**Death - Stories & Illustrations**

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**It’s not mere gluttony or greediness that makes us binge on sweets and go on spending sprees for luxuries we can’t afford, says a new study. It’s the fear of death. After 9/11, sales of indulgent snacks and expensive consumer items shot up, prompting social psychologists to wonder if it might be because everyone had just been reminded that life can end at any moment. To test this hypothesis, researchers at Arizona State University and Erasmus University in the Netherlands asked 746 students to write essays on one of two topics: a visit to the dentist or death. Later, they were offered plates of cookies as well as the opportunity to buy items off a hypothetical shopping list. Students who’d spent hours thinking and writing about death couldn’t get enough cookies, stuffing their faces with the treats; students who’d written about a dentist visit ate one or two cookies, or were disinterested altogether. The death essayists were also more likely to purchase items from a pretend shopping list. Eating and shopping to excess, researchers say, appear to be common strategies for escaping troubling thoughts about mortality. “When you indulge in shopping or eating, it helps you forget yourself,” researcher Dirk Smeesters tells New Scientist. “One would hope that companies do not exploit this by putting food ads straight after the news.” *(The Week magazine, June 13, 2008)***

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**Today Helen Ansley is a dynamic woman in her nineties. She was one of the principals in a recent exploratory project, Conscious Living/Conscious Dying, funded by the Institute of Noetic Sciences in California. “I see life as the Ultimate Finishing School,” she proclaims, “with a full curriculum that teaches us Conscious Living, so that we may graduate -- with honors -- with Conscious Death.” *(Dana Voght, in Unity magazine, June, 1993)***

**Ever had contact with the dead? One survey purports to prove 40 percent of the people in America believe they have. (L. M. Boyd)**

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**Spurred by changing social, spiritual and financial attitudes, America is on the way to joining the many other nations around the world in which cremation is the preferred disposition of the dead. 30%: The portion of U. S. deaths that result in cremation, a tenfold increase within two generations. In several Western states, the cremation rate is more than 60 percent. (Minneapolis-St. Paul Star Tribune, as appeared in Rocky Mountain News, on August 2, 2004)**

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**“It’s very beautiful over there” were Thomas Edison’s last words, which he uttered after briefly coming out of a two-day coma before passing away. *(Harry Bright & Harlan Briscoe, in So, Now You Know, p. 156)***

**Some primitive New Guinea tribes – to embalm their dead – simply smoke the remains. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**How come Korean apartment buildings don’t have a fourth floor? The word for four is “sah,” which also means “death.” So they skip labeling a fourth floor the way a lot of American builders skip labeling a thirteenth floor. (L. M. Boyd)**

**When he wasn’t composing musical masterpieces, Richard Wagner oversaw the digging in his garden of his own grave. He was pretty proud of it. Even used to parade dinner guests out to it between courses. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Ten of the hairs on your head will stop growing today, if yours is a typical head. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**J. K. Rowling may write for children, says Geordie Greig in the London Telegraph, but her underlying topic is deadly serious. “My books are largely about death,” says the author of the Harry Potter series. “They open with the death of Harry’s parents. There is (the villain) Voldemort’s obsession with conquering death and his quest for immortality at any price. I so understand why Voldemort wants to conquer death. We’re all frightened of it.” Her own terror of death is easy enough to trace. When Rowling was 15, her 35-year-old mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis; after a 10-year-long decline, she died in 1991. At the time, the penniless Rowling was working on a book about a boy with magical powers who goes off to study at a school of wizardry. “I was writing Harry Potter at the moment my mother died. But I had never told her. Dad called m at 7 o’clock the next morning and I just knew what had happened before he spoke. I was alternately a wreck and then in total denial.” Rowling, who has sold hundreds of millions of books, feels cheated that her mother never knew of her success. “Barely a day goes by when I do not think of her. There would be so much to tell her, impossibly much.” *(The Week magazine, January 27, 2006)***

**Alexander the Great was not the only human interred in a crock of honey. Ancient Egyptians routinely buried many of their dead that way. (L. M. Boyd)**

**By his resurrection Jesus revealed that life is greater than death and that death is but life's effort to free itself from man's self-imposed limitations. (Divine Science Textbook, p. 126)**

**One of Jesus' last words on the cross are recorded as “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani” (Matthew 27:46), which Dr. George Lamsa says translates from the Aramaic, “My God, My God, for this was I kept.” Jesus certainly could have said, “I don't have to take this!” But, instead, He said, “This is a part of the great purpose of my quest to overcome death itself and prove the principle of the Divinity of Man.” *(Eric Butterworth, in Discover The Power Within You, p. 92)***

**How come Orthodox Jews won’t use metal caskets for burial? Anything that prevents integration of the body with the soil is prohibited. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Steve Jobs was diagnosed with a rare form of pancreatic cancer in 2003 and had a liver transplant six years later, said The Washington Post. He rarely spoke of his illness but addressed it directly in a now-famous Stanford commencement speech in 2005. “No one wants to die,” he said. “Even people who want to go to heaven don’t want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because death is very likely the single best invention of life. It is life’s change agent. (The Week magazine, October 21, 2011)**

**I am glad God saw Death and gave Death a job taking care of all who are tired of living: When all the wheels in a clock are worn and slow and the connections loose and the clock goes on ticking and telling the wrong time from hour to hour and people around the house joke about what a bum clock it is, how glad the clock is when the big Junk Man drives his wagon up to the house and puts his big arms around the clock and says: “You don’t belong here, you gotta’ come along with me.” How glad the clock is then, when it feels the arms of the Junk Man close around it and carry it away. (Carl Sandburg)**

**It’s an old tradition in Korea that a woman is not permitted to hold the hand of a dying man. (L. M. Boyd)**

**As a physician who has been deeply privileged to share the most profound moments of people’s lives, including their final moments, let me tell you a secret. People facing death don’t think about what degrees they have earned, what positions they have held or how much wealth they have accumulated. At the end, what really matters – and is a good measure of a past life – is who you loved and who loved you. The circle of love is everything. (Dr. Bernadine Healy)**

**After I’m dead I’d rather have people ask why I have no monument than why I have one. (Cato the Elder)**

**On the death of my mother, I found a friend's thought apt and consoling: “You can't weep for people who have left more in life than they have taken out.” (John J. McAleer, in Reader's Digest)**

**General Gaishi Nagaoka, known as the father of Japan's first air force, sported a mustache 22 inches long. When he died in 1933, the mustache, too, was buried with full honors. Beside him. In a separate coffin. (L. M. Boyd)**

**About 100 people die every minute – somewhere in the world. That means 6,000 deaths per hour, or 144,000 each and every day. So death as a natural phenomenon would be a major problem of human existence even if all crime, war and calamity could be eliminated. (A. S. Otto, Jr.)**

**It’s disgusting and it’s irritating and it’s frustrating, and if you can think of any other words, go ahead and use them. And I’m not dead. (Margaret C. Morris, 95, of Bellevue, Nebraska, after her insurance company and Medicare dropped her coverage because they presumed she was dead due to an apparent clerical error.) (Associated Press, as it appeared in the Rocky Mountain News, December 12, 2006)**

**The 106 death sentences handed down in the U.S. in 2009 were the fewest since the death penalty was reinstated by the Supreme Court in 1976. Eleven states are now considering abolishing executions, largely due to the high cost of handling the often decades-long appeals by death-row inmates. *(CNN.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 15, 2010)***

**Movie publicists in the 1930s put pet obituaries in newspapers on behalf of film stars, wherein said stars bid gentle goodbyes to dead dogs, cats, canaries, whatever. Made a pretty good impression, advertising some movies and activation another business: pet cemeteries. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**That countless pioneers died along the old Oregon Trail is known. But not often is it reported that most of them were buried in accordance with a custom of the journey – heads pointing west. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Toledo, Ohio, native Fredric Baur was so proud of designing the container in 1966 for Pringles potato chips that he asked his family to bury him in one. In 2008, his family honored his request and buried part of his cremated remains in a Pringles can and part in an urn. *(American Profile magazine)***

**It is a matter of record that one rattlesnake's heart continued to beat 59 hours after its head was chopped off. (L. M. Boyd)**

**For just $3900 you, too, can go into orbit! The only catch is, you've got to be dead first. The Celestis Group of Melbourne, Florida, will pack your condensed ashes in a lipstick-size capsule, place it in a spacecraft with 10,300 other astro-urns, and rocket you into space. Your loved ones will be able to see you whizzing around 2,200 miles overhead, because the satellite mausoleum will be gold-plated and visible through a telescope. The first space-hearse launch has been scheduled for early 1987. (Life magazine, 1985)**

**When a person is dying, hearing is the last sense to go. Sight is the first. *(Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 299)***

**There is an old legend about a rich merchant in Baghdad who sent his servant to the market. While he was at the marketplace, he was jostled by someone in the crowd. When he turned around he saw a woman in a long black cloak and knew it was Death. The servant ran home to his master and in a trembling voice told him about the encounter and how Death had looked at him and made a threatening gesture. The servant begged his master to loan him a horse so he could ride to Samarra and hide so Death would not find him. The master agreed and the servant galloped away. Later the merchant went down to the marketplace and saw Death standing nearby. The merchant asked, “Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant and frighten him?” “That was not a threatening gesture,” Death replied. “It was just that I was startled to see him in Baghdad because I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra!” *(Sermon illustration used by Peter Marshall, retold by Alice Gray in Stories for the Heart)***

**Up to about a hundred years ago the custom of “sin-eating" was widespread in England and in the Highlands of Scotland. When someone died, the official village sin-eater was notified. He went at once to the house of the deceased, sat on a stool near the door, and consumed a groat, a crust of bread, and a bowl of ale. When finished he would rise and announce the peace of the departed soul, for whom he thus had just traded his own soul. For some people I can think of, it would take a lot more than a groat and a crust of bread! (Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 7)**

**The peak time of day for deaths is reported to be about 6 a.m. Medical statisticians say they’re trying to link that fact with sleep disorders, but are not sure they can. (L. M. Boyd)**

**I recently revisited the little town of Lakeside, California and was reminded of how things were there in 1949. As you drove into town, which was all of two blocks long, from the west, there was a stretch of road lined with cork elm trees that formed a tunnel. At the beginning of the tree tunnel was a billboard-size sign that read, “Please Drive Carefully. This Is a One-Hearse Town.” There was, in fact, a mortuary on Main Street. It’s still in business. (Sister Anna Mary Meyer, in Reminisce)**

**John DeFrain, a social researcher at the University of Nebraska, has studied about 500 families who have experienced unexpected death. “At first,” he says, “they are so stunned they don’t even know what they need to do, let alone tell others how to help.” This is why people who are grief-stricken seldom respond to the well-meaning offer, “If there is anything I can do, let me know.” (Barbara Russell Chesser, in Reader’s Digest)**

**Nobody knows where the body of Voltaire is. It was stolen from its tomb in the nineteenth century and has never been recovered. The theft was discovered in 1864, when the tomb was opened and found empty. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 124)**

**Why do we call it a wake? You don’t expect anyone to wake up, do you? – Karen: In the sense of a pre-burial vigil, wake derives from an old Indo-European word meaning to be active, which evolved in many directions, including the idea of watching or guarding, as in a vigil or wake, according to the Word Detective (word-defective.com). (Rocky Mountain News)**

**Almost everybody has heard the dying words of Great Britain’s renowned Cecil Rhodes, but hardly anybody knows who actually said them: “So much to do, and so little time.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**Death  
  
Why seek ye the living among the dead?**

**He is not here, but is risen.**

**(St. Luke 24: 5-6)**

**Behold, I show you a mystery;**

**We shall not all sleep,**

**But we shall all be changed.**

**(1 Corinthians 15:51)**

**And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;**

**and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor wailing,**

**neither shall there be any more pain;**

**for the former things have passed away.**

***(Revelation 21:4)***

**Somehow I’ve adjusted to all life’s other changes, so I suppose I’ll adjust to becoming dead. (Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)**

**Some people, though dead, can still be very entertaining. What right have dead people to affect our lives? And yet they are constantly doing so. (Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)**

**Much beloved Episcopal Bishop Warren Chandler lay dying. A close friend sat by his bedside. “Please tell me frankly,” said his friend, “do you dread crossing the river of death?” The old bishop smiled weakly and said with conviction, “My father owns the land on both sides of the river. Why should I be afraid?” (Dynamic Preaching)**

**As a general rule, I’m against death – but, if certain things didn’t die, I couldn’t live. (Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)**

**Death is the black backing on the mirror that allows us to see anything at all. *(Saul Bellow)***

**It’s not mere gluttony or greediness that makes us binge on sweets and go on spending sprees for luxuries we can’t afford, says a new study. It’s the fear of death. After 9/11, sales of indulgent snacks and expensive consumer items shot up, prompting social psychologists to wonder if it might be because everyone had just been reminded that life can end at any moment. To test this hypothesis, researchers at Arizona State University and Erasmus University in the Netherlands asked 746 students to write essays on one of two topics: a visit to the dentist or death. Later, they were offered plates of cookies as well as the opportunity to buy items off a hypothetical shopping list. Students who’d spent hours thinking and writing about death couldn’t get enough cookies, stuffing their faces with the treats; students who’d written about a dentist visit ate one or two cookies, or were disinterested altogether. The death essayists were also more likely to purchase items from a pretend shopping list. Eating and shopping to excess, researchers say, appear to be common strategies for escaping troubling thoughts about mortality. “When you indulge in shopping or eating, it helps you forget yourself,” researcher Dirk Smeesters tells New Scientist. “One would hope that companies do not exploit this by putting food ads straight after the news.” *(The Week magazine, June 13, 2008)***

**In their rituals to mourn the dead, the ancients painted their bodies black long before their eventual descendents wore black clothing. (L. M. Boyd)**

**If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, 10 angels swearing I was right would make no difference. (Abraham Lincoln)**

**Man is the only species that buries its dead. (L. M. Boyd)**

**For the record, it takes Madame Butterfly 4 minutes 48 seconds to die. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Don’t call me back and do not cry, I am so glad to go, I oft have longed to soar the sky and other worlds to know. Don’t call me back! A little while and I am far from earth, and I am leaving with a smile to face another birth. (Helga Stromberg)**

**Death is not putting out the light. It is extinguishing the candle because the dawn has come. (Unity in the Rockies newsletter)**

**Becoming the first state to abolish capital punishment in more than 40 years, New Jersey has replaced its death penalty with a mandatory sentence of life without parole. Gov. John Corzine, a Democrat, said eliminating the death penalty “best captures our state’s highest values and reflects our best efforts to search for true justice.” New Jersey last executed a prisoner in 1963, though polls show that a majority of New Jersey citizens support capital punishment. *(The Week magazine, December 28, 2007)***

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**Ancient Egyptians so respected their pet cats that they mummified them, then entombed them with mummified mice so they'd have something to eat in the thereafter. (L. M. Boyd)**

**One thing is certain: You can't die in the same world in which you were born. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

**If death is certain, at least I don’t have to worry about possibly missing it. (Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)**

**Death and taxes may be the only certainties in life, but nowhere is it written that we have to tax ourselves to death. (Nation’s Buisness)**

**We do not die from the darkness. We die from the cold. (Miguel de Unamuno)**

**Communication with the dead is only a little more difficult than communication with some of the living. (Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)**

**I am companioned though you are gone; from selfish yearning my heart is free. Still you are loving; still you are loved; veil of a moment hides you from me. How could I sorrow? Death is unreal, life has no vacuum; love has no gloom. Thronging the silence – angels of God fill with new gladness, your empty room. Beauty for ashes, laughter for tears, all this you gave me while you were here. Treasures of Spirit, friendship and love – I hold them precious, I hold you dear. Love’s compensation blesses this hour; tenderest Being knocks at my door. With or without you, God is my all. I am companioned forevermore. (William Aubert Luce)**

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**Be careful when you dance around my grave – it might revive me. (Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)**

**Death is delightful. Death is dawn, the waking from a weary night of fevers into Truth and Light. (Joaquin Miller, in Even So)**

**Death is not greatly in demand – but still each person is usually allowed only one. (Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)**

**I have never known a man who died from overwork, but many who died from doubt. (Charles Horace Mayo, American surgeon and co-founder of the Mayo Clinic (1865-1939)**

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**That the end of life should be death may sound sad; yet what other end can anything have? *(George Santayana, philosopher)***

**Drive carefully. It’s true that a lot of things come to an end on Labor Day – but you don’t have to be among them. *(Bill Moiles, in Worcester, Mass., Telegram)***

**That prince of Wales named Frederick died in 1707. On his tombstone is this epitaph: “Here lies Fred, he was alive and now he’s dead.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Every man dies. Not every man truly lives. (Braveheart)**

**Somebody said to me, “I can’t believe Jerry Garcia is dead. And I thought, Doesn’t this guy know? Everybody’s dead. It’s all a matter of degree.” *(George Carlin, in When Will Jesus Bring the Pork Chops?, p. 111)***

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**How come Korean apartment buildings don’t have a fourth floor? The word for four is “sah,” which also means “death.” So they skip labeling a fourth floor the way a lot of American builders skip labeling a thirteenth floor. (L. M. Boyd)**

**If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live. (Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968)**

**For what is it to die but to stand naked in the wind and to melt into the sun? And what is it to cease breathing, but to free the breath from its restless tides that it may rise and expand and seek God unencumbered? Only when you drink from the river of silence shall you indeed sing. And when you have reached the mountain top, then you shall begin to climb. And when the earth shall claim your limbs, then shall you truly dance. (Kahlil Gibran)**

**God does not die on the day when we cease to believe in a personal deity, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illumined by the steady radiance of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason. (Dag Hammarskjold)**

**When he wasn’t composing musical masterpieces, Richard Wagner oversaw the digging in his garden of his own grave. He was pretty proud of it. Even used to parade dinner guests out to it between courses. *(L. M. Boyd)***

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**It’s not healthy to look directly at death, without at least blinking. (Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)**

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**We give our loved ones back to God. And just as He first gave them to us and did not lose them in the giving, so we have not lost them in returning them to Him. For life is eternal, love is immortal. Death is only a horizon, and a horizon is the limit of our earthly sight. (Helen Steiner Rice)**

**Death destroys a man; the idea of Death saves him. (E. M. Forster)**

**Nothing dies so hard, or rallies so often, as intolerance. (Henry Ward Beecher)**

**By his resurrection Jesus revealed that life is greater than death and that death is but life's effort to free itself from man's self-imposed limitations. (Divine Science Textbook, p. 126)**

**One of Jesus' last words on the cross are recorded as “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani” (Matthew 27:46), which Dr. George Lamsa says translates from the Aramaic, “My God, My God, for this was I kept.” Jesus certainly could have said, “I don't have to take this!” But, instead, He said, “This is a part of the great purpose of my quest to overcome death itself and prove the principle of the Divinity of Man.” *(Eric Butterworth, in Discover The Power Within You, p. 92)***

**How come Orthodox Jews won’t use metal caskets for burial? Anything that prevents integration of the body with the soil is prohibited. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Steve Jobs was diagnosed with a rare form of pancreatic cancer in 2003 and had a liver transplant six years later, said The Washington Post. He rarely spoke of his illness but addressed it directly in a now-famous Stanford commencement speech in 2005. “No one wants to die,” he said. “Even people who want to go to heaven don’t want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because death is very likely the single best invention of life. It is life’s change agent. (The Week magazine, October 21, 2011)**

**I am glad God saw Death and gave Death a job taking care of all who are tired of living: When all the wheels in a clock are worn and slow and the connections loose and the clock goes on ticking and telling the wrong time from hour to hour and people around the house joke about what a bum clock it is, how glad the clock is when the big Junk Man drives his wagon up to the house and puts his big arms around the clock and says: “You don’t belong here, you gotta’ come along with me.” How glad the clock is then, when it feels the arms of the Junk Man close around it and carry it away. (Carl Sandburg)**

**It’s an old tradition in Korea that a woman is not permitted to hold the hand of a dying man. (L. M. Boyd)**

**As a physician who has been deeply privileged to share the most profound moments of people’s lives, including their final moments, let me tell you a secret. People facing death don’t think about what degrees they have earned, what positions they have held or how much wealth they have accumulated. At the end, what really matters – and is a good measure of a past life – is who you loved and who loved you. The circle of love is everything. (Dr. Bernadine Healy)**

**On the death of my mother, I found a friend's thought apt and consoling: “You can't weep for people who have left more in life than they have taken out.” (John J. McAleer, in Reader's Digest)**

**General Gaishi Nagaoka, known as the father of Japan's first air force, sported a mustache 22 inches long. When he died in 1933, the mustache, too, was buried with full honors. Beside him. In a separate coffin. (L. M. Boyd)**

**About 100 people die every minute – somewhere in the world. That means 6,000 deaths per hour, or 144,000 each and every day. So death as a natural phenomenon would be a major problem of human existence even if all crime, war and calamity could be eliminated. (A. S. Otto, Jr.)**

**It’s disgusting and it’s irritating and it’s frustrating, and if you can think of any other words, go ahead and use them. And I’m not dead. (Margaret C. Morris, 95, of Bellevue, Nebraska, after her insurance company and Medicare dropped her coverage because they presumed she was dead due to an apparent clerical error.) (Associated Press, as it appeared in the Rocky Mountain News, December 12, 2006)**

**0The 106 death sentences handed down in the U.S. in 2009 were the fewest since the death penalty was reinstated by the Supreme Court in 1976. Eleven states are now considering abolishing executions, largely due to the high cost of handling the often decades-long appeals by death-row inmates. *(CNN.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 15, 2010)***

**Movie publicists in the 1930s put pet obituaries in newspapers on behalf of film stars, wherein said stars bid gentle goodbyes to dead dogs, cats, canaries, whatever. Made a pretty good impression, advertising some movies and activation another business: pet cemeteries. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**That countless pioneers died along the old Oregon Trail is known. But not often is it reported that most of them were buried in accordance with a custom of the journey – heads pointing west. (L. M. Boyd)**

**Toledo, Ohio, native Fredric Baur was so proud of designing the container in 1966 for Pringles potato chips that he asked his family to bury him in one. In 2008, his family honored his request and buried part of his cremated remains in a Pringles can and part in an urn. *(American Profile magazine)***

**It is a matter of record that one rattlesnake's heart continued to beat 59 hours after its head was chopped off. (L. M. Boyd)**

**For just $3900 you, too, can go into orbit! The only catch is, you've got to be dead first. The Celestis Group of Melbourne, Florida, will pack your condensed ashes in a lipstick-size capsule, place it in a spacecraft with 10,300 other astro-urns, and rocket you into space. Your loved ones will be able to see you whizzing around 2,200 miles overhead, because the satellite mausoleum will be gold-plated and visible through a telescope. The first space-hearse launch has been scheduled for early 1987. (Life magazine, 1985)**

**When a person is dying, hearing is the last sense to go. Sight is the first. *(Uncle John’s Unstoppable Bathroom Reader, p. 299)***

**There is an old legend about a rich merchant in Baghdad who sent his servant to the market. While he was at the marketplace, he was jostled by someone in the crowd. When he turned around he saw a woman in a long black cloak and knew it was Death. The servant ran home to his master and in a trembling voice told him about the encounter and how Death had looked at him and made a threatening gesture. The servant begged his master to loan him a horse so he could ride to Samarra and hide so Death would not find him. The master agreed and the servant galloped away. Later the merchant went down to the marketplace and saw Death standing nearby. The merchant asked, “Why did you make a threatening gesture to my servant and frighten him?” “That was not a threatening gesture,” Death replied. “It was just that I was startled to see him in Baghdad because I have an appointment with him tonight in Samarra!” *(Sermon illustration used by Peter Marshall, retold by Alice Gray in Stories for the Heart)***

**Up to about a hundred years ago the custom of “sin-eating" was widespread in England and in the Highlands of Scotland. When someone died, the official village sin-eater was notified. He went at once to the house of the deceased, sat on a stool near the door, and consumed a groat, a crust of bread, and a bowl of ale. When finished he would rise and announce the peace of the departed soul, for whom he thus had just traded his own soul. For some people I can think of, it would take a lot more than a groat and a crust of bread! (Bernie Smith, in The Joy of Trivia, p. 7)**

**The peak time of day for deaths is reported to be about 6 a.m. Medical statisticians say they’re trying to link that fact with sleep disorders, but are not sure they can. (L. M. Boyd)**

**If a little tree grows in the shade of a larger tree, it will die small. (Senegalese Proverb)**

**I recently revisited the little town of Lakeside, California and was reminded of how things were there in 1949. As you drove into town, which was all of two blocks long, from the west, there was a stretch of road lined with cork elm trees that formed a tunnel. At the beginning of the tree tunnel was a billboard-size sign that read, “Please Drive Carefully. This Is a One-Hearse Town.” There was, in fact, a mortuary on Main Street. It’s still in business. (Sister Anna Mary Meyer, in Reminisce magazine)**

**John DeFrain, a social researcher at the University of Nebraska, has studied about 500 families who have experienced unexpected death. “At first,” he says, “they are so stunned they don’t even know what they need to do, let alone tell others how to help.” This is why people who are grief-stricken seldom respond to the well-meaning offer, “If there is anything I can do, let me know.” (Barbara Russell Chesser, in Reader’s Digest)**

**Nobody knows where the body of Voltaire is. It was stolen from its tomb in the nineteenth century and has never been recovered. The theft was discovered in 1864, when the tomb was opened and found empty. (David Louis, in Fascinating Facts, p. 124)**

**Why do we call it a wake? You don’t expect anyone to wake up, do you? – Karen: In the sense of a pre-burial vigil, wake derives from an old Indo-European word meaning to be active, which evolved in many directions, including the idea of watching or guarding, as in a vigil or wake, according to the Word Detective (word-defective.com). (Rocky Mountain News)**

**Almost everybody has heard the dying words of Great Britain’s renowned Cecil Rhodes, but hardly anybody knows who actually said them: “So much to do, and so little time.” *(L. M. Boyd)***

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