

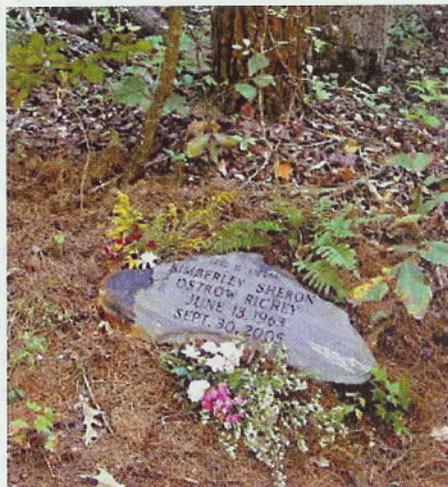


### Lasting Gifts

## How Your Body Can Help Preserve an Old-Growth Forest

A visit to nature preserve Ramsey Creek is, quite literally, a walk in the woods. Wildflowers come and go with the seasons, and the native fauna finds a safe haven in this old-growth forest in Westminster, South Carolina. But here's the surprise: Ramsey Creek is also a cemetery, the final resting place for ecology-minded souls who have used their passing

to help preserve wilderness for future generations. Opened in 1996, Ramsey Creek is operated by physician Billy Campbell, who says his primary motivation was to preserve natural land by leveraging laws that protect cemeteries from development. "Through death, we're helping to heal a piece of property," he says. While modern cemeteries bulldoze and destroy the natural landscape, Ramsey Creek is rich in biodiversity, with more than 200 native species of plants thriving there. Since no trees are removed to make room for burials, gravesites number only between 30 and 50 per acre (traditional cemeteries average about 1,000 per acre). Unembalmed bodies can be buried in boxes made of cardboard or untreated lumber — or no boxes at all. "We've done shroud burials and simply buried people in their street clothes," says Campbell. Even the natural stone markers used at Ramsey Creek have an ecological purpose in Campbell's eyes, creating homes and hidey-holes for reptiles and insects. Those who have laid loved ones to rest in this setting have found comfort in knowing the body will return to the earth as the circle of life continues. "We're interested in reuniting human and natural communities," Campbell explains. "The funeral industry is out of kilter with natural processes. It only reinforces the alienated relationship between people and nature." For more information, call (864) 647-7798 or visit [ramseycreekpreserve.com](http://ramseycreekpreserve.com).



Graves are marked by rocks from the preserve.

—Hilda J. Brucker

## Survivor, Fear Factor, and now... *The Monastery!*

When we received a casting notice for a new reality TV show called *The Monastery*, where participants will live in religious seclusion for 40 days and 40 nights as they "search for meaning and understanding in their lives," we wondered what viewers would see? Mindful dishwashing?

But apparently a BBC Two version attracted more than 2.5 million viewers per episode — enough to sell the series to the Learning Channel. The U.S. version will feature six episodes starting in February, and promises to show how five men and five women, when given the time, support, and a locale for an inner quest, can find insight. "The producers won't have any role in the process," says casting director Mary Ann Black. "There will only be one cameraman and he will not interact with the participants. Certainly they will know they are being filmed, but we are hopeful that after a while they won't realize it's on." Stay tuned...