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Jim Kriegshauser  
Managing Director for Funeral & Cemetery Services  
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To Jim Kriegshauser:

I am writing concerning the Greenlawn Memorial Park in Groves, Texas, adjacent to Port Arthur, Texas, where I was raised. In 1960, my parents, Herman and Arthur Mae Hankins bought four plots at Greenlawn. In 2000, after the death of my younger brother, his cremated remains were buried in one of the plots with the approval of Paul Ponds, cemetery manager, and Craig McGee, the Area Manager for SCI at that time.

My brother's cremated remains were encased in a tube made of PVC pipe sealed on both ends with PVC end caps. My family and some friends held a family-planned and family-directed graveside service, during which my father, an uncle, a cousin, and I took turns digging an appropriate-sized hole with a post hole digger, lowering the capsule into the hole with a specially-designed bag that I fashioned out of macrame materials that my brother had used to make craft items.

My mother and father (as well as the rest of the family) found the graveside service meaningful and advantageous to them in dealing with their grief. The participation by several family members in the service gave it meaning that it would not have had with the involvement of funeral or cemetery professionals.

My mother and father have now died. When I was in the Beaumont-Port Arthur area on Friday, February 25, in preparation for my father's memorial service at Wildwood-Village Mills United Methodist Church on Saturday, my wife and I visited with John Davis at Greenlawn to explain that I wanted to make preparations for a similar service for the

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interment of the cremated remains of both my parents, which remains are contained together in a container similar to the one I made for my brother's cremated remains. John Davis's initial reaction was that my family's wishes could not be fulfilled, but he agreed to talk with his supervisor about the matter and call me back within the hour and to provide information, as well, about the cost of a monument for my parents' gravesite.

When I received no call back from him by the following Tuesday, I called to find out why I had not received the information I had requested about the service and the cost of a monument for my parents. I was unable to reach him and got the name of his supervisor, Mark Root. He and I talked by telephone on Wednesday, March 2nd. Mark Root told me that in order to bury my parents cremated remains together, I would have to pay a second interment fee because this was required by the Texas Department of Banking, a statement I knew to be false, which I told him. In addition, Mark Root told me that the Department of Banking did not permit interment of cremated remains in a PVC container, nor did SCI rules. The latter statement I agreed with, but I knew the statement about the PVC pipe and the Banking Department to be false. I told Mark Root that I was going to contact the Department of Banking about his statements, which I did right after our discussion.

I called Russell Reese at the Department of Banking, the Director of Special Audits for Prepaid Funeral Contracts & Perpetual Care Cemeteries, and relayed the conversation with Mark Root. Mr. Reese said he would immediately call Mark Root to correct his misrepresentations of Banking Department regulations.

I have been a funeral consumer advocate for the past 18 years on behalf of the Austin Memorial and Burial Information Society, the Funeral Consumers Alliance (FCA) (which I served as a board member for nearly eight years, four of which were as president), and the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Texas. During my service as president of the FCA Board, I testified at a hearing held by the Senate Special Committee on Aging that was investigating fraud in the preneed funeral and cemetery business. Over the years, I have worked closely with the Texas Funeral Service Commission and the Banking Department on issues of common concern, so I am not completely ignorant about funeral and cemetery regulations.

The false representations made to me by Mark Root leave me wondering how many misrepresentations, distortions of federal and state regulations, and outright lies are told by cemetery personnel to families who are not as knowledgeable about such matters as I am when they go to you to make arrangements for the interment of their family members.

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I would like to resolve the needs and preferences of my family amicably with SCI, but the inexcusable deceit and hostility that I have encountered to simple requests that create no liability or demands on your cemetery or your corporation lead me to believe that SCI's greed is the only force that drives your corporate policies and the behavior of your employees.

On March 10, I spoke by telephone with Scott Leffler about this matter. He was unwilling to give permission for my family to follow their traditions and wishes regarding the interment of my parents' cremated remains, though he did say that he would speak to Mr. Root about his false statements that I have reported.

I would like to discuss this matter with you either by telephone or in person and will wait a reasonable time for a response from you before proceeding further to resolve these matters.

Sincerely,

Lamar W. Hankins

cc: Josh Slocum  
FCA Executive Director

Lisa Carlson  
Funeral Ethics Organization Executive Director

Jim Bates  
Director, FCA of Texas

Russell Reese  
Texas Department of Banking

Chet Robbins, Executive Director  
Texas Funeral Service Commission