



FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE OF PRINCETON

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Death Midwifery and the Home Funeral Revolution

Bill Strubbe, Common Ground Magazine, 2007

The first pioneering step Jerrigrace Lyons took in becoming a home funeral facilitator was in Sebastopol eleven years ago not out of any pre-existing desire or any forward-thinking business plan, but out of an immediate, unforeseen need. It was the sudden death of her Reiki mentor and close friend, Carolyn Whiting, that inspired her to found death midwifery and reinvent the long lost concept of the American home funeral.

Whiting had left explicit instructions: no embalming, no autopsy, no mortuary — loved ones should bathe and dress her, followed by an intimate home memorial. She then wanted her ashes scattered around the world on her friends' travels.

Jerrigrace's apprehension of handling a corpse soon dissipated, along, she says, with the fear of the subject of death itself, as she and Carolyn's other friends and relatives attended to her body. "The privacy of Carolyn's home lent itself to creating a sacred and intimate atmosphere in which to express all the emotions — grief, pain, love and even joy — that washed like waves over our souls, helping us cope with and accept the death of our precious friend," says Jerrigrace. That profound experience motivated her to found Final Passages, her home funeral service, so she could offer others what she ended up providing to her deceased friend.

Along with her partner, Mark Hill, she's helped "midwife" nearly 300 final passages. "It was a life-changing experience and it awakened in me a passion to share with others how empowering and beneficial the home funeral was and the fact that it is completely legal in California."

In all but a handful of states it's permissible for a body to remain at home — or be transported there from a hospital or coroner's — for a home wake. In California, a Permit for Disposition is required to transport the body across county or

FCAP Annual Conference

Do Try This At Home!

Home Funeral Consultants
Olivia Rhodes and Cheryl Clark

Sunday, April 18th, 2010, 2:00 PM

Princeton Theological Seminary
Erdman Hall, 20 Library Place

Free parking is available across the street
behind the Luce and Speer library.

Free and open to the public—bring a friend!

Olivia Rhodes & Cheryl Clark are Home Funeral Guides from *A Natural Undertaking*. Learn how they help families prepare for death and with after-death care. Death midwifery is a component of the green burial movement that embraces cremation and green burial, avoids toxic and invasive embalming, and replaces cement liners, metal and precious wood coffins with biodegradable options. It's much less expensive and has stunning emotional benefits.

state lines and a Certificate of Death must be properly, and precisely, filled out. Contrary to popular notion, embalming, begun during the Civil War when corpses were shipped long distances, is not required in any state. By 1920, embalming in the U.S. became almost universal, adding unnecessary expense. Further, where a mainstream mortuary burial can easily cost \$10,000, a home funeral followed by cremation can cost under \$1000.

Now, death midwifery — the employ of a person like Jerrigrace to assist with paperwork, facilitate the transport and the care of the body for a home ritual or wake — is a component of the larger, burgeoning green burial movement (also known as the natural burial movement) that leaves

the \$20 billion-a-year funeral industry out, or at least on the margins, of the equation. It includes the trend toward cremation in order to preserve open space, or alternative to that, green cemetery sites that eschew embalming, cement liners and the interment of mass-produced coffins with their metals and precious woods; for burial in simple pine or cardboard coffins or shrouds that are biodegradable.

Along with bypassing the sticker shock of funeral home care are the emotional benefits of the home funeral. Just ask Becky Thomas, whose brother-in-law took a suicide leap from the Golden Gate Bridge.

When Jerrigrace arrived, Becky and her husband were still in shock and exhausted, but felt a modicum of consolation that a home funeral perfectly suited Don, as he always tried to minimize his ecological footprint. They fixed up the garage at their Santa Rosa home, hung sheets up on walls, laid carpet down, strung twinkle lights, placed photos, and laid Don out on a mattress placed on top of a massage table.

“No one could believe it had happened. We spent a long time washing and touching Don and in doing so were more able to come to grips with the reality of his death. We needed more time than would have been available at a funeral home,” she says.

“Some family members had reservations; concerns about what shape his body might be in and how the children — then three and nine and who were very close to Don — would react. But Jerrigrace explained that children take their cues from adults, and they were totally okay with it,” Becky recalled. “They periodically went out to the garage and would say, ‘Hi, Uncle Don’ and pat him.”

Through the Victorian age, death was a reality that children were not shielded from. As a matter of course, families lovingly cleansed the body of sweat, saliva, tears, and other bodily fluids (the bladder empties at death), dressed the dead, lay them out in the front parlor for a wake — an oftentimes boisterous gathering of eating, drinking, storytelling and emoting, typically lasting several days. By the early 1900s, however, funeral parlors (the term “living room” came into vogue when the editor of a national magazine banned the word “parlor” from its pages for its close association

with the dead) came into favor, thus distancing society from death.

Jerrigrace’s workshops cover such practical matters as cleaning the body; anointing with scented waters or oils; the particulars of rigor mortis (initially the body stiffens, then later relaxes again); the proper positioning of dry ice under the organs; and an intimate view of a death midwife’s travel kit, including such practical items as medical gloves, adult diapers, nail clippers, alcohol, dry shampoo, and make-up, along with paraphernalia of a more esoteric nature — music CDs, rattles, feathers, and essential oils. The kit’s most disconcerting items were the X-Acto knife, suturing kit and Crazy Glue; a death midwife might be called upon to close up wounds.

One of Jerrigrace’s Final Passages midwife workshop alums is Nora Cedarwind Young, a green burial educator and a hospice chaplain in Chimacum, Washington. A great admirer of Jerrigrace, Young calls her mentor the “rebirther of the modern death midwife” movement. “People today know more about assembling a stereo or computer than facilitating the death of a loved one. By educating ourselves, we’re more capable to deal with grief and heal and also to educate others about green burial choices.”

Jackie Kramer’s 90-year-old father, Irving, died in late January at home in Sonoma from lung cancer. “He hadn’t requested anything as far as a service,” she recalls, “and until the 11th hour, I was conflicted about what to do. Jerrigrace told me how lovely it would be, but I didn’t really believe her.”

On the evening of his death, Jackie decided to proceed with a home funeral. Irving’s body was bathed with lavender water, dressed in a favorite outfit, his mouth closed. The next morning Jerrigrace arrived with the cardboard casket that family and friends decorated, placing in it items symbolizing his life.

“You think of death as this horrible thing, but his passing and funeral were natural, beautiful, a wonderful time for us,” Jackie recalls. “He’d been in a lot of pain and it was so nice to see how lovely and light-filled his face became after it relaxed. I was never that uptight about death before, but now I’m an advocate of home funerals. It gave me a chance to experience death as a part of life,

instead of running away from it. It takes away the fear and the taboo of talking about it, and is such a powerful opportunity for healing and growth.”

Says 59-year-old Jerrigrace, “The baby boomers are seeking personal and meaningful death rituals and ceremonies much like the home wedding, home birth and home schooling movements they spearheaded in the ’60s. Part of the boomers’ legacy is reclaiming sacred rituals; bringing family and community together to participate in one of life’s most important rites-of-passages.”

Home Funerals

The following is thanks to www.finalpassages.org

From the beginning of time, families have cared for their own dead. It has only been in the fairly recent past that families started paying outside parties to care for their dead out of the home. A generation ago, the baby boomers brought back home births. Now, more and more families are choosing to continue to care for their loved ones in the home after death.

A funeral is a ceremony commemorating the life and death passage of an individual. It is an important ritual acknowledging a life-changing event for surviving family and friends. A home or family-directed funeral is one that is held in a home environment.

A funeral reinforces the reality of a death. When a mortuary funeral business is hired, the deceased is wrapped in a body bag, whisked away, handled by strangers, stored in a funeral home and likely embalmed. The next time you see the body, it may look very different. A home funeral puts the family back in charge. Family and friends may wash the body if they choose and dress them the way they like, formally or in pajamas or their favorite flannel shirt. Participating in the care can help people to let go of the deceased in a gentler and less fragmented way. One family member said, "I needed more than my mind to help me understand what was happening, touching his body helped me to move through my grief and grasp the reality of his death." Dry ice can be placed out of view, and family and friends can view the person looking natural, lying in their bed or in a casket.

Most people have an immediate negative reaction to the idea of a home funeral, usually due to

discomfort at the idea of being in the presence of a dead body or having one at home. But, that is largely because most of our experience with the dead has been through horror films or viewing waxy, embalmed bodies in funeral homes.

Imagine caring for your child (or husband or mother) at home with hospice. You know she is going to die and you’ve been feeding, washing, dressing, holding her and caring for her in every way. When she finally takes that last breath, her body is still her, the child you love. You don’t stop loving someone at the moment of death. No one who has provided that kind of care for someone suddenly jumps up at the moment of death and screams “oh my god, a dead body!” For the first few hours or days, the body is still the person you’ve been caring for. Caring for someone you love after death is a much more meaningful, natural and healing experience than most can imagine.

A home funeral provides more time for visiting, viewing, ceremony, prayers, and ritual. Families can spend that time writing the obituary together, making or decorating a casket. While there may be restrictions of time and feelings of self-consciousness in a funeral establishment, the privacy of a home environment provides a safe, loving and appropriate place where one can discuss life and death and express emotions of grief and loss. Decorating a wooden or cardboard casket with personal and meaningful life mementos may give those who are having difficulty expressing these feelings a creative and healing outlet.

When a funeral is held at home, it creates a spirit of community and honors relationships in an atmosphere of familiarity and dignity. A funeral ritual acknowledges the natural birth and death cycle, is a rite of separation of an individual from their community and acknowledges a rite of transition of roles for the survivors, such as wife to widow. A home funeral provides a time and place where children can more easily see that death is a natural part of the life cycle and learn how their society participates in a cultural rite of passage and this cohesive last act of love.

In addition, home funerals can be an economical alternative to the more conventional funeral.

And, it’s not all or nothing. You might prefer to pay a funeral director to handle some aspects such as completing the paperwork and transport-

(Continued from page 3)

ing the deceased from the home to a cemetery or you might want help from a home funeral consultant or funeral director with washing and preparing the body.

Home Funeral Resources

Guides:

www.undertakenwithlove.org

<http://homefuneral.info>

Home Funeral Consultants:

www.naturalundertaking.org (eastern PA)

www.crossings.net (MD)

www.crossingscircle.org (TX)

www.naturaltransitions.org (CO)

www.finalpassages.org (CA)

Documentary available through Netflix:

www.pbs.org/pov/pov2004/afamilyundertaking

Excellent Articles:

The Surprising Satisfactions of a Home Funeral

www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/Presence-of-Mind-Which-Way-Out.html

Home Burials Offer an Intimate Alternative

www.nytimes.com/2009/07/21/us/21funeral.html

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Princeton

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Treasurer's Annual Report

Submitted by Betty Fleming

2009 Income:

Contributions/Bequests	\$6,435
Membership Dues	1,050
Interest	100
Book sales	77
Total:	\$7,662

2009 Expenses:

Dues to National Association	\$1,079
Gift to National Association	1,600
Printing	2,169
Postage	990
Advertising/promotional events	632
Board member training	0
Annual Meeting/Room Rental	190
Office Supplies	4
Telephone	325
Legal or Accounting Expense	0
State Taxes	25
Travel	0
Speaker	400
UUCP: Mail & Meeting Rooms	200
Total:	\$7,614

Net Income: **\$48**

Balance on hand as of December 31, 2009:

Checking account:	\$1,292
Savings account:	9,131
Total:	\$10,423

Let Us Speak To You

We've had great fun this year presenting "Plan Ahead and Rest in Peace" at the Princeton Adult School, West Windsor-Plainsboro Adult School, Hollowbrook Senior Center, Elm Court, Princeton Engine Co #1 Ladies Auxiliary and more! We'd love to speak to your organization, class, club or group. Contact: 430-7250 / info@fcaprinceton.org.

Thank You

We are very grateful to the 147 donors who contributed over \$4,800 to FCAP in response to our fall fundraiser to help us to help consumers and spread the good word about funeral planning. Haven't returned your envelope yet? It's never too late. All donations are fully tax deductible.



Funeral Consumers Alliance of Princeton FUNERAL DIRECTORS AND PRICES 2010

- ☞ The funeral directors listed on the other side have given us prices for simple cremations and burials. We do not have a binding contract with them and their **prices may change at any time**. Some of these funeral homes give our members substantial discounts (reflected in listed prices). Others are included because their regular fees are within the range of the funeral directors who give our members discounts.
- ☞ These prices are for **simple** cremations and burials. The services are precisely defined below. Please read these definitions carefully. If you want more complex arrangements, you will be charged at higher rates.
- ☞ Educate yourself about disposition options, speak with family, friends and clergy and decide what you would like for your final arrangements. If you want a direct cremation or burial, select one of these funeral directors and so indicate on your Expression of Personal Wishes form. If you want a full service funeral, call or visit one or more of these funeral directors and plan the details. Funeral homes are required by law to provide you with a price list for services offered. Have the funeral director provide you with a signed copy of the expense estimate for the arrangements. Attach a copy of this estimate to each copy of your Expression of Personal Wishes form and give to your family, friends and clergy person. Whether or not you make your arrangements now, file this list with your expression-of-wishes form where both can be easily found. We do not encourage pre-paying.
- ☞ We will send you an updated list once a year (generally inside the spring newsletter). We especially solicit your comments on your experience with the funeral directors. Your comments will enable us to serve our members better. If you have questions or comments please let us know.

PLAN I – DIRECT CREMATION - The funeral director will call for the body within the radius of miles specified, provide a death certificate and cremation permit, place the body in a minimum container acceptable to crematory, and arrange and pay for cremation. Cremation will occur within 48 hours (if not embalmed or refrigerated). Family may attend cremation if desired. Local delivery of ashes will be made in a simple container to family member or designated representative. Assistance with Social Security and veteran's benefits will be provided. **The following, if requested/required, may incur additional cost:** Mailing of ashes, urn, embalming, viewing, funeral service, disposal of ashes, vault or grave liner (sometimes required by the cemetery), grave plot and opening and closing of grave (charged by the cemetery), headstone or marker (charged by the monument maker), etc.

PLAN II – IMMEDIATE BURIAL - The funeral director will call for the body within the radius of miles specified, provide a death certificate and burial permit, place the body in a modest casket of the funeral director's choosing and arrange for interment at a designated cemetery. Burial will be private and needs to occur within 48 hours of death (if not embalmed or refrigerated). Assistance with Social Security and veteran's benefits claims provided. **The following, if requested/required, may incur additional cost:** Embalming, viewing, funeral service, upgraded casket, vault or grave liner (often required by the cemetery), grave plot and opening and closing of grave (charged by the cemetery), headstone or marker (charged by the monument maker), etc.

PLAN III – PREPLANNED FULL SERVICE FUNERAL - The funeral director will call for the body within the radius of miles specified, provide a death certificate and burial permit, provide embalming, cosmetology and dressing if requested, place the body in a modest casket of the funeral directors choosing, provide use of funeral home for funeral service with one hour prior visitation, arrange for interment at a designated cemetery, transport body to cemetery for graveside service and burial. Assistance with Social Security and veteran's benefits claims will be provided. **The following, if requested/required, may incur additional cost:** Hearse, upgraded casket, additional visitation time, vault or grave liner (often required by the cemetery), grave plot and opening and closing of grave (charged by the cemetery), headstone or marker (charged by the monument maker), etc.

Funeral Consumers Alliance of Princeton
FUNERAL DIRECTORS AND PRICES 2010

The prices quoted are for the minimum service cremations and burials described on the reverse. Mileage refers to the distance the funeral director will travel to reach the pick up site without additional charge.

FUNERAL HOME	PLAN I	PLAN II	PLAN III	MILES
Alloway Funeral Home Merchantville (856) 663-9085	\$450	\$700	\$2,000	50
Riverside Memorial Chapel Ewing (609) 771-9109	\$695	\$930	\$2,246	30
Cremation Services of Hopewell Valley Hopewell (609) 466-2700	\$825	\$925	\$2,200	30
Ledford Funeral Home Chambersburg/Trenton (609) 393-4567	\$850	\$1,000	\$1,970	60
Anderson Funeral Service Trenton (609) 394-1702	\$895	\$1,270	N/A	20
All Cremation Options Somerville (908) 575-9800	\$995	\$1,300	\$2,246	40
Kimble Funeral Home Princeton (609) 924-0018	\$1,135	\$1,150	\$2,246	35
Chiacchio Southview Funeral Home Trenton (609) 396-4686	\$1,200	\$1,970	\$2,246	25

- ☞ Except in special cases, embalming is not required by New Jersey law, provided burial, cremation or refrigeration takes place within 48 hours. The charge for embalming is included in Plan III.
- ☞ The casket included in the Plan II and III package price is usually cloth-covered or laminate-coated fiberboard or minimum metal (depends on funeral home). Upgraded caskets may be purchased from the funeral home for an additional charge, starting at \$195 – \$805. Consumers may make their own or buy a coffin from another source. Caskets available on the web start at about \$400 plus delivery.
- ☞ Ashes are generally returned in a cardboard or plastic container. Upgraded urns may be purchased from the funeral home for an additional charge, starting at \$70 – \$125. You may use a container you already have (e.g., a vase with a lid) or obtain one from another source or online.
- ☞ Some of our funeral directors are willing to travel to your home to discuss arrangements.
- ☞ For Plans I and II, it is often not necessary ever to visit the funeral home, as arrangements and payment can be made over the phone.
- ☞ Funeral directors can accommodate all religious needs and many are happy to work with those requesting viewing at home instead of at a religious institution or funeral home.

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- I am interested in the possibility of serving on the board. Please contact me.
- I am interested in the benefits of membership in FCAP. Please send me a brochure.
- I would like to become a member. Enclosed please find my check for \$25 for an individual plus \$10 for each additional household member.
- I would like to give a membership as a gift. Enclosed please find my check for \$25 for an individual plus \$10 for each additional household member.
- Please send the books indicated below and the pamphlets indicated on the reverse.

Books

___ ***Putting My House in Order*** We created this comprehensive workbook for you to fill-in-the-blanks with all the information your survivors will need when you're gone..... \$1.50

___ ***I Died Laughing: Funeral Education with a Light Touch*** by Lisa Carlson. Dear Abby says "This book proves that dying can be a laughing matter." softcover..... \$8.75

___ ***Dealing Creatively with Death: A Manual of Death Education and Simple Burial*** by Ernest Morgan. It's focus on the emotional and economic costs of death is unparalleled. (cover price \$12.95) softcover..... \$6.00

___ ***The American Way of Death Revisited*** by Jessica Mitford. Almost unforgivably funny, this exposé of the funeral industry was a number one bestseller and is a model of muckraking. Hard cover. Cover price \$25.00 **SALE! \$10.00**

___ ***Caring for the Dead: Your Final Act of Love*** by Lisa Carlson. Information-packed guide to working without a funeral director, includes state laws. Cover price \$29.95 . . **SALE! \$10.00**

___ ***You Only Die Once: Preparing for the End of Life With Grace and Gusto*** by Margie Jenkins. A handbook for preparing for the end of life. Cover price \$12.99 **SALE! \$5.00**

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To promote informed advance planning for funeral and memorial arrangements

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