

As the Executive Director of People's Memorial Association for the past year, I have learned many things about end of life wishes from our 75,000+ members. Choice of disposition, memorial service or party, green options or traditional burial.

Many of our members as well as most Washingtonians choose cremation. The choice of cremation as a final disposition runs about 80% in Washington as compared to 46% nationally. What a difference! By choosing cremation, Washingtonians also have a lot more options for their final resting place. In our state, you can bury or scatter cremated remains on your own property or on someone else's property with the owner's permission. You can have your remains scattered in our state or national parks with the permission of the head ranger. Your remains can be scattered on any navigable waterway too! In fact, the Washington State Ferries will schedule a cremated remains scattering off one of its ferries for virtually no charge. Its a lovely and quintessential Washington send off!

Cremated remains can also be buried in the ground in a cemetery or the remains may be placed in a columbarium. A columbarium is simply an above ground structure to hold many urns of remains, just like a mausoleum is above ground and holds caskets. Most cemeteries offer all three options, burial plots for caskets and/or urns, a mausoleum and a columbarium. Tahoma National Cemetery in Kent (right) offers in ground burial and a columbarium at no cost to our veterans.



Many churches also offer a columbarium for members' remains. My church is in the process of having a columbarium built for its members.

Because of my work here at People's Memorial, it seemed natural to me to be on my congregation's columbarium committee. As we discussed the issues, I started searching for other columbaria around the greater Seattle area. My previous congregation built a columbarium and reflection garden less than 10 years ago. It has a circular bench, a cenotaph (memorial wall) and a fountain.

Bellevue Presbyterian and Mercer Island Presbyterian churches each have lovely enclosed memorial or remembrance gardens.

Seattle First Baptist Church on First Hill, has a small but serene columbarium just outside the entrance steps to its sanctuary

A church columbarium is usually less expensive than private or commercial cemeteries, too. Prices range from \$2000-\$3000 for a double niche with single niches costing between 50%-75% off.

Whatever your final disposition wishes are, People's Memorial supports your choice and encourages you to please have the "talk" with your loved ones. It will be a wonderful gift to them easing their stress and grief.

