



Silver Diamond L.L.C.

Monument Selection Requires Planning

By Mark Jefferies

For the Idaho Press Tribune

“Consumer abuse in the death-care industry is running rampant in the United States,” says Carolyn Jacobi, consultant with the Monument Builders Association of North America.

The death-care industry has several different components. One component where consumer abuse can easily occur involves the headstone, or, as it is called in the industry, the monument.

Damon and Mark Jefferies, owners of Silver Diamond, L.L.C., a monument company in Caldwell, have some tips and suggestions when shopping for a monument.

First and foremost, when planning a funeral service, understand that the monument is not a necessary or required part of the service. As such, you should not feel any pressure to purchase a monument at that time. Most families have enough to deal with and the importance of this decision only adds to the burden.

Remember, the monument is the final permanent tribute to this person.

Realistically, much thought and consideration should be made regarding this decision. It is to your advantage to wait until a much less hectic and emotional time. Also, on the practical side, you may end up paying less when purchasing directly from a monument company versus a “package price” from a funeral home or cemetery. When you are ready to consider the monument, observe local cemeteries to not only see what is available, but to see what you might like personally. There are six basic styles of granite monuments with some variations:

- Grass Marker - Flush with the grass
- Bevel Marker - 6 inches above the grass with a slight slope
- Slant Marker - Sits about 16 inches high and has a sloped face
- Die/Tablet With Base - A vertical monument that sits on a granite base
- Bench - Just as it sounds
- Mausoleum - Serves as a monument and houses the casket(s)

Traditionally, monuments are made of granite, with many different colors of granite available. Gray granite has been the most popular, as it is the most affordable and tends to require less maintenance than colored granite. Much of this is determined by the

quality of water the cemetery has. While mineral deposits will ultimately discolor all granite, the gray will show deposits much less than other colors.

Silver Diamond, L.L.C. recommends that families shop around and ask questions before ordering.

A big factor in the monument industry today is the importing of Chinese granite. The customer needs to inquire if the granite they are considering is from China. The wholesale cost of Chinese granite is considerably less than American granite, and the price for a monument made from China gray should reflect that.

Quality wise, the verdict is still out regarding the longevity of Chinese granites when exposed to the elements here in the United States.

There are two basic ways that monuments are set in the ground. One, they are “wet set” meaning the concrete is mixed on site and the monument is set in it. The other is called a “dry set” where everything is precast at the monument company and then placed in the cemetery. The majority of monument companies “wet set.”

Our opinion is that the “wet set” is a higher quality set. It tends to be more accurate and conforms to the ground while the “dry set” can leave voids under the concrete, a perfect home for mice and other rodents.

Some cemeteries will allow natural-shaped stones as a monument, provided it is prepared correctly. Normally a face should be cut on the stone for the carving. At the very least, any loose material should be tooled off the stone prior to carving, ensuring a quality and long-lasting monument.

Natural-shaped stones have also been a popular option for cremations. Often, family members have no place to go and pay their respects, so they will create a memorial garden on their property that includes a natural-shaped stone monument.

Finally, people who are arranging their affairs for their later years may want to include a monument in their planning. This will allow them to make an educated decision and eliminate a lot of potential stress for family later on.