

From Ashes to Diamond a Jewel to Remember...

by Catrin Hughes

They say diamonds are forever, and memories last a lifetime, but now you can keep the memory of a loved one alive through successive generations by making a diamond from their ashes.

Remembrance Diamonds Corporation is the Canadian partner to Algordanza AG, a Swiss based organization that creates diamonds out of the cremated remains of those who have passed.

Founded in 2004, Algordanza uses a high heat and high pressure system to make a top quality jewellery-grade certified diamond. By using a laboratory method - a procedure notarized and awarded with ISO 9001 certification - Algordanza is able to distil carbon from cremated remains to produce a synthetic Memorial Diamond.

The process takes between six and nine months to complete, resulting in a beautiful everlasting keepsake which may be set into a piece of jewellery or kept in its original shadow box. Like diamonds produced by nature, Memorial Diamonds may be personalized with a tiny laser inscription of up to 75 characters; 65 less than a tweet. The engraving is so small that it can only be seen with a magnifying glass.

The size of the diamond is determined by the duration of the process. The longer the material remains in the growing phase the bigger it will become - however, the larger the diamond, the more potential for instability in the process. It is for this reason that Remembrance Diamonds and Algordanza currently only offers stones of up to 2.0 carats in size.

Two types of diamonds are available to order - Classic and Signature. Classic diamonds are symmetrical and polished, cut in familiar shapes such as round brilliant, heart or princess. Signature diamonds are one-of-a-kind; a rough diamond uniquely faceted and polished. These diamonds are not necessarily symmetrical as they are cut for maximum weight, however there are no two alike and they are ordered about 15 per cent of the time in Canada. Signature diamonds

"Classic" Memorial Diamond



are a unique offering from Algordanza and are truly spectacular in their own right.

Relatives do not have to decide between Memorial Diamonds versus burying, scattering or placing the ashes in an urn as it only takes 500 grams (or about one pound) to make up to four diamonds - that equates to around 25 per cent of the yield when someone is cremated. The fact that these diamonds can be offered in addition to what funeral directors currently provide makes it especially appealing. Many operators are looking to expand their suite of services and increase their revenue; one way is by introducing innovative products that families want. Remembrance Diamonds Corporation receives between 3000 and 4000 visitors monthly to www.rememberdiamonds.com, averaging at over 100 visitors per day.



Prices for these diamond keepsakes range from \$2,800 for a 0.30 carat Signature and \$3,900 for a 0.25 carat Classic Memorial Diamond, to in excess of \$21,000 for a 1.0 carat Classic. Additional diamonds ordered at the same time are further discounted and many families buy in multiples.

René de Diego, a Vancouver native, founded Remembrance Diamonds after a close relative passed away. "I had lost my grandfather and was inadvertently left with his ashes," said de Diego. "Doing some research on what options there were, I came

across Memorial Diamonds and in particular the Swiss company, Algordanza AG, which is best known for this service worldwide."

"I was fascinated by the idea; and when I learned more about the process, I decided to travel to Switzerland to see the production first hand. I was so taken by both the operation and the possibility of a diamond being the memorial keepsake of a loved one that I decided to bring this unique service to Canadians."

Now Remembrance Diamonds Corporation offers this service to anyone in Canada, where over the years the company has placed feature displays in a number of funeral properties; resulting in multiple diamonds completed for families working with Arbor Memorial, Dignity Memorial and McInnis and Holloway to name a few. Algordanza AG continues to offer Memorial Diamonds to families through partners in over twenty countries; including the United States, Japan, Germany and Hong Kong.

There are a handful of companies from around the world that offer this service, however, de Diego decided to partner with Algordanza AG because of their dedication to purity. "They do not add substances during the processing of the material to alter the colour of the diamonds," states de Diego. "As a result, the diamond comes out usually light blue or with a hue of blue within. This is due to the presence of boron in cremation ash that is not possible to remove."

Relatives that wish to use a portion of their loved one's cremated remains have two options - they can either ship the remains or they can deliver them in person to the Algordanza office in Switzerland. The company also provides all shipping and certification documentation as part of the service.

José and his wife from Montréal, QC, lost their infant daughter in 2012; turning to Remembrance Diamonds for their treasured mementos:

Thank you very much, if you have a testimonial page I would be more than happy to share my experience.

According to de Diego, there are generally two types of customers who are interested in Memorial Diamonds - those who have had the ashes for some time and the newly bereaved, who are often looking for a way to continue to connect and remember those who have passed.

Allison from Kamloops, BC, turned to Remembrance Diamonds after her mother passed away in 2013:

Thanks so much, I will be recommending this to anyone in need of a solution for remembering a loved one gone too soon.

For some clients, a full body burial can seem increasingly expensive with some spaces selling at a premium - especially in large cities - and finding innovative and unique ways to remember a beloved individual is becoming popular.

Michelle from Toronto, ON, decided to look into this service when her father had passed, finding the experience offered by Remembrance Diamonds to be exceptional:

I am forever grateful for your help, support and the expediency of the service you provide.



In an ever-changing globalized world, where families move far from home and are scattered across continents, a Memorial Diamond is a way of keeping the memory and connection with a loved one alive - especially for those who cannot visit the grave or a memorial. It is easy to keep a treasured diamond with you no matter where on this planet you move to.

Take the case of Scott Fong, the Hong Kong partner for Algordanza. He, like de Diego, brought the option of Memorial Diamonds there after his mother's aunt died, and they opted to change a portion of her ashes into diamonds.

However, as death is a taboo subject for many in China, Fong came up against criticism from his own father after setting up his partnership with Algordanza.

"He told me that all of Chinese cultural society would cut off my head for even proposing an idea like this," Fong said. Today, Algordanza's Memorial Diamonds have become a popular choice amongst families who have lost loved ones.

His father did eventually come around to the idea and when he died of liver complications in 2012, his cremated remains were made into four diamonds; split amongst his children who live all over the world.

A diamond is not just for those who are potentially unable to visit the grave of a family member, for some it is an eternal commemoration of those who have passed.

In 2013 an Italian father made headlines round world after he had the remains of his son turned into a diamond. The 20-year-old died in a car crash and his heartbroken father originally had him buried in his hometown of Treviso, Italy, but after discovering Algordanza Memorial Diamonds he had his son exhumed, cremated and his ashes turned into a diamond.

Remembrance Diamonds has a number of relationships with funeral directors and homes across the country. The company's website features a page dedicated to funeral homes, and pricing is uniform with respect to all partners.

Remembrance Diamonds often works with funeral companies that are members of the Funeral Service Association of Canada as they are fellow supplier members. Elegant acrylic Memorial Diamond displays are now featured in various properties across the country, and at this year's convention in St. John's, Newfoundland from May 20 - 23, you can sign up for yours at booth number one.



"Signature" Memorial Diamond