

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Utah Inspiring Funerary Feats of Love

A Serendipitous Occasion

By Sherman Bond

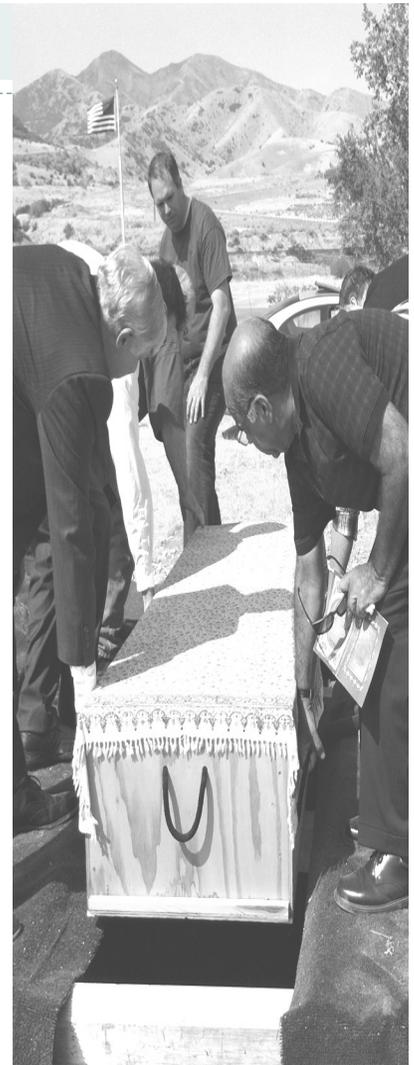
In May 2014, while minding my own business, busily weeding outside my home, I glanced up and saw her. She looked to be in her early thirties; long dark hair, dressed in a flattering white blouse, a black skirt and slip on flats. She was daintily bending down to pluck weeds from the front of my neighbor's house. I had never seen her there before. Who could she be? What on earth would cause a lady of such elegance to be pulling weeds from my neighbors flower garden? Curiosity overcame my normal quiet character around such creatures of beauty.

Gathering all my courage I walked across the lawn where she cheerfully divulged that she was the mother of the young couple that lived there. After introducing myself I learned that she was Joyce Mitchell, the President of Funeral Consumers Alliance of Utah. While engaged in seeking to collect my senses, I was informed via song that I could save serious coin by providing most of the arrangements of a funeral for my loved ones.

Little did Joyce know that my mother and father (who until recent weeks had lived in our home) were now on hospice in a veterans home in Payson, Utah. Although we desired a simple, affordable funeral we were facing hiring out at \$5000 or more per parent if we didn't learn better soon. Three weeks after that visit with Joyce my mother passed away on June 8th and then my father passed away on July 3rd.

Because of Joyce's advice, I had a pretty good idea of how to go about getting what we desired. June 8th fell on a Sunday. I contacted a local funeral director in Orem, explaining that I needed them to refrigerate her body until Tuesday when I would come dress her for burial, and bring 30 pounds of dry ice. We were taking her to New Mexico for burial.

The funeral director obtained the necessary forms that I needed for transferring the body to New Mexico. I purchased a beautiful casket from Robert Alexander of Farr West, Utah. Some at the graveside service asked me how to contact Robert to purchase such a beautiful pine casket, which cost just over \$900. ---->



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THANKS TO THE FLEXIBLE FUNERAL DIRECTORS OUT THERE

Our thanks to all the funeral directors who are willing to let families customize their purchase of products and services without extra fees.

Larry & Susan Turpin, owners of Alternative Society of Utah (ASU) in Utah County, have sold to the Serenity funeral home chain, which promises to offer the same flexibility ASU did. Serenity will be closing their "Affordable Funeral" storefront in Orem in the coming month to move to the Lindon location.

A Serendipitous Occasion Continued:

I rented a van from Ryder in American Fork. The van was used to pick up the casket and deliver it to the mortuary. My wife and daughters dressed my mother for burial and then placed the dry ice around her in the casket for the trip to New Mexico. We were treated very well by the funeral home because they knew what we wanted and expected. We only had to pay \$300 for their services.

The Bishop and the manager of the cemetery had been contacted as far ahead as we could. They knew that we were planning a graveside service. The cemetery only charged \$300 for digging the grave (which we already owned). There were upwards of a

hundred people in attendance. The service was carried out by me and my children and it turned out beautiful.

Three weeks later we went back to New Mexico and did everything over again for my father who had passed away on July 3rd. My family was very happy and gratified to perform this final service in such a personal and affordable manner for our parents. I recommend it to anyone who has the desire.

Donate to FCA of Utah using our paypal button on the "Volunteer" page UtahFunerals.org

"The service was carried out by me and my children and it turned out beautiful."

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Election in May

Submit nominations to FCAofUtah@gmail.com by March 30th 2016.



Funeral Consumers Alliance of Utah
1493 Renaissance Pl
Pleasant Grove UT 84062



Trevor Christensen, a photojournalist and fine art photographer based in Provo, Utah, has just begun a photography project about people who decide to carry out after-deathcare of a loved one themselves (all or in part).

He's looking for families who would be interested in documenting the process of expressing their final goodbye through photos. These families would also be open to sharing some of the photos to help promote the cause of funeral liberty.

Please contact Trevor if you are interested.

To see Trevor's work go to trevorchristensen.com.

(801) 669-6652 or email him at trevor@trevorchristensen.com.

Finding the Right Word

by Kathleen Owen

Sometimes a word falls into common use when it is really not the right word to use. Consider the definition of closure: The act of closing or the state of being closed.

I have often heard people use the word in reference to the loss of a loved one. They expect a viewing or a funeral or passage of time to bring closure. They want to shut the door on the difficult sorrowful emotions they are going through. The word closure implies some event or action or moment in time will bring the end of sorrow.

Consider the definition of acceptance: 1. Taking or consenting to take something offered.

The Serenity Prayer of 12 step programs is “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Death is one of those things we cannot change. It is not failure. It is not optional. It is a reality. We cannot bring our loved one back to earthly existence. That is the thing we cannot change. That is what we are given. If we can’t refuse it, we must accept it. If we accept it with gratitude for all the good the person brought to this world and all the goodness that remains in our life, we can have peace.

Acceptance begins not when someone we love dies; it begins when we accept the truth that we all die. It is an important part of the circle of life. Acceptance begins when we can talk about death as an ordinary occurrence by using words like, “when I die...” instead of hiding the reality with words such as. “If anything should ever happen to me...” Acceptance begins when, instead of interrupting one who wants to talk about her final wishes with “don’t talk like that, you are not going to die” hold her hand, look into her eyes and listen.

When she dies, take whatever time you need to grieve. Don’t look for closure, let acceptance come gently to your heart and let your life move forward.

One of the rewards of attending Utah’s state Funeral Licensure Board meetings is hearing from an expert. In 2014 our FCA of Utah president, Joyce Mitchell, ran into Kerry Peterson, director of the University of Utah body donor program.

She asked him, "What is one thing you wished people knew about donating their body to science and education?" He told her that he wishes more families knew they could do a funeral before the body is picked up. He added that if embalming is procured the funeral home must simply not embalm the cavity organs.

So she asked him, "What if a family is doing a Do-it-yourself funeral without embalming?" And he replied, "They have about a week as long as the body is kept cold".

Isn’t that liberating to hear!

On YouTube search for

“Caring For Your Own Dead: Cindy’s Funeral”

In this power point video you will hear Joyce Mitchell’s show and tell experience of caring for her friend Cindy after her sudden unexpected death.



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NOW ORDER CERTIFIED COPIES OF DEATH CERTIFICATES [ONLINE](#)

The Utah Office of Vital Records and Statistics (OVRs) recently launched an online service that makes requesting certified copies of Utah birth & death certificates more convenient and secure than ever. Ordering birth and death certificates from OVRs can be done online at any time in just a few minutes and for the lowest price available (\$18 for the 1st and \$8 each additional copy).

The state uses a network of resources to instantly verify the identity of each person requesting documents. This verification is crucial to delivering these primary records only to people who are properly entitled to receive them.

The ordering process is quick, secure, and completed online thus helping families avoid over-ordering upon initial death.

To learn more visit silver.health.utah.gov

For a new death one still has to fill out a death certificate registration form and file it in the Vital Records office of the county where death occurred.

Often only one or two certified copies are needed for settling the average person's affairs. Most entities just view the original, xerox it and then give it back to you.

Funeral Options Your Neighbor May Not Know

By Kathleen Owen

It is a common belief that the best way to handle a funeral is to hire a funeral director to “take care of everything”. What supports this belief is that most of us are not aware there are emotional, spiritual, environmental, and economic benefits of taking care of our own dead. The following information will help you make decisions knowing what your options are. You can be creative in fulfilling your loved ones wishes.

You don't have to purchase your casket from the mortuary and they cannot charge a handling fee if you provide a casket. You can make your own or purchase one online.

Embalming has nothing to do with protecting the public's health.

The organisms that cause decomposition cause a bad smell, not disease. Embalming does delay decomposition but not everyone wants to slow down their return to the earth. In most states it is not required by law for any reason. *Caption describing picture or graphic*

Some states require embalming if the body is not refrigerated cremated or interred within a certain amount of time (e.g. 24 hours.) Embalming is rare in every country except The United States and Canada.

Vaults and caskets do not protect the environment. A natural burial is the most environmentally friendly disposition. It involves no embalming, no vault and uses a shroud or a natural casket such as locally sustainable wood. Don't be misled by extremely expensive “green burials”. It shouldn't cost more to use less. Cremation is the second most environmentally friendly choice. The least environmentally friendly method of returning to the earth is a conventional burial with a concrete vault, and a casket that uses rare woods or metals.

Mortuaries are required by law to give out prices over the phone.

They also must give you a general itemized price list at the beginning of your discussion about funeral services. They cannot require you to purchase a service you don't want.

The funeral home may not be the best place to pre-plan. Get some information from the national Funeral Consumers Alliance and its local affiliates for free or inexpensive pre-planning forms or booklets. Talk about death with everyone in your family as you pre-plan. Learn their wishes and discuss your own. Being comfortable with talking about death before it occurs makes it easier to deal with death after it happens.

Death doesn't have to be expensive. Respect is not measured by the amount of money you spend. Many cost saving measures reflect

positively the values of the deceased. Saving money can actually result in more personalized care and an easier acceptance of the loss of a loved one. You can include family and friends when they ask “Is there anything I can do? They will appreciate being involved as they help with tasks such as notifying family and friends, contacting clergy, writing and posting the obituary, arranging music, transporting flowers, collecting and displaying memorabilia, or preparing meals and refreshments.

There are good alternatives to pre-paying funeral expenses. Start a dedicated savings account at your bank or credit union. Have the person you choose to take care of expenses be the beneficiary payable upon your death. The money can add up quickly when you gain interest rather than pay interest.

Not being quickly separated from the deceased can help with the process of grieving. Consider spending time with the body at the time of death or shortly after death rather than a week later in a public viewing. This is especially practical when a person passes away at home. There is no rush to call a mortuary. Call the closest family members and friends instead. Take your time. Wait until business hours if you want, or consider preparing the body at home.

You can donate your body to science at no cost. Pre-register with a university or organization in your state that handles body donations.

Your name can be listed on a death certificate as the funeral director of your deceased loved one. You may care for him at home and transport his body in the vehicle of your choice. There are many books and websites with information on laws and procedures to prepare you either to be your loved one’s funeral director or to work with the mortician of your choice. Americans are very unfamiliar with what is possible and legal, so pre-planning is important. Download some copies of the pre-planning form at utahfunerals.org. Distribute them among your family, interview each other and talk about the different options. You might be surprised how easy it is to talk about death when you know you have choices and you know how to make them happen.



“My mother wanted a simple burial. My nephew built her casket and we had a small graveside service with family. It was perfect and just what my mother wished.” -Cindy Higley, northern Utah

Side note: Instead of flowers notice the bouquet of wooden spoons on the casket. This was a meaningful symbolic expression of love for this family, not a “supposed to”.

NEWS

Editing the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Utah website is now faster and easier so feel free to send suggestions and edits any time by emailing FCAofutah@gmail.com

We are still looking for more volunteers to attend the quarterly Funeral Licensing Board meetings at the Dept of Professional Licensing Heber M Wells Bldg 160 E 300 S in Salt lake. Email FCAofUtah@gmail.com if interested in helping out.

Utah State's Funeral Licensing Board is looking for a Pre-need Sales Agent to sit on their Board! Write us at FCAofUtah@gmail.com if you know someone that may be a good candidate. We can email you the information needed to nominate them as an advocate for the public good.

SHARE THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT FUNERAL LIBERTY

There is a digital copy of this newsletter on our website: UtahFunerals.org

Feel free to send copies to your friends and family.

Also please distribute to places that you frequent.

INVITATION: Have you had an experience with handling after death issues in a creative or fulfilling way? Did your family get together to pre-plan and actually had positive family bonding experience? Did you use your knowledge of the funeral rule to get the funeral you wanted at a good price? Did you attend a graveside service in a lawn-free cemetery?

How did you feel about your experience? What were the challenges? What were the rewards? Email your story of 150 words or less to katheowen@yahoo.com and we might use it on our website or in our next newsletter.

Save the Date for the Next:

Funeral Consumers Alliance Conference

June 23rd- June 26th, 2016

Crown Plaza Atlanta Airport Hotel

Watch for updates at Funerals.org/conference

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