

THE FINAL DISPOSITION

De-Mystifying Death, Funerals,
Cemeteries & Ceremonies

Thank you for attending our first forum. We hope that the information provided in this day will aid in making informed decisions.

This is the first of a series of events at Mountain View and we welcome your comments/ideas via email to: mountainview.cemetery@vancouver.ca or call us at 604.325.2646

Check vancouver.ca/cemetery for more information on the cemetery, interment options, and our events.

It has been a pleasure to have you here and we look forward to seeing you at other events at Mountain View Cemetery.

MOUNTAIN VIEW CEMETERY
Where Vancouver Remembers



Presented on April 24th, 2010
by Mountain View Cemetery

WELCOME

There are very few situations where people are comfortable speaking about dying and death. It is unfortunate that this significant universal human event makes many people so uncomfortable. Those who work in this 'industry' will attest to the people they have met who, after experiencing a loss, wish they had more information before the circumstances were thrust upon them.

On behalf of the staff of Mountain View Cemetery and all the participants, I hope that you find the day to be informative and thought-provoking. Most importantly, please share this information with your friends and colleagues – when they are faced with a similar situation they will be extremely grateful that you did.

Glen Hodges, Manager

SCHEDULE:

11am – Noon	Screening "A Family Undertaking: Home Funerals in America"
Noon	Break
12:30 – 1:15pm	Romayne Gallagher
1:15 – 2:00pm	Barry Jeske
2:00 – 2:45	Glen Hodges
2:45 – 3:00	Break
3:00 – 3:45	Stephen Olson
3:45 – 4:30	Paula Jardine and Marina Szijarto

NOTES



Paula Jardine is the Artist in Residence at Mountain View Cemetery
mrspaula@telus.net

Marina Szijarto is a contemporary rites of passage celebrant, artist & designer
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CEREMONY

Touching Death

We are in dire need of doing hands on work – at the very least washing, dressing, and burying, perhaps also coffin building and grave tending. Otherwise, death itself becomes ethereal and abstract, prolonging grief and severing our felt connections with the earth in which they rest or the sky in which they float in particles.

Ronald L. Grimes, *Deeply Into the Bone; Re-inventing Rites of Passage.*

About 10 years ago, artists Paula Jardine and Marina Szijarto embarked on a research project into death rites and practices. For each of them the impetus was a personal experience.

The death of Paula's father, and her experiences organizing his funeral with her siblings, gave her a new perspective on the role of artists in the life of the community. For Marina, it was her ongoing study of rituals and spiritual practices of several traditions (specifically Buddhism, Vedanta, Earth based and integral spirituality), combined with her direct experience at the deathbed of her Grandmother, and the ensuing interaction with the funeral industry, family and friends.

In this presentation Paula and Marina will talk about a variety of customs they have learned of, then each will talk about personal responses to deaths since then, and ceremonies they have created or facilitated. Describing both the poetic moments as well as practical considerations, their emphasis will be on reclaiming these important rites, and empowering ourselves to express our love and connection in meaningful, personal ways.



OUTLINE OF DISCUSSIONS

Romayne Gallagher is Providence Health Care's Division Head of Palliative Care, and the Physician Program Director for the Palliative Care Program at Providence
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Palliative Care is an approach to medical care that helps an individual with a life-limiting disease to live as well as possible for as long as possible. Palliative care aims to relieve suffering and improve the quality of living and of dying. It is available for all diseases throughout the course of the illness. Palliative care aims to address the physical, psychological and spiritual needs of an individual and their identified family as they cope with a life-limiting disease. It complements treatment that attempts to control the disease and is not just for the end of life.


Palliative care in Vancouver is available in all health care settings – home, hospital, residential care facility – anywhere a patient might receive care. In Vancouver we have a central coordination of services to try and get the right care in the right setting as soon as possible when it is needed.

Patients and family always do better when they are partners in the care team. This means understanding what is happening, what is planned and how they can be helpful. Information is available through the palliative care teams in all the hospitals and facilities as well as the Vancouver Home Hospice Program. An excellent website for information about palliative care is Canadian Virtual Hospice at www.virtualhospice.ca.

Barry Jeske is an independent funeral director and co-owner of Wiebe & Jeske Burial & Cremation Care Providers in Abbotsford
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The documentary "A Family Undertaking – Home Funerals in America" shares families experiences with not just the planning of a celebration or a service when a family member dies but also the trend that the family themselves can care for the deceased's body prior to cremation or burial and eliminate the need of using a funeral home. In the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley there is already a high percentage of families taking over all the details of the celebration or service however very very few families on their own deal with the handling and disposition of the deceased's body. Why is this?

The documentary refers to preparedness and having a "team" to assist with the home funeral. I believe these plus the simple facts we live in major metropolitan area make the home funeral logistically difficult for families. I don't believe most families want to prepare



for a death and when faced with a death really would not know where to turn for information regarding home funerals. The documentary focuses on families that were more rural with a strong sense of community and family bond which is less likely to exist in the 'big city'.

I can't honestly see a major resurgence of people wanting to engage in 'home funerals' but if families are interested I think that most funeral homes would respect those wishes and assist with the family's wishes. Somewhere in the middle of 'doing it yourself' and leaving everything up to the funeral director, I think the funeral home can assist families with the details that seem absolutely impractical for most urban families to accomplish and steer families in the right direction for the details they may want to look after themselves. During my presentation I will try and outline from start to finish all of the details to consider, who usually does what, where, how and if families can and really want to look after these details. I will also share my personal experiences of helping families that have wanted a more active roll in the process and why, for reasons of cost or customs, they chose to do it 'their way'.

Glen Hodges is the Manager of Mountain View Cemetery glen.hodges@vancouver.ca

The local cemetery... Everyone knows it as a place with old headstones marking the spots where people were buried a long time ago. These 'old-fashioned' sites have become less relevant today since most people prefer to be cremated. After all it's much more 'romantic' to scatter the ashes in the ocean or in Stanley Park, isn't it? There just isn't the same need for cemeteries today as there might have been in the past.

Many people share these perceptions of cemeteries. If only it were so simple. Unfortunately, many people do not recognize the value of the cemetery until it is too late.

Cemeteries are tremendous resources and places of comfort for surviving family members – both at the time of loss and for generations after. Have you ever tried searching for a distant relative? Have you ever wondered where your great-grandparents are buried? Maybe you have yet to even experience the loss of someone close to you.

Before you finalize any decisions for you or your loved ones, you should at least consider some of the little known, but very valuable, services that a cemetery can offer – in perpetuity. After all, cemeteries are forever, and forever is a long time...



Stephen Olson is the Executive Director of Royal Oak Burial Park in Victoria, BC stephen.olson@robp.ca

GREEN BURIAL ~ FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY

Green burial is a simple form of interment. The deceased is not embalmed, they are placed into a fully biodegradable shroud or casket that is then buried directly into the earth. After the burial the surface of the grave is planted with indigenous groundcover, plants and trees. When a green burial area has been fully utilized it is the naturally restored area as a whole that becomes a living memorial to the individuals interred there.

In the mid 1990s the green burial movement began to attract increasing interest and support in England. As green burial became more widely accepted green burial cemeteries began to appear throughout the United Kingdom. By 1999 local environmental advocates on Vancouver Island had heard about the English green burial movement and approached the management of Royal Oak Burial Park in Victoria to discuss the feasibility of providing green burial services.

This contact set in motion the research, consultation, design and development of Canada's 1st green burial cemetery that opened in October 2008. At the Final Disposition symposium attendees will learn about the philosophy and design process that went into the development of Royal Oak Burial Park's Woodland interment zones. From concept to reality, this presentation will explain what green burial is, how it is accommodated in Victoria, the public response to green burial and whether it can be viewed as just a fad or an authentic trend for the future.