



a publication of Funeral Consumers Alliance
protecting a consumer's right to choose a meaningful, dignified, and affordable funeral



Inaugural Issue

Who are we, and why are we sending you stuff about death? We're your staff and volunteers at the national Funeral Consumers Alliance, the oldest and largest nonprofit watchdog organization protecting the rights (and wallets) of grieving consumers. From our office in Vermont—and by countless routes through the electronic ether—we keep tabs on the prices and practices of the funeral industry to help people like you plan funerals that are meaningful and affordable. We work together with local nonprofit consumer education groups around the country to survey funeral prices, help grieving families resolve complaints against mortuaries and cemeteries, and act as a voice for consumer interests before state and federal legislatures. Those local groups mentioned above? You're probably a member of one of them, maybe the Funeral Consumers Alliance of Utah, the Funeral Consumers Alliance of East Tennessee, or the Peoples Memorial Association in Seattle. And guess what? That means you're a member of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance, too.

QUICK FACTS

- FCA was founded in 1969.
- FCA was a major force behind the passage of the Federal Trade Commission's "Funeral Rule," a law that protects consumers buying funerals.
- FCA helped draft and support several bills before Congress to extend FTC consumer protections to cemetery customers, an ongoing project.
- FCA takes no money from the funeral industry or the government. We're able to do our work because you give to us both directly and through your support of your local Funeral Consumers Alliance affiliate.

This is the first issue of our new, back-to-basics consumer publication *The Grim Reader*. Twice each year the GR will bring you concrete facts about funerals and show you can use to plan for one of the most important occasions every household faces, the end of life.

WHO ARE YOU?

Tell us a little about yourself. Where are you from, and what local FCA member group do you belong to? What prompted you to join us? Have you had experiences good or bad with the death care business? Has FCA helped your family navigate the death transaction? Most importantly, do you know any good funeral jokes? Drop us a line at grimreader@funerals.org. That'll be a much livelier publication (har-har) with you in it. We'd love a picture, too (yes, you may pose with your cat). If at least three have souls send us a snapshot and a note we promise to reveal our faces in the next issue. **Bonus**—executive director Josh Stocum will open his recipe vault and share a dish fit for a funeral.

5 Ways to Fail at Funeral Planning—make your send-off a costly catastrophe!

1. **Don't talk about it, there's nothing you can do anyway.** Forcing your kids to admit that you'll die someday will put them into nervous prostration; better to just let them muddle through on the day of your death. Think of it as your last surprise gift! For nerve-wracking examples of families that talked candidly about death, go to funerals.org, then click on **Funeral FAQs**, then read **Did You Forget The Most Important Part of Funeral Planning**.
2. **Prepaying is magic!** When you give the undertaker your money ahead of time "it's all taken care of." No matter when you die, no matter if your death occurs 3000 miles from home, the merchandise is no longer available, the funeral home was sold to charitatus, even if your preferred funeral isn't practical at the time of death—prepayment wondrously takes care of it all. Your kids will never have to make any decisions because circumstances will never change. Of course there's always some pre-consumer nag questioning the wisdom of prepayment. Go to funerals.org, then click on **Funeral FAQs**, then read **The Pitfalls of Preneed**.
3. **The best way to show your love is to empty your wallet.**

[Funeral planning kit](#) and [turn your own yearly Grim Reader](#) general planning. Leave us a comment or [d](#)