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WEDNESDAY, June 30, 1999

Rest in Reefs

In America these days we recycle everything—plastic soda bottles, newspapers, aluminum cans—all in an effort to protect the environment. Now you can make the ultimate gesture and spend eternity, or at least the next 500 years, recycling yourself. Don Brawley of Atlanta, Ga., president of Eternal Reefs has developed a method that gives new meaning to communing with nature by making your remains part of an artificial reef.

The artificial reefs are concrete structures developed to help replenish the worlds' rapidly deteriorating natural coral reefs. Initially provided to local and state agencies as well as worldwide organizations, there are currently more than 40,000 of the Reef Ball units in oceans around the world. However, the idea to add human remains to the reefs did not come up until Brawley's father-in-law, composer and arranger Carleton Palmer, asked that his ashes be added to the artificial reef. "He told me that I'd rather be were all that life is going on than in a field with a bunch of dead people," Brawley said. "He felt like it was his way to give back to the environment and that it was something he could to for his grandchildren."

Not only are the "Permanent Living Memorials" ecologically sound, but they often cost less than more traditional methods. Prices range from \$850 for the "Community Reef" to around \$3,000 for the "Atlantis" model. The reefs include a bronze plaque engraved with the name of the deceased attached to the bottom and family members receive two memorial certificates with the longitude and latitude of their loved one's final resting spot. The reefs are then provided free of charge to local and state governments with reef rejuvenation programs. "It's a win-win for everybody," said Brawley. "The local governments don't have to use taxpayers' money to help the environment and the families feel good because they are doing something to make up for the damage we've all caused." — *Walaika Haskins*

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<=Back

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