# A BRAVE NEW WORLD OF BURIALS: THE BUSINESS OF IDIOSYNCRATIC BODY DISPOSAL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

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*Democracy spreads wealth to the masses and allows low-income citizens to enjoy comforts of life denied the elite of past civilizations. And because democracy makes conspicuous consumption available to a multitude of the living, the culture of extravagance extends to after-death rites. The most prosperous generation is dying and in the process is defying tradition in favor of extravagantly personalized funerals.*

Traditionally, American corpses are embalmed, dressed in attractive clothing and professionally coiffured and made up, ensconced in an upholstered casket of metal or wood, and put on public view in an elaborate salon. After it has been displayed, the body, coffin and all, is transported by a baroque hearse to a cemetery—especially assigned limousines convey the family. At the grave, tents cover the opening in the ground and the folding chairs that are set up for family and close friends of the deceased. The dirt removed from the hole has been trucked away until needed or carefully piled in low mounds near the grave and covered with artificial turf. When the coffin is lowered into the ground on an elaborate mechanism that extends the web straps supporting the casket inside a metal frame (the speed of descent is preset by a funeral home technician—some mortuaries use grave entry systems with the capacity to play a tune while the coffin makes its last ride), the carefully crafted decorative box does not touch dirt but comes to rest in a concrete or steel vault that is sealed before the grave is closed.



Masses of flowers cover and surround the grave, and in the weeks or months after interment, a monument may appear on the site to inform future generations whose remains lie beneath that particular patch of earth. Twenty-first century technology gives survivors the option of buying a monument with audio and video capacities. Solar cells power equipment built into a stone or artificial stone marker decorated with instructions to those who want to hear and perhaps even see the life story of the person whose remains are contained beneath.[1]

If a mausoleum has been chosen to receive the remains of the departed, the funeral moves inside, and the burial is carried out in air-conditioned comfort free of rain, wind, dirt, and noisy songbirds and insects. The enterprise can easily be one of the largest single expenses a family ever encounters, ranking just below the price of houses, cars, college tuition, and catastrophic illness. Although a traditional funeral can lead to financial disaster and economic hardship for low-income households, it can enrich owners of funeral homes and cemeteries and provide work and income for hundreds.[2]

The traditional funeral, expensive and rife with frivolous trimmings, is a ready target for social critics and environmentalists, who decry not only the wasteful use of land for durable concrete vaults and steel caskets but also burial without a vault, which endangers groundwater, especially when bodies have been injected with chemicals to delay decomposition. Nevertheless, funeral rites have been evolving for over 60,000 years, from the rituals of the Neanderthals[3] and the renown pyramid building of the ancient Egyptians to the body-viewing practices of the ancient Romans and the embalming adopted by the early Christians.[4]

Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth* around a variation in how human beings enter this world. That classical emphasis notwithstanding, we all start as babies who look pretty much alike before maturing into adults of varying heights and weights but who still look alike beneath the clothes. In life humans struggle to set themselves apart with accomplishments and whatever trappings they can afford. A few stand apart from the masses because they have great intelligence, beauty, courage, strength, charisma, or wealth. Most strive to draw attention to their work, behavior, or property, but only a few succeed and thereby distinguish themselves. Death is the great leveler: no one escapes it. Life can be extended through expensive medical intervention, but not even wealth can extend life beyond the normal range—few live to a hundred years. Born as nearly identical babies, humans become nearly identical corpses. Although gender and race distinguish us, if the 150,000 cadavers the world produces daily were placed together without our daily trappings, none would stand out from the others; brains, muscle, and personal appeal all leave the body with the life force.

People accustomed to setting themselves apart in life often wish to do the same in death. Egyptian Pharaohs' tributes built to memorialize themselves have endured thousands of years, taking on a life of their own that has surpassed the legacy of the dead kings. Many millions have lived and died, but few have left lasting monuments: Jesus and Muhammad founded enduring religions; George Washington left a great nation that memorializes him.

Rank and file citizens the world over fabricate niches in life undeterred by the celebrity of notables who dominate headlines at home and abroad. Much the same is true in death. While most are satisfied to have their corpses buried or cremated in traditional ceremonies, others seek in death the distinctions great and small they found in life. Idiosyncratic funerals capture a disproportionate share of media attention and overshadow the unexceptional burials of millions of corpses every year. Whereas many of the exceptional rites are interesting, even entertaining, some few are harbingers of trends. A half-century ago, cremation was practiced by few in the United States; in the twenty-first century, cremation reduces more than a quarter of the dead in the United States and promises to become the principle means of body disposal as the proportion cremated approaches 50 percent by 2025.[5] Unusual burials and funerals are also likely to become more routine as the prosperous post–World War II generation around the world dies. Green funerals that are exceptional in the early twenty-first century are likely to become more common as concern for the global environment grows. Budget burials are already less an oddity and more an accepted option for people who buy coffins on the web or from a discount store and are willing to provide hands-on body preparation and carriage. And who could deny the forthcoming need for supersized burials to accommodate ever-larger bodies? "Goliath Casket offers triple-wide coffins" for sale for bodies too large for standard boxes.[6]

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Some niche funeral practices are simple and inexpensive but not particularly eye-catching. Since his death in 1987, Dick Cousineau's family has placed tomato plants instead of flowers on his grave in Rochester, New Hampshire.[7] In contrast, families in Taipei, Taiwan, can contract with Baushan Enterprise to shoot the ashes of loved ones into space. "The tube orbits Earth once every 90 minutes before re-entering the atmosphere and burning up...It can orbit for months or even years."[8] Even renown coffin maker Batesville is getting into the niche market with "the Floral Reflections scattering urn. When placed in water, the pressed cotton urn floats for sev-

eral minutes, then slowly dissolves and sinks, releasing the deceased's ashes into the sea." Coffin manufacturers are tapping into the consumer revolution by catering to both low-end and high-end markets. Low-cost coffins are offered at discount stores for as little as $1,000, but "top-of-the-line models that are crafted from finer metals and feature a permanent seal and personalized engravings" sell for as much as $20,000. "A typical upscale mahogany casket with velvet lining will run between $5,000 and $6,000." An assemble-it-yourself coffin kit is available for $500.[9]

Personalized funerals are likely to characterize the worldwide boomer generation in death much like that vaunted cohort's choices distinguished it in life. Hearse clubs? There is at least one, the Phantom Coaches Hearse Club in Covina, California, where fellow members feted the corpse of Rene Ochoa. At the funeral of his dreams, Ochoa was dressed in a sharkskin suit and red bowling shirt for a last ride in his 1965 hearse complete with vanity plate GOULISH. The motorcade included other hearses, presumably belonging to club members.[10]

Vehicular funerals should be expected in a world dedicated to wheels. In Coalville, Leichestershire, UK, "Countrywide Motor Funeral Service" is available to anyone wanting to be delivered to the cemetery in a motorcycle sidecar hearse. The vehicle "won 'Best Modern Hearse' at the Hearse of the Year competition in 2003."[11] In the United States a similar service is available from the Tombstone Hearse Company, "featuring 19th century style hearses powered by Harley-Davidson converted motortrikes...for those of us who believe...their farewell ride should not be in a Cadillac!"[12]



In the United Kingdom, railway funerals offer commoners the opportunity to emulate Queen Victoria, King George VI, and Sir Winston Churchill, all of whom took their last rides on steam-powered trains. The Midland Railway Centre in Ripley, Derbyshire, offers steam carriage for the funeral party and coffin (£350), a ceremony in the railwaymen's chapel (£75), interment in the trackside Golden Valley Woodland Burial Ground (£335 for burial rights and £195 for interment; £145 for burial rights and interment for cremated remains), and a wake aboard the train.[13] Similar arrangements have not been advertised in the United States but are probably available or will be as railroad buffs request and even provide railway funerals.

Although death is not a gamble, Palm Mortuary in Las Vegas, Nevada, has found a winning hand in "funeral backdrops with giant playing cards, oversized dice and a towering slot machine to memorialize the departed in the

gambling capital of the world. Gargantuan casino chips and the signature 'Fabulous Las Vegas' sign also are available to give gamblers a special send-off."[14] The backdrops for niche funerals like the gamblers' paradise rent for $1,000 to $3,000 and help the $17 billion-a-year funeral industry make up monies lost as survivors increasingly choose cremation over the more expensive traditional funeral.[15]

The prize for the most enduring low-key nonconformist display of a corpse goes to Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832). Bentham has remained part of the political economy landscape in his writings and his person. He is the oldest resident economist at University College London. Bentham left his estate to the school in return for eternal tenure. He requested in his will that his remains be dissected in the presence of friends and his skeleton placed in a chair so that he might attend commemorative gatherings "stationed in such a part of the room as to the assembled company shall seem meet." Whether he was more whimsical than others who preceded and followed him is a matter for debate; what is certain is that he used his wealth to perpetuate his whimsy well beyond his lifetime.

Corpses have been displayed since reasoning creatures first grasped the connection between the reality and abstraction of death and recognized its impact on the living. Criminals hanged in public and left to decay on the rope sent a message to others who might defy the law or social convention. Heads mounted on poles in public places warned others they too were susceptible to death and desecration. In the Middle Ages suicides quartered and buried in the four corners of a crossroads deterred others who might consider death an escape from a harsh life. Modern readers cringe at revelations of savage treatment accorded corpses in the past, yet the twenty-first century has seen Palestinians mutilate the bodies of Israelis[16] and Iraqis desecrate the bodies of murdered Americans.



Niche funerals that defy social convention are the most obvious and entertaining trend in body disposal but are not the most important or most penetrating trend. Less spectacular but more significant for global society in the long run are green funerals. Coffins imported into Western nations link the growing global interest in death care with green burials. "From Ghana, [coffins] in the shape of a cow, hen, fish or Mercedes car" were originally carved to bury chiefs in but are now available to anyone with enough money to buy them. These are duplicated in the United Kingdom and "exported to Spain and California—and a cocoa bean, [a] red pepper and a chicken

coffin have been made for an exhibition in the Netherlands."[17] William Wainman exports the simpler and greener bamboo biodegradable coffins he designs and builds in Hunan, China. "The coffins got an unexpected advertising boost last summer when Nicholas Albery, a prominent environmentalist campaigner, was buried in one after being killed in a car crash." The coffins are inexpensive, selling for as little as £140 ($202).[18]

In 1991 Albery and Josefine Speyer founded the Natural Death Centre to provide information on finding biodegradable coffins as well as crematories and cemeteries that accept family-managed corpses. "Centre staff members offer advice on how to open a site, or even how to bury relatives in their gardens.[19] According to Wienrich [Stephanie Wienrich of the London-based Natural Death Centre], commercial sites must be approved by the Department of the Environment and the local council, but no planning permission is needed for burials on private land—although garden burials are not recommended as they can affect house prices." Because cremation uses fuel and pollutes the atmosphere, the centre favors burial; notwithstanding, traditional burials remain expensive.

The Natural Death Centre recommends woodland sites for burials. For about half the cost of a traditional funeral in the UK, a family can lay a loved one to rest in a wooded plot with a name plaque instead of a headstone. Since grave plots in the UK and other countries are sold for a limited time, planting a tree over a grave is one way to prevent its being filled with yet another body. Wooded sites are gaining popularity in the UK because of their lower cost, environmental friendliness, and openness to hands-on body preparation, transportation, and burial. Hands-on involvement by family and friends is another trend in body care.[20]



Green funerals are not universally embraced. Many local citizens objected when developers in South Shropshire began a new section for the Ludford cemetery in which half of the 240 plots were designated green and the other half traditional. The district council approved the new burial ground on the condition that plots be restricted to local citizens.[21] Pole Wood, Upper Stanway Farm, Rushbury, the location of another green site in Shropshire, promises 400 burial plots and room to bury urns and scatter ashes. This site, too, has detractors but will be developed as planned.[22] Meanwhile, in Sweden, Promessa Organic is applying for patents in thirty-five countries on a process for freeze-drying corpses then shattering them into an odorless powder. Buried in a coffin made of corn starch, the remains will be compost in six

months. Plantings over the grave will take up the nutrients and become living memorials to the deceased. Susanne Wiigh-Maesak, biologist and head of the company, looks forward to becoming a white rhododendron.[23]

Green burials are catching on in the United States. Memorial Ecosystems in South Carolina has slow-started a green cemetery where endangered wildflowers are to be planted over the graves. Farther south, in Georgia (home to Ray Marsh, prosecuted for taking payment to bury or cremate over 300 corpses that he instead stacked in piles around his property),[24] Eternal Reefs, Inc., mixes human ashes with environmentally safe concrete to build reef balls. The balls are planted in the ocean and provide stimulus for coral growth.[25] And, on the shores of Lake Livingston in East Texas, Ethician Church Bishop George Russell created an eighty-one-acre natural cemetery where headstones are not allowed but pets are.[26]

Niche burials endure on the margin of the death-care industry and will always be an eye-catching fringe business. Green burials are also on the fringe but are growing in popularity and importance as world population expands. The most widespread and timeless corpse-care issue is cost. Niche funerals are often rooted in cost-cutting, and green funerals are held up as low-cost alternatives to traditional burials. Many individuals resent high professional mortuary charges because they think they are overcharged for too few services; others are caught between responsibility and costs beyond their financial capacity.

In Jakarta, Indonesia, citizens can look to the Bunga Kamboja Foundation (YBK) for a helping hand when they have to finance the preparation and burial of a corpse, Established in 1960, the YBK accepts members for pennies a month and in return provides basic funeral and burial services to Christians and Muslims. Christians also have recourse to the Tabitha Consolatory Foundation in Kemayoran, Central Jakarta. The Tabitha foundation charges slightly higher fees than the YBK but offers classes of membership: larger monthly payments underwrite a fancier coffin. For those who do not belong to a funeral society, there are charitable organizations like the Rumah Gadang Foundation (RGF), which, in its twenty-four-year tenure, has buried 10,000 bodies. The RGF survives on fees assessed the families of those they have interred.[27] Similar societies operate around the world to help the poor bury their dead with dignity. In the United States over half-a-million citizens belong to memorial societies.[28]

The 1990s witnessed a wave of conglomeration in the death-care industry as several North American firms seeking scale economies bought funeral

homes, cemeteries, casket manufacturers, crematories, and even flower shops in the United States and abroad. The acquisitors' rising stock values reflected the profits anticipated by investors just as the conglomerates' rising charges for death-care services revealed that lower costs were not going to be shared with consumers.[29] By the twenty-first century the mortuary stocks had collapsed. Consumers now face higher funeral prices because constituent firms are carrying heavy debt contracted over years of expansion. Moreover, uncapitalized prepaid funerals are a drug on the entire industry, an industry already suffering the decline of its number one moneymaker, the traditional funeral with burial in the ground. Cremation has morticians scrambling for new sources of income.

High and rising funeral and burial costs reinforce the long-term drive for lower priced corpse care. Most funeral shoppers continue to choose a mainstream mortuary and pay for a traditional funeral, which has become a Veblen good—a purchase made more for its exclusivity than for its direct value to the buyer. The closest alternative to the traditional funeral purchased from a mainstream mortuary is a discount funeral purchased from the same source. Newcomer Family Funeral Homes, based in Topeka, Kansas, for example, saw in the rising funeral prices an opportunity to enter the discount market. Founder Warren Newcomer identified the average funeral cost in 1996 as $4,782 and set about constructing a plan to offer comparable goods and services for $2,585. What Newcomer and other discounters cut are unessential amenities. Although his chain of discount mortuaries has been called the K-Mart of the funeral industry, he likes to think of Newcomer Family Funeral Homes as the Southwest Airlines of the burial business.[30]



Cut-rate funerals that run about $2,000 below average cost are offered in New Berlin (Milwaukee), Wisconsin, by Church & Chapel Funeral Service. Ted Larsen likens franchising discount burial services to franchising Big Macs and quickie auto maintenance stores.[31] When Stewart Enterprises, one of the giant conglomerates that expanded with the burgeoning stock market of the 1990s, monopolized funeral services in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana, they opened the door to competition by firing employees John Vickers and Walter Dornan. Vickers and Dornan and their partners opened a discount mortuary in what had been Pancho's Mexican Buffet. Before the new discounter could open for business, Stewart launched its own cut-rate burial business in an effort to capture some of the low-end market.[32] Similar discounting of funeral services is emerging in markets everywhere. In

the Sunday *Honolulu Advertiser*, a full-page ad offering "Direct Cremation $599" announced the spread of the low-cost trend from the mainland to the island state. Where burial dominates, discounters concentrate on graves, caskets, and embalming, but in venues like Hawaii where cremation is the overwhelming choice (over 60 percent), discounters target the lower cost market for their lowest cost advertising.[33]

Professional morticians know intuitively that price discrimination will allow them to keep their hold on the high-end market even as they tap the low-end market. Economists use price discrimination to describe firms that segment their markets and sell substitutable goods or services at different prices when production costs do not account for that difference. That is not to say that the discount funeral costs the same to put on as the preferred customer funeral but that the $2,000 to $4,000 difference between the discount funeral and the first-class burial is not matched by similar variations in cost. A company operating both high-end and low-end mortuaries will use the same laboratory and technicians for all embalming and the same vehicles, etc. The difference in costs lies in the decor in the viewing rooms and the number of personnel looking after details. When coffins are priced according to the funeral package chosen, mortuaries can charge different prices for the same coffin.

For the seriously cost conscious or those who prefer not to relinquish death care for loved ones to outsiders, the hands-on movement is a viable option. Hands-on care combines well with niche burials, green and natural funerals, and low-cost cadaver care. Hands-on burial is sometimes chosen by families who could afford professional care but is usually associated with survivors who cannot pay even the discount funeral rates.



The retail casket market is the most conspicuous contribution of the hands-on movement to corpse care. Mortuaries cloak the cost of a coffin in funeral packages complete with other goods and services. Although packages must be itemized for inquiring customers and most morticians abide by that regulation, the coffin price remains a mystery—how much is charged for a particular coffin may depend on the other goods and services purchased. Even the savvy buyer who works a deal with a mortuary for a particular coffin at a good price may find it difficult to ensure the coffin lowered into the hole is the one agreed upon. Careful funeral shoppers address the issue by buying and storing their coffins in advance of need. Mortuaries are required by law to accept the consumer-owned coffin and

commonly advertise funeral packages that require the buyer to provide the casket. Morticians tapping the low-end market expect customers who have their own boxes. High-end mortuaries may direct casket-bearing shoppers to an associated low-end outlet. The retail casket business will remain small but profitable so long as the market is not overloaded with competitors.[34]

A casket purchase is about as close to hands-on burial as most people come. Washing and dressing a body, placing it in the coffin, and transporting the coffin to the cemetery for burial in a grave opened by professionals is an intense experience.[35] Family members sometimes build the casket for a burial in the ground; other families may deliver a deceased member to a crematory then collect the ashes and scatter, store, or bury them. If burial takes place on private property, any professional participation in the funeral can be eliminated. That is extreme hands-on inexpensive corpse care.[36]

On the other extreme is mummification. Summum of Salt Lake City, Utah, offers to soak bodies in embalming fluid, wrap them in gauze, cover with polyurethane, then deposit the package in a bronze shell filled with resin. Prices are $35,000 and up.[37]

Another trend in corpse care is the mortuaries' growing role in creating and distributing printed and electronic obituaries. Mortuaries need new revenue sources to make up for declining income from traditional funerals. Video obits combining family photographs, movie film, and magnetic tape with narration have become a standard offering at funeral homes around the developed world. These reminders of a completed life are usually made available on a web site. If the mortuary is responsible for this amenity, funeral planners will mount the video on the mortuary's web site for a specified time and sell more time to those who want it. Individuals in the hands-on tradition may prefer to mount the video on a private web site. The video can be made available at the grave site as well. Tombstones equipped to play the video on a built-in screen cost between $2,000 and $6,000.[38]



Another change in obituary writing is less amusing than talking tombstones: the fictional obit written not to record milestones in a finished life but to craft a facade. Like mortuaries, newspapers must seek new revenue sources as old ones dry up, and they have found money in selling space for obituaries. In the spirit of the consumer-is-always-right, editors give paying obit writers a creative free hand. Founder of the International Association of Obituarists Carolyn Gilbert thinks the change is permanent. Historians searching the web for obituaries will find them in plenty, but their value

is questionable. When obits were written by newspaper journalists, errors flourished because most were written by the least of the journalists. Now error has been supplemented by fiction.[39]

In 1996 Richard T. Gill, in "Whatever Happened to the American Way of Death?" bemoaned the loss of memorialization of the deceased as more Americans turned to cremation and reduced expenditures on care for the dead. Modern Americans, and by extension people around the world who embrace Western culture, live only for themselves and the moment. Gill suspects the motivation for modern behavior is rapid change: people hardly know what to expect in the coming decade let alone in the coming centuries. Yesterday's memorialization of the dead—Victorian memorialization—he sees as a salute to past generations for the splendor they created for the future. But moderns live in a future they create themselves, and their children, who will face old age by the time their parents die, will live in a future created not by their parents but by themselves.

In arguing the declining interest in memorialization of the dead, Gill may have underestimated aging. In earlier eras when many died in the prime of life, bodies were preserved perhaps because they looked like the persons who had lived in them; today, men and women at death may look very little as they did in their prime. Worn out bodies no longer resemble the self-image of those who have died. The departed want to be remembered as they looked while they fully displayed the life that has now left them. Forget the body, forget the memorial stone; keep the reminders of life, forget the reminders of death.[40] Increasingly people are destroying the body and memorializing the remnants of their better years.



Mankind became human in the contemporary sense when people began attending their dead. The modern era, characterized by rural to urban movements, urban growth, and industrialization, created a market for professional morticians. Laws to protect public health embed professionalism in death services and the mortuary industry side-by-side with single-purpose cemeteries. After hundreds of years of families' hands-on burials, citizens of industrialized nations are separated from their dead by a class of professional body handlers.

Relinquishing death care to professionals has spread with industrialization: mortuary employees do everything from collecting the body to putting a marker on the grave and maintaining the site in perpetuity. Social critics see traditional burial customs abandoned around the globe and call it Americanization of death and even McDonaldization as though Americans

are responsible for changing customs abroad. It is more precise to see the changes in worldwide death care as extensions of industrialization and globalization. The United States is the ultimate industrial nation, but industrialization began in England and spread to the United States and elsewhere. Modern death care is an outgrowth of that spread of industrialization in a process called globalization.

In the postmodern world, death care is well established and spreading along with industrialization, monetization, and commercialization. When backward nations press for the living standards of the industrialized world, they ignore the stages of development their predecessors followed and often jump from backwardness to market-oriented industrialization shockingly fast but not without growing pains, as shown by the difficulties plaguing Russia.[41] Nations as backward as Bangladesh are jumping the development of land-line telephone systems in favor of cell telephone technology. When Bangladesh adopts cell phones, social critics do not herald the event as Americanization or McDonaldization but as industrialization and globalization.

As the postmodern era progresses, professional death care will continue to provide most body management around the world, but cremation will claim an increasing portion of corpses and by the end of the century will be the rule rather than the exception. Nevertheless, mortuaries will continue to dominate the death trade worldwide. Variations on commercial death care will remain marginal while attracting attention away from center stage. When local newspapers display a photograph of a funeral cortege of motorcycles or a wake set among personal artifacts and a large video display showing scenes from the life of the departed, it is easy to forget the hundreds of conventional funerals that took place during the same twenty-four hours. The business of idiosyncratic body disposal in the twenty-first century, for all its appeal, functions on the margin of the death-care industry.



NOTES

1. Elise Ackerman, "Look Who's Talking Now: The Death Business Is Going Interactive," *U.S. News & World Report* (April 26, 1999): 54.
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4. Alexandra Alger, "The New (and More Convenient) American Way of Death," *Forbes* 158, no. 10 (October 21, 1996): 324; "Barbarians at the Pearly Gates," *The Economist* 340, no. 7985 (September 28, 1996): 79; "Death's Future," *Marketing News* 32, no. 2 (January 19, 1998): 15; Robert W. Habenstein and William W. Lamers, *The History of American Funeral Directing* (Milwaukee, WI: Bulfin Printers, 1955); Donald Heinz, *The Last Passage: Recovering a Death of Our Own* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Glennys Howarth, *Last Rites: The Work of the Modern Funeral Director* (Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing, 1996); Darryl J. Roberts, *Profits of Death: An Insider Exposes the Death Care Industries* (Chandler, AZ: Five Star Publications, 1997); and Ronald G. E. Smith, *The Death Care Industries in the United States* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996).
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6. Charles Haddad, "Double-Wide Nation," *Business Week* (February 2, 2004): 12.
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11. Http://www.motorcyclefunerals.com/index.htm.
12. Http://www.tombstonehearse.com.
13. Http:/www.peacefunerals.co.uk/railway.htm.
14. Adam Goldman, "Mortuaries Put a New Spin on Funerals: Most Popular Themes Include Golf, Old West, Las Vegas," *Daily Texan* (May 3, 2004): www.dailytexanonline.com.
15. Cullen, "What a Way to Go," 88.
16. "Palestinians Exhibit Remains of 6 Israeli Soldiers," *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer* (May 12, 2004): A4.

17. Sam Weller, "Funerals from Around the World," *BBCi Health* (March 26, 2004): http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/bereavement/practical_world_funerals.shtml.
18. Mary Hennock, "Coffin-Maker Resurrects Tradition," *BBC News World Edition* (December 28, 2001): http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/1730190.stm.
19. Most Americans think home burial is a primitive reversion, yet in many locales it is legal. In 2002 in Selma, Alabama, Leonard and Marion Allison buried their twenty-year-old son in the backyard. To the dismay of neighbors, their action was legal. "Yard Burial Upsets Neighbors," *Columbus Ledger-Enquirer* (July 25, 2002): A2.
20. Lucy Fisher, "Do-It Yourself Funerals: Many in Britain Are Opting for Simple Green Burial in a Wood or Field Instead of Traditional Interments," *Time Magazine Archive* (May 31, 1999): http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/subscriber/0,10987,1107990531-26714,00.html. In Mexico City, use of a grave site may be limited to seven years after which time remains are exhumed, cremated, and stored in one of seven public mausoleums. Burial in that city is an unusually clear and simple example of the workings of the market. Eternal rest is available at privately owned and operated cemeteries for upwards of $5,500, about the cost of burial in the United States and most other Western Nations. Interment in a public graveyard costs about $5 (the public Delores cemetery in Mexico City holds more than a million people and receives 200 new corpses every day). Will Werssert, "In Mexico City's Cemeteries Eternity Isn't Permanent," *Opelika-Auburn [Alabama] News* (May 28, 2002): 8A.
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