

# Death Be Not Proud

## *Alumnus Stewards Land into Sustainable Resting Place*

**T**he land adjacent to Jim Bell's 68OX 71C Milton, Georgia, property has long been the burying ground for members of the Boiling Springs Primitive Baptist Church. Gazing over his pasture, Bell considered a similar, yet fundamentally different way, to preserve his bucolic landscape while generating income. In doing so, he entered a paradigm shift in the way Americans deal with death.

### **Eternal Sustainability**

Within a year, Bell went from no knowledge of green burials to learning about them from the front page of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and *National Geographic*. Before creating Milton Fields



Jim Bell provides an ecologically sound burial choice.

on seventeen of his thirty acres north of Atlanta, he consulted with the Green Burial Council (GBC) ([www.greenburialcouncil.org](http://www.greenburialcouncil.org)) and partnered with Conservation Burial Partners.

Essentially, green burials simplify the end-of-life process.

The deceased is not embalmed (it's not required by law) and is buried in a biodegradable shroud or coffin. Flat stone markers or GPS readings are substituted for monuments. Unlike manicured grounds, eco-friendly cemeteries cause no visual changes to the landscape. Ultimately, natural burial sites save

**Jim could have done something else with his land, but chose to do something that will benefit the community.**

— Joe Sehee, executive director of the Green Burial Council

greenspace and greenbacks for the living while returning the deceased's remains to the earth in an uncomplicated way. As with other green burial grounds, a portion of the burial fee at Milton Fields will be donated to help the city purchase public greenspace.

### **The High Price of Dying**

On average, green burials cost one-half to two-thirds less than conventional burials. As sustainability gains momentum, more consumers question spending thousands on funerals when that money could help fund a grandchild's education. Green burial presents "an option that's ecologically sound and less expensive," says Bell and notes that many religious groups have practiced natural burials for generations.

### **Consumer Education**

Education is essential to addressing misconceptions about green burials. For example, the risk of ground water contamination appears minimal, according to a British study. And while some express concern that animals might disturb

#### **FAST FACTS: GRAVE CONCERNS:**

## **Burial's Price to the Planet**


Every year, conventional burials place the following materials into the ground:

- More than 800,000 gallons of formaldehyde
- More metal from caskets than was used in the Golden Gate Bridge
- Enough reinforced concrete from vaults (1.6 tons) to build a two-lane highway from New York to Detroit

\*Source: Green Burial Council

For more information about Milton Fields, contact Jim Bell at [bell@miltonfieldsgeorgia.com](mailto:bell@miltonfieldsgeorgia.com) or 770.751.1445.

natural burial sites, this hasn't occurred at GBC cemeteries.

Bell filters fads and fiction through a business lens. To him, green burials make good sense. "Sustainability is a practical application of theory," he says. Perhaps this practical, sustainable approach to death can prolong the life of our planet. 

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