



On becoming a tree

By STEVE BERGER

I used to joke about not wasting valuable real estate on graveyards, now

euphemistically called memorial parks. It seems, though, my humor was not so misplaced. It is apparent that more land will continue to be needed for final resting places and, according to an article in *The Denver Post* a few weeks ago, we are even running out of room and options for dealing with the remains from cremation, to which more of us are turning.

The *Post* article, combined with the efforts of a friend to honor his brother's last request, concern for the environment and memorial gifts from other friends, caused me to think about a solution that incorporates dignity, practicality and ecology into a long-lasting memorial.

My friend's brother requested that his ashes be cast to winds at the foot of Mt. Everest. Sounds simple enough. However, the long, involved story of getting Rick to Nepal involved handing his urn off to family members and friends to get to the next person who happened to be heading in the general direction of Tibet. It also involved shipping and smuggling the urn with his ashes through the post and customs, which, apparently, is against the law in some places.

Although Rick's remains finally made it halfway around the world, this solution took more than a year and put quite a strain on his family. Sometimes, even a simple request of a favorite vacation spot, mountain view or peaceful valley can cause problems. Some areas will not allow you to inter or disburse the ashes of a loved one; others might have changed since the deceased was last there, perhaps developed into a new-home community, shopping mall or theme park.

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Tree a fitting, living memorial

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Last year, a good friend of our family gave my wife a beautiful blue spruce as a memorial for her father.

Another friend had a tree planted in Israel as a remembrance. After reading the article in the *Post*, it occurred to me that, where local ordinances allow, one could incorporate the planting of a tree with the interment of a loved one's

ashes. While the tree benefits some from the ashes, it also stands as a living memorial, reminding children and grandchildren of their loved one. It can even be graced with a memorial plaque. The tree will enrich your life as your loved one did, and it will enhance the site on which it is planted.

— *Freelance writer Steve Berger welcomes your questions and comments at bwcreativ@iex.net*