

Step 1

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS FOR DISPOSITION OF THE REMAINS?

One of the foremost decisions you'll be faced with is choosing a type of disposition. That choice will have an undeniable effect on most all other decisions you make. The two primary options are burial or cremation, although a few other options do exist, such as mausoleum entombment, alkaline hydrolysis, burial at sea, and whole body donation.

Burial—For centuries now, burial has been a widely accepted method of disposition. In our culture, burial almost always takes place in a dedicated cemetery. Cemeteries are typically owned and operated by private businesses, churches, non-profit associations or various levels of government (the federal government, counties, cities, special tax districts, etc.). In Oregon, burial on your own private property is also an option, although very rarely selected. Most cemeteries require the use of a casket and outer burial container, such as a grave liner or burial vault; however, this is not required by law. In many parts of the United States, burial is still the most commonly practiced method of disposition, however, here in the Northwest, it has given way to cremation as the most common practice. Choosing burial in no way requires you to hold a traditional funeral; it is simply the method of disposition.

Cremation—Cremation continues to gain popularity as the chosen method of disposition for a number of reasons. Many families choose cremation because of the lower cost; if arranged carefully, it can prove to be a very economical choice. Some people prefer to eliminate the use of ground space that burial requires, while others prefer the idea of having the wide variety of options for memorializing their loved one. Once the cremation process is completed, the family must decide the final destination of the cremated remains or “ashes”. Here are some examples:

- ◆ **Cemetery placement**—Many families choose to bury the ashes in a grave at a cemetery. Cemetery requirements will dictate the costs for the grave and the opening of the grave as well as the type of container that must be used, if any.
- ◆ **Niche placement**—Most mausoleums (see Mausoleum entombment below) have areas specifically designated for placement of ashes. These spaces are called niches and a group of niches, is called a columbarium. Mausoleum requirements will specify the costs involved and the type of container, if any.

- ◆ **Retained at home**—Some people find comfort in having the ashes at home with them, at least for a time. You may have a designated area for a special urn or container and there are many varieties of containers to choose from.
- ◆ **Scattering**—Oregon law does not address the scattering of cremated remains; therefore, it is not considered to be illegal. However, we advise that you be cautious as to where the scattering takes place and be respectful of others. Cremated remains are considered to be non-toxic and harmless to people or animals. Many families that choose to scatter the ashes also choose to keep a small portion in a keepsake urn, memorial jewelry or other cremation-oriented memorial art.

Mausoleum entombment—Throughout the Northwest, there are a number of mausoleums. Mausoleums are structures, commonly placed on cemetery grounds, which hold a number of crypts. Each crypt has space for one or more caskets. The mausoleum will provide the specific requirements as to the costs of the crypt and the opening and closing of the crypt. Many mausoleums require embalming prior to placement in the crypt.

Alkaline Hydrolysis—Alkaline Hydrolysis is a new type of disposition technology and it is not readily available in the Portland area at this time. Contact one of our offices for information about changes in the availability. Alkaline Hydrolysis is the act of placing the body into a resomator containing water and lye, which is heated under pressure until the body is dissolved into the remaining liquid.

Whole body donation followed by cremation — Whole body donation can be an option that suits some families. Donating a body to a university or educational institution can benefit society by helping advance medical research and education. However, be very cautious deciding where to donate the body; find out where the body goes and with whom you are actually dealing. Please note that not all human bodies are eligible for whole body donation. Eligibility is always addressed on a case by case basis and your family should have an alternate plan, should the donation not be accepted.

Realize the difference between use of the body for education and research because they can be vastly different from one another:

- ◆ **Education** – Use of the body for education generally implies the body is used in a higher education program or continuing education of experienced surgeons and physicians. The body is generally kept in-tact at all times and following the educational use, cremated in its entirety and the cremated remains are returned to the family. You might expect this process to take one to two years.
- ◆ **Research** – Use of the body for research generally implies the body is dismembered and various parts are used for research by private industry and research companies. Depending on the type of program you have chosen, the various body parts may or may not be reunited with the rest of the donor for cremation and the family may or may not get cremated remains returned to them after the research. Private industry and research companies are known to pay vast amounts of money for body parts and, financially, this type of program stands to benefit greatly from your generous donation. Unfortunately, that financial benefit is not shared with the family that offers the donation.

For many years Crown has been an avid supporter of whole body donation here in Oregon. We have developed a working relationship with two local programs that use the donation for educational purposes and return the cremated remains back to the family following the designated use. These programs cover the cost of local transportation and cremation.

Legacy Health - “Legacy Body Donation Program”
www.legacyhealth.org/bodydonation 503-783-3387

Western University of Health Sciences - “Willed Body Program” www.westernu.edu/body-donation-program
541-259-0256

IMPORTANT MESSAGE: Some, who claim to be “whole body donation programs”, are actually businesses that dismember, or dissect, the body and actually sell or lease body parts to purchasers throughout the country. They call this process “Tissue Procurement.” These body parts are generally not returned. The unused body parts (usually only 15-25% of the body) are cremated (generally by a third party) and returned to the family. Some of these businesses even go so far as to advertise “Free Cremation” in order to get families to donate the body to their business. Again, educate yourself and do not agree to anything that does not meet your family’s needs or desires.

Crown Memorial Centers’ role in whole body donation – Crown Memorial Centers recognize the benefits to society, and the need to educate future health care professionals and train experienced health care professionals on new techniques and procedures. This can only be achieved through the generous gift of whole body donation. With this in mind, we are proud to be one of Oregon’s leading supporters of whole body donation. When we facilitate a whole body donation, there are no charges to the family unless additional items are requested at the time of death such as certified death certificates, memorial service assistance, viewing prior to donation or memorial products like urns or jewelry. There may also be situations when a family is asked to pay mileage charges if the decedent is outside of our service area.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT DISPOSITION OF REMAINS

A question that surfaces quite often is “who has the right to choose the method of disposition?” Oregon law (ORS 97.130 - Right to control disposition of remains) is very specific in this regard. Although the law is specific and somewhat lengthy, here is an overview of who has the right to control disposition of remains:

1. The decedent, during their lifetime (if at least 18 years of age), or;
2. Any person (over the age of 18 years) that the decedent delegates in writing with an instrument called: **APPOINTMENT OF PERSON TO MAKE DECISIONS CONCERNING DISPOSITION OF REMAINS**. This form is available at most funeral service establishments or online at www.ANewTradition.com, or;

3. A person within the first applicable listed class among the following listed classes that is available at the time of death:
 - (a). The spouse or registered domestic partner of the decedent.
 - (b). A son or daughter of the decedent 18 years of age or older.
 - (c). Either parent of the decedent.
 - (d). A brother or sister of the decedent 18 years of age or older.
 - (e). A guardian of the decedent at the time of death.
 - (f). A person in the next degree of kindred to the decedent.
 - (g). The personal representative of the estate of the decedent.
 - (h). The person nominated as the personal representative of the decedent in the decedent’s last will.
 - (i). A public health officer.

Step 2 WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE TRIBUTE?

An appropriate tribute for you and your family can be as unique as the individual whose life you're honoring. It can be anything from a complete traditional church funeral with cemetery burial to a simple, quiet moment with the body before it is transported for disposition. Only you and your family will know what feels right to you. These are common examples of how we see other families manage their loss and pay tribute to someone they love.

No formal services—Some families prefer to go through this process in their own quiet way and they may not wish to hold public services of any kind. This is perfectly acceptable as long as it's what helps you manage the loss. Some intimate time with close family and friends, or even alone, is exactly what some people need. No one else can tell you how *you* must handle the loss; it's just far too personal for them to know.

Memorial gathering—There are situations where the most appropriate solution is to provide an informal memorial gathering for family and friends. This gathering may be held at your own home, a restaurant, church fellowship hall, funeral home, park or even a country club.

Celebration of life—A celebration of life is usually a more formal type of gathering, but uplifting and happy, celebrating the life of the deceased. Generally there is a member of the clergy or a celebrant (see step 5) speaking about the life of the deceased as well as appropriate music and perhaps a video tribute or slideshow. The body may or may not be present.

Memorial service—The memorial service is generally a more formal type of service than the celebration of life service and many times can incorporate a more religious theme. It would be important to have your pastor or a celebrant presiding over the service. Normally there is music and perhaps a video tribute or slideshow. The body is not present, but a cremation urn holding the ashes is often present.

Funeral service—Holding a funeral service implies that the body is present; the casket may or may not be opened. A funeral is generally held in a church, a traditional funeral home or other facility. A clergy member or celebrant would preside; music and a video or slideshow may be used. Many times the casket is taken to the grave as the final portion of the funeral; this is called a *committal* service. The funeral service is generally the most complex of tributes and has been the time honored tradition in our culture. Although the funeral's heritage comes from the Christian faith, it does not always need to be religious in nature.

Graveside service—As the title implies, a graveside service is held at the grave and may include a casket or cremated remains in an urn. Generally, a clergy member or celebrant presides and music may be incorporated. A graveside service is generally a more simple type of service; however, there can be something very therapeutic about a gathering at the grave.

Witnessed placement cremation or burial—Although not normally considered to be a tribute, it's important for your family to know that you have the right to be present at the time of cremation or burial and, if you choose, witness the placement of the body into the crematory or grave. Some families find comfort through this involvement. There may be additional charges because of scheduling and planning if you choose to be present.



Step 3 WHEN IS EMBALMING NECESSARY?

It is very common for families to struggle over the decision of whether or not to have the body embalmed. Embalming is the process of temporarily preserving the body and preparing it for viewing by injecting a formaldehyde based solution (embalming fluid) through the body's circulatory system. This is accomplished through a small incision in the skin, allowing access to one or more arteries and veins. The embalming process usually takes between one and three hours. Except in certain special cases, embalming is not required by law. Embalming may be necessary, however, if you select certain funeral arrangements, such as a funeral with viewing. If you do not want embalming, you usually have the right to choose an arrangement that does not require you to pay for it, such as a direct cremation or immediate burial. Whether or not embalming is necessary should be determined more by the type of viewing and/or services you prefer than the type of disposition.

Note that after the funeral establishment has received the body, Oregon law specifically requires refrigeration, embalming or disposition within 24 hours. Following that, if refrigerated, the body may not be removed from refrigeration for more than six hours, including travel time to the cemetery or crematory.

EXAMPLES OF HOW TO DECIDE ABOUT EMBALMING

- ◆ If your choice is simple direct cremation or immediate burial and you have no intentions of viewing, embalming is certainly not necessary. You can still choose embalming if you want; however, there would be additional charges for the embalming.
- ◆ If your choice is simple direct cremation or immediate burial, but some family members would like a few minutes of viewing time to say goodbye, embalming would still not be necessary in most situations. Please realize there are situations where any viewing without embalming or some preparation of the remains may be very difficult, such as viewing following an autopsy or viewing following a death resulting from trauma.
- ◆ If your choice is a traditional funeral with an open casket, embalming is something most families prefer.
- ◆ If your choice is cremation or burial following a formal viewing time for family and/or friends or even the public, embalming is highly recommended. It is through the process of embalming that the funeral service professional can be assured the body will be presentable at the viewing. With no embalming, there is little control over the physiological condition of the remains and changes resulting from decomposition may occur quite rapidly in some instances.
- ◆ If your choice is a traditional funeral with a closed casket, embalming may not be necessary, but still recommended. The Oregon law mentioned above could present a logistical challenge when choosing a funeral followed by a committal at the cemetery.
- ◆ If your choice is to have the body transported long distance to an out of area cemetery or transported out of state by common carrier, embalming is typically required.

Step 4 HOW DO I CHOOSE A FUNERAL SERVICE PROVIDER?

Choosing a funeral service provider in no way implies that you must choose to have a funeral. You are simply selecting who you'd like to work with regarding details of disposition, processing an array of paperwork and, if you choose, assisting with a funeral or memorial. Don't be afraid to ask specific questions of potential providers; it's your right to know the provider's policies, practices and prices.

In Oregon, all funeral service providers must be licensed as Funeral Service Establishments. The Oregon Mortuary and Cemetery Board licenses individual death care professionals and the facilities where they work. The Board maintains an informative website: <http://www.oregon.gov/MortCem> and they can be reached by phone at 971-673-1500.

To help families compare prices, the Federal Trade Commission requires all funeral service establishments to provide a "General Price List" upon request. Our General Price List begins on page 9 of this booklet.

TYPES OF PROVIDERS

Traditional funeral homes—Traditional funeral homes typically operate out of larger facilities which are usually on commercial property and sometimes located on or near cemeteries. Generally, they have an on site chapel, viewing rooms, embalming facilities and a casket selection room. A traditional funeral home is an excellent choice for families that wish to hold a large funeral or memorial service within the funeral home's chapel or need the funeral home's facilities for other reasons.

Although all funeral homes offer cremation services, most do not actually have cremation facilities at the funeral home. Cremation facilities are licensed separately by the Board as Crematories. Often the cremation is handled by an outside company or "third party" who may or may not be affiliated with the funeral home; however, some funeral homes do have cremation facilities. If choosing cremation, ask where the cremation takes place and who owns the crematory.

Because traditional funeral homes must own and maintain the large facility, they will typically have the highest prices.

Non traditional providers—As an alternative to the traditional funeral home, a rapidly growing number of Northwest families find that their needs are being met quite successfully by choosing a non traditional provider of burial, cremation, funerals and memorials. Most non traditional providers can assist you with services in a church of your choice or other facility, but usually they do not have on site facilities to accommodate a large group. Although they generally hold the same Board license as the traditional funeral home (some are licensed as Immediate Disposition Companies only and cannot assist with funerals or memorials), this type of provider usually operates out of a more conservative facility and offers substantially lower prices.

Again, if choosing cremation, ask specific questions and find out where the cremation takes place and who owns the crematory.

For your family's peace of mind, it is very important to know exactly where the body is taken and who holds the very important responsibility of caring for your loved one prior to disposition. Don't be afraid to ask these questions; it's your right to know.

Step 5 HOW CAN MY FAMILY PERSONALIZE THE EXPERIENCE?

In the previous sections we mentioned a number of ideas that can help you personalize this process for your family. Let's talk more about ideas for personalization.

A quiet moment—If the death occurs at home or in a nursing facility or hospital, sometimes the most therapeutic moment can be just following the death. Once the death has occurred, there should be no need to rush; it's okay to appreciate that special moment and reflect on the life that has been lived.

The officiant—The officiant is the person who presides over a service or tribute. Here are some examples.

- ◆ Your church pastor, priest or bishop—If you are now, or have been previously, active in a church family, this is most likely the obvious choice. You and your family may already have a personal relationship with this person that will prove to be priceless throughout this process.
- ◆ A chaplain—Hospice, hospital, nursing facility or fire district chaplains devote much of their lives to helping people through this difficult time and they are well versed in the process of caring for the survivors, while at the same time, honoring the one they've lost.
- ◆ A certified celebrant—You may be interested in securing a certified celebrant to help you with the tribute. A certified celebrant is someone who has been trained to work closely with the family, learning as much as possible about the deceased and the life they lived, and then organizing a fitting tribute that is usually very personalized. The celebrant can make the service as religious or as non-religious as the family desires. Certified celebrants charge a fee for their services and in many cases this is what they do for employment. Consult your funeral service provider for celebrant suggestions and related fees.
- ◆ Family member or personal friend—Sometimes a member of the family or a personal friend is capable and willing to officiate. This is perfectly acceptable and can add special meaning to a tribute.

Special music—Music can add immeasurable comfort to most any tribute and can be live or recorded.

- ◆ Having a family member or friend who is capable of performing live music can add a very personal touch to any service. If you have a church home, it may be an obvious choice to ask church musicians to help you with the music.
- ◆ With today's technology, the options for recorded music have become endless; most families have the ability to download specific songs to be used at the service. Designating one dependable family member who has the ability to secure the music is usually the most efficient way to proceed. Make certain that the music is not left until the last minute; be prepared early.

Video tribute or slideshow—In more recent years, it has become much more common for family members to incorporate video tribute programs or photograph slideshows into the tribute. Some families have the ability to produce the video or slideshow themselves, while others prefer to hire professional assistance with the project. It may become a fairly time consuming project and generally time is of the essence. As with music, we recommend delegating one dependable family member to oversee the project. Your funeral service professional can provide you with direction.

Printed memorial goods—If you are holding a public service of any type, it is very common to provide printed memorial folders to hand out and a register book for your guests to sign. Most funeral service providers can assist you with this and the folders may be a simple stock item from their selection or they may be custom printed with full color photos. Sometimes a family member, or your church, is capable of producing these as well.

Memory board—A memory board is a large collage of photos, special notes and memorabilia pertaining to the deceased's life. Preparing this at the family's home before the tribute service can become a therapeutic

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experience as it brings the family together, reflecting on their individual relationships with the deceased.

Memorial table—Particularly when there is no casket present, it is common to use a memorial table as a focal point. The memorial table will generally hold special flowers from the family, the urn, items of memorabilia and quite often, an enlarged photo of the deceased.

Memorial contributions—Some families prefer to request that contributions be made to a charity or special organization, such as hospice or medical research. For some families this can create a meaningful and lasting tribute.

Floral tributes—Depending on the type of service you prefer, your family may wish to include special floral pieces. Here are a few examples:

- ◆ Casket spray—If considering a traditional church or chapel service with the casket present (open or closed) you may wish to have a spray, or “blanket”, of flowers placed on top of the casket. This floral spray is placed on the grave following the burial.
- ◆ Standing easel spray—Some families prefer a standing spray to be placed near the casket or near a memorial table when the casket is not present. This spray is also placed on the grave following the burial.
- ◆ A vase of special flowers—A simple vase of flowers with special meaning can add a personal touch to any tribute.

Personal items of the deceased—Regardless of the type of service, families can add a personal touch by incorporating special items that represent aspects of the deceased’s interests. These items may be as subtle as a springtime daffodil or as obvious as a Harley Davidson.

Writing letters to the deceased—Many people find great comfort in writing a letter to the deceased. This process can be emotional, challenging, therapeutic and rewarding, all at the same time. If you choose, the letters can be incorporated into the service or placed with the deceased.

A custom obituary—Your family may find satisfaction in writing a very complete obituary story of the deceased. Many newspapers will print a custom obituary, at an additional charge, while some have no extra charge or even no charge at all. The obituary can be used for other purposes as well, such as reading at a tribute service, printing in the memorial folders or updating family genealogy records or church records. A special photograph can be a nice added touch.

