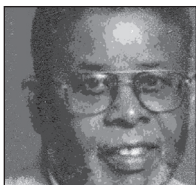


President's notes



Rising oil prices and record new participation in the electoral process, the threat of terrorist attacks and the miracle of childbirth, worldwide hunger and the growth of the ecology movement. All of these issues inspire thoughts and opinions that tease the psyche — save the miracle of birth and the certainty of death. Here is where truth and power unite.

It is my belief that when we are truthful to ourselves that is when we realize our power.

How many of us experience the effect of a super ordinate influence that shapes our choices and influences our behaviors? My guess is that it is not possible to let it happen consistently if we are awake.

What would happen if no one advocates for funeral consumers? People will still die. Loved ones or the State will handle the remains. Is there really a big deal?

We happen to think so. We happen to believe that emotional distance or guilt around imposed values need not increase the pain from the loss of a loved one. We believe in informed choices about last rites and we advocate the employment of pre-planning and clarification of the needs, wants and desires of all that are concerned when the certainty of death arrives.

This posture makes for controversy. There are people who challenge our practice of providing information.

The truth is that the power to decide as consumers may be periled by inactivity.

It is up to us, as consumers, to define what is of value and decide when and how to assign importance, what thoughts and feelings to engage, and how much and what kinds of energies to commit as a matter of choice.

Carter Stevenson
FCIS President

Your chance to play a part in something big: Join us for the FCIS annual meeting

The 2008 FCIS Annual Meeting convenes from 10 a.m. until noon on Saturday, June 14 at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Church, 23925 Northwestern Highway, Southfield.

First, we'll attend to business. Running for board positions are: Wendy Lyons, president; Holly Gilbert, VP; Tom Madsen, secretary; and Ray Bazmore; officer. Nominations from the floor are encouraged. We'll update you on our activities and Rev. Kimi Reigel will present her death & dying seminar titled "Things we learned which may be helpful."



Member Challenge: As the saying goes, many hands make light work. You can help with

our price survey by picking up a general price list from your local funeral home and dropping it off at the annual meeting.

If you've got an appetite for learning more, you can attend the the Funeral Consumers Alliance's national conference June 26-28 in Seattle.

For more information, visit www.funerals.org.

FCIS annual meeting • 10 a.m. until noon • SATURDAY, JUNE 14 • Northwest UU Church • rev. kimi reigel • join

A look at death on the other side of the pond

By Erika Nelson, BS, MSW, Michigan Mortuary Science Licensee

I recently traveled to England to explore my ancestral homeland and to attend The Green Funeral Exhibition, which was hosted by The Natural Death Centre, a London-based resource center for environmentally friendly funeral options in the United Kingdom.

At the conference, I met with exhibitors who were displaying a variety of ecologically minded burial and cremation products and services, such as woven willow caskets and biodegradable urns, and service providers from several natural-burial cemeteries, called woodland cemeteries on that side of the pond. I learned that in the 1990s, there were only a handful of woodland cemeteries in the U.K. but the number had mushroomed to approximately 200 when the population demanded

it. At the same time, the number of cremations in the U.K., which is one of the highest in the Western world, is decreasing.

World-renowned English botanist and environmental campaigner David Bellamy gave a presentation on the value of mindful land conservation through woodland burial and the need to consider sustainability when designing a woodland cemetery. The English are so far ahead of the Americans that the issue is no longer whether to have woodland cemeteries but how to make them sustainable into the distant future.

Sustainability concerns for woodland cemeteries are much different than those of conventional U.S. memorial-lawn-style cemeteries because woodland cemeteries do not create artificial ecosystems of

Continued on page 3



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Directors lobby loud in Michigan; dentist plunders bodies, forges records

Granholtm appoints public member to mortuary board

Gov. Jennifer Granholtm appointed the Rev. Don Duford, of Clarkston's Church of the Resurrection, to the Board of Examiners in Mortuary Science on December 6, 2007.

The board consists of six funeral directors and three public citizens. "He's appointed to represent the general public," said Heidi Watson, spokeswoman for the governor. "He came highly recommended from an acquaintance of the governor."

According to Duford, a funeral director on the Michigan funeral directors board and another on the National Funeral Directors Association board recommended him.

"Funerals are a big part of our role as priest to be involved with people," said Duford, who added that in 20 years of ministry, he has never met a funeral director he did not like.

U.S. Congress succumbs to formaldehyde fumes (Sorry, we couldn't resist)

The U.S. Congress passed a resolution declaring March 11, 2008, National Funeral Director and Mortician Recognition Day.

"NFDA believes strongly that a national day of recognition is long overdue," states the NFDA Web site regarding the reason NFDA initiated the resolution. "The date coincides with our Advocacy Summit when many NFDA members will be in Washington, D.C., to meet with their Senators and Representatives about issues of concern to funeral service."

For more information on NFDA's "2008 Key Federal Legislative and Regulatory Issues," go to www.nfda.org/page.php?plD=119.

Dentist pleads guilty to stealing, selling body parts

A New Jersey dentist pleaded guilty March 18 to running a \$4.6 million operation dealing in body parts plundered from funeral homes and sold for use in transplants and medical research. Seven funeral directors have also pleaded guilty in the case.

The dentist, Michael Mastromarino, 44, admitted to stealing bone and tissue from

industry
dirt



numerous corpses and forging consent and medical records. Prosecutors believe that thousands of patients may have tainted blood, bone or tissue in their bodies as a result.

Among the bodies plundered was that of British journalist Alistair Cooke, who was also the former host of "Masterpiece Theater."

Mastromarino operated Biomedical Tissue Services until the FDA shut it down in 2006, citing its inaccurate record keeping as a health threat. He faces 18 to 54 years in prison.

Report shows funeral lobby alive, well in Lansing

The Michigan Funeral Directors Association's Political Action Committee once again made the Michigan Campaign Finance Network's list of Top 150 Michigan lobbyists.

Over a 16-month period, MFDA PAC contributed \$61,889 earning it a rank of No. 71 on the network's "Top 150 Michigan PAC's - 2008 Election Cycle," which includes contributions from January 2007 to April 2008.

Republican Sen. Jud Gilbert, of District 25, comprising St. Clair and Lapeer counties, received \$9,250 from the MFDA PAC to aide his winning senate campaign, according to the network's "2006 Citizen's Guide to Michigan Campaign Finance" report. Gilbert attended Wayne State's mortuary school and became a licensed funeral director in 1974, according to the senator's Web site. He is chairman of the transportation committee, vice-chair of both the agriculture and the finance committees, and a member of the commerce and tourism, economic development, small business, and regulatory reform committees.

The Michigan Campaign Finance Network describes itself as a nonpartisan, nonprofit coalition of organizations and individuals concerned about the influence of money in politics and the need for campaign finance reform in Michigan. For more information, go to www.mcfn.org.

A look at death on the other side of the pond

from page 1

non-native plant species and manicured, fertilized lawns, which must be maintained. If not maintained, a woodland cemetery will simply look like a woodland preserve. Rather, these sustainability concerns have to do with maintaining their preserved status so that they will not someday become properties of interest to commercial or residential developers.

Funeral director tête-à-tête

While I traveled the English countryside, I visited some funeral homes to ask about their services and pricing and see how they compared to the American funeral home.

One of the first things I noticed was that the layout of an English funeral home is very different from the typical U.S. funeral home. In England, they are small storefront businesses designed primarily for handling paperwork. They do have small—very small—chapel rooms, which basically only allow for identification viewing of the deceased. They do not hold services on-site because it is expected that services will take place at a church or in the home.

When I asked about embalming, they tended to look at me like I was crazy. One woman that I spoke with at a funeral home, a co-operative which handles about 200 calls per year, said: “Well, you see, this is a very safe community. We don’t get a lot of young girls who die violently in this town, girls that need to be beautiful.

“I mean, if someone wanted embalming, we could call someone from out of town to come out here and do it. But we rarely ever do that.”

I didn’t quite understand what she meant, but then I got it: Embalming is something that they only do for restorative cases, like young, beautiful women who die violently and need to become beautiful again.

When I mentioned public health, she almost couldn’t contain her laughter and said, “Yes, I understand that is something that they

do in America, but we don’t feel that it is necessary.”

I asked her about pricing, and she said that the actual cremation process is 700 pounds (\$1,400). I assume this high cost is due to high demand, less government subsidy of fuel costs and stricter air pollution standards, which require scrubbers on crematory stacks. In the U.S., the cost of cremation is around \$200.

I then asked her the price of embalming, and she said: “Well, we’d have to have someone come in from out of town, so it could be as high as 80 or 100 pounds (\$160-200).” That’s quite a bargain considering that many Service Corporation International (SCI) firms charge around \$1,500.

An English gal finds her roots

Throughout my time in England, I was impressed by the practical approach that the English have with death. There is no endemic death denial as in the U.S. Many conference exhibitors’ business names were unusually—and delightfully—whimsical: “Go As You Please,” “The Fantastic Funeral Company” and “Daisy Coffins.” When touring the Lake District, I noticed that one of the funeral homes had daisies on its sign, and the business was advertised as “Ian Robinson, Undertaker.” It was refreshing to see that historical word for the work used.

Visiting the town of my grandmother’s birth, I saw glimpses of my own family in the relationship that the English have with their gardens. I realized that the practical, thoughtful, environmentally conscious and even dry-humored approach to life that I was raised with came from this place. And I realized that the approach I have brought to my funeral-service work came from this place, as well.

Back on this side of the pond, I want to help those in my present-day homeland to remember the echoes of their own past cultures and return to the beauty, simplicity, comfort—and historical tradition—of natural burial.

Let us know your thoughts on our new look

I’m sure you’re noticing our new newsletter format. With the graphic design talent of our newest board member, Holly Gilbert, we are overhauling our look to become more contemporary, edgy and fun. Yes, I said fun.

There is no doubt about it: Death—particularly when you are in the midst of grief—is no laughing matter. It hurts. At the same time, entering into an expensive business transaction in the midst of grief with little or no knowledge of your rights, options and needs hurts, too, and often leads to regret that keeps on hurting long

into the future.

Here at FCIS, we deal everyday with three tremendous hurdles: lack of knowledge, fear of the unknown and the taboo nature of our subject—quite a formidable combination for any organization to overcome, especially a tiny volunteer-led nonprofit on a shoestring budget.

We don’t have furry kittens and puppies to pull at your heartstrings; we talk about death and dying. And it’s a conversation that makes many uncomfortable, including those within the industry who don’t like our consumer-education mission.

So, to be successful, FCIS must overcome these obstacles. We must find ways to make people want to talk about a taboo subject so that they can replace fear with knowledge. And I can think of no better way than to poke fun at our old enemy, Death, whenever possible.

This is the goal of our new newsletter design. We’ve tried to walk the thin line that separates taste from tackiness. Have we done it? Send us an e-mail or snail-mail and let us know what you think.

We’re dying to hear from you.

Michigan casket makers find industry dead set against any competition

When Fae Presley's husband, Ed, passed away in April of 2003, her life changed forever. Ed had been diagnosed with a brain tumor just eight months earlier, and all of a sudden Fae found herself with the difficult task of caring for his funeral arrangements.

She didn't know it at the time, but her husband's death, coupled by that of her father's death two years later, would be what motivated Fae to start her new business—the making of wooden caskets and urns.

"I did not know a lot about the funeral industry at that time (of Ed's death)," Fae said. "But I did read an article about a group of people who did make wooden caskets, and my husband was one who liked wood."

However, when she went to the funeral home and asked for a wooden casket for her husband, Fae was disheartened to see what she had to choose from.

"They took me down in the basement, and there was one stuffed away in the dark," Fae said. "It just was not attractive at all."

Though Fae finally found a wooden casket that she liked for her husband, the fact that she had to push so hard frustrated her.

In the time following Ed's death, Fae would meet her current husband, Tim Presley, through a mutual friend. It was during this time that Fae would suffer her second loss in as many years when her father passed away in the winter of 2005. Though he wasn't in the business at the time, Tim offered to build the casket himself, despite the lack of a real working space.

"When Tim made my father's casket he was still living in Montana," she said. "He didn't have a shop there, so he made the casket in his kitchen."

Upon laying Fae's father to rest and being married in February of '06, Fae and Tim both discovered that building wooden caskets is something that they were very interested in pursuing. They took Fae's first husband's last name and combined it with



the Presley name to make up Stuart and Presley, LLC, of Hersey, Mich., makers of fine wooden caskets and urns.

Originally, Fae and Tim planned to deal directly with funeral directors rather than selling directly to customers.

Their plans, however, would change. "(Funeral directors) don't want to market anything but their particular line of caskets," Tim said. "I've found out through various casket retailers that funeral homes like to market with big names because they'll set up showrooms. With the showrooms comes a contract, which says they have to exclusively market that particular brand.

"It seems that the funeral industry doesn't want other people marketing caskets. They want to be the ones that market them. So they guard their market very jealously," Tim said.

"If the general public learns there are other options besides purchasing at a funeral home—I think there's a lot of fear in the funeral industry over that because the casket is where they make some of their biggest numbers."

Tim estimates that funeral homes mark up their caskets as high as 100 to 800 percent, saying that really the sky is the limit to where they will go.

According to a Michigan funeral director, who wished to stay anonymous, funeral directors often mark up the caskets significantly.

"I do know that many funeral homes do mark up caskets one-hundred to five-hundred percent or so," the funeral director said but also stated that using percentages isn't the norm. "Most of the ones that I have had experience with marked the caskets up by a fixed dollar amount, not a percentage."

The funeral director also cautions people, who are quick to lump all funeral directors into the over-charging-for-products group, to understand that not all directors make a ton of money off their caskets.

"Some funeral homes charge more for caskets and other merchandise and less for their service charges," said the funeral director, "while other funeral homes charge more for their basic service charge and other services and keep their merchandise costs down."

Still, Fae and Tim do believe their company will lead to more competitive prices down the road.

"(Stuart and Presley) offer another resource," Tim said. "The funeral people locally here now have to consider us and what we are charging for a casket. It's another kid on the block, so to speak."

"Some people want something that is more basic," adds Fae. "This natural wood speaks to the heart like nothing else."

The natural wood is something that makes the caskets truly unique. Unlike many conventional caskets, Stuart and Presley's caskets are made with nearly all biodegradable products (obviously, metal hinges would be one of the nonbiodegradable pieces) and can be special ordered for customers looking for something unique for their loved ones.

Caskets aren't the only thing Stuart and Presley make.

"We just had a couple from Texas that ordered urns made out of cherry wood. They were from Michigan, and cherry wood is kind of common around here," Tim said. "So she got a couple urns for her and her husband."

Though Fae and Tim would both tell you they are working to give customers options, not everyone has welcomed them to the business with open arms.

"(The funeral homes) simply ignored us and have not wanted to do business with us," Fae said.

"So far, I can recall one positive response," said Tim. "Only one in Texas has



Fae and Tim Presley build custom wood caskets and urns in their home; Fae says they wanted to provide options to the conventional offerings at reasonable prices.

expressed interest in the product itself."

The prices Stuart and Presley offer are another thing that catches the eye of potential customers. Though Tim and Fae both say they have good prices for the products they make, they don't look at what they're doing as under-cutting or trying to eliminate the funeral director.

"I see it as offering something to people that is not available right now," Fae said. "It's a choice that many people would choose if they knew it was available."

While both Fae and Tim see a need for change with how the funeral industry handles itself, they are quick to point out that they aren't in favor of eliminating the industry as a whole.

"We aren't saying there shouldn't be a funeral industry. There needs to be a funeral industry," Fae said. "But, I think they need to change."

Perhaps most importantly, Fae and Tim both express how essential it is for people not to shy away from the topic of death. Both emphasize that it is key to have some kind of basic knowledge going into your discussion about how to handle the death

of a loved one.

"Think about these things," Fae said. "Talk about them ahead of time." Tim agrees. "A funeral home is going to be putting a lot of pressure on you to do things quickly," he said.

"Educate yourselves now before you are in a moment of grief or crisis."

John Locklear is an FCIS intern from Oakland University. He is currently wrapping up his college career that sees him graduating at the end of June 2008. He is striving to be a sports journalist, something that has appealed to him for as long as he can remember.

As funeral-consumer advocates, FCIS cannot advertise funeral products. We simply offer this article to provide choice and to provide a first-hand account of the inner workings of the funeral industry.

For more information, visit Stuart and Presley's Web site, www.stuartandpresley.com

in the mail



Dear FCIS members,

I recently read the book "Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers" by Mary Roach. It is a compelling book, which describes the various ways human cadavers are used for the good of society. The author has a droll sense of humor, which adds to the strength of the information in the book. ... After reading the book, I am even more convinced that donating a body is the thing to do. ... I thought it was an incredible book, and I urge those of you who inform citizens of funeral rituals ... to read it. Thank you for your work. I appreciate what you do."

Pontiac, Mich.

Send mail to:
 FSIC@juno.com
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FOR LAUGHS

A passenger in a taxi leaned over to ask the driver a question and tapped him on the shoulder.

The driver screamed, lost control of the cab, nearly hit a bus, drove up over the curb and stopped just inches from a large plate glass window.

For a few moments, everything was silent in the cab, and then the still shaking driver said, "I'm sorry, but you scared the hell out of me!"

The frightened passenger apologized to the driver and said he didn't realize a mere tap on the shoulder could frighten him so much.

"No, no, I'm sorry. It's entirely my fault. Today is my first day driving a cab," he replied. "I've been driving a hearse for the last 25 years."

last
writes



Reflections on life's finale

The Director's Cut

By Holly Shreve Gilbert

I plan, of course, to star in my death scene.
 But, I wonder who will direct?
 Woody Allen?
 He single-handedly elevated angst to an art form, and
 glamorized despair.
 But I hear he tends to anxiety,
 and I plan to be relaxed.
 My intention of going out peacefully also eliminates Coppola.
 His penchant for gore and guts wouldn't play well
 with my bedside demographic.
 What about that climactic moment when my life passes before
 my eyes;
 shall I leave it to Robert Altman to splice together a
 biographic tableau
 or will he corrupt my stories, the way he did
 Raymond Carver's?
 Of course since I don't even know the ending of me,

I wouldn't want someone behind the camera
 who would spoil it for the audience.
 A secret like this would have been safe in the hands of
 Alfred Hitchcock,
 but he's dead himself.
 Anyway, he was far too fond of filming his leading ladies in profile,
 and I look fat from the side.
 When the end does come, am I over,
 or will my me slip free, and flutter off into some
 freakish hallucination?
 Wouldn't Fellini have a field day with that?
 Unfortunately he, too, is otherwise engaged.
 The clerics promise that a good life, like a good movie,
 has a sequel.
 Does that mean my contract will be renewed,
 or will someone else, with fuller lips and a lustier laugh,
 be cast in the starring role?
 Perhaps Nora Ephron will be free and we can wrap the story
 with a laugh;
 the joke of course, being on me.

Remembering Your Style

For Al Ugelow
 by Carter Stevenson on behalf of
 your loving staff at FCIS

Remembering your style when you have
 gone
 Will brighten all our days as we go on
 Look into our eyes my friend and see
 All the wondrous gifts received from thee

Our wishful little stars are flying high
 As tear drops jerk our hearts
 We say bye-bye

Now we'll be remembering
 All the joys that work can bring
 And still there is the lingering
 The shadow of your smile

Friends

By Carter Stevenson

If, I am your friend:
 I can walk ahead of you when you need a
 scout
 I can stand behind you when you need to
 lead
 I can work next to you, shoulder to shoul-
 der, and make life sweet

If, you are my friend:
 You listen to me with your eyes
 You check me with your memory and
 make sure I am the person now that you
 knew when we became friends

You speak to me when danger is near,
from within me or from the world

Because we are friends:
 We can celebrate our samenesses and
 observe our differences and see more
 We can travel to a common destination
 one of us on the sidewalk the other in the
 street
 We can share the answers and the truths
 that we have found in this life and clarify
 and pass on to others like us the ques-
 tions

As the mystery of life unravels

To submit your original poetry on death and dying for free publication in our newsletter, e-mail it to fcis@juno.com.

Condolences:
 Richard "Dick" Trytten,
 father, husband and
 friend to FCIS

Richard (Dick) Wesley
 Trytten died on March 29, 2008
 at the age of 83.
 Dick was the president
 of the Memorial Advisory &
 Planning Society (MAPS), the

Ann Arbor affiliate of Funeral
 Consumers Alliance.
 Our condolences go out to
 Marilyn, his wife of 51 years, his
 two daughters, Deborah Anne
 and Melissa Anne, and to all of

his family and friends.

*- FCIS members
and staff*

Don't be left in the dark; daughter's death sheds light on funeral law

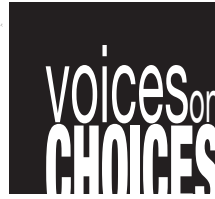
When my daughter, Sarah, died suddenly at 22 years old, I went into shock that lasted for about three months.

I was totally unprepared to make arrangements and relied on my family to help me. Our family is Polish/Ukrainian, and the neighborhood funeral home took care of the funeral arrangements.

I told the funeral director that I did not want her embalmed—the very thought was repulsive to me—but he told me it was mandatory if I wanted visitation. Visitation at the funeral home was a tradition in the culture I was brought up in, so I agreed. The funeral director then took us into the basement of his office so we could pick out a casket. The least expensive casket they had was \$1,800.

By law, I later learned, an invoice of cost must be provided at the time the arrangements are made. However, when I received the final bill, there were many itemizations that I presumed were included under the \$1,500 basic services fee that were not. The final bill of \$5,500 was hundreds of dollars more than what I was initially shown. I felt that I had been taken advantage of in my time of grief.

guest
column



I did not have an insurance policy and had to go into debt to cover the funeral costs. Due to medical problems and a loss of work, I was unable to pay the bill in a timely manner. A collections attorney started calling me using a very threatening tone of voice. I told him I believed that I was taken advantage of, and he said that we could go to court and let a judge decide. He further tried to intimidate me and said that he had never lost a case. I quickly replied that it was not a matter of winning or losing, it was about burying your loved one the way you want without having to go into debt.

This nightmare went on and on.

I wish I would have had more options that were less expensive. It seems that the funeral business is not there to help but to profit. But I don't think someone should profit from your grief.

About a year later, a friend told me

that Wendy Lyons, our mutual friend, is an advocate for do-it-yourself funerals. Wendy gave me a copy of the FTC's "Funerals: A Consumer Guide," which explains the Funeral Rule and our rights as consumers. With this new knowledge, I was better prepared to deal with the attorney and point out breaches of FTC regulations. We eventually reached an agreement.

Later, I went to the presentation Wendy made, "DIY Funerals: Families Caring for Their Own Dead," and it made so much sense.

Now, I want things done very differently when I pass. It is unnecessary to go into thousands of dollars of debt.

As a nurse, I am use to caring for others and have been with people when they died. In my opinion, it is very natural to take care of a loved one who has died.

Death is traumatic enough without having to make business decisions. I am in favor of the simple, respectful funeral that doesn't put you into debt, and that is why I endorse DIY funerals and the educational work of FCIS.

- Helen Murphy

Funeral Trade Commission's Funeral Rule: a primer

Helen's experience demonstrates the importance of knowing your rights as a funeral consumer ahead of time, not when you are faced with a death. To help, we offer a primer on the Federal Trade Commission's Funeral Rule.

Prices of Goods and Services:

Funeral directors must quote itemized prices of goods/services over the phone and provide a general price list to anyone who requests one in person. They are not required to mail a copy.

When you enter a funeral home to discuss arrangements, you must be given a general price list (GPL) before arrangement discussions begin. It must be a copy for you to keep. When arrangements are made, you must be given an itemized statement of the total cost of the goods/services selected.

You cannot be required to purchase a "package" funeral; you can select only the goods/services you want. If a law requires you to buy an item, it must be disclosed on the GPL with a reference to the specific law. If purchases

are required due to cemetery/crematory policy, such as a burial vault, this must be disclosed in writing.

Caskets:

If you buy a casket from a third party, funeral providers must accept it. A funeral home cannot charge you a handling fee. If you buy a casket from a funeral director, you must be given a list of caskets they sell that includes descriptions and prices before you are shown the caskets.

Funeral directors cannot claim that state/local law requires a casket for cremation. It must be disclosed in writing that an unfinished wood box or an alternative container can be used, and they must be available for purchase.

Embalming:

It must be disclosed in writing that embalming is not required by law, except in certain cases. (The common practice of requiring embalming for a funeral with a viewing is not a legal requirement; it is a trade practice.) Embalming cannot be performed without permission.

You cannot be charged for an unauthorized embalming unless it was required by law. Funeral directors must disclose in writing that you have a right to direct cremation/burial, which do not require embalming.

Fees:

Funeral providers can charge a basic service fee that customers cannot decline to pay. This fee, which can vary greatly, is intended to cover the expenses of funeral planning, preparation and overhead costs. The basic service fee is not applicable to direct burial or immediate cremation.

Fees charged by the funeral home for goods/services purchased from outside vendors on your behalf, like flowers, obituary notices, organists, etc., are called cash advances or third-party fees. If funeral directors charge an extra fee above their own cost, this must be disclosed in writing. They must also disclose refunds, discounts or rebates from suppliers on any cash-advance items.

TRIBUTE

Al Ugelow: A man who respected the significance of life and death

By Holly Shreve Gilbert

A champion of end-of-life choices, Al Ugelow eloquently practiced what he advocated.

When the former FCIS board member died March 8 at age 73, he was at home with his wife, Joanie, and surrounded by his artwork.

"He was ready," says Joanie, "and he was comfortable with going."

Al, a retired Oakland Community College psychology professor and watercolor artist, is described by his friends, family members and colleagues as a quiet gentleman who held life in the highest regard. He also respected death and felt that people are entitled to know about the options available for facilitating that momentous passage.

"He felt it was so important to honor the individual decisions people make about death," says Joanie.

To that end, he devoted time to FCIS as well as to the memorial garden at Emerson Church Unitarian Universalist, where he and Joanie were members.



Joanie and Al Ugelow

"Knowing Al made you feel warm inside," says Carter Stevenson, FCIS president. He also personified Al as a consummate professional who contributed enormously to the work of the Society.

"The fact that Al was a noteworthy artist and almost none of us knew about it says a lot about how focused he was," Carter says.

Al's choices about the end of his life were simple: He wanted to die at home and he wanted to be cremated. They started taking shape, says Joanie, when he made the decision to stop chemotherapy after

three treatments.

"After each, the cancer got worse," she says.

The Ugelows contacted hospice and it was, Joanie says, "a wonderful experience."

Last fall, to mark his imminent passing, Al completed several pieces of art. One of them, Joanie says, is particularly moving. She describes it as Chagall-like, with abundant light, angels and a young boy in the foreground.

"It has a wonderful energy," she says, "there is absolutely nothing scary."

Art is something that both Joanie, a potter, and Al were passionate about throughout their 37 years of marriage.

"It was very significant in his life," Joanie says.

A local physician once purchased one of Al's paintings. Some years later, after he was diagnosed with cancer, Al became a patient of that doctor, who happened to be an oncologist.

"The doctor's wife had hung the painting on the office wall," says Joanie. "Al told me it was just like being at home."

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