

TRUST THE PROCESS

— by Katherine Atkinson



Kathy and John and Anne Field were able to also stroll the beaches of Australia.

“Trust the process!” Those are the words Kevin Burns expounded during the “Life is Short, but Really, Really Wide” session of the CCC convention in Quebec City last September. How often I have found those words to be true in this ministry of ours, the corporal work of mercy, the burial of the dead. But never in my wildest dreams did I think ‘the process’ would bring me to a cemetery study tour in the beautiful country of Australia!

“The trip of a lifetime” Jeff Sterba, the 2005 ICFA winner of this trip, exclaimed before drawing the name of the 2006 CCC winner of Axiom Business Systems’ raffle at the end of the convention banquet. Jeff, the General Manager of the Catholic Cemeteries for the Diocese of Omaha, Nebraska, and Anne and John Field, owners of Axiom and the tour hosts, had all eyes upon them. The next words out of Jeff’s mouth, were my name - my full name. For several minutes thereafter, there were NO words out of my mouth.

How do you describe the feeling of winning a trip to Australia?

Of course, when I entered the drawing at Axiom’s Booth, I never thought I would actually win, so my first thought (forgive me Anne and John), was ‘oh no, now I have to make that long trip!’ Shortly after the announce-

ment, I was besieged with offers from other cemeterians to “go with you”, ‘carry your bags’, ‘get in your bags’, and my personal favorite, ‘carry you’, which was pretty creative!

Anne and John said they would be ‘in touch’ and the next morning I was on a flight back to San Francisco and reality. It was difficult to answer family and co-workers’ questions. I was not really sure just exactly WHAT I had won and believed it would be several months before I would be addressing the idea of heading ‘down under’. Not wanting to be rude to the trip sponsors, I called Jeff instead. He said he knew exactly why I was calling - he had felt the same way when he won. Knowing he understood was a relief. Jeff enthusiastically explained that the trip was for one person, economy class to Australia for the purpose of a work-study tour of cemeteries in Australia. The hosts would also provide hotels, food, sightseeing, and some accommodations in their lovely home. As the Aussies are well known for their hospitality, Jeff assured me that I would return feeling like ‘one of the family’. WOW!

A week or so later, Anne Field called me to discuss the details. She and John had mapped out an itinerary and wanted to know if I could travel November 30 to December 14! I about fell through the floor -

November 30? That was only six weeks away - and between Thanksgiving and Christmas - how could I leave now? Finally I realized that there is never a ‘perfect time’ to leave home or work, so after getting the ok from my boss, Monsignor Schlitt, I cleared my calendar and told Anne, ‘yes, I can make it.’

Next I was in ‘planning mode.’ This time I called Jeff and asked him ‘what do I bring?’ and he provided me with great tips. I also purchased two books about the country, got the necessary visa added to my passport, and started looking through my closets for clothes - the weather in SF doesn’t get hot very often - and December in Australia is usually very hot.

So it was pretty easy - Anne and John were providing everything - all I had to do was show up!

And show up, I did! Landing in Melbourne 27-1/2 hours after leaving my home in San Francisco, I came through customs to see Anne’s always smiling face racing across the airport with John right behind her. As she embraced and welcomed me, I burst into tears! Why? Who knows? All I had to do was ‘trust the process’ and place myself in Anne and John’s hands.

We drove to their lovely home in Dromana, had a quick lunch and a walk on the beautiful beach. They told me to take a nap and then we would go to dinner - I missed that one as I slept 12-1/2 hours - right through to 6:30 am, so awoke refreshed and ready to go on Sunday morning. After Mass, we had breakfast with their oldest daughter and her family and then hopped a plane to Sydney. Dinner on Darling Harbor was a real treat; then off to our hotel located adjacent to our first cemetery: **Macquarie Park.**

Macquarie Park - Full of Technological Delights

Macquarie Park is a lovely place to start a tour. Beginning with the location kiosk at the entrance to the office,

continued on page 76

Trust the Process, continued



Kathy (left) and Anne Field follow the Stations of the Cross pathway at Marquarrie Park Cemetery.

my head was spinning trying to take in all the technological delights of this cemetery. Ross Davis, the CEO, and his lovely wife Jackie, were so hospitable. Each of the three chapels carry a floral theme throughout; magnolia, camellia, and palm, including the plants in front of the chapel, the etchings on the doors, and the artwork within. Equipment is available for video recording, a TV screen for family presentations and even the ability to web cast services. There are also LCD screens and outside speakers to ensure services can be seen and heard in the courtyard alongside each chapel. The efficient handling of the casket from the hearse to the chapel to the retort in spotless surroundings is amazing. The catered reception areas are equally lovely and spotless. The cemetery has its own flower shop and a café where local people may come for a quick bite in addition to cemetery visitors.

The highlight of Macquarie Park, are the ‘Stations of the Cross.’ Ross proudly explained the design and construction of this unique path. As a non-Catholic, Ross found all the right people to guide him through the process of creating an historical yet contemporary work of art for the Catholic and Christian communities. Inspired by Michael Gerrard of Urban

Landscape Projects in Sydney and Barte Shadlow, a ULP designer, this interpretation of Jesus’ passion and death can be understood by anyone looking at the bronze sculptures.

After passing the magnificent crucifix where Jesus dies on the cross, the tomb where He is buried, and then the 14th station, the Resurrection from the dead, your eyes fall upon a large broken cross, symbolizing Jesus’ atonement for our sins. Credit must also be given to Linda Klarfeld, the sculptor who, at the time of design, was only 24 years old. She brought the designs to Passionist Father Tiernan Doherty for approval before starting each piece. It’s an incredible work of art and a beautiful reminder of what our faith is all about. The entire project is also indicative of Ross’ attention to accuracy and detail - right down to the use of plants that grew in Jesus’ time - lavender, rosemary, bay shrubs and olive trees.

[Rookwood - Home to Australia’s Only Catholic Mausoleum](#)

The next day we visited **The Catholic Cemetery at Rookwood**, where we were warmly greeted by the General Manager, Harold O’Keeffe. It was grand to see someone I knew so many miles from home. Harold was swamped but still gave us a great tour. The cemetery’s monthly mass was celebrated that day so it was filled with visitors and cars. Dating back to 1867, the cemetery is an older more tradi-

tional cemetery than Macquarie Park and has a special beauty of its own. Large stately monuments line the tree-lined roads.

Rookwood is home to the only Catholic Mausoleum in Australia. Designed in 1997 by Sydney Architect, Bruce Bowden, the two-story mausoleum has won a variety of architectural and building awards. It is absolutely stunning, filled with magnificent windows for natural light in addition to recessed lighting, a reflection pool, Australian religious sculptures, 1723 crypts, 1280 niches, 7 family vaults and a chapel for up to 300 people. The wide curving ramp that leads to the upper story lends to the openness of the structure and makes it easy to visit the upper floor. It glistens in the Australian sunlight and lives up to its promise of ‘perpetual peace, perpetual care.’ It is truly comforting to one’s heart and soul.

Construction workers were working at a furious pace to complete a new complex that includes a chapel, crematorium, and condolence lounge (reception center) that was scheduled to open February 17, 2007 - which it did. The design and colors are magnificent!

As land is limited in this part of Sydney, cremation is increasing at the rate of 10% per year. The crematory was designed so Catholic families will be able to have their loved ones cremated in a Catholic crematory rather than a secular one. They are also



Darren Leuders (right) was Kathy’s tour guide of the spectacular Enfield Memorial Park. He and Derick Murdoch (left) escorted Kathy through the lush tree-lined grounds.

allowed to have funeral Masses in the chapel before the casket is lowered through the floor into the crematorium. Unfortunately, my new camera wasn't working and I didn't get any photos of this.

After leaving Rookwood, Anne, John and I spent a few hours in Sydney Harbour. It was a perfect day. The harbor is even more beautiful than it looks in photos. It was difficult to select a restaurant as outdoor dining places surround the harbor, but the one we finally picked was terrific! Since it was my turn to treat, John warned me that the restaurants graciously include tips in their prices. I felt uncomfortable not leaving one. John noticed that they now have a line for a tip on the credit card tape as they do here in the United States, so if you don't know the custom, you will pay a second tip! Lucky that this tourist was with a local! Then we hurried to catch a flight to Adelaide.

Centennial Park - Acres of Beautiful Rose Gardens

Centennial Park in Pasadena, South Australia brought us to the care of Bryan Elliot, CEO. Thankfully, Bryan provided us with attractive straw hats to protect us from the sun, as we began our tour. The offices are modern and lovely and include urn and monument displays. The chapels are welcoming with warm lighting and lush foliage. But the real jewels of this

cemetery are the acres and acres of beautiful rose gardens! (If I remember correctly, Bryan said they have 72 horticulturists on staff.) As their beauty pleases the eye, so does their fragrance fill your senses, as well as your heart.

What comfort and joy I felt as we passed from one beautiful garden to another. Just when I thought we walked through the prettiest setting with a fountain, statue or arbor, we would walk into an even more glorious garden! It struck me then how much of the cemetery is dedicated to cremation burials. The choices are limitless and I don't know how anyone could ever make a selection - the options are all so lovely!

Water features are also breathtaking - fountains, brooks, pools! The most recent addition, Springbank Island, consists of a redwood gazebo, bridges, rock memorials, a large pond and the cutest ducks! As cute as they are, Bryan said their droppings do not add to the beauty of the cemetery. It seems as though God's creatures worldwide give us joys and headaches at the same time. Cleaning up after them is a challenge, but they are so cute waddling around the area, you can't help but smile.

The number of cremation interment and memorial options continued to amaze me as we walked along a rambling stream, meandering through an array of beautiful trees, shrubs, and flowers that offered both protection

from the heat and a comforting environment. Everything is so green and lush! The tropical climate is wonderful and the grounds are as impeccable as Bryan's hospitality.

The 'Contemplation Court' for the temporary placement of cremated remains until families decide on final disposition fascinated me. It is an interesting concept and seems to work well, as many families eventually choose burial sites within the cemetery for the final disposition.

The fact that interment rights, or 'licences' as they are called, are good for only 50 years, was new to me. They are renewable for up to a maximum of another 50 years. Burial plots may be purchased pre-need, but a premium is charged on the licence fee.

Enfield Memorial Park - Different Sections Based on Religion

Next on our list was **Enfield Memorial Park** run by the Adelaide Cemeteries Authority. The lobby area, filled with unique biodegradable urns in lovely colors and designs, caught my eye. Again, the focus upon cremation struck me.

Eric Heaphy, the CEO welcomed us and then asked Darren Leuders and an associate to take us on the tour. Enfield is another memorial park that is filled with beautiful rose gardens and a wide variety of burial and memorialization options.

A 'Catholic Section' has monument band based headstones for full casket burials with a rosebush between each monument. It's a glorious idea!

The Catholic lawn section is separated from the 'Muslim Section', by a grassy aisle. The generous size and pre-placement of these wide tablet style monuments add to the graves' appeal. The grave and monument space are purchased as a full package - all the monuments are alike and the beauty of the symmetry with a tree rose in between each is breathtaking!

continued on page 78



Roses are popular at most of the cemeteries. At Centennial Park there are 72 horticulturists on staff to care for the flowers and landscape.

Trust the Process, continued

Enfield opened Adelaide's first community indoor mausoleum in 2002. The white/dark streaked marble, contrasted with dark green carpets and trim is stunning, as is the artwork. The mausoleum was a 'pilot project' created by retired CEO, Kevin Crowden. (Fortunately, later in the day, we shared a meal with Kevin and I was able to enjoy the stories of this creative man.) The entombment rights in the mausoleum are for 99 years, which is unique for Adelaide. Most are for 25, 50, or 75 years.

The Pavilion Garden in Enfield has the novel idea I would most like to copy in our cemetery. Trees are placed in the center of geometrically arranged casket graves. Bronze plaques are attached to the concrete band around the trees to create a planter effect. The rows of trees create a wonderful atmosphere and each person buried in this section can claim to be part of the planter feature. I would replace the bronze with granite due to our salty air, but the design is ingenious. It was difficult to leave this lovely setting.

The weekend brought time for fun. John threw an assortment of goodies 'on the barbie' and we had a grand dinner with Anne's sisters and their husbands. As we had all recently lost our 'mums', we had much to share.

The next day introduced me to my new favorite meal - fish and chips! The Aussies really know how to

make them. Of course sharing them at the beach with Anne, John and their grandchildren made them even tastier. The children enjoyed a dip in the water, but the rest of us stayed on shore. Afterwards, it was back to the house to watch the kids decorate the Christmas tree and to answer questions about life in San Francisco. It's unusual to hear Christmas carols in the grocery store on the way to the beach, but no less festive.

A trip to the farmer's market on the hottest day of the year was an adventure. It was 102 degrees so everyone was looking for shade and water. Some of the unique wares displayed included aboriginal art, emu lotions and creams (an emu is a tall swift-running, flightless bird similar to an ostrich), and a pearl booth where I did a lot of my 'take home' shopping. The people running that booth were distributing wet towels to place around customers' necks. This allowed us to continue shopping. It was a great public relations idea!

After a visit to the local winery for a little 'tasting', we took a ride above the Port Phillip Bay coast. It was breathtaking! The wind was howling, but that didn't stop us for taking a quick walk. Our destination that day was a bakery/deli in Sorrento for a piece of Anne's favorite dessert, 'vanilla slice'. It's more like a 'hunk' as were all their delicacies. John and I each ordered something different and the three of us shared our choices, along with a pot of tea. This was the best Monday after-

noon I've ever had!!! When it is Monday in Australia, it is Sunday in the United States, so it was a good day off.

Springvale Botanical Cemetery - 422 Acres of Beautiful Floral Landscaping

It is a good thing we had taken a break from our cemetery visits as the last cemetery on our tour, **Springvale Botanical Cemetery**, in Melbourne had my head spinning! I could not keep up with all that I saw. At approximately 422 acres, it was certainly the largest of the group so we toured this one mostly by car!

Unfortunately, while we were there, Melbourne was experiencing horrible forest fires and the skies were gray with smoke. Although the photos show a dark, gray sky, still the cemetery showed off its great beauty. The spacious, modern offices are well appointed and welcoming. A small creek flows along the side of the building. Cremated remains may be buried in the promenade area along its banks. Temporary placement in the extensions of the building, known as the "Walls of Reflection," are for only three months. Russ Allison, the CEO brought us behind the wall to see the inner workings. What an expanse! New cremated remains being placed inside and others leaving to go to their final resting place.

Springvale has rooms for catered receptions and rooms available for



The Pavilion Garden in Enfield Memorial Park shows geometrically arranged casket graves with bronze plaques.



"Full Memorials" in which the caskets are buried under the granite monuments at Springvale Cemetery. Forest fires raging throughout Melbourne created smoky skies according to Kathy.

lease for various group meetings. There are colored lines in the roads directing visitors and services from the entrances to their destinations. There are chapels for each of the seasons, where weddings are often held. There is an area dedicated to fallen police officers, that is heart wrenching. The children's area is immaculate and the most decorated area I saw that day. There are areas dedicated to different cultures and those dedicated to different faiths. The Asian style memorial park is the first of its kind in Australia. The temple for the Song He Yuan cemetery was under construction. In fact there is much construction in progress - the lake was being drained and dredged to change its banks and make room for another development.

One section that I found to be particularly interesting had a 'wall to wall' look of what we call 'overground vaults.' In Australia they are referred to as 'full monuments' or 'full memorials.' In our overground vaults, the casket is placed inside the vault for what is considered to be an 'above ground interment.' Springvale's 'full memorial' is placed over the top of a regular in-ground burial. There is a small door at the foot of the memorial that opens to a storage area for the family's memorial cleaning supplies.

Springvale also has beautiful gardens and flowers. Cremated remains are interred for a limited number of years. Thousands of letters are sent annually to the families of those whose burial rights have expired. They can be

renewed for a fee or are removed and placed in a mass burial area. The niche is then resold.

Even the cemetery's garden center is lovely. Containers of roses and other plants and shrubs are cultivated. Because graves were sold with certain foliage around them, the cemetery continues to foster those varieties to ensure the graves continue with the varieties existing when the graves were purchased. This practice is a lovely tribute to the government's care and respect of its people. (In addition to rose garden tours, the cemetery also provides rose pruning and budding demonstrations.)

My favorite section is where families are allowed to create a plot by selecting irregularly shaped sites and placing large monuments of unique sizes and shapes. It is like walking through a grassy forest with individual alcoves of shrubs and flowers that gives one a sense of being in Eden. It is expensive, but worth every penny.

The final stop of my sojourn was in Axiom's main office in Wantirna, Victoria. It was so good to meet a few more of John and Anne's children. They efficiently run the business in Australia while Anne and John establish American and Canadian accounts.

The purpose of this stop was to review the trip and see Axiom's headquarters. As you may know, Axiom's 'Charon Cemetery Management Suite' (CMS) provides a one-stop cemetery manage-

ment system. However, not once throughout the trip did Anne nor John try to sell me their services. Instead, questions such as 'How can we make this trip a better experience?' and "How can we better promote this raffle?" were asked and easy to answer.

Having become very close friends by this time it was also easy to thank Anne and John for their phenomenal hospitality. They shared their love of cemeteries and brought me into their relationships with wonderful ceterians. They shared their love of people and brought me into their family just as they have done with the exchange students they have hosted over the years. This is, in fact, the reason they came up with the raffle - so they could have cemetery 'exchange students'.

And, so, by 'trusting the process' I was abundantly blessed to return to Colma, CA, the "City of the Dead," refreshed, renewed, and with a wealth of information, new ceterian friends to call upon for help and, best of all, another family to love.

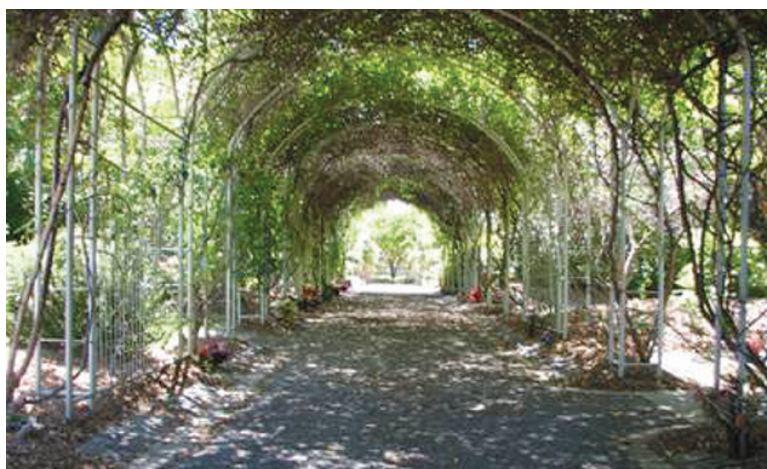
There was so much to see and absorb, that it is truly impossible to put it on paper. The kindness and generosity of all the ceterians we visited was typical of the care and respect shown to all the families they serve.

Jeff was right, it was the 'experience of a lifetime'! It is well worth the long trek getting to this fabulous place with its wonderful people and gorgeous cemeteries.

So 'trust the process' and add your name to the drawing this year in Phoenix. Who knows? I could be calling your name and watching your face light up with the shock and excitement of winning this terrific cemetery experience with Anne and John Field.

GOOD LUCK!!!!

Kathy Atkinson, director of cemeteries, Archdiocese of San Francisco, may be reached at 650.756.2060 or keatkinson@holycrosscemeteries.com.



An arbor walkway at Centennial Park connecting two incredible gardens.