

Recommendation from Wm Larry Martin

During my 40 plus years as a Certified Public Accountant, I worked with many clients that lost a spouse, child, or parent. This is a very difficult time for anyone. There are so many details that need to be addressed and when a death occurs, the survivors do not feel like tending to details.

Upon retirement, I become involved as a Trustee on the Board of the Arlington East Hill Cemetery Association. I decided to use my experience as a CPA to help people get ready for the time when death occurs in their family.

The best advice I can give is for you to determine what you would like to see done upon your death while you are capable of making those decisions. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who do I want to handle my affairs if I become incapacitated or when I die?
- Who do I want to determine if I should be put on life support or not?
- Do I want to donate any parts of my body?
- Who do I want to have the assets that I own at my death after my death?
- Who do I want to receive my life insurance proceeds upon my death?
- Who do I want to receive my benefits from my retirement funds?
- Who do I want to take care of my children if they are under the age of 18?
- Do I want to have a traditional funeral and be buried in a cemetery or do I want to be cremated and placed in a cemetery or have my ashes scattered in the wind over the Grand Canyon?
- Which funeral director and mortuary do I want involved with my funeral?
- What type of funeral services do I want and what type of casket and vault do I want?
- In what cemetery do I want my body to be placed?

All of the above questions will be answered regardless of whether you answer them or not. Unfortunately, if you do not answer them, then one of your loved ones will have to decide the answers at a time when they really do not feel like doing it.

I recommend you prepare answers for each of the above questions. After you have the answers, prepare a plan as to how you would like to handle each answer. Once the plan is prepared, discuss the plan with your spouse and children to get their input before you formalize the plan. After you have discussed it with your spouse and family, find an attorney to prepare a will and any other documents that are appropriate to execute the plan. Talk to your accountant regarding any tax issues that may be involved upon your death. Make a complete list of all of your assets along with the fair market value of each. Check your life insurance policies and retirement funds regarding the beneficiary or beneficiaries. Meet with a couple of funeral directors and get quotes on the cost of the funeral service. Meet with a representative of a couple of cemeteries and get quotes on the cost of the interment of your body or the inurnment of your ashes. Prepare a memo for the personal representative of your will listing the location of each of your legal documents and the location of each of your assets. Keep this list current. If you follow this advice, your spouse and family will be very grateful. It is one of the best things you can do for them. Do not delay in doing this.