

Burial option combines human remains with artificial reefs

Memorials to be placed for the first time off Fort Lauderdale beach

By BETH FEINSTEIN-BARTL
Waterfront News Writer

Chris Zook loved the water. "He always fished and dived for lobster," said Zook's aunt, Cindy Larschan, of Palm Beach Gardens. "It's been his whole life, since he was old enough to walk." Before his death last year at age 37, Zook, a Lake Worth resident, saw a news story on television describing how people's remains are incorporated into reefs, and told his family that was what he wanted, Larschan said.

On Oct. 1, Zook's wish will be granted. His loved ones will board a chartered boat to watch divers place a permanent memorial bearing his cremated remains underneath the ocean, one mile off Fort Lauderdale beach.

Zook's memorial will be one of 15 sphere-like structures that will be installed by an Atlanta, Georgia-based company called Eternal Reefs, Inc.

The firm has been creating and placing memorial reefs since 1998 by incorporating cremated remains into a concrete mixture that creates a sphere-like structure with holes that some say resembles a giant ball of Swiss cheese.

Eternal Reefs has some 100 reefs on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts. In Florida, reefs have been placed in Manatee,

Sarasota and Collier counties. The deployment off Fort Lauderdale will be the firm's first memorial in Broward County, said Don Brawley, company president.

"We have a number of people in the area who were interested in having a memorial reef created," he said.

Fifteen families will be watching as memorials holding their loved ones' remains are placed in the waters off Fort Lauderdale. The individual reef balls will be in a grouping to create one large community reef, Brawley said.

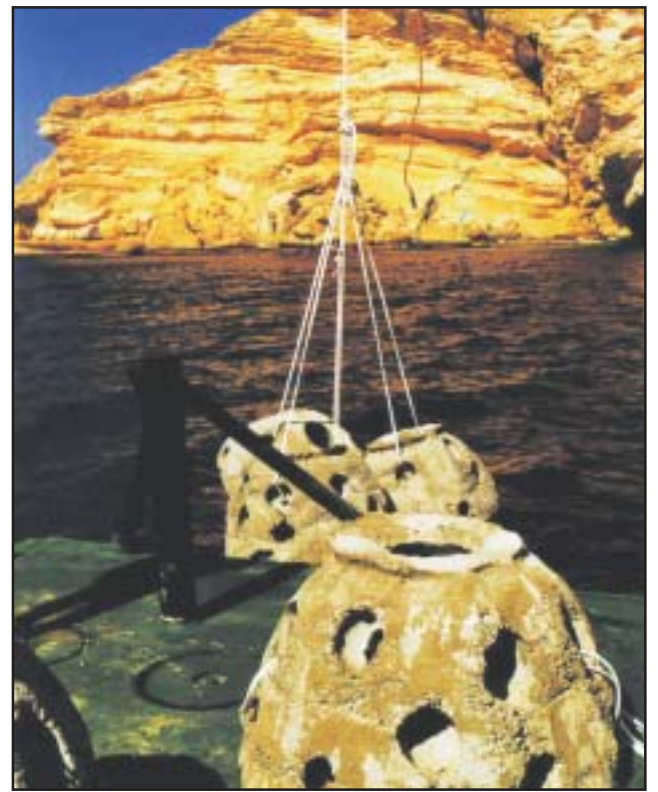
Each ball will bear a plaque and families will be provided with the latitude and longitude data, in the event they want to make future visits.

Based on requests, the company will create more memorial reefs in South Florida, Brawley said.

Depending on its size, the company's reef balls can hold one to four sets of cremated remains. The smallest memorial is two feet high and three feet wide and weighs 400 pounds. The largest is four feet high and six feet wide and weighs 4,000 pounds, Brawley said.

The cost ranges from \$850 to \$3,200, not including the cost of cremation, he said.

The company can create a reef using a single sphere, or by placing several together. Not every sphere has to contain cremated remains. In cases where the person has been buried or their ashes have been scattered, family members can opt to



Photo/COURTESY OF ETERNAL REEFS INC. Eternal Reefs has been creating and placing memorial reefs since 1998 by incorporating cremated remains into a concrete mixture that creates a sphere-like structure with holes that some say resembles a giant ball of Swiss cheese.

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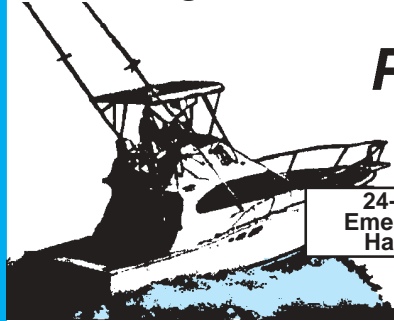
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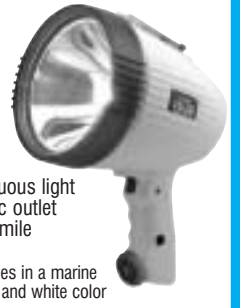
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