
*Dedicated to a consumer's
right to choose a meaningful,
affordable funeral.*

The History and Changing Landscape of Funerals and Memorial Services

Funeral practices in America are very much in a state of change. Not only are there changes in disposition of the body, such as cremation, but there are also changes in the approach to funerals or memorial services, often celebrating the life of the deceased—and often in a creative fashion. Our speaker for the Annual Meeting of the Memorial Society of Georgia on March 29, 2015, will address the history and changing landscape of funerals and memorial services in America.

Dr. Gary Laderman, Professor of American Religious History and Cultures and Chair of the Department of Religion at Emory University, is highly qualified to give what promises to be a fascinating presentation. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara, in 1994, and is well known for his books on death in America: *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes Toward Death, 1799-1883* (Yale University Press, 1996) and *Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford University Press, 2003) as well as numerous other books and articles. He is also the founder and editor of the web magazine *Sacred Matters: Religious Currents in Culture*, and the founder, director, and co-editor of the online blog, ReligionDispatches.org.



Dr. Gary Laderman

Dr. Laderman is an engaging speaker who has been interviewed on topics ranging from death and funerals to horror films and televangelists in a variety of media, including the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, and other newspapers; *US News and World Report*, *Ebony*, and other magazines; various radio shows; and television and documentary broadcasts, including the NBC Evening News and The Today Show.

Dr. Laderman's named professorship at Emory University is in recognition not only of his scholarly achievements, but also of his teaching skills. He is an ardent teacher whose courses and seminars include U.S. Religious History; Mind, Medicine, and Healing; Death and Dying; Native American Religions; and American Religious Cultures. He is continuing to research, write, and teach on the sacred in American life as well as death, sexuality, science, and popular culture.

The Memorial Society of Georgia is honored to have Dr. Laderman as our Annual Meeting guest speaker and we hope you will join us on Sunday, March 29, at 2:00 p.m. to hear him. We will have copies of Dr. Laderman's most recent book available for purchase and signing.



Treasurer's Report

by John Vacher, Treasurer

The year 2014 showed both a decline in revenues and a decline in expenses, which would have roughly cancelled each other out, had not the Board of Directors chosen to donate \$5,000 to our parent organization, The Funeral Consumer's Alliance. This left our net worth in the \$45,000 range rather than the \$50,000 range.

The decline in revenues is primarily attributable to a drop in membership fees, likely due to a lack of publicity for the Society, which the Board is actively working to reverse. The decline in expenses is largely due to automating the application process, which requires both less compensation and fewer expenses.

Financial Statement

	2013	—	2014
INCOME			
Book Sales	\$ 0.00	\$	325.00
Funeral Dir Payments	2,340.00		735.00
Interest Income	55.57		36.83
Memberships	20,975.00		16,741.00
Membership Refunds	(175.00)		(350.00)
Reimbursements	0.00		19.22
Total Income	\$23,195.57		\$17,857.05

EXPENSES

Ann. Corporation Fee	\$ 30.00	\$	30.00
Annual Meeting	70.60		760.71
Bank Charges	48.00		50.00
Brochures	0.00		307.85
FCA Annual Dues	3,375.00		2,577.00
FCA Contribution	1,000.00		5,000.00
Funeral Home Survey	0.00		75.00
Gifts	0.00		61.56
Newsletter*	860.06		2,231.56
Non-Employee Comp.	5,700.00		4,390.00
Office Supplies/Copies	347.13		609.34
PayPal Fees	7.92		257.70
Postage*	1,693.88		255.82
Printing*	2,469.48		1,785.76
Reimbursable Expense	0.00		319.22
Rent	600.00		600.00
Software	42.79		511.79
Storage	3,600.00		2,967.56
Telephone	512.70		569.16
Website	182.20		1,494.99
Total Expenses	\$ 20,539.76		\$25,205.02

NET GAIN (Loss) \$ 2,655.81 (\$ 7,347.97)

*Starting in 2014, the cost of postage and printing for the newsletter is being included in the newsletter expense category.

ACCOUNT BALANCES - 12/31/2014

Savings Account	\$34,575.45
Checking Account	\$ 7,511.26
PayPal Account	\$ 2,808.06
Cash Account	\$ 95.00
TOTAL ASSETS	\$44,989.77

Board's Report

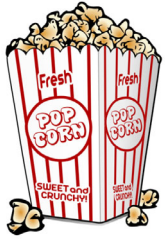
The year 2014 showed a decline in applications to 422, down from 589 in 2013 and 621 in 2012. We think this is due primarily to a lack of publicity, which we expect to change with our new Funeral Fun Fair (see next page) and revamped website. A substantial amount of time has been spent smoothing the application process; now, instead of a several-week, 5-stamp, hard copy process, the online application process can ensure that submission, entry into the database, return confirmation and membership card, and forwarding to the funeral home can all be done in under an hour. While the old process is still active, it is definitely to the applicant's advantage to use the online process.

We have also spent time working on consolidating and smoothing our various databases, so that obtaining member information doesn't require hunting down paper forms. We now know that we have in the neighborhood of 11,500 members. It would be very difficult to make this exact, because we are not always notified of deaths or out-of-state moves. Members can keep in touch with us through info@memorialsocietyofgeorgia.org when they want information changed. Members wishing to make adjustments to their prearrangement form with the same funeral home should just drop a note to the funeral home.

We are also trying to be more nimble in responding to questions. Emails are typically monitored several times a day and the telephone messages are monitored at least three times weekly. We are trying for a same-day response, although that is not always possible. A lot depends on you. (We recently received a prearrangement form marked "expedited," which had been sent out in 1976!) Note that if you never return your prearrangement form, you are still a member of MSOG and can use any of our cooperating funeral directors, but you may have to pay an additional \$50 fee for collection of death certificate information. And isn't it easier to have all of this decided in advance?

FUNERAL FUN FAIR™

Come Explore the Future of the Death Care Industry!



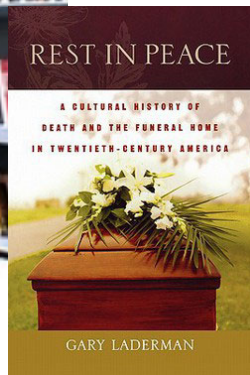
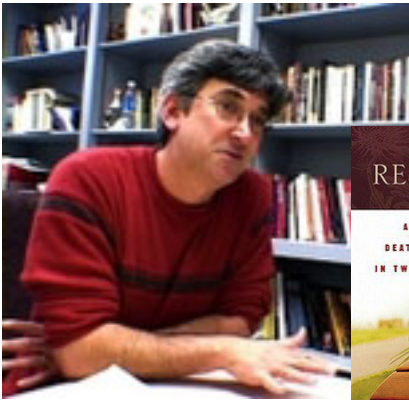
MARCH 29, 2015, 3 - 6 PM

1911 Cliff Valley Way NE, Atlanta, GA 30329

(Following the Annual Meeting of the Memorial Society of Georgia)



MEET THE AUTHORS



Dr. Gary Laderman
Georgia Author



Susan Soper
Georgia Author

ObitKit®

A Guide to Celebrating Your Life

MEET THE EXPERTS

Compassion and Choices
choosing how to die

Hospices
dying peacefully and gracefully

Green Burial Organization
simple and natural burials

Death Midwife
care of the body and funeral in your home

Decatur Glassblowing
glass originals for cremains display

**Cooperating
Funeral Directors**
services and prices

Crematories
cremation services, process and prices

Georgia Board of Funeral Service
licensing body of the funeral industry (invited)

Planning for your
death isn't morbid
— it's rational.

The Memorial
Society
of Georgia

404-634-2896

A Nonprofit Consumer Advocate
www.memorialsocietyofgeorgia.org

ADMISSION IS
FREE

Memorial Society of Georgia Board of Directors 2015 - 2016



PRESIDENT	John Lantz
VICE PRESIDENT	John Mackey
TREASURER	John Vacher
SECRETARY	Kathleen Nixon-Lancelot
DIRECTORS	Parthenia (Chan) Brown Howard Rees Darryl Neill
CONSULTANT	Wally Kelleman

A Message From The President

Changes are ahead, and we will have good news to share with you soon. While familiarity is comfortable, novelty can be exciting and stretch us in new ways. It is time for our organization to look to the future and serve the changing needs of our members and the public in the cremation, funeral, and death industry.

Currently the Memorial Society of Georgia's main service is to negotiate the price of a "simple cremation" for \$1,095 and a "direct burial" for \$2,050 with our 29 Cooperating Funeral Directors (CFDs). We have found, however, that two new CFDs we have recently signed with have a regular price for cremation that is lower than the price we have negotiated with the other 27! Georgia Funeral Care and Cremation Service is \$795, and Georgia Cremation Centers is \$995. Both of these are located in Acworth, Georgia, and since there is an extra mileage charge for over 30 miles, many of our members will have limited ability to use their services. The other 27 CFDs have regular prices for a simple cremation set substantially higher than our negotiated price, so it is clear that we still provide a service, but it is also clear that we need to reconsider our business model.

The funeral service industry is huge. In Georgia alone it is estimated to be about \$450,000,000 each year! That is an average of about \$7,755 for each funeral and \$2,570 for each cremation. This is changing rapidly; people chose cremation in Georgia at a rate of about 33% in 2010, up from about 23% in 2006, and the proportion choosing cremation is expected to reach over 50% nationally by 2017.

We are in the process of a national survey of the advertised prices, working with the national organizations of the Funeral Consumers Alliance and the Consumers Federation of America, as well as another survey of prices in the five-county metro Atlanta area. We hope to have the results of these surveys online in the near future.

The Memorial Society of Georgia wants to bring our services to a greater number of the approximately 75,000 deaths in Georgia each year. We want to help the living plan for their own funeral, cremation, and memorial arrangements and to offer the survivors better choices on mourning the death and celebrating the life of their deceased loved ones. We are preparing to meet the challenges of advocating for funeral consumers for the twenty-first century.

Please come to our annual membership meeting at 2:00 PM, March 29, 2015, at 1911 Cliff Valley Way, NE, Atlanta, GA 30329. Our first annual FUNERAL FUN FAIR 2015 – a cremation, funeral, and death industry trade fair – will be held immediately after the annual meeting at 3:00 at the same location. Join us for EDUCATION AND FUN while you learn more about the care, memory, celebration of life, and mourning the loss of the dead.

Best regards,

John Lantz, President

Society Cost Schedule

The Memorial Society of Georgia offers an alternative to the high cost of traditional burial and cremation. MSOG membership of \$35 per person allows you to take advantage of negotiated rates with our cooperating funeral directors. Immediate completion of a pre-arrangement form is mandatory to inform the funeral director that you are a member and to provide instructions for final disposition of your remains. If the form is not on file with the funeral director at time of death, there will be potential service delays as well as a \$50 additional fee. You must be a MSOG member for 30 days prior to death to take advantage of the arrangements that the Memorial Society has with the cooperating funeral directors.

Cremation – No greater than \$1,095

Simple Burial – No greater than \$2,050

Both Cremation and Simple Burial services include local transportation* of the body to the funeral home and filing of death certificate. For cremation, a simple cremation container is provided (no casket is required). Burial services also include care, dressing and casketing of body; a simple casket; and transportation* to cemetery.

Simple Burial and Cremation *do NOT include* space and time at funeral home for viewing; memorial service; embalming; cemetery plot; opening and closing of the grave; nor committal service. You may arrange any requested additional services with the funeral director at their predetermined prices; a price list will be furnished by the funeral director upon request.

* Note: Transportation greater than 30 miles is subject to a \$1.50/mile/vehicle cost plus potential meals and lodging expense (at cost) for funeral home personnel in connection with non-local transportation.

Cooperating Funeral Directors

Please visit www.memorialsocietyofgeorgia.org for full contact information for our Cooperating Funeral Directors.

Bridges Funeral Home (Athens)
www.bridgesfuneral.com

Bridges Funeral Home & Crematory (Gray)
www.bridgesfh.com

Byars Funeral Home (Cumming)
www.byarsfuneralhome.com

Dahlonega Funeral Home (Dahlonega)
www.dahlonegafuneralhome.com

Fischer Funeral Care & Cremation Services (Chamblee)
www.fischerfuneralcare.com

Georgia Cremation Centers (Acworth)
www.georgiacremationcenters.com

Georgia Funeral Care & Cremation Service (Acworth)
www.georgiafuneralcare.com

Goolsby Mortuary (Atlanta)
www.goolsbymortuary.com

Harwell Funeral Home & Cremation Chapel (Covington)
www.harwellfuneralhome.com

Higgins Hillcrest Chapel (Newnan)
www.higginshillcrestchapel.com

Hillside Memorial Chapel (Clarkesville)
www.hillsidememorialchapel.com

Holly Hill Funeral Home (Fairburn)
www.hollyhillfuneralhome.com

Hutcheson Memorial Chapel (Buchanan)
www.hutchesonmemorialchapel.com

Ingram Funeral Home & Crematory (Cumming)
www.ingramfuneralhome.com

McDonald & Son Funeral Home & Crematory (Cumming)
www.mcdonaldandson.com

Medford-Peden Funeral Home & Crematory (Marietta)
www.medfordpedenfuneralhome.com

Mountain View Funeral Home (Blairsville)
www.mountainviewfuneralhome.com

Purvis Funeral Home (Adel)
www.purvisfh.com

Roscoe-Jenkins Funeral Home (Newnan)
www.roscoejenkinsfuneralhome.com

Roy Davis Funeral Home (Austell)
www.roydavisfuneralhome.com

Starling Funeral Home (Harlem)
www.starlingfuneralhome.com

Stewart Funeral Homes (Lawrenceville, Loganville, Monroe & Snellville)
www.stewartfh.com

Thomas L. Carter Funeral Home (Hinesville)
912-876-5095

Tri-Cities Funeral Home (Lithonia)
www.tricitiesfuneralhome.com

Wages & Sons Funeral Homes (Lawrenceville & Stone Mountain)
www.wagesandsons.com

Special Thanks

- Dr. Sally Meyer, long-time Executive Director of the Memorial Society of Georgia, has resigned after more than a decade of service. We wish to give her that EXTRA SPECIAL THANKS for her dedication and hard work in keeping our organization together and providing the central continuity for the Memorial Society for so long.
- Another round of applause goes to Henry (Cappy) Ricks, a very long-time board member. As part of his service to the MSOG, Cappy has been our telephone answering person for at least nine years, and in that capacity he has answered thousands of your questions. This has truly been of invaluable help to our members, and we are very appreciative.
- We also extend heartfelt thank yous to the other outgoing board members – Herschel Beazley, Hugh Fordyce, Geoff Kent and Gerald Robison – for their service on the Memorial Society board.
- Finally, thank you to Clint Bailes for supporting the web site; to Terry Beale for making the newsletter happen; and to Barbara DeVries for her assistance to Executive Director Dr. Sally Meyer.

New (And Cheaper!) CFDs

The Memorial Society of Georgia's two new Cooperating Funeral Directors (CFDs) both have a regular cremation price that is less than the MSOG's contracted price. The price for a simple cremation at Georgia Funeral Care & Cremation Service is \$795 and at Georgia Cremation Centers is \$995. As those are their (current) regular prices, they do not require MSOG membership. Both are located in Acworth, Georgia.

GEORGIA FUNERAL CARE & CREMATION SERVICE

4671 South Main Street, Suite 110

Acworth, GA 30101

678-574-3016

<http://www.georgiafuneralcare.com>

GEORGIA CREMATION CENTERS

4325 Highway 92

Acworth, GA 30102

678-398-9266

<http://www.georgiacremationcenters.com>

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Submitting an online application at www.MemorialSocietyofGeorgia.org is the fastest, easiest, and most accurate way to join MSOG.



Those without Internet access can apply for membership using the form below, which should be returned to:

The Memorial Society of Georgia
1911 Cliff Valley Way NE, Atlanta, GA 30329

I wish to join the Memorial Society of Georgia. Enclosed is a check for \$35. Please send the Pre-Arrangement Form, which I will complete and return for myself and my dependent children under age 18.

NAME _____

Email _____

Address _____

City, State Zip _____

Signature _____

Telephone (_____) _____

Date _____

Who is hosting the



Funeral Consumers

ALLIANCE

2016 National Conference?

WE ARE!!

The Memorial Society of Georgia is proud to be hosting the Funeral Consumers Alliance's biennial conference in early summer 2016 in Atlanta. Initial planning is in the works and we are

seeking volunteers to help with the effort. If you are interested in being part of the team to plan, organize, and implement the FCA conference, please contact John Lantz at jlantz@memorialsocietyofgeorgia.org.

What is the Funeral Consumers Alliance?

The FCA, a national federation of nonprofit Funeral Information Societies, is the oldest (52 years!) and largest nonprofit watchdog organization protecting the rights—and wallets—of grieving consumers. The FCA keeps tabs on the prices and practices of the funeral industry to help people plan funerals that are meaningful and affordable.

They work with nonprofit consumer education groups around the country to survey funeral prices, help families resolve complaints against mortuaries and cemeteries, and advocate for consumer interests before state and federal legislatures.

Through FCA's efforts, thousands of families better understand their legal rights and have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in unnecessary funeral costs. FCA is not funded by any government agency nor does it have corporate or funeral industry sponsors. For more information or to send donations, contact:

Funeral Consumers Alliance

33 Patchen Rd., South Burlington, VT 05403

www.funerals.org

Don't Take Your Last Wishes to the Grave

Before I Go You Should Know is a comprehensive end-of-life planner available from the FCA.

It includes:

- 30 pages to record everything – from your preference for burial or cremation – to plans for who should take care of your pets and how – to how to close down your social media accounts and online life – and more.
- Two chapters from the book *Final Rights*, giving your state's funeral and burial laws along with a guide for families who want to take on some or all of the funeral process themselves.
- A survivor's checklist of important but often overlooked tasks when death occurs.

Before I Go You Should Know is available as spiral-bound book or digital download.

For information and ordering, go to

www.funerals.org/bookstore

or call 802-865-8300



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An Affiliate of the Funeral Consumers Alliance

1911 Cliff Valley Way
Atlanta, GA 30329

Phone: (404) 634-2896

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

To:

Memorial Society of Georgia
Annual Meeting
Sunday, March 29, 2015, 2 - 3 PM
See details on page 1.

~ ~ Followed by the ~ ~

FUNERAL FUN FAIR™
3 - 6 PM
See details on page 3.

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta
1911 Cliff Valley Way NE, Atlanta GA 30329