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Section Gee!

ADVICE, HUMOR, COMICS, HOROSCOPE, KIDS

Off-Kilter

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Go Out With a Bang: Cutting-Edge Tombstones in a Theme-Park Setting

E-Ticket Afterlife: Graveyards and roller coasters usually don't mix, but that could change in the near future, courtesy of a company called the Final Curtain.

Hoping to revolutionize the funeral industry, Final Curtain wants to build a chain of theme park cemeteries featuring rides, shops and outlandish tombstones designed by artists. The ideas for gravestones (which can be viewed at *http://www.finalcurtain.com*) include:

- A giant Etch-a-Sketch filled with cremated ashes mingled with iron particles. This would allow visitors to create drawings using the large knobs at the base. However, it's unclear whether the big monument could be shaken to erase it.
- A massive ant farm tombstone made from a combination of soil and cremated remains.
- A monument guarded by talking gargoyles and chia pet statues.
- A coffin containing a video camera—so visitors could watch the corpse decay live or via a time-lapse recording.
- A working Wurlitzer jukebox gravestone with a 10-foot-by-10-foot dance floor.

Other amenities at this "Coney Island for corpses" would include mausoleum roller coasters, phone booths built from upright caskets, drinking fountains flowing with "nondenominational holy water" and restaurants called Dante's Grill and Heaven's Gate Cafe.

Although much of it sounds tongue-in-cheek, Final Curtain officials insist the proposal is real. "Until now, the handling of death has been regimented and boring," says a company prospectus. "At the Final Curtain, we are throwing away all the rules . . . [to create] a place where life can be immortalized with irreverence and humor rather than by the morbid display of funereal pomp."



JIM YEAGER / For The Times

A roller coaster like this at a cemetery? That's Final Curtain's idea.

To drum up interest, the company recently bought ads in the Village Voice and L.A. Weekly that said: "Death got you down? At last an alternative." Potential clients are urged to design their own tombs, or they can sign up for the Final Curtain's "time-share program," a traveling exhibit of urns that will move from city to city inside a UFO-shaped mausoleum.

The time-share option enables the dead to "spend autumn in New York, summer in California, spring in Paris and winter in Florida," says a company brochure. Each cemetery would also have an amphitheater for concerts and poetry readings, assorted retail stores and a museum and gift shop that sells reproductions of the most popular tombs.

Currently, only artists are being accepted as clients, in order to achieve "a higher-quality product that will set new standards for the death-care industry."

Quote of the Day: Chicago columnist Zay N. Smith, commenting on recently uncovered evidence that Neanderthals in France practiced cannibalism: "Look, they had to have something until they came up with foie gras."

Sign of the Times: Placard held by a San Jose panhandler: "Will work for thousands of dollars and stock bonus."

12-Step Barbie: Need a gift for that special booze-hound niece or nephew? How about the new Fetal Alcohol Syndrome doll designed to scare pregnant teens out of drinking?

Smashed-up DUI Dream Car and Lounge Lizard Ken sold separately.

Best Supermarket Tabloid Headline: "Possessed Poodle Kills Exorcist!" (Weekly World News)

Unpaid Informants: Wireless Flash News Service, San Francisco Chronicle, Susanna Timmons. E-mail Off-Kilter at roy.rivenburg@latimes.com. Off-Kilter runs Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.