Bay will be getting their first issue of our semi-annual newsletter. We hope the information will be useful!

### MEMBERS: Update your Info

Do you have a new address? A new phone number? Have you given us your next-of-kin information? Your date of birth? Have you decided or changed your mind about the mortuary you want to use? WE NEED TO KNOW! And we especially need a good email address for you. Send an email to [office@ba-fca.org](mailto:office@ba-fca.org) with your updated info. Or go online to [www.ba-fca.org/MemUpdateForm.html](http://www.ba-fca.org/MemUpdateForm.html). Or call or drop by or send the info via US Mail. We accept all forms of communication!

**Churchill's commentary on Man:**  
Man will occasionally stumble over the truth, but most of the time he will pick himself up and continue on

## A Plot to Raise Funds

Out of the blue, BA-FCA got a phone call wondering if we could accept a cemetery plot as a donation, no strings attached. The family that owned the plot did not need it, as everyone was planning to be cremated and scattered in a certain place. Nor did the family know how to go about selling it, so they would rather donate it to a good cause. As it happens, BA-FCA is a good cause and we do know how to go about reselling cemetery plots from our occasional interactions with cemetery brokers. And we certainly can use the proceeds to prop up our scrawny shoe-string finances.

So we accepted the plot and are offering it for sale. DETAILS:

Lot number 1145 is located within the popular (and sold-out) Garden of Peace at the Oak Hill Cemetery in San Jose. The going rate for property in that area of the cemetery is \$13,900, but this plot is listed for \$9,885. This includes burial for two persons (double-depth), the lawn crypts, a concrete base set for a plaque, and endowment fee. The only other expenses will be a transfer fee and the cost of opening and closing the grave twice. The lot is in an attractive setting, surrounded by mausoleums on three sides, with easy access to the road on the other.



Look into this if you need a cemetery plot for two! Call 650-321-2109 or email our office at [office@ba-fca.org](mailto:office@ba-fca.org) if you are interested in looking at it. All offers considered.

We will be using the services of Allan Hutty, sales rep from California Cemetery Brokers, to complete the sale and legal paperwork. Allan is a member of the BA-FCA Advisory Council and a strong supporter of BA-FCA.

People's Memorial Association in Seattle, a sister affiliate of FCA, Inc., national, also has been accepting plots and niches for resale, so there is precedent for this. Our program is similar to theirs.

### **DONATE YOUR UNUSED CEMETERY PLOT**

As a 501c3 organization, donations to BA-FCA are tax deductible for the full worth of the property—in the above case, for the value of \$13,900. So if you have unwanted cemetery property and would enjoy a large charitable tax deduction come next tax time, donate it now! There is a form ([www.ba-fca.org/BurialPlotDonationFormBAFCA.pdf](http://www.ba-fca.org/BurialPlotDonationFormBAFCA.pdf)) on our website (for people wanting to donate their unneeded cemetery property to BA-FCA). It's a win-win program.

## Funeral Complaint Phones

**Federal Trade Commission:** (877) 382-4357 or (415) 848-5100

**California Cemetery and Funeral Bureau:** (800) 952-5210 or (916) 574-7870

**California Attorney General:** (800) 952-5225 or (916) 322-3360

Or your county's District Attorney

## Volunteers Needed

The Board of Directors and office manager can't do it all! Please lend a hand to keep our services available.

### **No volunteers = no BA-FCA.**

What can you do to keep us going?

1. Serve as a board member, or nominate someone who would be interested.
2. Be your county's Liaison to the BA-FCA board, or suggest a leader.
3. Become a speaker for organizations in your county, after training.
4. Help staff the BA-FCA table occasionally at health and senior fairs in your county.
5. Serve on the Mortuary/Cemetery Committee--help do surveys, mortuary visits, phoning, or internet research.
6. Audit our finances in January with a second person.
7. Serve on a committee: Newsletter, Fund Raising, Office Helpers.
8. Be our Webmaster.
9. Be technical adviser for software, computers, website, or social media.
10. Train to be treasurer.
11. Be on planning committee for annual meeting or a workshop.

What's your line? Call Margie Bridges for more information, 650-325-2000.

*IN TOUCH* is issued twice a year from the offices of Bay Area Funeral Consumers Association, 463 College Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306

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## Tributes

### **With thanks to these donors**

Each year our organization receives gifts made to honor respected individuals or in memory of loved ones who are missed. Below are the financial tributes we have acknowledged since the last newsletter:

**Rick Bridges**, from Marjorie Bridges

**Gisele Elly**, from Bernard Henschke

**Barbara & Kathy Gado**, from Louis Gado

**Al Meckler**, from Deborah Meckler

**Lois Salo**, from Miriam Salo

**Susanna Wallace**, from Donald Wallace

## Euphemistically Dead

A lot of people have trouble saying the word “died” when referring to a loved one. Too harsh, too cold, too final. Not surprisingly therefore, there are over 100 euphemisms for death, some gentle (“left this world”, “slipped away”) some flippant (“bought the farm”, “croaked”) some spiritual (“went home”, “entered eternal rest”) but all used so as not to say that dreaded d-word. Legacy.com analyzed obituaries from around the nation and compiled the most-used euphemisms by state. Most common (12 states) and not a euphemism at all was the straightforward “died”, followed by “entered eternal rest” (8 states) and “departed” (6 states). In only three states was “passed away” most commonly used in obituaries, though this seems to be the one most commonly used when speaking on the subject.

Just for your amusement, here are, in alphabetical order, a sampling of some of the more flippant euphemisms: at room temperature, bit the dust, cashed out, ceased to be, checked out, expired, faded away, feeding the worms, flatlined, gave up the ghost, got his wings, immortality-challenged, joined ones ancestors, liquidated, met ones maker, out of business, playing a harp, pushing up daisies, shuffled off this mortal coil (Shakespeare), six feet under, sleeping with the fishes, snuffed out, terminated, walked the plank, and went to the happy hunting grounds.

So whether you decide to kick the bucket or rest in peace, we hope it all happens far in the future!

## Changes to Price List

Several changes were made this summer to our List of Cooperating Mortuaries, so it would be well to examine your funeral plans to ensure the mortuary still reflects what you want. The complete list can be found at [www.ba-fca.org/COOPERATING\\_MORTUARIES.pdf](http://www.ba-fca.org/COOPERATING_MORTUARIES.pdf).

Alameda Family Funeral Service and Beddingfield Funeral Services sent in their resignations. BA-FCA has notified you if our records show you have chosen one of those mortuaries. We do not know everyone’s choice, so check your planning sheet.

Fortunately, two other funeral homes were happy to join our list— Fernwood Funeral Home and Cemetery in Mill Valley and Byrgan Cremation and Burial in Los Gatos.

Fernwood contains an historic section with upright monuments, plus a green cemetery adjoining the Golden Gate National Recreation Area where the only grave markers are natural boulders and only biodegradable materials are allowed in the graves, providing a National Wildlife Federation Certified Habitat. There is a Gan Yurok Jewish section and a crematory on the grounds, too. Owners are Yogu Kanthiah & Tyler Cassity, who also own Forever Hollywood cemetery.

Byrgan used to be a cooperating mortuary when under different ownership. It is now owned by the Habing family, who also run a long-standing mortuary and cemeteries in south Santa Clara County. They use local churches or the Habing Funeral Home Chapel in Gilroy for funeral services, and Gavilan Hills Crematory for cremations.

Another change in the Cooperating Mortuaries Price Sheet is a lower cremation price at A Special Touch Cremation and Funeral Service. It is now \$995 for the basic cremation.

## Open Letter of Thanks

from Byron Chan, Treasurer

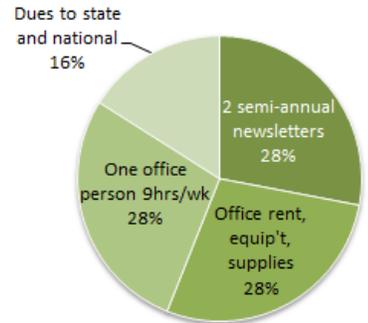
Thank you for your continuing support of BA-FCA and its mission to bring vital information to the public about death care and end-of-life issues.

We would like you to know how your memberships and donations are being spent. Our annual budget runs about \$25,000, with this approximate breakdown: \$7000 for two newsletters mailed to ~2500 members and friends, \$7000 for office rental and equipment expense, \$7000 payroll expense for one employee for 9 hours/week, and \$4000 for dues to state and national affiliates. We attempt to take in each year at least as much as we carefully spend, and we generally succeed. All donations help.

But mere figures cannot tell the whole story of the dedication of the handful of individuals that keep the organization running and fulfilling its mission. All the outreach, research, web work, technical issues, and board activities are performed by volunteers. And we LOVE help.

As a 501c3 non-profit, all donations to BA-FCA are fully tax deductible. Memberships and donations make up our income. We thank you for all your generous contributions.

BA-FCA Budget



## Outreach

by Jennifer Harris, Outreach Coordinator

BA-FCA reaches out to the public in a variety of modes. Our Speakers Bureau took to the road a dozen times this year with a lively and informative presentation called *Are You Good to Go?*, which we present free to community groups such as churches, senior centers, businesses, and libraries. We educate people on earth burial, cremation, body donation, and new trends in death care. We address the need to plan, how to save precious dollars, and we explode myths.

We also take our information to public health and information fairs, where we staff a table, hand out brochures, and answer questions.

Senior Roundtable events are held monthly in most of the Bay Area counties. By attending, BA-FCA offers a chance to let other organizations know we exist and to network with organizations doing related work, such as service providers for seniors. We also attend monthly gatherings of Points of Life, which is another networking group for entities addressing seniors’ needs.

And finally, we have an information-packed website available to anyone with an internet connection ([www.ba-fca.org](http://www.ba-fca.org)). Here you will find information on prices, laws and regulations, facts vs myths, home funerals, body donation, how to plan, interesting trends, and much more.

All of these activities and resources are provided by volunteers. If you enjoy public speaking or meeting new people, we welcome your participation. Call us at 650-321-2109 or email us at [office@ba-fca.org](mailto:office@ba-fca.org). If you have a community group looking for death-care information, let us know.



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### RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

We are a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting the right to choose meaningful, dignified, affordable death care, and to providing information to help make these choices.

### SMILE!

You know that you can get about anything you want through Amazon.com, but did you also know that you can get Amazon to support your favorite non-profit every time you make a purchase? And at no extra cost to you! It is called **Amazon Smile**.

You just log in to your Amazon account through [Smile.Amazon.com/ch/94-3402027](http://Smile.Amazon.com/ch/94-3402027), and a portion of whatever you spend will be donated to BA-FCA! We have a direct link to Amazon Smile on our homepage ([www.ba-fca.org](http://www.ba-fca.org)). Be sure to bookmark it! Anything you can get through Amazon.com is available through Amazon Smile. So now when you make a purchase, your money will go farther than ever!

**Before I Go, You Should Know**—This \$15 booklet contains useful forms (powers of attorney, advance directives, etc) and lots more! Order by emailing [office@ba-fca.org](mailto:office@ba-fca.org) or calling 650-321-2109.

### News You Can Use

**Addition to Who Can Control Human Remains.** SB 1284 (Hernandez)—This bill amends the Section 7105 of Health and Safety Code to add the conservator of the person and a conservator of the estate to those who have the right to control the disposition of the remains of the deceased person.. The order is: agent under power of attorney for health care, surviving spouse, other specified relatives, and when sufficient assets, a conservator of the person, a conservator of the estate, and the public administrator. If the person (s) who would otherwise have control cannot be found in seven days, or fails to agree, the right would devolve to the person(s) next in kinship. The funeral home having possession of the remains may file a petition in Superior Court asking the court to decide upon a responsible party and direct them to make interment of the remains.

**One Less Place to Donate Your Body.** PathServe Tissue Bank has closed its facilities in San Carlos, but will retain its San Francisco office. Roman Karp, pathologist-owner, found that most of its business centered in the city. He will

try to accommodate previous arrangements for the Body Donation program. Address is P.O. Box 16510, San Francisco, 94116, phone 415/664-9686, email is [info@tissuebank.com](mailto:info@tissuebank.com). Bay Area residents still can donate their bodies to UC-San Francisco and Stanford University for medical training and research..

**Help for Caregivers.** Mills-Peninsula Health Services has a strong program of support groups for Caring for Elders; Loss, Grief, and Bereavement; and specific health problems; as well as classes and health screenings. Call 800-654-9966 for information about location and times in San Mateo County.

**Events at Mission Hospice.** Mission Hospice is showing free films, with popcorn and discussion, that are end-of-life related. The next two are: Thursdays, Oct. 13, 6:30 p.m. "Life Before Death." ([www.lifebeforedeath.com](http://www.lifebeforedeath.com)) and Nov. 10, 6:30 p.m., "Honor Flight," ([www.honorflightthemovie.org](http://www.honorflightthemovie.org)). The movies are screened at

1670 S. Amphlett Blvd., Ste. 300, San Mateo. Mission Hospice is also sponsoring "The Art of Saying Goodbye," coming Nov. 12 from 10 to 5, at Peninsula Jewish Community Center, 800 Foster City Blvd., Foster City. Facilitators will lead participants in a whole day exploration of loss, grief, and healing through the arts, with hands-on activities. Registration of \$80 (sliding scale) covers lunch and materials. RSVP or find more info at [MissionHospice.eventbrite.com](http://MissionHospice.eventbrite.com) or call Susan Barber at 650/532-2396. You can check their website at [missionhospice.org](http://missionhospice.org) for time of support groups and useful articles on end-of-life and grief.

**Honoring one of ours.** Our own Margie Bridges will be honored at the FCA California meeting in Fresno on Oct 22 for her many years of devoted service.

A recent study has found that women who carry a little extra weight live longer than the men who mention it