

Caring for Each Other After Death: Final Disposition & Ceremony Options



HOLLY *J* PRUETT
Celebrant. Guide. Creative Partner.

For More Information

- My Services hollyjpruett.com

Life-Cycle Celebrant (funerals, memorials, celebrations of life)

Home Funeral Guide & After Death Care Educator

NEDA-Proficient Death Doula

- Oregon Funeral Resources & Education oregonfuneral.org

State-specific, non-commercial consumer information about funeral rights, final disposition options, and family/community-centered after deathcare and ceremony

Overview

- Opening Perspectives
- Final Disposition Choices
- From Death to Disposition
- 15 min break
- Ceremonies of Remembrance & Bereavement
- Q & A

It Is Enough

Anne Alexander Bingham

It is enough
to know that the atoms
of my body
will remain

to think of them rising
through the roots of a great oak
to live in
leaves, branches, twigs

perhaps to feed the
crimson peony
the blue iris
the broccoli

or rest on water
freeze and thaw
with the seasons

some atoms might become a
bit of fluff on the wing
of a chickadee
to feel the breeze
know the support of air

and some might drift
up and up into space
star dust returning from

whence it came
it is enough to know that
as long as there is a
universe
I am a part of it.



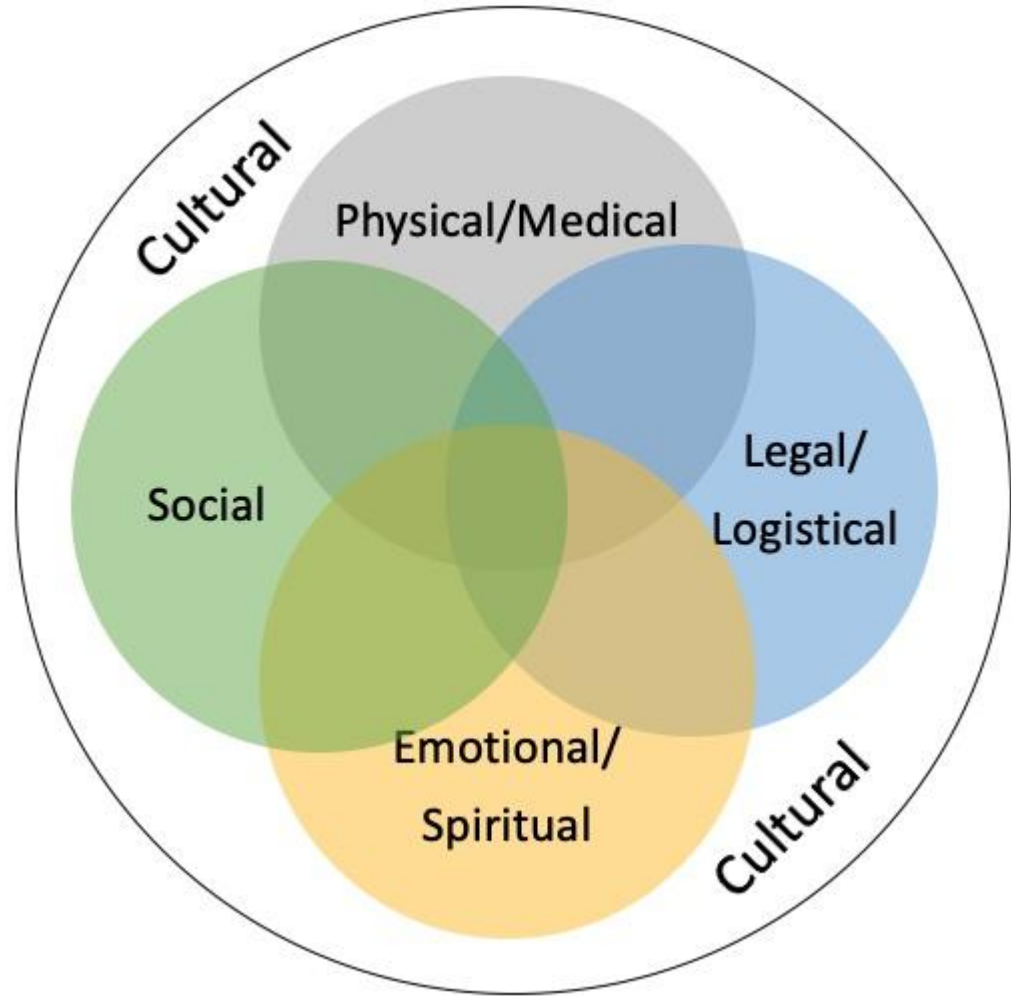
Before Death



During Death



After Death



Final Disposition

OREGON DEATH CERTIFICATE WORKSHEET

1. Decedent's full legal name – Legal name, not nicknames

Prefix First Middle Other Middle

Last name prior to first marriage Last Suffix

AKA (full name) _____ (Only include if substantially different than legal name)

2 a-b. Date of death _____ (mm dd yyyy)

- Actual date of death Approximate date of death Court determined date of death
 Presumed date of death Found date of death

3. County of death _____ 4. Sex F M Undetermined Unknown X

19. Method of Disposition

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alkaline Hydrolysis | <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Organic Reduction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burial | <input type="checkbox"/> Removal from state (check this box if disposition occurred outside of Oregon, regardless of method) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cremation | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donation and Cremation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entombment | |

s hours minutes

Country

Do NOT leave this blank.

Done? No Yes.

10. Decedent's resident address (If the decedent was homeless at the time of death, list "Domicile Unknown" for the Street Number, Name, Apt #. Fill in the other address fields as much as possible.)

Street Number, Name, Apt # City or Town

County State Country Zip Code + 4

WHAT do you want for your body after death?

- WHOLE BODY BURIAL
 - Conventional Burial/ Entombment
 - Natural/ Green Burial
 - Burial at Sea
 - Burial at Home
- CREMATION/ RELATED PROCESS
 - Conventional flame cremation
 - “Water cremation” (Alkaline Hydrolysis)
 - “Composting” (Natural Organic Reduction)
 - Donation to science (then cremation)
- Don't know/ undecided

WHY: What informs your decision?

family tradition \$cost

cultural tradition

religion enviro cost

survivors preference hands-on

convenience

Two pathways, with variations

- WHOLE BODY BURIAL
 - Conventional Burial/ Entombment
 - Natural/ Green Burial
 - Burial at Sea
 - Burial at Home
- CREMATION/ RELATED PROCESS
 - Conventional flame cremation
 - “Water cremation” (Alkaline Hydrolysis)
 - “Composting” (Natural Organic Reduction)
 - Donation to science (then flame/water cremation)

Body Donation

- Who benefits from this donation?
- Will the donation be used to make a profit?
- Are there costs associated with the donation (transportation, death certificate, cremation)?
- What are the requirements to become a donor?
- Where will the donor be used (within the state, nationally, or internationally)?
- Do I have the option for the entire cremated remains to be returned?
- Can they share a list of the different programs or groups to which they provide donors?
- Including the programs, companies, or institutions to which they supply tissues?
- Will I have the option of donating my corneas?

Green/ Natural Burial

Green Burial Council definition

We define green burial as a way of caring for the dead with minimal environmental impact that aids in the conservation of natural resources, reduction of carbon emissions, protection of worker health, and the restoration and/or preservation of habitat.

Which generally means

- No embalming
- No outer burial liner (vault)
- Natural/ biodegradable shroud or casket

Green/ Natural Burial

Types of Cemeteries

- **Hybrid:** Existing cemeteries that allow natural burial
- **Natural Burial Grounds:** Separate cemetery or separate section with native plants and trees; utilizes sustainable management practices, reduced use of resources, cares for land as habitat; alternative and/or natural memorialization
- **Conservation Burial Grounds:** Permanently protected acreage that has been preserved in perpetuity in its historic, native, natural condition by being utilized for natural burial

Considerations

- Burial Site Prep
- Burial Container
 - Shroud
 - Lowering board
 - Casket
- Processional
- Lowering the Body
- Closing the Grave
- Memorialization

Green/ Natural Burial... what it can look like



Cremation & Related Processes

- Conventional flame cremation
- “Water cremation” (Alkaline Hydrolysis)
- “Composting” (Natural Organic Reduction)
- Donation to science (then cremation via flame or water)

Cremation/ Aqua Cremation/ Natural Organic Reduction *Aka “Incomplete Processes”*

What They Have in Common

- Incomplete processes
- All use natural resources to process, frontloading a significant carbon footprint
- All remove and pulverize bones
 - Calcium phosphate and sodium, trace metals and minerals
 - pH of 11
 - 200 – 2000 x too high for plant and microbial communities to utilize
 - Takes 3 years to neutralize



The Rise of Cremation in the U.S.

Quick Timeline of Cremation

- 1873 — Ludovico Brunetti reveals cremation unit at the Vienna Exposition
- 1876 — Dr. Julius LeMoyne, Washington, PA builds 1st crematory in the US
- 1913 — Cremation Association of America forms
- 1993 — Albany Medical College installs 1st commercial alkaline hydrolysis unit for human cadaver disposal
- 2019 — Washington State approves legislation recognizing NOR as a form of cremation

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National rates: 10% in 1980 to nearly 61% in 2023

NV, OR, WA the highest ~ 80%

Enviro Impact of Cremation

Flame Cremation

- 7 – 10+ lbs. of pulverized bone
- Fossil fuels (natural gas) 2-3 hours at 1900° F
- Releases mercury, nitrous oxide, and particulate matter into air and water
(Britain study 16%, Minnesota study 14%)
- 250 lbs. of carbon released per cremation
- Radiopharmaceutical contamination *(Journal of the American Medical Association, 2.26.19)*

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David Noble: Each cremation uses ~ 2,000 cubic feet of natural gas, equal to driving 4,800 miles. 50 cremations = drive to the moon (238,900 miles!)

Alkaline Hydrolysis

Alkaline Hydrolysis

- Legal in 29 states, available in 19 (Sept 2023)
- 100 gallons 200 - 350° water pressure
- Potassium hydroxide alkaline solution (lye) 3 - 12 hours
- Claims to:
 - use 80% less energy as flame cremation; emits 20% less CO²
 - capture but does not mitigate mercury
 - neutralize embalming fluid, cytotoxins
 - inactivate viruses, bacteria, and prions

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Not currently available direct-to-consumer

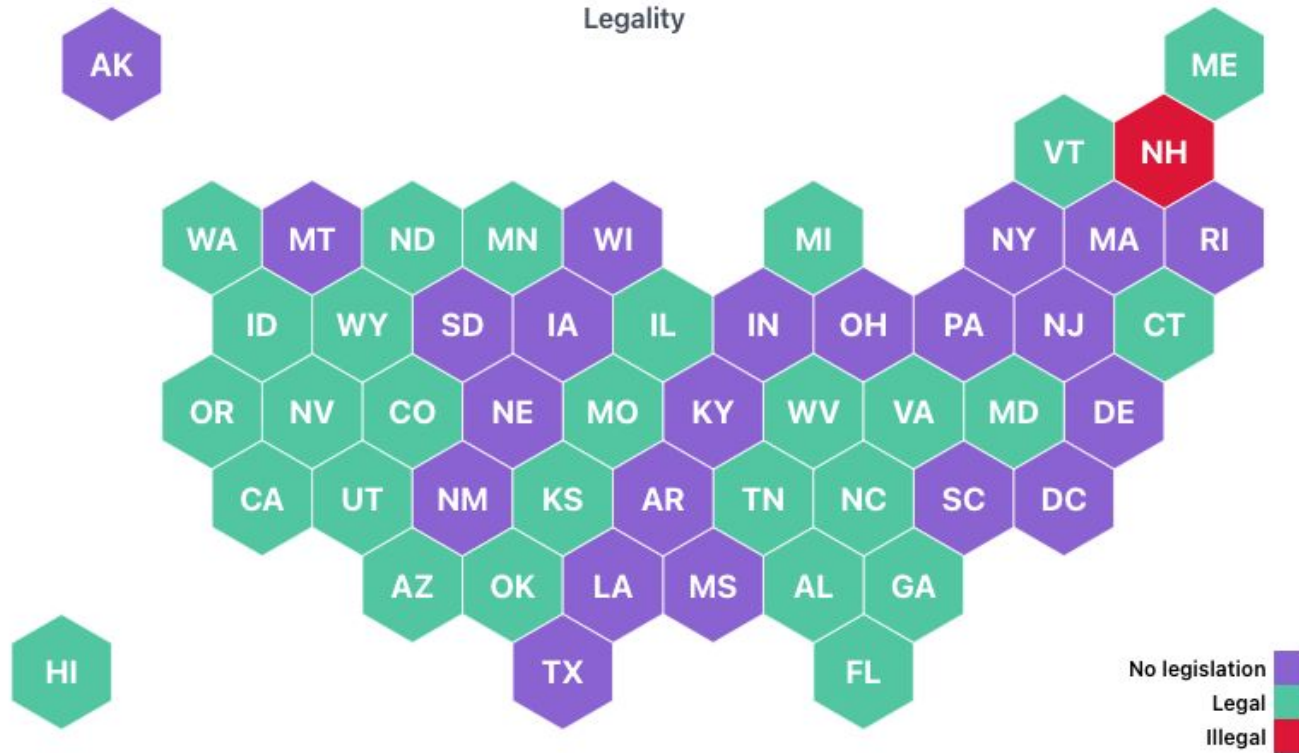
AH Disposal

- 10 – 15 lbs. finely pulverized bone
- 20-32% more than flame cremation, needing larger urns
- 120 – 300 gallons of effluent
- Releases to the local wastewater treatment or septic
- Not approved as fertilizer

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Alkaline Hydrolysis Legal States 2024



<https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/alkaline-hydrolysis-legal-states>

Natural Organic Reduction

Natural Organic Reduction

- 4-7 week composting process
- 1/8th the energy of flame cremation
- Feedstock grown, harvested, shipped; alfalfa, wood chips, etc.
- Tumbled in temperature and humidity controlled vessel for 6-8 weeks
- Pathogens, pharmaceuticals, and heavy metals mitigated by microorganisms
- Meets all EPA safety standards

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NOR Disposal

- Bones removed, pulverized, added back to mixture
- 1-2 cubic yards of organic matter for disposition



No facilities currently in Oregon

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States Where Human Composting is Legal

March 2024

Arizona

Arizona became the eighth state to legalize human composting.

[View](#)

September 2022

California

California became the fifth state to legalize human composting.

[View](#)

May 2021

Colorado

Colorado became the second state to legalize human composting.

[View](#)

May 2024

Delaware

Delaware became the 10th state to legalize human composting.

[View](#)

June 2024

Maine

Maine became the 12th state to legalize human composting.

[View](#)

May 2024

Maryland

Maryland became the ninth state to legalize human composting.

[View](#)

May 2024

Minnesota

Minnesota became the 11th state to legalize human composting.

[View](#)

May 2023

Nevada

Nevada became the seventh state to legalize human composting.

[View](#)

December 2022

New York

New York became the sixth state to legalize human composting.

July 2021

Oregon

Oregon became the third state to legalize human composting.

June 2022

Vermont

Vermont became the fourth state to legalize human composting.

May 2019

Washington

In 2019, Recompose led the movement for Washington State to become the first place in the world to legalize human composting.

Legalized in 12

1. Washington ('19)
2. Colorado ('21)
3. Oregon ('21)
4. Vermont ('22)
5. California ('22)
6. New York ('22)
7. Nevada ('23)
8. Arizona ('24)
9. Maryland ('24)
10. Delaware ('24)
11. Minnesota ('24)
12. Maine ('24)

<p>January 2023</p> <p>Connecticut</p> <p>HB-06485 to legalize human composting was introduced to the Connecticut House of Representatives in January 2023.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>February 2025</p> <p>Georgia</p> <p>SB241 to legalize human composting was introduced in February 2025 by Senator Ricky Williams.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>January 2021</p> <p>Hawaii</p> <p>HB-680 to legalize human composting was introduced to the state legislature in January 2021.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>February 2023</p> <p>Illinois</p> <p>HB-3158 to legalize human composting was introduced to the Illinois House of Representatives in February 2023.</p> <p>View</p>
<p>January 2023</p> <p>Massachusetts</p> <p>HD1224/SD898 to legalize human composting was introduced to the Massachusetts State Legislature in January 2023.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>February 2024</p> <p>Missouri</p> <p>HB2706 to legalize human composting was introduced in February 2024.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>January 2025</p> <p>New Hampshire</p> <p>For a second year in a row, a bill to legalize human composting was introduced in the New Hampshire state legislature.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>March 2024</p> <p>New Jersey</p> <p>Bill S3007 to legalize human composting was introduced in the New Jersey Senate in March 2024.</p> <p>View</p>
<p>January 2023</p> <p>New Mexico</p> <p>SB-0407 to legalize human composting was introduced to the New Mexico Senate in February 2023.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>February 2024</p> <p>Oklahoma</p> <p>SB-1637 to legalize human composting was introduced to the Oklahoma State Senate in February 2024.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>October 2022</p> <p>Pennsylvania</p> <p>HB-2916 to legalize human composting was introduced to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in October 2022.</p> <p>View</p>	<p>June 2024</p> <p>Rhode Island</p> <p>The House approved HB 7212 to allow for human composting in June 2024.</p> <p>View</p>
<p>January 2025</p> <p>Texas</p>	<p>January 2025</p> <p>Utah</p>	<p>January 2023</p> <p>Virginia</p>	

Legislation introduced in 15 states

- **2021:** Hawaii
- **2022:** Pennsylvania
- **2023:** Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Virginia
- **2024:** Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Rhode Island
- **2025:** Georgia, Texas, Utah

NOR Providers in Washington State

PROVIDER	TERM USED	CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP	PRICE	OWNERSHIP/ ROLE IN MARKETPLACE
Recompose recompose.life	Human composting			
Return Home returnhome.com	Terramation			
Earth Funeral earthfuneral.com	Soil transformation			
Herland herlandforest.org/human-composting-in-the-herland-forest/	Natural Organic Reduction			

Resources

Oregon Funeral Resources & Education

LEARN MORE STOP

HOME HOW TO LEARN MORE STORIES BLOG CONTACT Search

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu. A vertical list of menu items is displayed under the 'HOW TO' header. A red arrow points from the left to the 'ARRANGE DISPOSITION' item. Another red arrow points from the 'STORIES' header to the 'GLOSSARY' item in a secondary menu on the right. A third red arrow points from the 'GLOSSARY' item in the secondary menu to the right. The background of the website is a scenic image of a sunset over the ocean with large rocks.

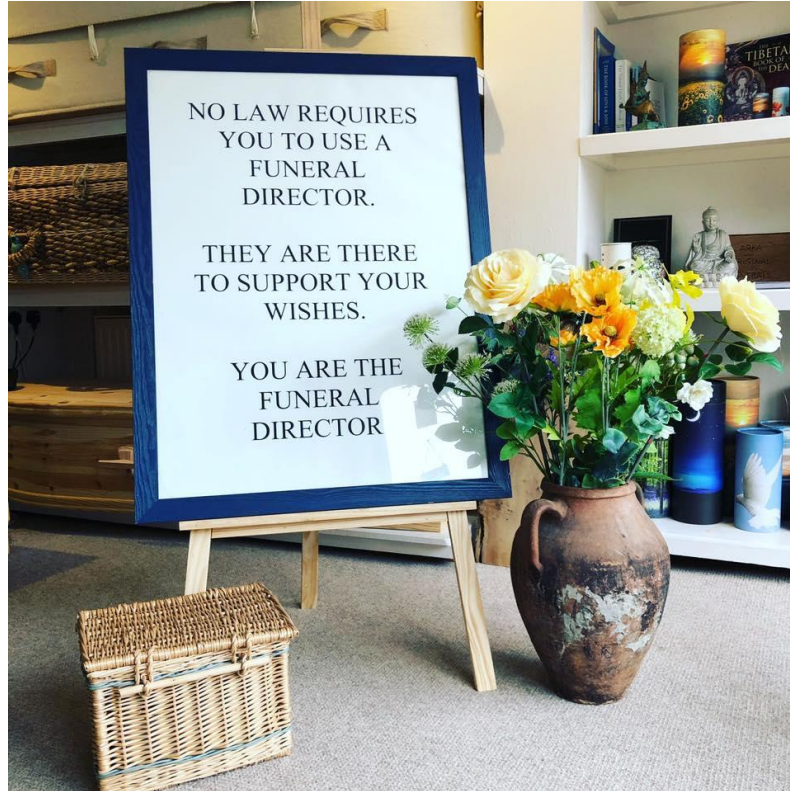
- GET HELP NOW
- LEARN THE LAW
- HAVE A HOME FUNERAL
- PERFORM BODY CARE
- COMPLETE PAPERWORK
- ARRANGE DISPOSITION
- TRANSPORT THE DEAD
- CREATE CEREMONY
- GO OUT GREENER
- PAY FOR A FUNERAL
- WORK WITH PROFESSIONALS

- RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONALS
- TOOLS FOR COMMUNITY EDUCATION
- BOOKS, ARTICLES, ORGANIZATIONS
- GLOSSARY
- SAMPLE FORMS
- MEDIA KIT
- PANDEMIC CARE GUIDE
- FAQS

Welcome to Oregon Funeral Resources & Education

We are dedicated to providing Oregonians with information about their legal rights and available resources when death occurs. Whether you're anticipating a death through illness or age, or wanting to be prepared with the facts knowing death can come at any time, this website is designed to enable you and your community to be better equipped to provide meaningful, hands-on care for the dead — what is commonly called a "home funeral".

From Death *to* Disposition



Have you ever...

- Bathed or dressed a deceased body
- Spent time with a deceased body (sometimes called a wake, vigil, or viewing)
- Kept a deceased body at home for a time after death
- Transported a deceased body
- Made direct arrangements for final disposition (cremation/ burial) without a funeral home's assistance
- Created a ceremony around a death without a funeral home's assistance
- Filed the paperwork (notification of death, death certificate)
- Attended/ participated in a home funeral

What is a home funeral?

- A noncommercial, family-centered response to death that
 - involves the family and its social community in the care and preparation of the deceased for disposition (e.g. burial or cremation)
 - and/or in planning and carrying out related rituals or ceremonies
 - and/or in the disposition itself
- May occur entirely within the family home or not
- Differentiated from the institutional funeral by
 - emphasis on minimal, noninvasive care and preparation of the deceased's body
 - reliance on the family's own social networks for assistance and support
 - relative or total absence of commercial funeral providers in its proceedings

Excerpted from Undertaken With Love: A Home Funeral Guide for Congregations and Families by Holly Stevens and Donna Belk

“Death DIY”





Why Does This Matter:

- Cost
- Reducing carbon footprint
- Religious, cultural, or spiritual beliefs
- Continuity of relationships
- Active grieving, communal mourning
- Maintaining control
- Regional/ cultural preference for DIY
- *Each person's reason will be different*

Oregon Funeral Resources & Education

HOME

LAW

HOW TO

GET HELP NOW

LEARN MORE

FAQS

CONTACT

LEARN THE LAW

LEARN THE LAW



Oregon law provides for:


- Families who choose to retain custody and control of the body of a loved one and care for their own dead
 - “Person acting as a funeral service practitioner” must not be paid
 - ORS 432.005
- Choices regarding self-determined disposition ORS 97.130
- A way to file the necessary legal paperwork
- Families to make arrangements for services, disposition



A memorial altar is shown in the background, featuring a framed photograph of a man and two children, lit candles, and flowers. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the warm glow of the candles.

Oregon law does not:

- Restrict families from caring for their own dead
- Prohibit families from transporting the deceased home or to disposition
- Require embalming
- Require use of a vault
- Restrict length of time families may spend with the deceased before disposition
- Prohibit burial at home, if county approval is obtained

A scenic landscape at sunset with rolling hills and a large white circle containing text. The sky is filled with vibrant orange and pink clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon. The foreground shows a grassy field with scattered trees and a fence line. The white circle is positioned on the left side of the image, partially overlapping the landscape.

Empowering families and your community

“Up until around 1900, when a death occurred, the tasks that are now performed by paid professionals were performed by the family. Most people today think that they are legally required to use a funeral home, which simply is not true. More and more families desire hands-on involvement, but simply don't know how to go about doing so. I am confident that this website will be a real blessing.”

—**David Noble**, retired after five decades serving Oregon families as funeral director, cemetery owner/ operator

Oregon Funeral Resources & Education

HOME LAW HOW TO GET HELP NOW LEARN MORE FAQs CONTACT

HAVE A HOME FUNERAL

PERFORM BODY CARE

COMPLETE PAPERWORK

ARRANGE DISPOSITION

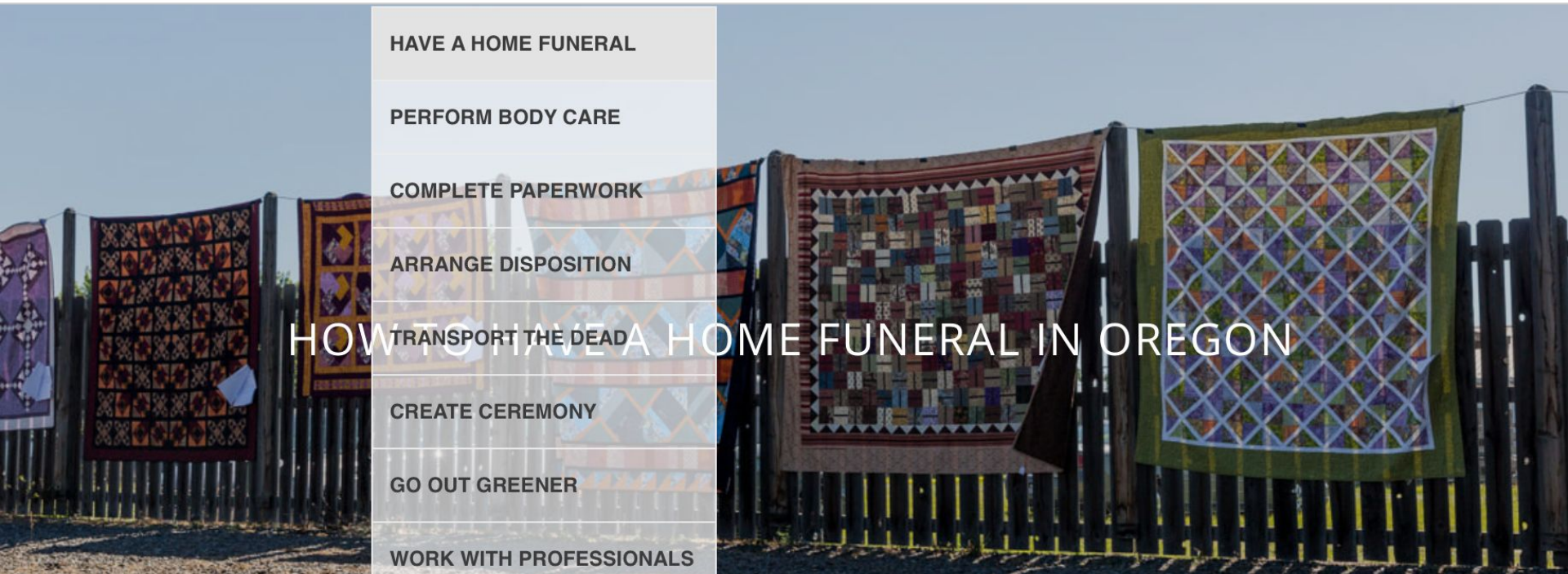
TRANSPORT THE DEAD

CREATE CEREMONY

GO OUT GREENER

WORK WITH PROFESSIONALS

HOW TO HAVE A HOME FUNERAL IN OREGON



Funeral Goods and Services, Options and Opportunities

Service	Service Provider			
	Funeral Home	Cemetery	Crematorium	Family of Deceased
Remove deceased from place of death	•			•
Deliver deceased to cemetery or crematorium	•			•
Report the death, file death certificate	•			•
Arrange to transport the deceased out of state	•			•
Wash and dress the deceased	•			•
Transport the deceased to or from place for ceremony	•			•
Host memorial service (no body/ remains present)	•			•
Coordinate funeral service (body/ remains present)	•			•
Perform embalming	•			
Provide/create caskets, shrouds, urns	•	•	•	•
Provide vaults/ outer burial liners	•	•		
Provide in-ground graves		•		on own property
Provide crypts in a mausoleum		•		
Provide niches in a columbarium		•		
Provide/create monuments/ grave markers	•	•		•
Provide places to scatter remains		•		on own property
Open and close graves, niches, crypts		•		niche, grave closing
Conduct cremation or alkaline hydrolysis or NOR			•	
Provide viewing of cremation			•	

3 Approaches to Funerals



Home
Funeral

Conceived and conducted by
family and their wider community

Blended
Funeral

Retaining control while
purchasing only
what is beneficial or necessary

Funeral
Home

Directed by professionals
hired by the family

Ceremonies of Remembrance & Bereavement

How do we honor and strengthen the continuity of relationships across the veil of life and death?







What purpose does ceremony or ritual serve?

Who benefits?

"Rituals are cairns marking the path behind us and ahead of us. Without them we lose our way." ~ Robert Fulghum

"Ritual is the journey; the sacred is the destination. Ritual binds us to the whole of creation, and it is in this bond that we can encounter the sacred." ~ Eileen London & Belinda Recio

"The death of anyone close to us is always a form of salutation, a simultaneous good-bye to their physical presence and a deep hello to a more intimate imaginal relationship now beginning to form in their absence." ~ David Whyte

"To truly and freely grieve as an entire people can revive an entire culture just as much as it can bring back to life an individual." ~ Martin Prechtel

Planning Considerations

- Religious, cultural or family beliefs or traditions to guide the ceremony?
- For whose benefit is the ceremony? The living, the deceased, ancestors?
- Timing: before, immediately after, soon after, long after?
- Designed, organized, and led by...?
- Best funeral/ memorial/ ritual you've attended – what was most memorable?
- Worst funeral/ memorial you've attended – what fell short, for you?

Typical Elements

- Arrival/ Ambiance
- Welcoming Remarks
- Candle Lighting/ Ritual/ Meditation or prayer
 - A non-verbal way for everyone to participate
- Music/ Opening Poem or Reading
- Eulogy
- Slideshow
- Remarks by family members and guests
 - Open mic or “toasts” later
- Reading, piece of music, or other elements
 - Litany of Remembrance
- Closing remarks/ music
- Mingling over refreshments and informal sharing of stories

Types of Ceremonies

Living Memorial

“Last party you’ll ever throw”

Convened by family

Virtual/
written

Life Review

Vigil/ Viewing

At home after dying at home

Brought home after death

At hospice/
hospital

At Funeral Home

Funeral/ Interment

Ceremony with body/ remains

Witnessed cremation

Burial service

Scattering

Memorial/ Celebration

Pre-planned

DIY w team

Celebrant or emcee

Home or community

Funeral home/
place of worship

Remembrance Rituals

Anniversary occasions

Every day rituals

“Never too late”

Community rituals

Types: Living Memorials



Vigil/ Viewing



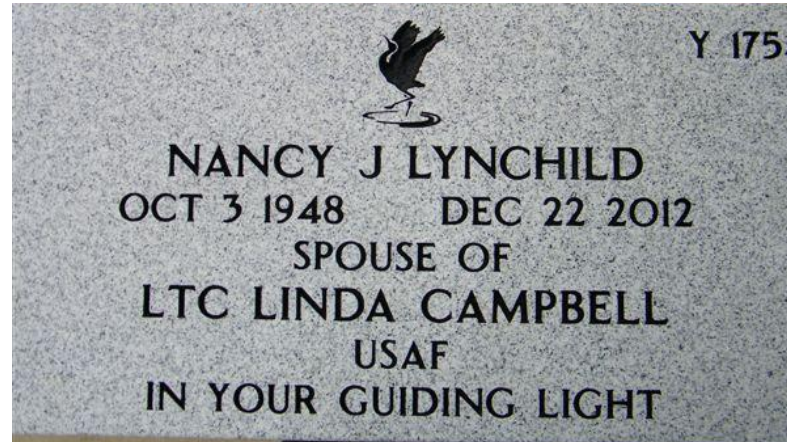
Funeral/ Interment



OREGONLIVE
The Oregonian

NEWS BUSINESS SPORTS

In a first, Veterans Affairs approves request by Oregon woman to bury same-sex spouse in national cemetery





DO ASK,
DO TELL

A speech given by

Linda Campbell

March 10, 2014

*"...a story that includes all of us,
in the ways we can strengthen
our families and communities
by reaching across the differences
that appear to divide us."*



Celebration of Life

Sunday ~ 2 pm

mother.
mayor.
visionary.

**Musical
Performance**
Allegra by
Hector Fiocco

Performed by
former Vera Katz
staff member Laura
Jauregui Wynter

Welcome
Kerry Tymchuk
~ Oregon
Historical Society

Remembering Vera
2004 Video

Speakers
Margaret Carter
Mike Lindberg
Erin Hoover-Barnett
Jesse Katz

**"I Love to See
You Smile"**
Words and music by
Randy Newman
featuring Rob McElroy,
representing the
Portland Gay Men's
Chorus

Accompanied by
Darcy White

Design by Sockeye



VERA

A tribute

01.28.2018

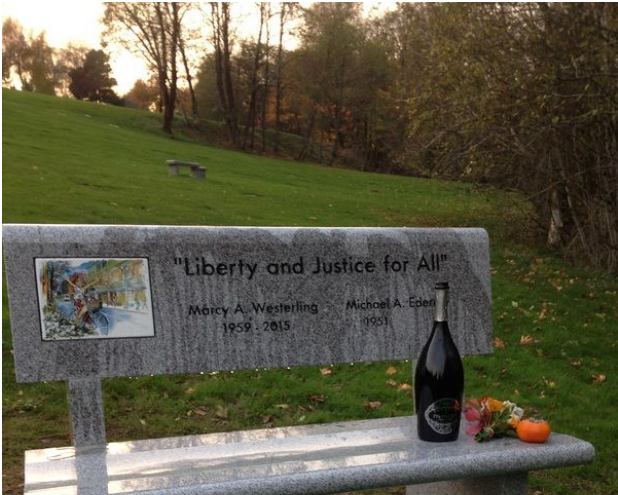
Portland
Art Museum



Memorial/ Celebration of Life



Memorialization



Ceremony Re-Dos



Ceremony Re-Dos



“Virtual” Memorials

- Online
 - 100% virtual or “hybrid”
 - hosted by funeral home or
 - virtual platform or
 - self-hosted
- Synchronized Offline
- Personal Rituals



Litany of Remembrance

In the rising of the sun & in its going down

...**We remember you**

In the blowing of the wind & in the chill of winter

...**We remember you**

In the opening of buds & in the rebirth of spring

...**We remember you**

In the blueness of the sky & in the warmth of
summer

...**We remember you**

In the rustling of leaves & in the beauty of
autumn

...**We remember you**

In the beginning of the year & when it ends

...**We remember you**

When we are weary & in need of strength

...**We remember you**

When we are lost & sick at heart

...**We remember you**

When we have joys we yearn to share

...**We remember you**

Yes, we remember you.

So long as we live, you too shall live,

for you are a part of all who have known you.

Obituary Options

- Community Service Publications
- Paid Advertisement
 - Full
 - Brief with url for longer on-line version
- On-Line
 - Social media/ personal site
 - Mortuary/ Funeral Home Site
 - On-Line Memorial Sites

Anatta~Reflection on Death

Susie Barrios

Birds sing in green leaves, lime-lit in the sunlight
Children squeal with delight on swings in the park
Parents worry they are flying too high, cautioning
to slow down

As I lay in the dark cool ground
Slowly giving back to the earth, the air, the
ever-beauty of green

Strange to think of myself dead and decaying
Molecules from *what was* becoming *what is to be*
Will I know myself in the tree's bark and roots?
Will I admire my vibrant green in the grasses I
become?
Will I feel the stir of wind against my leafy cheek?

Where is 'I' in this ceasing and becoming?
The remembering in the forever gone?
My mind can't wrap around my own death
Not existing while existing. Not living while alive.
No spiritual anchors give weight to this unknown

Is there peace in that cool darkness? Or
nothingness?

Is that the peace?

Will I know nothingness as now home?

Bones resting in quiet earth

Will I know rest?

Or will I be waiting?