

# Farley Essay

*Sue Schuetz*

## HONORABLE MENTION

Trying to decide where to have yourself buried (for eternity) is not a decision to be made lightly. Even though you, yourself, will not notice (that we know of) after the big exit where your body is, our choice now can be a comfort in making our final plans.

Obviously, we identify and fulfill our desires while alive, wondering if we will be aware of them after we die. Because how can we imagine how it will be after we die? It gives comfort to plan now the way we want things to be. People who say "I don't care what you do with my body after I die" have no imagination.

We plan now because we don't really know what others will do later. It's assumed that they will follow our wishes, but will they really do it the way we wanted? Legally, they have to. So why not take the time to put things in writing and allow your mind to rest easy? Also...it's comforting to know that if we plan for ourselves, it takes the burden off our survivors.

Forest Hill cemetery is in Madison on Speedway Road. This is a beautiful piece of land, with mature oak trees and well-tended grounds. The Catholic cemetery, Resurrection (ascension, anyone?) is right across the street. One has to be careful, if they are Catholic, about where they are buried. Just like real life! Separateness is the key issue. We were always warned in Catholic grade school not to enter a church of another denomination. We could be swayed to "switch sides", thereby causing the Catholic Church to lose (paying) members.

So I guess it stands to "reason" that, if Catholic, you must be buried in Resurrection cemetery. Can't be mixing the baptized with the non-baptized! A baptized Lutheran, for instance, just won't do.

As far as I know, there is none of this foolishness at the Farley Center. Yes, they have requirements, but they are of the sensible variety, and utilized to protect the land. One of the rules is no metal caskets (or metal anything), but it seems far more practical, anyway, to be buried in a natural blanket of one's choosing. Biodegradable is the key word here.

My parents are buried in Forest Hill, my mom (cremated) in a plot with her father, mother and two sisters. (Her brother, Jim, is buried in Beaver Dam.) There is room in that plot for two more boxes of "cremains", one for my sister, and, potentially, one for me.

My dad is buried (casket) in the Veterans' section, just a short walk down from mom.

My mom and her family's plot, or at my dad's headstone could be the repository for my ashes. Cremation, I understand, is a highly polluting affair. As an environmentalist, this practice offends my sensibilities, although I understand the various reasons one might choose to do this.

The Farley Center is tempting option. There, in afterlife, wrapped in a favorite blanket (still projecting comforts of the living), reposed in a lovely woods, no pesticides used on the grounds, and surrounded by like-minded people; I won't notice all these things later, but I notice them now.

I love the Farley Center. What a great thought, to know that your body would be on (in) those quiet woods...forever. The events, the farmers toiling away in their organic garden plots, the care that goes into running the Farley Center. You just want to be there!

My decision (or my indecision) lies (no pun intended) in whether I want to be buried at Forest Hill in Madison with the rest of my family, or be sustainably (not regarding me, of course) buried in the beautiful, tranquil, enveloping hills and valleys of western Dane County. If you ever wanted to be truly rooted in the land, this is your opportunity.

Hey! I'll bet there are even a few atheists buried at the Farley Center. No discrimination in these woods.