

ROLLER COASTERS AND TRUST

By Ryan Helfenbein

When I was a young boy getting on my first roller coaster ride, I remember my father saying, "Trust me ... " With my knees knocking and tears close to the surface, the coaster started its descent from a long slow ride into the sky. And seconds after the descent, I never looked back and continue to enjoy roller coasters with my children today. Dad was right. "Trust me, you will enjoy this ..."

This level of trust is something that needs to come to the forefront with cremation in the funeral industry today. According to National Funeral Directors Association, a small percentage of funeral homes actually own a crematory, yet 100 percent of them offer this service. This brings up not only the question of, "Where is my loved one going?" but also, "How can I be assured those are the ashes of my loved one?"

The scary reality of this is that most people use the same funeral home over and over again and therefore the level of trust is never questioned. With ownership, staffing and industry changes today it's a good idea for customers to question their funeral firms' handling of the cremation process.

You can only shake your head knowing that in an industry based on trust, cremation negligence still occurs. Fortunately there are questions to ask the undertaker to be sure cremation will be done in not only a legal fashion, but more importantly a dignified and professional manner. The go-to questions of a funeral firm should be: Do you own the crematory? What identification process do you have in place to ensure that I receive the remains of my loved one? Who is overseeing the cremation?

Ownership really needs to be addressed. If a funeral firm is going to provide cremation, then it should own a crematory. Shouldn't it be that simple? You need to be confident that when

an undertaker brings your loved one into his care, that the loved one stays there. Today we find undertakers meeting with the families while their loved one is being transported by a third party to a different company to do cremation. That company probably does cremations for many funeral homes in the area.

The identification process is something that you often forget to ask that undertaker about. If an undertaker cannot provide this in written form, then you may want to consider going elsewhere. From the first time the deceased comes into the firm's care to the time that their cremated remains are returned to a family, a well-documented identification process should be apparent. ID tags, metal cremation discs, log books and much more must be in place before selecting a firm for cremation. Any knowledgeable and transparent cremation service provider will be able to provide this information easily. This in turn provides the assurance that the cremated remains being returned are in fact that of your loved one.

The last question is one that we would think is a no-brainer. But when it comes to cremation, not all crematories have certified, cremation-licensed funeral directors overseeing their cremations. Be sure that the funeral firm you work with has oversight that includes a licensed funeral director who is also a certified crematory operator to ensure that things are done both professionally and ethically. Trust is a powerful word. We are trusting a lot today and it seems that trust can be broken more often in some circumstances than it is in others. When it comes to cremation in the funeral industry, we need to be sure that we choose a provider who can be trusted.

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Bay Bytes

An easy way to record your family's history is offered at Historyproject.com which is an easy-to-navigate site that will help you pull it together. Includes pictures.

