

Southwest Funeral Consumer

Spring 2008 Vol. 14, No. 1



**Newsletter of Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Southwest
Providing Education and Information to Consumers in
Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico and environs.**

**Phone 972-509-5686 or 1-800-371-2221
www.texasfuneralconsumers.org
Email: info@texasfuneralconsumers.org**

Annual Meeting

Speakers?

In years past it has been our policy to have a speaker at our annual membership meeting who would address the concerns of the membership. This year, in a departure, we will have our President, Jim Bates, as the principal speaker, and because of his extensive experience in promoting and protecting the rights of funeral consumers, he will be able to address any of your concerns or questions.

He is only one of our local board members who will be featured.

Come One! Come All! Bring a Friend!

**Funeral Consumers Alliance of North Texas and
Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Southwest
Annual Combined Membership Meeting**

**Sunday Afternoon April 13th, at 3:00 PM (note time)
Sanctuary, First Unitarian Church of Dallas**

4015 Normandy, at Preston Road in Dallas
(Mapsco Page 35-K)

Some parking available in the bank's parking lot just south of the church.
Reception following the meeting in Channing Hall.

Welcome New Mexico

You will notice on the mast head of this publication that we have added two words : **New Mexico**. That state and its end of life issues have come under our tent and we have two volunteers who are gathering information on funeral home prices and services in New Mexico to add to our data base.

Those volunteers are Corinne Marie and Dienna Genther. They operate a company called The Old Pine Box in Dead Wood, New Mexico where they manufacture hand made caskets. We invite you to visit their website www.theoldpinebox.com. We welcome all our new members from out west.



New Legislation to Consider

To quote President Jim Bates, Funeral Consumers Alliance of North Texas, and the Funeral Consumers movement nation-wide, are in place to "help educate and prepare consumers for one of life's most expensive and serious moments."

Your Alliance has had a profound effect upon the actions of our legislature in Austin and will continue to be a watch dog for your rights when you must deal with the funeral industry.

An aspect of shocking treatment of the deceased as come to light in only the last few years. The State of Texas is now endeavoring to put legislation in place that would control the after-death sale of body parts. There is no law now. The need for such a law will be the major subject of discussion and you may have many questions about the subject. The answers should be available at the membership meeting. Jim Bates will have information relating to the rules and regulations that currently cover the harvesting of body parts from the recently departed either with, or sadly without, the permission of the surviving family members.

The sale of recovered body organs such as: heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, eyes, skin, is forbidden by law. There is no law, national nor state, covering the sale of body parts such as: bones, sinew, ligaments, heart valves (not the entire heart just the heart valves, they CAN be sold.). The value of such parts to the medical and scientific community can run as high as Fifty to Sixty Thousand dollars. But families are not seeing that kind of money offered.

If the body was that of a healthy youth, either male or female, the value on the open market could

run as high as One Hundred Thousand dollars. For instance, just one healthy vertebrae can be used in as many as eight back operations. There are 24 vertebrae: cervical, dorsal and lumbar. To someone who is able to harvest a healthy spine the return can be substantial.

The day following the March 4th Texas Primaries, that is, March the 5th, there will be a Funeral Consumers Public Hearing into human body recycling. The hearing will be held by State government committee at the Dallas Institute of Funeral Service, which is located at 3909 South Buckner Boulevard, from One to Five.

If you are unable to attend that public hearing, then you might have an interest of informing your self with a couple of books on the subject: 1/ *Black Markets - The Supply and Demand of Body Parts.*, written by Michele Goodwin and published by Cambridge University Press, and 2/ *Body Brokers. Inside America's Underground Trade in Human Remains*, written by Anne Cheney and published by Broadway Books.

Jim Bates will be available at the Membership Meeting to discuss your concerns.

Other public hearings will be held across Texas : March 26th in Midland-Odessa, April 16th in Amarillo, April 30th in Lubbock, and May 14th in Tyler.

It is hoped that Texas can write a law covering the sale of body parts that might serve as a template for similar laws in other states. There is NO national law

Thank You to Our Members

We would like to thank all those members who have sent in a tax deductible donation to continue our efforts in educating the public to the possibilities that are available when it comes to planning a funeral for one's self or for a newly departed family member or friend.

In particular those thanks come from our Board Treasurer, Ken Carter. You should understand that

your one-time life-time family fee of 35 dollars (twenty five for an individual) is not tax deductible because you receive something of value for the fee : access to our website and the chance to take advantage of the information that has been gathered there for you.

BUT - If you wish to support the continuing efforts of your Alliance in spreading the word of dignified,

(Continued on page 4)



Spreading the Knowledge

Two of your board members have developed a non-credit college course on the subject of Funeral Buying. Ed McHam and Joe Tinnin offer the course at Richland Junior College, in two sessions April 7th and April 14th.

A recent story in the January/February edition of the AARP magazine draws attention to the fallacies surrounding prepaid funeral plans (R.I.P. Off : A Funeral industry scandal that's fleecing thousands of Americans.)

Truth is few Americans shop for funerals with nearly as much care as they use to buy a new lawn mower. Tinnin and McHam will cover every aspect of funeral buying from Federal and State laws, to the areas of cost savings.

Joe Tinnin lives in Richardson and is a Professor of Psychology at Richland College and a volunteer board member of Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Southwest. He has been a board member for the last fifteen years and, as is the case with all board members, gives his time to assure the public service of your Alliance. Joe is the person responsible for responding to phone inquiries in January and August of each year. He is also the person who heads our speakers bureau and the person you should contact if your organization or company is in need of a knowledgeable and informative speaker.

His partner in this college presentation is Ed McHam, the Vice-President of Consumer's Alliance of Texas. In 2005 Ed retired after 29 years as a Chemical Engineer with the Environmental Protection Agency. He has been a member of the Alliance for 26 years and has been on the board for five and half years. He keeps very busy as monitor of incoming phone calls and e-mails. He is the person responsible for coordinating our on-line data base of funeral home prices and services. That is in itself a full time job because he must collect those constantly changing prices on a continuing basis and keep the lists up to date.

Ed became active as a member when he reflected on the fact that by the time he was just 26 years old he had buried both his mother and his father. At the age of 42 he accepted responsibility of his nieces and nephews following the death of his sister. He was startled by the rising cost of funerals and decided there had to be a better way to honor deceased family members while preserving their estates for the living. That's why he is anxious to present the case in these classes at Richland College.

Richland Junior College is located at 12800 Abrams Road, Dallas, 75243. You can sign up -and you can sign up a friend - by calling "Continuing Education" at 972-238-6147 or 6146.

Please take a moment to fill out and return this coupon to:

Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Southwest, 2875 East Parker Rd, Plano, TX 75074-7503

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Do you contribute to Funeral Consumers of the SW? (income tax deductible donation) Yes No

Would you like to make an annual donation? Yes No

How would you prefer to receive this Newsletter? Print Only Email Only Print AND Email

E-mail address :- _____

Would you have time to volunteer for light duties with your Alliance? Yes No

Would you have an interest in serving on the board? Yes No

What talents, or abilities, or experiences would you bring to the board if you were nominated?

Are you fluent in Spanish? Yes No

Please make a tax deductible donation now to Funeral Consumers of the Southwest \$ _____

Thank You



...thank you (cont'd)*(Continued from page 2)*

affordable funeral arrangements, you can send a check to : **Funeral Consumers Alliance of the South West**. That's our educational arms of the Alliance and it's there because the IRS says it has to be.

Ken, as Treasurer, has the responsibility of keeping our books in order. You might also wish to know the fact you are holding a copy of this twice yearly news letter is largely because of the work of Ken.

Ken arranges that the copy be edited by a professional, that the edited copy gets to the printer and that the printed address labels get done. It is also Ken's job to recruit the board members to the crew that paste address labels on each copy. He has to see that the many newsletters go into the proper postal boxes in the

proper order because if they are out of order the post office will refuse to handle them.

He has been at the job for thirty years now and in those days when he had a regular job that paid him (being treasurer pays nothing) he was a geophysicist in the oil industry. That must be where he learned his attention to detail and without it that attention we would be lost.

All that praise is not to say he couldn't use a little help. If you, or someone you know, has some accounting experience and would like to be mildly occupied, you might want to contact Ken through our local number, 972-509-5686. OR you could fill in the form you find here in the news letter and send it in. This organization is only as good as those who volunteer to help us steer the dangerous shoals of the funeral industry.

Ken explains, that of those donation checks that come in, most are in the \$20.00 range. It's those checks that help to keep us afloat in these stormy waters.

Read this newsletter then pass it on to a relative or a friend.

Funeral Consumers of North Texas now has a membership of nearly five thousand .

**Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Southwest
2875 East Parker Road
Plano, TX 75074-7503**

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