



# Ask the Undertaker

By Ryan Helfenbein

The holidays are a time when we eat great home-cooked meals, visit with extended family members and scatter our loved ones cremated remains. What? That's right, the holidays have proven to be a very popular time for that final goodbye as loved ones are already gathered together anyway. Studies show that two out of five families who elect cremation plan to use scattering as their final goodbye. That said, where is ash scattering prohibited?

Living as close to the water as most of us do, many of our families who elect to scatter ashes plan to do so in the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. Before you gas up that boat and ice down the beverages, you should know that it is against state and federal laws. The Environmental Protection Agency and the state of Maryland prohibit scattering of cremated remains in waters closer than three nautical miles from land and in waters less than one hundred fathoms (600 feet) deep. Those of us who grew up having to learn the deepest point of the Chesapeake Bay to satisfy our middle school science teachers (Bloody Point), know that even this location is not a suitable depth.

But what about the reef program offered by the company Eternal Reefs out of Florida? Can't they put cremains into a reef ball and place them in the Chesapeake Bay? Prior to April of this year, yes. However, it was reported by the state of Maryland on April 26 that, "MD DNR Fisheries Service will no longer allow the placement of human remains incorporated into manmade structures onto sites permitted to the Maryland DNR Fisheries Service. This includes all sites in Chesapeake Bay and state waters of the Atlantic Ocean (within three nautical miles of the shoreline). Furthermore, it will be the Maryland DNR Fisheries Service policy to oppose the placement of manmade

*structures integrated with human remains on non-DNR permitted sites within the waters of Maryland."*

OK, so I can't legally place the cremains into the local areas of the Chesapeake Bay. Then what can I do? Fortunately, there is a company by the name of Atlantic Scattering that offers assistance to the families seeking water scattering as the final resting place for a loved one's cremains. This organization is based in Maryland and scatters cremated remains in accordance with the state and federal laws. They provide the family with photos and/or video of the sunset scattering service on the Atlantic Ocean and provide certification, with a map, that includes GPS coordinates as to the placement of the cremains. All cremains are contained in a biodegradable receptacle prior to placement into the water.

Another option for this holiday season is airborne scattering. A pilot at Tribute Aviation provides scattering from his airplane using a unique device that contains the cremated remains on his plane's wing. With a push of a button from a family member in the cockpit, cremains

are released over the designated area. He provides aerial scattering in the mountainous areas of West Virginia to offshore waters in the Atlantic. In addition, Tribute Aviation also provides options of high altitude and even loop-the-loops and rolls during the scattering process. A one-of-a-kind means of scattering indeed! Tribute Aviation's contact information is [www.tribute-aviation.com](http://www.tribute-aviation.com)

As the gift-giving season knocks on our door, perhaps a trip to the mountains of West Virginia or a cruise in the Atlantic should be considered for those planning an ash scattering. Whichever it may be, please be sure to take a moment to double-check into specific area regulations or simply contact a local undertaker in that area.

*Ryan, owner/supervising mortician and preplanning counselor at Lasting Tributes on Bestgate Road in Annapolis, offers area residents solutions to high-cost funerals. He can be reached at 410.897.4852 or [Ryan@LastingTributesFuneralCare.com](mailto:Ryan@LastingTributesFuneralCare.com)*

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*Estate planning & prenuptial agreements*

**Jennifer Enos Langone**  
Attorney  
*Peace of mind now & protection for the future*

626C Admiral Drive, #535  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
[JEL@LangoneLaw.Net](mailto:JEL@LangoneLaw.Net)

Office: 410-280-0442  
Mobile: 443-926-1154  
[WWW.LangoneLaw.Net](http://WWW.LangoneLaw.Net)