



Geisel School of Medicine
At Dartmouth

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Ellen Arnold
Director, Dartmouth Real Estate
Associate General Counsel for Campus Services
4 Currier Place, Suite 305
Hanover, NH 03755

Re: Rennie Farm

Dear Ms. Arnold,

This letter is in response to your request for information regarding burials performed on the Rennie farm property. These burials occurred in a single year (1966) and represented the remains of 19 donors used in gross anatomy as well as 13 stillborn fetuses from the hospital. These bodies were buried in zinc lined wooden boxes that were (and still are) commonly used for transportation of human remains. There was no vault or other substructure created at the site.

The anatomy bodies were embalmed with 8 to 10 gallons of embalming fluid containing 2% formalin (around 1/2% formaldehyde) and around 5% phenol in an aqueous solution also containing glycerin. There were no heavy metals or other ingredients used. These bodies were used in anatomy for one to two years, during which time the great majority of this fluid drains and most of the volatiles (including formaldehyde) evaporate. The bones and remaining tissues at the end of dissection are what was interred at Rennie Farm in the 10' x 10' plot. There were no additional experiments or treatments done to these bodies. The stillborn fetuses would have been stored in a formalin solution (as is common with pathologic specimens) after birth up until burial. At that time they were also placed in the same kind of zinc-lined box for transport to the site and subsequent burial.

While I don't know the condition of these boxes after 50 years in the ground, the wood certainly would have degraded at this point and the thin metal lining of these cases is composed of a non-toxic, naturally occurring metal (zinc).

Please let me know if you have additional questions regarding these burials.

Regards,

Rand Swenson, MD, PhD