

# ADAPTING TO CHANGE

By Ryan Helfenbein

Remember growing up how simple the world was? If you wanted to go play ball with a friend, you'd knock on the door and ask, not hope, that the Wi-Fi is working so you can send them a video of yourself with a caption of, "Want to join in?" I overheard the other day that more change has occurred in our society in the last 18 years than the last 2000. For an industry such as the funeral business, that still keeps typewriters in use, we have even begun seeing change in the style of service offered. The funeral service is now being replaced by celebration of life, the newspaper obituary is falling by the wayside as online personalized tribute pages are created, and as amazing as this might seem, even the methods of disposition are expanding into alternatives beyond our wildest imagination.

For generations now, the choices of what to do with those who die has been narrowed down to two options – burial or cremation. But with change in all death care services, it was only a matter of time until it caught up with us.

Today, options in methods of disposition now include placing our loved ones directly into the earth through the option of "green burial" and dissolving the dead with an alkaline solution through what is called alkaline hydrolysis. And, as of May 21, in the state of Washington, families can transform their dead into human compost.

Recomposing, or "natural organic reduction" as it is being called, is the newest jaw-dropping method of disposition. As if the dissolving idea was not radical enough, we now can generate a nutrient-rich topsoil similar to that which can be purchased

at the local store, in which trees and flowers can be planted. The process transforms everything, even bones and teeth, into soil by introducing heat-loving microbes and helpful bacteria to rapidly breakdown the human remains contained in a reusable vessel. Through the introduction of woodchips and a controlled process to balance out the ratio of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and moisture, recomposing creates the ideal 120- to 160-degree environment for thorough decomposition. At different intervals, the human remains are mixed to ensure equal breakdown. The entire process takes about a month and the cubic yard of topsoil left behind is then given to the family.

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So what about surgical implants and pacemakers you ask? Do they break down in this process as well? Good question. Much like that of cremation, all foreign material is removed prior to or after the process is completed and then recycled or placed into bio-waste. This concept of recomposing is to attempt to reduce our human

remains into the most environmentally friendly form available. Yes, the world was simple 30-50 years ago. Phone calls were just that, picking up the phone and speaking to someone, not keystroking a handheld device through texting, and the nutrient-rich earth that we used for our landscaping was something we purchased at the garden center, not what the undertaker handed back to us after grandmother died. Things are changing all around us, even in an industry we would imagine is most resistant to change. The question is ... are we ready?

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## Bay Bytes

Water testing kits can be purchased through Amazon or Lowe's or through sites found on Google. Test kits will analyze such things as lead content, bacteria, nitrates, pesticides and all sorts of other unwanted additions found in your drinking water. They will make suggestions as to how to clean it up. For a possible freebie, contact Safe Drinking Water at 800.426.4791.

