



CREATIVE CHOICES

The newsletter of the Austin Memorial and Burial Information Society (AMBIS)

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Spring-Summer 2013

The Intricate Process and High Cost of Shipping Remains Abroad

One of the best benefits of being a member of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance is the depth and breadth of their Deathcare Discussion List. Recently, Josh Slocum, FCA's Executive Director, posted on the List information from the National Funeral Directors Association about shipping remains and mailing cremated remains. Happily, this information is readily available to anyone who visits the NFDA's website.

Especially if you are considering having your remains shipped abroad, the excerpts below may prompt you to consider this option carefully, not only because of the extensive paperwork, transportation requirements, and costs themselves, but also because the funeral home that makes the arrangements is likely to charge a significant amount for their time and effort.

What documents are needed to send a body to another country?

This varies country by country. Each country has its own guidelines on what documents must be presented along with the body. NFDA has compiled a comprehensive list of the documentation needed for each country at <http://nfda.org/international-regulations.html>.

NFDA recommends that the funeral home contact the foreign country's Consulate/Embassy to verify that nothing has changed from their requested documentation, as countries will occasionally change their requirements.

If a country has not specified any shipping requirements, NFDA recommends the following items:

- Death Certificate
- Burial/Transit document
- Permit Letter of Non-contagious Disease
- Embalmers Affidavit
- Passport of Deceased (if obtainable)

- Letter on funeral home letterhead stating that only human remains are inside the casket; the flight itinerary; consignee's name, address, and telephone number

What documents and procedures are needed to ship a body on an airline?

This varies from airline to airline. Each airline has its own documentation needed, as well as procedures for transporting a body to another country.

The general public needs to be aware that, in order to ship with airlines, you must be a known shipper with the airlines or they will not accept the body.

[More details about "known shippers" at <http://nfda.org/additional-tools-shipping/3446-frequently-asked-shipping-questions.html>.]

What is needed to ship cremated remains?

Once again, this varies country to country. You can find each country's required documentation at <http://nfda.org/international-regulations.html>.

If a country has not specified the documentation it requires, NFDA recommends the following:

- Death Certificate
- Cremation Certificate
- Passport of the deceased (if obtainable)
- Letter on funeral home letterhead stating that the urn/container contains only the cremated remains of the individual

NFDA also recommends that you check with the consulate or embassy of the country to verify whether any additional documentation is required.

Procedures for shipping cremated remains may vary by airline. [The NFDA webpage listing required documents includes a list of the various procedures for each airline.]

(continued on page 2)

Lowest Cost for Direct Cremation in the Austin Area Drops to \$650

Affordable Burial & Cremation Service is now offering direct cremation in the Austin area for \$650. Arrangements are made by phone and all paperwork is done by email and/or FAX. (The company, whose licensed facility is located in Killeen, is listed under *Additional Options* on page 7 of our 2013 funeral home price survey.) For more information, call 512-354-2509, or go to [http://www.centraltexascremation.com/.](http://www.centraltexascremation.com/)

Meet Our New Council Members!



L to R: Ron Turner, Michael von Wupperfeld,
Sabiha Bandali

At the close of our annual meeting on February 16, the AMBIS Governing Council met briefly to welcome new members Ron Turner, Michael von Wupperfeld, and Sabiha Bandali.

Ron Turner served as Council treasurer from 2007 to 2010. Ron retired from the IRS in 2011 after 30 years of federal service. His principal IRS work involved tax law compliance and management. Prior to his IRS employment Ron worked in financial and accounting areas of private businesses in Austin. In addition to his work on the Council, Ron will be serving on our finance committee.

Michael von Wupperfeld is a Safety and Infection Control Officer for the Austin-Travis County EMS. Previously, he held a variety of positions with the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department. Currently Mike is an active member of the Texas State Guard, responsible for developing mass care plans during major disasters such as tornados, wildfires and hurricanes. Mike is also a board member of TEXSAR Search and Rescue Team and the Travis County Fire Control Team.

Sabiha Bandali was born and raised in Tanzania, East Africa. Originally from India, her grandparents migrated to Africa in search of a better life and settled there. Sabiha speaks several languages including Kutchi, Gujrati, Hindi, Urdu, and Swahili, in addition to English. In her work as a social worker at Texas Home Health Hospice, Sabiha has given our Funeral Home Price Survey to many patients and their families to help them make informed decisions. Sabiha is also a presenter for the hospice session of our Lifetime Learning Institute course on End-of-Life Options.

After welcoming our new members, the Council elected officers. Nancy Walker (President), Rita DeBellis (Vice President), and Don Harris (Treasurer) were re-elected. Sabiha Bandali was elected Secretary.

The Intricate Process and High Cost of Shipping Remains Abroad (continued)

May I carry cremated remains when I travel on an airline?

Generally, cremated remains may be hand carried on most airlines so long as the proper documentation is brought and **the urn/container is able to be x-rayed at security**. The airline should always be contacted first to make certain there are no special documents required.

May I ship cremated remains through the mail?

You can send cremated remains through the mail (i.e., United States Postal Service). No other carrier (e.g., UPS, Fed-Ex, DHL, etc.) will accept cremated remains. Recently some post office branches have not been accepting cremated remains, in spite of USPS policy to accept them. Should you run into this issue, assuming you are following proper procedures, you may show them their policy:

452.2 Cremated Remains

Human ashes are permitted to be mailed provided they are packaged as required in 453b. The identity

of the contents should be marked on the address side. Mailpieces sent to domestic addresses may be sent via Express Mail or Registered Mail service. Mailpieces sent to an international address must be sent via Registered Mail service, and the country listing in the International Mail Manual must show that cremated remains are permitted and Registered Mail service must be available for that country.

453 Packaging and Marking

b. Powders. Dry materials that could cause damage, discomfort, destruction, or soiling upon escape (leakage) must be packed in siftproof containers or other containers that are sealed in durable siftproof outer containers.

Additional NFDA shipping FAQs at:

<http://nfda.org/additional-tools-shipping/3446-frequently-asked-shipping-questions.html>.

Lisa Carlson, Executive Director of the Funeral Ethics Organization, provides more detailed information about shipping and carrying cremated remains at www.funeraethics.org/cremains.htm.

The FCA: Supporting Consumers from Sea to Shining Sea Advocacy and FCA National Politics

Rodger Ericson, FCA Vice President, AMBIS-FCA Liaison

Here's the big picture: "big box" funeral corporations pour millions of dollars into lobbying for their national and state agendas. To protect consumers, AMBIS supports fair legislation for business and consumers, as well as helpful education.

Lobbying is a formidable and effective force in FCA's world of consumer deathcare. FCA of Texas, with strong support from all four affiliates in Texas, has been effective at stopping or blunting attempts to control consumer buying habits through unfair legislation in Texas.

The Executive Director of FCA works with volunteers from all states to resist consumer unfriendly regulations. Advocacy is not free. Yes, we rely mostly upon our interested volunteers, but **FCA national needs contributions from you to help stop the well-planned and amply-financed efforts of "big box" funeral corporations.** Together, from sea to sea, we see many issues as involving corporate interests vs. families' hearts and minds. Currently, FCA national is working hard with FCA volunteers in several states to resist industry proposals that are not consumer-friendly.

Even relatively small contributions help to combat industry money with truth, compassion and clarity. **Thanks to your extra donations** to the FCA, and the efforts of local volunteers, Texas has led the way on several issues that are good for consumers. **Please send your donations to FCA, 33 Patchen Rd., South Burlington, VT 05403**

President's Message



Dear Friends of AMBIS,

In April, we finished another eight-session End-of-Life Options course for Lifetime Learning Institute. Major kudos to Council members Rita DeBellis and Sabiha Bandali for their outstanding presentations on hospice care. We are delighted that LLI has invited

AMBIS to offer the course (for the fifth time!) this fall.

Those of you familiar with UT Austin's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute will understand how pleased we are that UT SAGE has asked us to conduct a six-session seminar on End-of-Life Planning this fall, and UT LAMP has invited us to do a program in November. One of the sessions for UT SAGE will be presented by AMBIS President Emeritus Lamar Hankins, who will talk about the death with dignity movement.

Thanks to those of you who are telling others about AMBIS, we continue to make steady progress reaching senior communities in our service area.

Because we are always encouraging people to have *the conversation*, we are delighted that several highly capable AMBIS members are putting the gears in motion for a series of AMBIS-sponsored **Death Café** events. In our next newsletter, we'll tell you what makes **Death Cafés** so unique, and we'll let you know where you can attend one. In the meanwhile, we invite you to visit www.deathcafe.com to see why these meetings are a rapidly growing phenomenon across America.

On the business front, our big good news is that we are now using the iPad donated by AMBIS member John Yeaman to process credit card transactions in the office and on the go. We hope new and current AMBIS members will enjoy the convenience of this payment option. Hats off to Don Harris, our treasurer, for all he did to get our mobile credit card account up 'n' running.

Our next newsletter will be coming your way in September. 'Till then, stay in touch! Let us know how we can serve you. And be well.

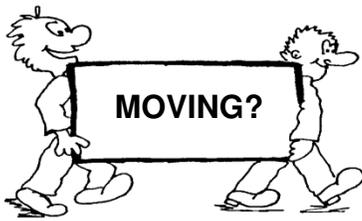
Nancy Walker

512-480-0251; president@fcaambis.org

While doing your spring cleaning ... remember, *Gone for Good* does AMBIS good!



AMBIS is continuing its partnership with *Gone for Good* to raise funds for our organization. The program operates under the auspices of the Austin Community Foundation. *Gone for Good* accepts art, small furnishings, jewelry, and crafts with a minimum value of \$50.00 each. Once donated, the items are gone for good, out of your home and out of your life. *Gone for Good* will sell the items and forward the proceeds, less a modest handling fee, to AMBIS. To donate items and arrange for pick up, contact Gail at 297-6302 or Retta at 657-7210. Visit their web site at www.goneforgood.net to learn more.



Email <office@fcaambis.org>, call 512-480-0555, or clip and mail this form to our office.

My new or corrected contact info:

Name

Street or P. O. Box

City, State, Zip

Phone

Email address

Help me transfer my membership to an FCA affiliate outside the AMBIS service area.

AMBIS
3710 Cedar Street, Mailbox 13
Austin, TX 78705-1449

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 236
AUSTIN, TEXAS

RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED

Postmaster, please return newsletter
with address legible for remailing

Spring-Summer 2013

AMBIS Mission Statement

AMBIS, a member of the national Funeral Consumers Alliance, is a nonprofit, nonsectarian, educational consumer organization that encourages and assists Central Texans in making informed, practical end-of-life decisions.



Send address, email and phone number changes, editorial items, testimonials, letters, and inquiries to: <office@fcaambis.org>

~ OR ~



Mail to:
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Visit us online at <www.fcaambis.org> ...



- * To join or donate to AMBIS
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Visit our [Facebook](#) page to read a variety of interesting articles.

AMBIS Governing Council:

- **President:** Nancy G. Walker
- **Vice-President:** Rita DeBells
- **Treasurer:** Don Harris
- **Secretary:** Sabiha Bandali
- **Directors:** Alana Carpenter-Moore, Karen Larson, Jake Lorfing, Ron Turner, Michael von Wupperfeld

President Emeritus: Lamar Hankins

President Emeritus: Leon Lebowitz

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