

# I am compostable, therefore, I was!

## OR: *My nana died, but she still brings me flowers on my birthday every summer!*

by Martin Pariseau, Hu.D. (*Doctor of Humanics*)

Having participated in Humanist Officiant/Celebrant training here in British Columbia, as well as being familiar with various communities of seniors claiming secular beliefs, I have heard a few interesting stories about how people would like their mortal remains to be disposed of. The limited availability of areas in which to bury the dead, the increase in environmentally based values and a need for said communities to express their unique personalities in posthumous fashion have resulted in the following “food for thought.”

When corresponding with the widow of my favourite author, I was impressed with an essay she sent me prior to its publication. Note that she is a published author herself. She has also made a career in psychiatry while simultaneously, and therefore also ironically, demonstrating clear abilities for thinking outside of the *eighty-four inches long* box.

In the essay she shared with me, possibly published in an online version of the *Humanist News* at the time, she wrote the following words about alternatives to whole body burials. “Make each small pile part of the nutrition of gardens. With 7 billion people on Earth, rapidly increasing, we’re going to have to accept using our own waste products instead of dangerous chemical fertilizers. Why not accept crumbled dead bodies?”

She also mentions the benefits of homes

with roof-tops that grow food – which I must confess is what I sleep under every night – and also that her suggestions would be applicable in space-stations and extraplanetary colonies. How can you find such options when shopping for your final resting place here in BC? Easy! As the illusion of Canadian democracy is, for the most part, consumer-driven, simply vote with your spending dollars. Research what laws exist (or not) in relation to this and then put your money where your mouth...uh...will be able to feed others!

Janet O. Jeppson Asimov was one of those rare individuals who was not prone to wearing a mask. She suffered, much like all other truly sentient life, in regard to the choices made by *the norm*. While I coined the term “suffering from *species alienation*,” she calls herself a curmudgeon. I define this word as sourced in curmudgeon-alley.com, which says that “curmudgeons are mockers and debunkers whose bitterness is a symptom rather than a disease. They can’t compromise their standards and can’t manage the suspension of disbelief necessary for feigned cheerfulness. Their awareness is a curse.”

Myself, I cannot help improve society for future generations by spending money that my – mainly – philanthropic work won’t be able to generate. Instead, I have sent various documents that were, as usual, promptly ignored by more than

a dozen *corporeal Members of Parliament*. Here is a quote from one such document where I define individuals who suffer from *species alienation*. “A person who suffers from Species Alienation might have relatively acute awareness of the state of the world...but...what does differentiate them (...even more...) is that they care enough about right and wrong to suffer immensely when seeing their fellow Human Beings facilitate the status quo and choosing to rationalize all sorts of excuses to avoid taking action. In essence, I suffer from Species Alienation because I care enough about doing the right thing.”

Janet ended her essay by saying that “... lots of people would pay to have their remains used to fertilize not only a Martian garden but even the vats of algae that would help humans survive. I would.” She was against hiding/dumping dead bodies and discouraged turning them into mantelpiece décor, decorative beads or, to cite *Current Affairs*, into *supernatural* travelling freak shows. She suggested, instead, that we use our remains in order to help life do what it *naturally wants to efficiently do*.

I end this essay by saying that, whatever your wishes are, make sure you appoint someone you can trust to help you make them a reality. If you are a Humanist, you would then have greater assurance that your final wishes would not be used to poison the living just because the living were well-domesticated at making choices that were poisonous both to themselves, as well as their children’s children. Therefore, your death would find you acting as a role model for being part of the solution and not the problem. And on that last note, for some of those performing artists in politics, I say to thee, *better late than never*.

*Martin Pariseau is an ecocentric humanist.*

*Ecocentric Humanism is a philosophy that rejects supernaturalism unless this supernaturalism serves a spiritual need in helping humanity reconnect with the global ecological system in which it evolved and still belongs. Ecocentric Humanism stresses an individual’s dignity and worth and capacity for self-realization through reason but not at the expense of other important components within Mother Earth.*

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