

Engineering the Future of Water Cremation

Water Cremation Technology Driving Change in the Deathcare Industry

by Nicki Mikolai

BACK IN THE EARLY 1990S, I attended the University of Minnesota with the dream of being a doctor. While studying pre-medicine, I discovered mortuary science. I was fascinated by end-of-life care and drawn to helping families in this time of need. I decided I wanted to pursue a career in this field; and after graduating with a bachelor's degree in mortuary science, I began looking into my options.

I became a funeral director and worked in a variety of roles within the funeral industry—everything from training with the Minnesota Lions Eye Bank, to pre-need, and then onto sales with a casket company.

It was while I was working with Bradshaw's Celebration of Life Center that I became aware of water cremation, which had been legal in Minnesota since 2003. Bradshaw's had its "Resomator" installed in 2012.

When I first heard about this natural process as an alternative to harsh flame cremation, I was drawn to its gentle and eco-friendly qualities. I urge others to consider it, and I even urged my family to choose it to say goodbye to my grandpa, Donald.

My Grandpa

I had a great relationship with my grandpa; we were close. He lived in the same part of the city, so I saw him a lot. I have great memories of going to our family cabin every summer. We both loved to swim and play cards. He was the one who taught me how to fish. In the winter, he and I would go cross-country skiing.

My grandpa was very organized and already had considered his funeral options before he died. While I worked at Bradshaw's, he and my family came in and pre-planned for his cremation followed by a memorial service. However, water cremation wasn't yet available when he made his pre-arrangements.

Sadly, as my grandpa got older, he developed dementia and my family relied on me to make the decision about his final disposition. I decided to switch grandpa's



Nicki Mikolai with her grandfather, Donald

The more people I talk to within the industry and the general public, the more people I see requesting this and asking where they can get it.

cremation to water cremation after I discovered Resomation. I am a strong believer in the environmentally friendly and peaceful nature of this process, so much so that I took a role as a sales manager at Resomation America.

I was attracted to Resomation America because the company has a 144-year history in the United Kingdom as manufacturing experts and has invented a number of engineering products used across the globe.

Resomation seemed like the right option for grandpa, as he'd always been around water throughout his life. He used to be a lifeguard, was an avid swimmer, and his favorite place at our cabin was by the water.

I knew this would be the right decision for grandpa; the process is so much more gentle and better for the environment. I truly believe he would have chosen this option himself.

The Service

Using a process known as alkaline hydrolysis, water cremation is creating a new "middle way" for people's final farewells, providing more choice for those impassioned by green principles in life and for their death.

The gentle process, which takes just a matter of hours, presents a lower carbon footprint compared to the high CO₂ emissions associated with flame cremation.

Water cremation does allow for embalming, but that isn't what my grandpa wanted. We chose instead to have his urn present at the memorial service. With this process, you actually end up with 30 percent more cremated remains than with flame cremation; and the ashes are pure white. We buried the urn next to my grandma and aunt in a local cemetery, which was his chosen final resting place.

For us, water made sense; it's more respectful and natural. More people are choosing it as a preferred option because the idea of water is much more calming than fire. As a society, we love escaping to swim in oceans and relax in spas and baths; we find water soothing and peaceful.

The Future

More and more people are realizing the gentleness and the environmental benefits of water cremation. As a sales manager with Resomation America, I am increasingly meeting families who are requesting the service.

As an industry, we need to educate the public, as there are so many misconceptions. For example, some people believe the water left after this process is sludgy, when, in fact, it's 100 percent sterile and completely safe.

I see water cremation only increasing in popularity. The more people I talk to within the industry and the general public, the more people I see requesting this and asking where they can get it.

The process will be permitted in 20 states by the end of this year. By summer 2020, Resomation will have installations in renowned medical schools and funeral homes spanning the States, with installations coming this year in California and Washington. ☑

Nicki Mickolai is a licensed funeral director and current sales manager for Resomation America. For more information visit our website: www.resomationamerica.com. She can be reached at NickiMikolai@resomationamerica.com.



Nicki Mikolai stands beside the Resomator at LBBC

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