

for casket sales with **A Simple Tradition, All Faiths, Superior, and Collier Caskets**, all of which have low casket prices. Cook-Walden has more than made up for the reduced costs of the 20- and 18-gauge caskets priced in the survey by their greatly increased nondeclinable fee and embalming charges. Last year, Cook-Walden charged \$995 for the 20 ga., and \$2,495 for the 18 ga. caskets. In 2006, their prices are \$595 and \$1,195, respectively; a difference of \$400 and \$1,300. Their increases for NDF and embalming, however, total \$1,700.

The charges for direct cremation in the

2006 survey ranged from a high of \$2,690 at **Pennington's FH** in San Marcos, to a low of \$675 at **A Simple Tradition** in Austin. The survey average for direct cremation is \$1,603. Above-average cremation costs were reported for **Beck, Condra**, all **Cook-Walden FHs, Harrell, Marrs-Jones-Newby, Mission** (S. 1st St location), **Pennington, Thomason, Weed-Clay-Fish, and Weed-Corley-Fish**.

In reviewing the new costs for the Cook-Walden FHs, one AMBIS volunteer remarked that their slogan, "Service Beyond Expectations," should be changed to "Prices Beyond Expectations."

It's Not Cheap to Go Home Again

*Bodies are disinterred and moved for any number of reasons, but
FD Beacham McDougald of Laurinburg, NC, sees a financial stranglehold
when they're moved out of corporate cemeteries – and sometimes in.*

Call it frustration! Here in our mostly rural city, the cemeteries are either owned by the municipal governments, churches, or families. The highest price grave space is \$400, and the highest priced opening and closing in any cemetery at any time is another \$400. It is possible to buy grave spaces in some cemeteries as low as \$150, and the opening and closing costs can be as low as \$300. That is true value.

Yesterday, we received signed disinterment/reinterment permits from two sons (both attorneys on the West Coast) to have their father disinterred from a corporate cemetery in another city so they can have him cremated at our crematory. The sons have preplanned their mother's cremation and service, and want the same done with their father.

The staff at the cemetery flipped when they got our request. "That's never been done before! Are you sure they know what they're doing?"

Well, for starters, the cemetery says it will disinter the concrete vault for \$1,500, and that does not include the fee for the vault company to bring the vault up from the grave and open it. Then the cemetery decided it would need an-

other \$400 to dispose of the concrete vault.

The cemetery called back today and said it will have to get its attorney to draw up another disinterment/reinterment permit, as it does not feel the version that is accepted and printed by the state is sufficient. Of course, the cemetery's attorney could be an additional charge. Then they explained we need to hire a staff member from the funeral home that did the burial in 1981 to be present for the disinterment and witness the opening of the vault. Why? "In case the vault has failed, the funeral home will be responsible."

The saga continues...

Today, we had another burial in a corporate cemetery in another city. Fortunately, 10 years ago, the family bought the grave space (\$1,200), the concrete liner (\$1,100), and the bronze marker (\$1,200). Now all that's left is for them to pay \$1,115 to open the grave.

It is really nice to live in a rural community, void of corporate greed. When some speak of all the conveniences of the large cities, they tend to ignore the realities – especially with cemeteries.