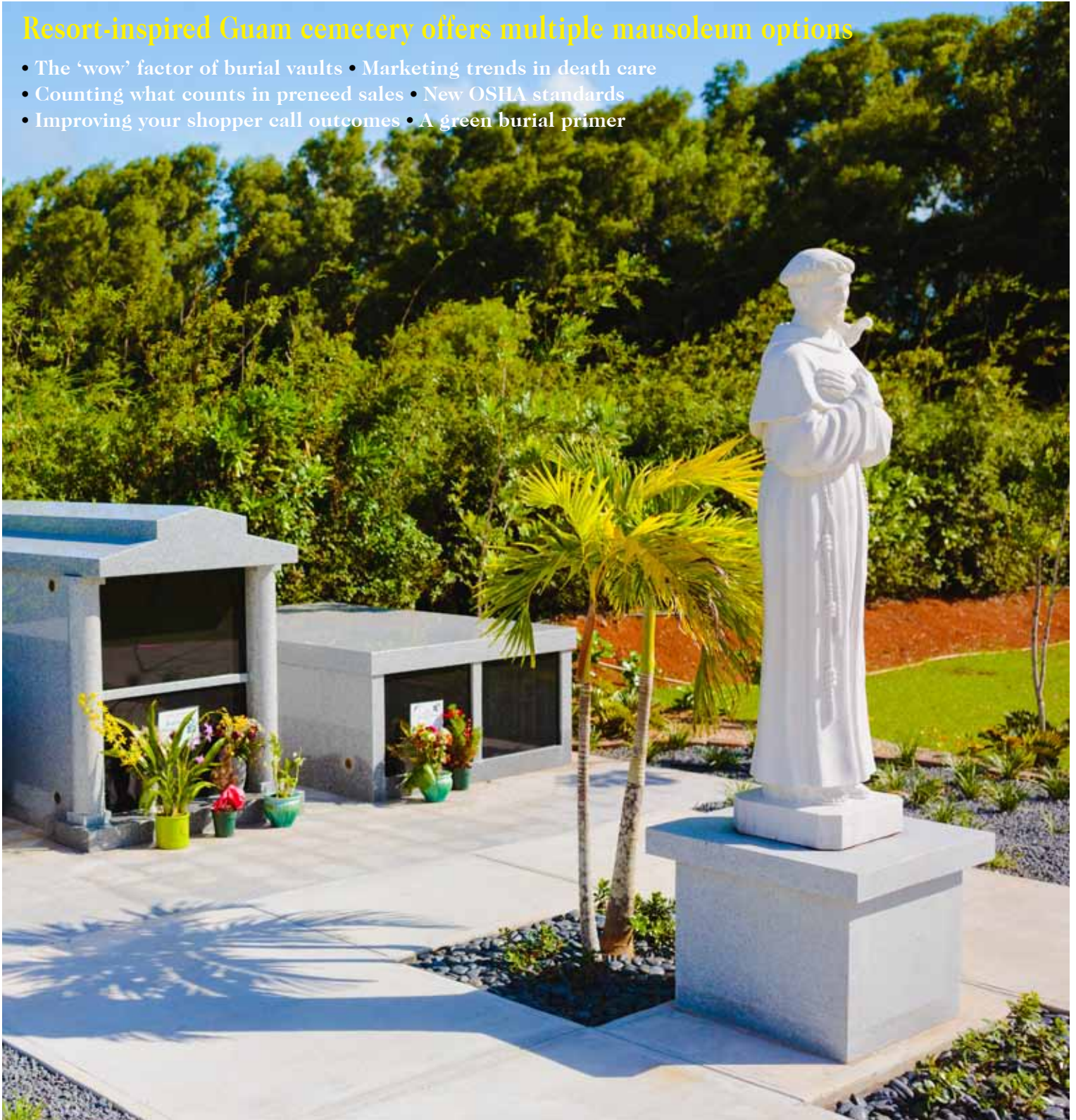


## Resort-inspired Guam cemetery offers multiple mausoleum options

- The 'wow' factor of burial vaults • Marketing trends in death care
- Counting what counts in preneed sales • New OSHA standards
- Improving your shopper call outcomes • A green burial primer





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**ICCFA  
Magazine  
author  
spotlight**

► Stilnovich is principal at Premier Columbaria, a family-owned

business led by him and his brother, Doug Stilnovich. He is an engineer by training and produced this article with writer Denise Ploof.

► **Premier Columbaria**, Centralia, Washington, is a wholesale cemetery provider that focuses on cemetery cremation memorial capital projects. Its team of designers, engineers and installers supplies cemetery and cremation gardens and sells and installs granite memorial products and features.

► The company provided all the cremation memorials, monuments, statues, mausoleums and installation for this project, which used materials from the U.S., Italy, India, Norway and China.

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#### **MORE ABOUT THIS SUBJECT**

► For more information about Guam Windward Memorial, call 671.989.8090 or visit [www.guamwm.org](http://www.guamwm.org)

## **CEMETERY DESIGN**

Even in paradise they need cemeteries.  
Guam Windward Memorial offers tradition-minded islanders a multitude of mausoleum and ground-burial options while planning for an increasing cremation rate. And it has the look and feel of a tropical resort.



The first of several possible community mausoleums (unless a family decides to buy all 12 crypts) on the Saints Corridor at Guam Windward Memorial. Many of the alcoves just have foundations poured and are available for development as the family desires.

# Resort-inspired Guam cemetery designed with a Polynesian flair

Close your eyes and imagine you are at a beautiful Polynesian resort on a secluded island. Feel the warm sun and tropical breeze. Listen to the gentle water tumbling down a nearby waterfall and the rustling of bamboo. Delight in the scent of a spectacular garden of tropical trees, plants and flowers. Throw in a beautiful blue sky and impeccably manicured grounds and enjoy the beauty, peace and serenity of this luscious island.

But you're not at a luxury resort enjoying a long-awaited island vacation; you're at a cemetery. Guam Windward Memorial is a new, greenfield 17-acre memorial park and cremation garden cemetery in Yona, on the eastern side of the tropical island of Guam.

With an expansive view overlooking an upland grass valley, it is a showplace of contemporary architecture, gorgeous statues, grand mausoleums, striking fountains, exquisite stonework, tranquil gathering spaces, tropical gardens and an impressive array of unique memorials—all with Polynesian-inspired elements.

Guam is a U.S. territory in Micronesia, in the western Pacific Ocean. It's distinguished by tropical beaches, villages and ancient stone pillars called latte. It lies about three-quarters of the way from Hawaii to the Philippines. With a diverse population of 161,000 on its 217 square miles, it is the most populous island in Micronesia.

Guam is a unique blend of the indigenous



**Above**, a Buddha statue and lotus top a columbarium. This garden section allows for monuments around the statue and inurnment in the statue base. Ground burials are also available in the section in front of the statue.



**Left**, a drone aerial photo of the cemetery entrance. Note the serpentine coral band and plantings by the road on the right side of the photo. The office and cemetery restrooms are just inside the entrance.

**Below**, the front and back of the welcome sign you encounter immediately upon entering the park. It has directional signage on the front and is set up as a cenotaph on the back. The sign encloses the ossuary that is the cemetery's value offering. The whole area is set in a tranquil bamboo garden.



**Left**, a private three-crept walk-in mausoleum on the Saints Corridor.



One of two granite entry signs flanking the entrance. They are about 24 feet wide, with the name in raised metal.

## MORE ABOUT THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT

► **Robert “Bob” Salas, cemetery owner and project leader**, is president of Guam Windward Memorial and Landscape Management Systems Guam in Tumon, Guam, U.S.

[www.guamwm.org](http://www.guamwm.org)

[www.lms-guamlandscaping.com](http://www.lms-guamlandscaping.com)

► **Landscape Management Systems**, established in 1994, has more than 140 employees and offers landscape design, installation, and grounds maintenance services for governmental, commercial and residential customers.

► **Norman Harris, architect**, is principal, owner and president of TBU International. He is from the island of Tonga and lives in Honolulu, Hawaii. He has worked in and led many international design teams.

[www.facebook.com/TBUinternational/](https://www.facebook.com/TBUinternational/)  
808.489.0604

design portfolio:

<https://tinyurl.com/hkod96m>

► **TBU International**, established in 2002, is a concept design-driven company with an extensive background in architecture, site planning and landscape design. One of the firm’s specialties is designing tropical resorts.



Harris designed a recognition stone that was unveiled at the cemetery dedication by Bob Salas to honor everyone involved in making his vision a reality.

## CEMETERY DESIGN



As part of their marketing efforts, the cemetery donated this 12-by-8-foot sign at a local downtown park. Architect Norm Harris designed it to echo the local latte stone of Guam’s traditional Chamorro culture. The design was installed with tension rods that run through all the pieces and into the foundation to preload the monument against typhoon wind loads.

Chamorro culture with peoples from all over the South Pacific and Asia. The Spanish-Catholic influence is still very prevalent from the times when Spanish galleons sailed the seas, along with a mix of Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, Trukese, Pohnpeians and other Pacific Islanders. Guam is a major tourism destination, especially for Japanese weddings, and has many luxury resorts.

These elements played a role in inspiring the look and feel of the cemetery.

### A landscaper turns to cemetery development

Robert “Bob” P. Salas, president and CEO of Landscape Management Systems Inc. Corporate Holdings, based in Guam, is the founder and owner of Guam Windward Memorial. A Guam native who went to school on the U.S. mainland, Salas wanted to create something that would help his own community and be something his children could be proud of and take forward.

He became interested in developing a cemetery when he was a member of a cemetery board of directors. “What I wanted was to build a cemetery for the next generation. I wanted to do it for my family and the community,” he said. The greenfield development is “a garden and a park, and it

doesn’t feel like a cemetery.”

Salas and a team of international experts made the project a reality after six years of imagining, planning, designing, construction, manufacturing, importing and installation. The cemetery is located in a town of 6,500 on the eastern side of the island. Guam Windward Memorial opened its first phase in October 2014 with the setup and installation of its cremation section. Phase two, completed in March 2016, included the installation of the burial section, monuments, mausoleums and statues.

The Guam Contractors Association has awarded Guam Windward Memorial and LMS three excellence in construction awards: Excellence in Construction Merit Award (2012), Excellence in Construction Irrigation System (2013), and Excellence in Construction (2014).

Salas retained Hawaii-based designer Norman Harris, whose specializes in tropical resorts in the South Pacific and Asia, to develop the master plan for the cemetery. He had worked with Salas before on several large-scale resort hotel projects in Guam, including the Hilton Guam Resort & Spa and the Sheraton Laguna Guam Resort. Harris did the design for the Tongan Village at the Polynesian Cultural Center



**The polished black granite infinity sculpture is set amongst a bamboo garden that incorporates a semicircle of top-loading columbaria and benches.**

on Oahu, one of the most frequently visited tourist destinations in Hawaii.

Harris not only did the conceptual development and master plan for the cemetery, he also worked closely with me to develop many of the tropical- and Asian-inspired memorials custom-designed for this project. He once had me come to the ossuary area and sit on a bench. “Close your eyes and listen,” he said. Sitting there on a bench in the filtered light, I heard the rustling of the bamboo by the ever-present warm trade winds. It was truly magical.

A heavy mix of cremation product was installed to accommodate future generations and the faster rise of cremation despite the fact that the overall cremation rate on Guam is quite low.

To cater to this still traditional market, a significant inventory of private mausoleums was installed in addition to the ground burial plots. Attention was paid to offering a progression of price points for each type of customer—cremation or burial. This way any customer can be memorialized at the cemetery regardless of preference or budget.

A lot of time and thought was put into

creating an array of unique spaces so that everyone can find what appeals to them. This includes the intermixing of burial, mausoleum and cremation space so that future generations of families can be together even as tastes evolve.

Harris worked with Premier Columbarium to develop cremation product designs inspired by Pacific Islander culture, addressing design elements and granite colors and textures.

### **Creating a resort-like feel with plants, sounds and colors**

Both Salas’ and Harris’ experience in building and designing resorts taught them

that a luxury resort in a pristine tropical setting draws its clientele based on physical setting and superior amenities. They drew on this knowledge in developing the cemetery.

“Rather than create the typical ‘cemetery experience,’ we wanted to create a resort-like feel and a peaceful sense of place with plants, sounds and colors,” said Harris. “We took the principles we have developed in resort work, where we create comfortable gathering areas, and applied them to the cemetery.”

Guam Windward Memorial not only provides a serene resting place and tranquil garden for the deceased, but also gives families and other visitors a beautiful and peaceful park setting to experience.

The extensive knowledge Harris and Salas have of tropical plants is apparent in the diversity and coordination of plantings. It is one of the best planned cemeteries, from a horticultural perspective, I have ever seen.

LMS owns and operates a large nursery on Guam, so they had access to a large array of specialized tropical plants, including some very mature ones. These gave the cemetery an established feel even on opening day, as most of the plantings were full-sized upon installation.

Harris set the stage for the resort cemetery experience before one even enters the property. Along the main road leading up to the entrance is a serpentine row of elevated granite pillars topped by bowls overflowing with plants. Behind them are a large white coral band and a berm, also with

layered plants cascading from them, separating the road from the cemetery. The berm and plantings also block noise and sight lines into the cemetery and add to the sense of privacy within it.

Ease of maintenance also was considered in the landscape design. All the plantings and lawns are watered with sprinklers and drip irrigation that can meter fertilizer automatically. Even the planters by the road have drip lines routed through the pillars for automatic watering. Hundreds of little details like this were incorporated into the plan.



**Here a granite ossuary was placed atop a large concrete vault. The bamboo will grow into a thick grove surrounding the area. The wall cenotaph (see page 11) encircles the other half of this area.**

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## CEMETERY DESIGN

Particular attention was placed on creating a selection of mausoleum designs.

Some of the mausoleums have built-in columbaria for family estates, some are walk-in. There is a 12-crypt community mausoleum in one section. Some of the mausoleum spaces were designed for oversized caskets, as there has been a demand for oversized spaces.



**Above left**, a fully developed alcove showing two-, four- and six-crypt mausoleums. The four- and six-crypt units can be sold as family or community mausoleum space. **Above right**, Guam has a very traditional culture, but as seems to be the case everywhere, that is in flux. Several mausoleums were designed to accommodate families with both traditional burial and cremation preferences. These alcoves offer either columbaria niches or in-ground cremation inurnment in all the mausoleum areas.



**Above**, a 14-foot-tall marble statue of the resurrected Christ anchors the central portion of the Saints Corridor mausoleums. Cremation posts provide a cremation offering in this mostly burial section. **Above right**, part of the Saints Corridor, ending with the Pieta set in a bamboo grove. Each of the alcoves honors a traditional patron saint of one of Guam's villages and features several granite mausoleums. The statue bases are columbariums.



### In-ground and mausoleum options

The cemetery is comprised of two main sections, one with an emphasis on cremation and one for traditional burial, though products are intermixed in both sections. The cemetery is currently mapped for 7,000 ground interment plots.

Traditional sections offer both in-ground and mausoleum options; mausoleum space is a popular option in Guam. Both flat marker and upright monument sections are available, as giving

families options was a priority. Notable areas are the Saints Corridor and the Huai En Garden.

**Saints Corridor:** This is a major section, with individual and family mausoleums and beautiful hand-carved white marble statues, each representing a patron saint of one of Guam's villages. Each saint has its own alcove; the statues are lined along a circular pathway to create the Saints Corridor.

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## CEMETERY DESIGN



The sweeping views of the Tranquility Terrace and the central grasslands of Guam. The Huai En Garden and Saints Corridor can be seen at left in the distance.



**Above left**, Tranquility Terraces. This traditional ground burial section is designed as a memorial park, with only flat memorials allowed. Note Bob Salas' requirements for long-lasting and low-maintenance products even extended to the all-granite combination flower tables and garbage cans. These are offered in each section of the park and include water for filling vases or rinsing hands. **Above right**, while most of the park is a traditional memorial park with flat bronze and granite memorial options, the Gentle Breeze section allows traditional American-style monuments with curb foundations for ease of maintenance.

The section is anchored with a 14-foot statue of Jesus surrounded by granite cremation posts. Each of the patron saint statues is at the center of a cluster of private and small community mausoleums.

Particular attention was placed on creating a selection of mausoleum designs. Some of the mausoleums have built-in columbaria for family estates, some are walk-in.

There is a 12-crypt community mausoleum in one section. Some of the mausoleum spaces were designed for oversized caskets, as there has been a demand for oversized spaces.

There is still much room for future mausoleum expansion as inventory is needed in the future. The design was

planned to accommodate the accessibility that these future developments will require.

**Huai En Garden:** This is an ideal burial place for people practicing Eastern beliefs. Good *feng shui* was read on this southern part of the cemetery, and the grounds were blessed by Buddhist nuns and a *feng shui* master from China.

There is a large Buddha statue placed atop a lotus flower-inspired columbarium. In addition, several traditional Chinese monuments have been installed. One features two columns carved in a traditional green Chinese temple carving stone with an intricately designed phoenix and dragon. This section is stunning, set on the cemetery edge overlooking a large grassy valley.



The phoenix and dragon columns on this pagoda monument were hand-sculpted. The stone carved to create the columns is the same stone traditionally used for carving temple columns in China.

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## CEMETERY DESIGN



**Above,** a view from the road looking up into the Celestial Garden at its central bubbler fountain. Note the columbaria designed by the architect to echo the native stone pillars and proa boat sails of South Pacific Island cultures.

**Below,** Harris designed custom family columbaria for the Celestial Garden that show a good use of colors and textures to make them visually appealing.



**Left,** memorial curbing in the Celestial Garden. These areas allow for in-ground placement under the river rocks behind the curb memorials. A poured concrete curb keeps the area neat by controlling dirt from the planting area behind. Memorialization can be done via either a bronze or granite plaque and can incorporate an integral stem vase.



### Cremation gardens

The cremation gardens are designed as three distinct locations to integrate cremation memorial options into the architecture. To cover a full range of price points, products include an ossuary with large cenotaph, curb memorials, innovatively designed columbarium niches and family memorials.

Particular attention was paid to creating clusters of memorials appropriate for

families, as the sense of family is very strong on Guam.

**Celestial Garden:** This is the central cremation garden. It's nestled between the lower Stellar Circle and upper Divinity Circle and includes a large gazebo used for services. Entering the gazebo, one notices the balance of the design with a large bubbler fountain at its center and the cremation gardens flanking both sides.

This section contains several unique

columbarium designs created by Harris. There are four niche units with an arched shape to echo the sails of the traditional proa boats used throughout the South Pacific.

Several large black pillar columbaria are inspired by lava figures on other Pacific islands. The mature palms feature flat granite memorials at their bases.

At Salas' insistence, one of the columbaria was designed to contain



## CEMETERY DESIGN

A heavy mix of cremation product was installed to accommodate future generations and the faster rise of cremation despite the fact that the overall cremation rate on Guam is still quite low.



**Above,** a view from the gazebo in the Celestial Garden, looking down through the swaying palms to the Stellar Circle garden.

**Right,** Divinity Circle contains a mix of cremation products around a custom metal sculpture as part of the central garden columbarium. The area accommodates both ground and niche inurnments, with several designs offering inurnment and memorialization for a family. The landscaping incorporates manicured lawns with imported small river rocks and indigenous coral boulders.

a large number of plantings. Careful attention to the design and installation made this successful. A waterproofing sealer was applied, and irrigation and drainage systems were designed for the columbarium.

**Stellar Circle:** This lower cremation garden, with its open design and beautiful bamboo, is centered around a graceful self-contained spiraling fountain. Columbarium benches and private family columbaria line the concrete walkways that divide this grassy section with sweeping views of the valley.

**Divinity Circle:** The upper garden is focused around a massive planter columbarium with a custom-designed metal statue at its center. Surrounded by concentric curb memorials and rocks covered in beautiful vines, there are several family columbaria in the Divinity Circle, each designed as an integral part of the circle.



**Left,** the central fountain of the Stellar Circle area, which is set up for both in-ground and columbarium inurnments. This area offers larger family columbariums and estate benches. It was developed with about half of its design inventory in place to start with to keep the area open and breezy.

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## CEMETERY DESIGN



**Above**, an example of the granite signage that marks each of the sections in the park. **Left**, architecturally-designed curb memorials capture the interplay of texture and light in Divinity Circle. All of the stone had to be imported, as there is no stone on Guam.

### Island challenges

Although granite is common in cemeteries, and Guam Windward Memorial includes tons of granite on its property, its inclusion presented a challenge. There is no stone on the island, which is composed of coral.

Since no stone was available locally, we had to bring in everything, from the large features to tons of small, round river rocks. The cemetery includes more than a million pounds of granite, including solid granite signs.

The imported stone was used as accents, with crushed coral adding texture to the gardens. The mixture of stone, coral

and plantings adds to the island feel.

Salas' idea to use stone—fabricated and imported from China—for ease of construction was an expensive one. “The cost was herculean,” Harris said. However, it was offset by purchasing material manufactured in China from Premier Columbaria.

Installation also presented challenges, especially for the first phase. Premier Columbaria had a four-man installation crew on site. The work was physically demanding, as they toiled away with the tropical sun beating down on them. Each person was drinking two gallons of water a

day and sweating out most of it.

When we arrived, the project was behind schedule due to some weather delays, and many of the foundations were not ready for product installation. Our team really stepped up and even helped the concrete contractor form up and pour many of the foundations, which was not in our original scope of work. We were there and just had to make it happen.

One of the design considerations involved planning for the typhoons that occasionally hit the island. Construction included several structures, built on site: a cemetery office with room for events,

**The main cemetery office. It is a solid cast-in-place poured concrete building, constructed that way to make it typhoon-proof.**



## CEMETERY DESIGN

All of these buildings are solid cast-in-place concrete, including the roofs. These monolithic building structures are required on Guam because of the typhoon threat.



**Above left**, the reception room inside the office, designed as a comfortable place to talk with families. **Above right**, the arrangement room, containing a map of the cemetery sections along with displays of memorials, urns, vaults and keepsakes.



**Above**, the kiosk building for future computer index of cemetery records. **Below**, a cart for giving families tours of the cemetery.



a kiosk building to house an electronic map of the cemetery and a large gazebo structure for hosting outside services.

All of these buildings are solid cast-in-place concrete, including the roofs. These monolithic building structures are required on Guam because of the typhoon threat.



In the foreground, the Palm Estates allow for ground burial cremation around the palms in a manicured grassy area. This area provides a wonderful place to sit in the shade and hear the palms rustling as the trade winds blow. The custom planter columbarium behind the palms was designed to accommodate oversized urns. The center of the columbarium is filled with plantings watered by drip irrigation. Special urethane sealers were applied to the granite to keep the moisture in the planting area only. Drainage was designed and tested to handle the heavy tropical rains that come during the rainy season.

### Developing and building the dream

The project was a superb team effort. The group focused on creating a beautiful garden- and park-like atmosphere with a Polynesian aesthetic for departed loved ones and those left behind who will be visiting. "Everyone did a great job of helping to develop and build my dream," Salas said.

"We eventually want to do weddings

and have tourists enjoy it," Salas said. They also plan to start incorporating memorabilia and personal items into the memorialization options. "If someone wants something special, we have a designer who can design it, and Robb will make sure we can build it. We're not looking to make a lot of money. We want it to be remembered and enjoyed." □