

Everything You Wanted to Know About Funerals

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Death and Taxes are inevitable ... even when we don't like them.

Unfortunately, we don't have a choice about death. We can't leave this life any other way. Bummer!

What is a Funeral?

A funeral is a very special ceremony to remember and honor the deceased and comfort the bereaved. The difference between a funeral service and a memorial service is that the casket is present at a funeral service.

Grieving Rituals

Funerals provide traditions that allow us to be actively involved in the grieving process. Many people don't want to attend funerals because they don't want to feel sad. But losing someone we love and care about will make us sad whether we attend their funeral or not. Funerals provide a very fitting opportunity to provide comfort to others as well as receive comfort ourselves.

Let's talk about religious traditions with regard to funerals.

The order of the Catholic traditional funeral is, first, the Rosary is recited and there's an open casket viewing. Then the casket is closed and the funeral service takes place. The deceased is then transported to the cemetery where the graveside service is held, followed by the interment. The interment is when the casket is lowered into the grave. Following the graveside service, many families have a reception or repast at the funeral home, or church. A meal provides another level of comfort following a burial and, again, brings people together to share memories and stories about the deceased.

The Orthodox church will only accept burial if you want to have a Trisagion which is a funeral service held at the church. Orthodox churches do not accept cremation.

Funerals can be held wherever they are allowed: churches, funeral chapels, or even outdoors. However, many of the club houses in senior communities or churches do not want an open casket in their facility which is why funerals are usually held at a funeral chapel. You'll want to check with your facility or church to see what they allow.

Jewish, Latter Day Saints, Buddhist, Sikhs, and other cultures also have rituals and traditions.

Transportation

After a person dies, there is a process of bringing the deceased into the care of the funeral home. This process is referred to as "the removal." Most funeral homes use an unmarked van

for this purpose to avoid attention being drawn to the situation, especially when someone dies in their home in a residential community.

Transport to the funeral service and the cemetery is done in a funeral coach, also referred to as a hearse.

Today it's common for families to use a limousine service when they travel to the funeral service and the cemetery. This provides an opportunity for the family to be together and provides comfort in their grief.

If there is a procession to the cemetery of more than 3-5 cars or over a long distance, motorcycle escorts are required for safety reasons. It is up to the family to decide if there will be a procession or if people will meet at the cemetery.

If Cremation is Preferred, Can We Still Have a Funeral?

Some individuals prefer cremation to burial, but a funeral is still possible. For this purpose, a rental casket is available. There is a removable interior lining called an "insert" where the body is placed for the viewing and funeral. The casket insert is beautifully lined just like the interior of a burial casket, so it's difficult to tell the difference. Each insert is used only once and is included in the cremation process.

Crematoriums require a cardboard casket container to be used in the cremation process. If there is a funeral service, the casket insert will be used instead of the plain cardboard container.

Celebration of Life or Memorial Services

At a funeral service, the casket is present. At a celebration of life or memorial service, the casket is not present. Some people choose to have the graveside service prior to the memorial service.

Usually a large picture of the deceased is displayed in the front of the chapel. Most of the time, the urn is not displayed, but the choice is up to the family. The question is, "Where do you want the focus to be, on the person and their life or on the cremated remains?"

Memorial services were usually religious in nature and held in churches. The newest method now is a celebration of the life of the person who has passed. In our culture, most families prefer the latter. Celebrations of life tend to be less formal. Both can be very personalized to reflect the strengths, interests and personality of the person being honored. The highlight of the service is the eulogy, followed by a sharing time and video tribute of the life of the person. It is not unusual for someone to share something that makes the audience laugh. Sometimes a celebration of life is combined with a reception with food or a luncheon. Sometimes it is very informal and it may feel like a party!

To Cremate or Bury? That is the Question!

Statistically, over 60% of people in California choose cremation. Sadly, less than half of them have some kind of service of remembrance.

The value of a service is that people come together to grieve and mourn together. The result is that those present, especially the family, are comforted at a time when they truly need it. I have heard it said over and over again, "I can't believe how many people came to celebrate his or her life, they really loved them!" If you are making pre-arrangements, don't shortchange your loved ones by insisting on no service. Their comfort and processing of their grief are worth every penny spent. Besides, they want to show how much they love you and honor your life.

Burials

There many district-owned cemeteries, also referred to as public cemeteries, in the area: Rocklin, Newcastle, Roseville, Lincoln, San Juan-Citrus Heights, Fair Oaks and Rio Consumes near Elk Grove. The pricing for a plot at a district cemetery is one-half to one-third the cost of a commercial cemetery. The least expensive burial for veterans and their spouses is at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery. It's 100% free, no cost to the veteran or their family. You just need a funeral home to make the arrangements for a permit and to transport the deceased to the cemetery. Proof of an honorable discharge (DD-214) is required. A flag can be provided along with military honors. Military honors can be held almost anywhere. The funeral home can set up those arrangements for you.

Burial locations are restricted by State law. There are several green cemeteries in Northern California where you can bury without a casket. You are prohibited from burying on private property in California. Most cemeteries require a vault to prevent the ground from caving in. Opening and closing fees are charged by the cemetery.

Cremation

The inurnment of cremated remains can be done in a plot, niche, retained at a residence or scattered. Sacramento Valley National Cemetery has large niches that hold two urns. There is also the option of placing an urn for the spouse in the plot of the deceased veteran. There is no cost for the veteran and their spouse.

Scattering of cremated remains can be done by a licensed scattering company. We work with one that has been doing this for over 30 years. He scatters from his small airplane over land or sea. After the scattering he sends the family a picture and coordinates of the scattering.

If you want to scatter the cremated remains, here are a few rules you need to know.

1. Do not scatter on private property unless you have permission.
2. You must go 500 feet off shore when scattering in the ocean.
3. In the State of California, you may not scatter in lakes or rivers. Nevada does not have the same law. Most national parks will allow scattering if you ask.

I have been told by a realtor that if you scatter on your private property, you must disclose it at the time the property is sold unless it's been over 3 years.

Preparing is Caring

The death of someone we love is one of the most traumatic experiences we'll encounter during our lifetime. When making final arrangements following a death, there are between 25 and 140 questions that need to be answered. You can make it easier on your family by planning ahead. Remember, death is inevitable. You are loved, and you are important! You can let your family know you love them by telling them what you want, and by planning ahead for the inevitable.

Grief Care

Grieving is a natural emotional reaction to being separated from someone you love. But that's a subject for another time. There is such a thing as "Good Grief." I'd love to have an opportunity to share about that with you. My contact information is provided below. Give me a call to schedule a "Good Grief" seminar for your group or organization.

Thank you for coming! If you have questions that weren't addressed today, I would welcome you to call me.