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Gracia Casey Thibodeaux

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New Ways to be Buried

Reef balls are the newest way to be buried and save money in the process.

Funerals are expensive and companies have been searching for a lower cost, acceptable alternative to traditional burial practices for years.

Reef balls have been selling well in Florida, California and on the East Coast.

Now, the company has expanded to Texas.

A reef ball is a steel sphere, ranging in size from six inches across (the lowest price burial receptacle) to three feet across (the most expensive burial receptacle.)

A person's cremated remains are placed inside the reef ball and sealed after which the ball is placed into the ocean, off shore, to eventually become part of a living reef.

I am not making this up. Even my fertile mind could not conjure up the idea of a person's remains being placed into a giant b-b and dumped on the ocean floor.

For \$1,500 to \$5,000, the ball will become part of an artificial reef system off shore of Texas, right along with discarded oil platforms, locomotives, old auto frames and 55 gallon drums, thrown in with assorted garbage from Galveston.

It can rest among all that exotic scenery forever, unless it is rolled onto a nearby beach by the tidal action of a hurricane. (This makes me wonder why they didn't invent reef squares).

Of course, the idea is, if the ball rolls onto a beach someone can just toss it back into the ocean. Or they can take it home and use it for a door stop.

The Environmental Protection Agency thinks reef balls are a great idea. They save cemetery space, and according to the EPA, are "friendly" to the ocean. When you have things like Great White Sharks and Giant Squid in the water, a large b-b can do very little harm.

In a few hundred years, your reef ball and hundreds more just like it are supposed to become the basis for a living reef, and will be covered with all sorts of sea life that make a home for fish, etc.

I'm not sure what the ultimate fate of a reef ball is. That fact is conveniently kept out of the literature about the balls.

The burial by reef ball can be even cheaper if you don't mind the company co-mingling your remains with the remains of others in what they call a Community Ball.

Another new idea for burial (although burial is no longer the correct word, when nothing is buried) is to cremate the remains, take a small part of them and pack them in a lipstick sized steel cylinder, which NASA will take into earth orbit and deposit there. In a couple thousand years the orbit will decay and the remains will re-enter earth's atmosphere and become a brief but bright shooting star.

It would be just my luck (if I were interred in a space lipstick) for the night of my shooting star to be overcast worldwide. No one would see my split second of glory.

You can have that service for about \$6,000.

They do gosh knows what with the remains that aren't orbited.

(One of the first persons whose remains were orbited was Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry).

I didn't expect either of these ideas will become very popular - the old ways of burial are still the most

acceptable.

As for me, I do not wish to consign my remains to anything that sounds like something a giant catfish coughed up.

Gracia Thibodeaux

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