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Cover story; Crying and Digging; Reclaiming the realities and rituals of death; [HOME EDITION]

Nancy Rommelmann. Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles, Calif.: Feb 6, 2005. pg. I.10

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For centuries in America, we tended to our dead. People died at home, and relatives prepared the body, laid it out in the parlor and sat by as callers paid final respects. The body was buried in the family cemetery, if there was one, or on the back 40; pieties were spoken, and life went on until the next person died. Death, if not a welcome visitor, was a familiar one. This changed, incrementally, during the Civil War, when others were paid to undertake the job of transporting the bodies of soldiers killed far from home; this is when formaldehyde as an embalming agent was first used. But it was only 100 years ago that we began routinely to hand over our dead to the undertakers. Soon the gravely ill as well were deemed too taxing, and moved to hospitals to die. Within decades, what had for millennia been familial responsibilities were appropriated by professionals.

"People think we're not emotionally capable, let alone physically capable, of carrying this out," says Jerri Lyons. "Well, what were we doing before when we weren't supposedly able to take care of people?"

Lyons is making tea in the small cottage she shares with her husband in a leafy glade in Sebastopol. Bookshelves overflow, a computer is crammed into a nook and there is no room for a dining set, so Lyons sets the teacups on her massage table, which, in any case, is multipurpose.

"We use it to turn people during seminars," she says. "We use it for reiki, and we also lend it to families that want to have a showing at home."

What she means by "a showing" is a wake. But Lyons, a 57-year-old former Costco rep and cafe owner, is not an undertaker, or, in her euphemistic parlance, a "well-intended grief choreographer." In fact, there is as yet no title for what she does, which is to teach people about their right to a home funeral and how to prepare the body for it.

There's an alternative-death movement fomenting in Northern California, one that leaves the funeral industry out of the picture altogether. Proponents of home funerals and of green burials, wherein bodies are interred in natural environments and in ways that promote decomposition, insist that this country's "death-denying tradition," in Lyons' term, is not merely costly but corrosive to body and spirit, to land and communities. Fear and doubt, they say, crept into the space left when we handed death to others, and our attendant helplessness supports the multibillion-dollar death-care industry. And they know, even if we don't yet, just how badly we want to bury our own dead.

"We're always afraid of the unknown, until we've been exposed to it and seen that it isn't frightening," says Lyons, proffering several fat albums containing photographs of former clients: dark-haired Donna, who stenciled her own casket before dying of a brain tumor at 32; Bernd, who also died of cancer, lying in bed, wearing a prayer shawl, his mouth curled in an easy smile. There is nothing ghoulish or grotesque about the images; there is neither rictus nor putrefaction. Instead, there's a 3-year-old in foot-pajamas peering at Aunt Donna, lain out after death in her own bedroom.

There's also a picture of Carolyn Whiting, who died suddenly of respiratory failure in 1994 and whose friends, Lyons says, "were simply not ready to let her go."

It turned out that they did not have to. Convening at Whiting's home the night of her death, Lyons and others learned that she had left instructions as to how she wanted to be cared for. "She did not want to be turned over to a mortuary," Lyons says, "but rather wanted her friends to bring her body home if she was in the hospital, and prepare her body."

Lyons admits that they were caught off guard. "I don't think this would have occurred to us. At all," she says. "We, like everyone else I talk to about home funerals, would have asked, 'Is that legal?'"

Home preparation of the deceased, without an undertaker's involvement, is legal in every state but four. Today there are books (such as Lyons' "Creating Home Funerals" and Lisa Carlson's "Caring for the Dead: Your Final Act of Love") that give detailed instructions in after-death care. At the time, Whiting's friends winged it: They took her body home, bathed and perfumed her, picked out clothing, held a wake, and then loaded Whiting into a van and drove her to the crematory.

"It was so helpful to us, to deal with our shock and our grief, and in such a loving, beautiful way to celebrate her life," says Lyons, who went on to found Final Passages, a nonprofit educational program, and Home and Family Funerals, a service wherein Lyons is paid as a "death-midwife," helping the dying and their families with everything from preparing the body to filing paperwork. She works on a sliding scale, but says a full cremation with her facilitation could cost \$750. She estimates that in the last 10 years she's helped more than 250 people "pass over."

"A person, their body doesn't immediately look white as a ghost, or change rapidly," Lyons says. "People think they're going to start decomposing instantly. And that's not so."

As she teaches in seminars around the country, the body can lie in state at home for up to three days, and perhaps longer, provided measures are taken within the first six to 12 hours. The body should be well washed, especially the genitals, with warm, soapy water; the abdomen should be pressed to expel any waste. After the body is dried and dressed, ice (preferably dry but regular will do), which has been wrapped in grocery bags and then cloth, should be placed beneath the torso to keep the organs cool, as these are the first parts of the body to break down. The body should be kept in a cool room. If the person dies with his mouth open, which can be disconcerting to visitors, a scarf may be looped beneath the chin and tied around the head until the mouth sets shut. Similarly, eyes may be closed by gently weighing them down with small bags filled with rice or sand. The casket can be decorated, and a memorial display set up, plain or fancy. One family Lyons helped watched a video with their departed father that he'd rented but had not had a chance to see; another put hiking boots on dad and wheeled him into the woods for a final "hiking trip to heaven."

These people were able to take a deep breath and do what needed to be done. Others need hand-holding. Lyons recently helped a family whose belief in anthroposophy (the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner) dictated that the father's body be kept at home for three days, surrounded by loved ones, read to and cared for. This frightened his teenage daughter.

"She did not come in the room as we were bathing him," Lyons says, "but eventually she came in and started asking questions, and started feeling really relaxed and comfortable." So comfortable that a while later she had her friends over. "They were in the other room, talking and being normal teenagers. It was all a part of family life."

Feeling the body lose its warmth, seeing the tension leave the face, being present for the transition from life to death, Lyons says, helps us to accept that the person is gone. "The actual doing does help, because you're moving through your grief with a process, a ritual," she says. "You're present to it not just with your mind but with your senses.... You're not escaping, or pretending it didn't happen, or getting busy doing something else."

Northern California was the site of an earlier revolt against the funeral industry, when Oakland resident Jessica Mitford wrote her scathing 1963 expose, "The American Way of Death." In updating the book for a revised edition published posthumously in 1998, Mitford found that, though consumers had put the brakes on burials, they were still being taken for a ride. "Cremation, once the best hope for a low-cost simple getaway, has become increasingly expensive," she wrote in her new introduction. "[M]orticians are fast developing techniques for upgrading this procedure into a full-fig funeral."

The "full-fig" or fancy-dress funeral in America includes embalming, whether or not one chooses cremation, so the body will have a lifelike appearance in its coffin, which will be metal. After the viewing, those who choose cremation will be transferred to a burnable container and their ashes transferred to an urn, such as the gold-plated Olympus model that Forest Lawn Memorial Parks and Mortuaries sells for \$5,000. Those being buried will have their coffin placed in a concrete vault to ensure that the ground cover does not buckle, thus maintaining the putting-green uniformity of most cemeteries. Or vaults and urns may be placed in a mausoleum, for which there is a perpetual-care fee. These final dispositions typically cost \$8,000, though can easily run to \$10,000, \$20,000 or more.

"If you ask people, they don't want any of this stuff," says Joe Sehee as he speed-hikes up a shady path in Mill Valley. "Half of what they spend money on is because they think they have to because it's required by law, mainly caskets and embalming fluid. That just angers me so much, because that's really some toxic stuff that no one should be exposed to, let alone put in the ground. And it doesn't serve any purpose!"

Sehee reaches a crest on the 32-acre property known as Fernwood and takes in the view: the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, and a necklace of multimillion-dollar homes on a nearby ridge. This is prime Marin County real estate, for which one of Sehee's partners in Fernwood paid \$495,000 in 2003, a figure that will no doubt make developers keen. But the Fernwoodians do not plan to build on the land, and couldn't even if they wanted to, because there are bodies buried beneath the grounds of this former cemetery. They plan to bury more.

Fernwood is the nation's second commercial "green" cemetery, which means only natural burial techniques are used: no embalming fluid; biodegradable burial containers such as wood or a simple shroud; the vertical headstone replaced with a flat rock or a tree-- or nothing, as a loved one's location is available by global positioning satellite. Since its opening in August, 1,000 people have requested a tour.

Sehee took a circuitous route to get here. In 1998, IBM recruited him to lead a research project examining how big ideas are born. The following year, he began to do consulting work for Tyler Cassity, who wanted to open up Hollywood Forever Cemetery, which he'd just purchased, to the community. They started by screening a Rudolph Valentino film against the side of a mausoleum; other charitable events followed; the cemetery wound up on Los Angeles magazine's "101 Sexiest People, Places and Things in L.A." list, and Sehee saw how easily life thrived in a place assumed to be reserved for the dead.

Which is when he got his own big idea: to combine landscape conservation and natural burial. Cassity encouraged Sehee to run with it, and so he did--right into someone who'd done it before. In 1996 Dr. Billy Campbell founded Memorial EcoSystems, which seeks to establish memorial parks that will save and restore wildlands, as well as Ramsey Creek Preserve, the nation's first commercial green cemetery, in South Carolina. Sehee says he then "played yentl" for Campbell and Cassity.

"Billy's incredibly altruistic, has donated land and money to conservation efforts, but he's had this idea since 1996 and has never really been able to make any traction," Sehee says. "He was looking for a partner within the industry, and in this industry there's no more progressive element than Tyler, really. Tyler has allowed us to get behind enemy lines, and he's absolutely integral to this concept."

Sehee, a former Jesuit lay minister as well as the former Los Angeles-based rollerblading lounge singer known as Joey Cheezhee, acknowledges that it's an odd partnership. "We fight a lot," he says. "Billy's a super-purist. Tyler understands the economics of the industry. Billy Campbell has done 40 burials in seven years ... it was an ecological prototype, not a business prototype. That's what this is."

Their business model is threefold: natural burial techniques; an endowment fund dedicated to ecological restoration as opposed to typical cemetery maintenance, such as the \$15,000 a month Cassity spends watering the lawn at Hollywood Forever; and a conservation easement for the land, so that it cannot be developed in the future.

Although Fernwood is owned outright by one of Cassity's holdings, Sehee says they'd rather the land itself be owned by a nonprofit such as the National Audubon Society, or a government agency such as the Park Service, any organization with a mandate if not the money to protect land and wildlife. "Think of another idea where you can generate money by having land stay fallow," he says. "Our vision is to

sort of be concessionaires, almost like the inverse of mining. Instead of paying for extraction rights, we're paying for insertion rights, but then we have money set aside to do ecological restoration and keep the land up forever. Then we have this for-profit management that operates the facility, digs the holes, builds the trails, markets the facility and moves on as this thing fills up. We can use the concept to, hopefully, restore other land. Our goal is a million acres over the next 30 years."

Sehee nods at the homes across the canyon. "Guess who some of the first customers will be to buy this property?" he asks. "All those people who want to preserve the ridge top, who live here. Those are the people who've been approaching us."

As if to illustrate his point, a family and their dogs pass by. They may be folks from the area out for a weekend walk, as Fernwood is open to the public, or they may be clients picking out their final resting spots, which they can mark with little flags.

"The people [we're] talking to are in their 40s and 50s who would never prearrange, but they know this place is going to be filled up in five or six years," says Sehee. "They also know that if they help do this, it's enlightened self-interest--they're keeping the space open for their community. Mrs. Jones is keeping her property value up by buying space to be buried here."

It's not just Mrs. Jones who's interested. When an article about Ramsey Creek Preserve appeared in the July/August 2004 issue of the AARP Bulletin, the AARP website polled readers, asking: "Which type of burial is most appealing?" Only 8.1% wanted a traditional cemetery burial; 18.6% picked cremation, while 2.9% went for "exotic burial," such as being shot into space. The rest--70.4%--chose green burial.

Which is not surprising, considering that a sizable number of AARP's 35 million members are baby boomers, a generation that never met a ritual it didn't want to retool. These are the folks who wrote their own marriage vows and demanded home birth and hospices, and now that they're burying parents and considering their own final arrangements, they're looking for alternatives to being pumped with chemicals that demean the body and degrade the earth, and caskets that cost as much as cars. Lawsuits filed in recent years, after the buildup of anaerobic bacteria in bodies in "sealer caskets" caused corpses to explode, forcing the liquefied remains to flow down the fronts of mausoleum crypts, have done similarly little to endear them to the industry.

"Universally, almost all Americans are dissatisfied with death-care options," Sehee says. "This article in AARP came out, and we realized it's religious traditionalists, it's conservatives, it's outdoors enthusiasts. Evangelical Christians love the shroud burial concept. It's obviously been part of the Jewish tradition, the Bahai tradition. It's the way most cultures buried their own until 130 years ago."

Although one does not imagine that there was a whole lot of profit in the graveyard business back in 1875, funeral arrangements and cemeteries currently generate \$11 billion a year in revenue, according to the National Funeral Directors Assn., though numbers vary widely, with some estimates as high as \$20 billion. The industry is dominated by just three conglomerates--Service Corp. International, Alderwoods (formerly the Loewen Group) and Stewart Enterprises.

Robyn Sadowsky, a director for corporate communication at Service Corp. International, says the traditional funeral industry is well aware of the alt-death trend. After directing inquiries to a few industry websites (where there is no information on either green or natural burial), she says the 1,800 funeral homes in the SCI network have a sole mandate: "Our role as funeral care providers is to celebrate the life of the person who has passed on, and to do it in a way that they would have liked, as well as their family."

She mentions several recent funerals that were far from traditional, such as one that included a procession of vintage cars, and another in which a person's ashes rode to the cemetery in the sidecar of a Harley-Davidson. She also mentions cremation "wreaths" that, when tossed on the water, slowly release the ashes.

And if, say, a woman went to an SCI funeral home and requested that her husband not be embalmed and casketed, but simply wrapped in a shroud and buried green?

"We would try to accommodate that," Sadowsky says, "but you have to think, what are the shroud regulations in that state? Where is the closest green cemetery? Are there refrigeration issues? There are legal and health considerations, and we have to look into all of those. A shroud and a green burial may sound dignified, and respectful of the environment, and everything the person wanted, but what do we have to do to accommodate that wish?"

Sehee is skeptical. "There's this notion of socially disruptive technology or innovation," he says. "These are ideas that completely revolutionize industries that the industries weren't interested in, because you're dealing with lower margins and problem customers. You're talking about taking away all their opportunities to make money on floral arrangements and big headstones and \$7,000 caskets--why would they want to get involved in that?"

Not that it's cheap to buy at Fernwood. The least expensive burial of "cremains" is \$1,000, burial of a body is \$3,000, and all interments require a one-time 10% endowment fee to preserve and restore the land. Prime spots on the property can fetch three times as much. But it's still considerably less than at Forest Lawn, where a mid-range casket alone costs more than \$9,000.

"Our bet is that this is the future, this is the way people are going to want to be buried," says Sehee. "You'll probably see a lot of green-washing [in the funeral industry]. You'll see people say they're doing green burials, and there's a couple of acres out back where you don't have to have a casket and use embalming fluid, which is great, but they'll never do conservation."

Dr. Billy Campbell calls late one night from South Carolina, saying he's "pretty tired," having hand-dug a grave earlier in the day. How deep should a grave be?

"You want the nutrients in the human body to get to the surface, so you don't want to dig too deep--I learned that the hard way," says Campbell, an environmentalist and medical doctor who started to see how out of whack the burying business had become when he lost his father.

The funeral director "was talking about the vault, and he said, 'It'll take 20,000 pounds per square foot,'" Campbell says. "And I can remember saying to him, 'We're trying to protect the corpse from a direct nuclear strike or a runaway tractor-trailer, but what's the point? What is it we're protecting him from?' And you know what it was? Nature. That's the thing. We don't want the body to be violated by natural processes. I thought, this is stupid, and not only that, it's wasteful."

Mary Woodsen, a member of Commemorative Nature Preserves of New York, an organization that advocates memorial nature preserves, calculated three years ago what American cemeteries inter annually in addition to bodies: 827,060 gallons of embalming fluid, 1,636,000 tons of reinforced concrete, 104,272 tons of steel, 2,700 tons of copper and bronze, and 30 million board feet of hardwoods.

Although the Cremation Assn. of North America predicts the national cremation rate will rise to 35% by 2010, "people don't really actively save land when they're cremated," Campbell says, "they just don't waste land."

Campbell began to look for examples of natural burial, and found them in the tall grass prairies of Iowa and Ohio. "The most diverse places were the old pioneer cemeteries," he says. "It wasn't deep-plowed, so the old cemeteries became some of the best areas for remnant prairies. If that's by accident, why can't we do it intentionally now and turn this into a powerful [conservation] tool? You've got a \$20-billion-a-year industry, you've got baby boomers-- you can create places that aren't just cemeteries but where you learn about plants, and they become these multidimensional social spaces, and, oh yeah, you can be buried there too."

Campbell says that as the only doctor in the town of Westminster, he's taken some flak. "My favorite line was, 'You know, Doc, you going into the cemetery business is like a vet who got a taxidermy license and put a sign in the window that says, 'Either way, you get your dog back.' " But he's also seen the healing that happens when the grief-stricken get their hands in the dirt--as recently as this afternoon, at the burial of a 44-year-old man who died in a car accident two days before Christmas, leaving a wife and four daughters.

"If you're alienated from nature and someone dies and you fix them up like they're not really dead, and you spend a lot of money and put them in a box in a box in a box and put turf on top of them and make it like it never happened, that's normative," he says. "But there is this potential for people to be transformed, where you see where someone is buried, like today.... The pallbearers actually lower the casket into the ground, and people throw dirt on top of the casket. It's amazing when you hear the dirt bouncing off the top of the casket--people break down sometimes and will actually wail. There's one guy who was there today, he was crying and digging, crying and digging, and I think that probably was therapeutic. We had one lady who came and helped dig her mom's grave and said, 'I could be back on the couch popping Xanax with the rest of them, but I'd rather be out here doing something for Mom.' "

After the AARP article ran, Ramsey Creek Preserve received 6,000 e-mails from people asking how they could be buried this way. They were not, as Campbell expected, "my fellow granola tree-hugging hippie people."

"We bury people in overalls, playing country music and throwing cigarettes in the grave," he says. "I had one guy who was buried there who said, 'I love the woods, I just don't like environmentalists.' It wasn't an ideological thing for him. It does appeal to free-market Republicans who want to see a business do this and see people make individual choices. It appeals to people who are hard-core environmentalists. We've seen a lot of support from evangelical Christians, who are talking about the Rapture and the whole nine yards, who think this is more in keeping with what the Bible says. It's like Genesis 3:19: Dust are thou and to dust thou shall return.

"I'll be 50 years old this year," Campbell says, "and I would rather protect a million acres than make a gazillion dollars, and whatever we have to do to make that happen, that's what I'm going to do."

It may soon be happening in Southern California. In December, Campbell and Sehee met with city and cemetery officials about taking over a 1,400-acre parcel in Chatsworth, as well as several pieces of land in Orange County.

"Remember when your grandfather said, 'Just put me in a pine box?'" asks Tyler Cassity. "We're going to."

It's late afternoon, and Cassity is sitting on a low, crumbling wall that runs between ancient slate tombstones. It is a section of Fernwood that was built for employees of the Sausalito Land & Ferry Co. back in the 1880s but has gone largely unused for the last 50 years.

If his partners are concerned with environmentalism and big ideas, Cassity is obsessed with ritual and remembrance. Part of this is reactionary: His father and brother sold pre-need insurance products to the funeral industry, and 10 years ago he reluctantly followed them into the business, albeit with his own twist--digital archiving, the sorts of life-story videos that now are commonplace but which, at the time, were considered in very bad taste. Cassity recalls one mortuary in his hometown of St. Louis running ads on the radio that said, "We don't have the video gimmick!"

But Cassity had seen the effect that memories had on mourners. "I did one [video], and went to a funeral and sat up in the balcony and saw it," he says. "It was a compilation of photos, and I saw it work on people--saw them laugh, saw them cry, saw them grow closer and need to be consoled, but it was catharsis."

Catharsis, he says, is what was lost when the funeral industry took over ritual. "The funeral director was just a cabinetmaker," Cassity says of the layman who built the caskets, and later learned to embalm, and over the course of 100 years remade himself. "He took the visitation away first, saying it was very unsafe, very unhealthy in this culture of science and medicine--'You cannot be around that body'-and he took the body and the visitation into his home. From the minister he took the service. He had a parlor and a chapel. And then he directed. It's key that he directs, because he's the expert, he knows, and therefore you have to listen to him, like you listen to the doctor and the priest.... [But] the cabinetmaker never stopped making cabinets. He's just selling boxes--that's all he cares about."

At Hollywood Forever, Cassity sees how crucial the box is to the living, how it becomes the final manifestation of their devotion. He sees people overspend and attempt to care for the deceased in ways that are injudicious. He knows all about the class-action suits and sealer caskets. And yet ...

"I do it," he says. Prompting the question: Did he get into the green cemetery business to expand or to atone?

"It's very selfish," he says. "Walking through those gates [at Hollywood Forever], one of the things I knew was that I couldn't change the business because I had no idea what it was.... But I also knew it would teach me what I did not know, and it did, in the best way possible--and that was with the Buddhists, the Armenians, the Russians, the Latins, everyone who brought their traditions with them and still cared. Neptune seems like the right thing to do, but it's not."

He refers to the Neptune Society, which offers burials at sea. The \$1,200 to \$1,800 fee can be prepaid, and is all-inclusive: The client dies, his or her arranger calls Neptune, a van comes and collects the body, and the body is gone, with no more fuss than setting a couch on the curb for Goodwill. Soon after, the body is cremated and the ashes are dropped into the ocean. For a nominally higher fee, loved ones may receive the ashes, and for more money still, attend the at-sea burial. Many people choose Neptune because it gives them a modicum of control over the uncontrollable, it lifts the burden from family and friends during a difficult time, it seems like the right thing to do.

"It's very socially acceptable to call the Neptune Society. It sounds like a nice name," says Cassity. "But all those hard parts, those are the good parts."

Cassity has now tasked himself to convince people who've rejected burial that it's safe to get back in the water, so to speak. Since it

opened, Fernwood has interred a dozen bodies and cremains, and performed direct cremation (meaning without a funeral home's involvement) in the onsite crematory of perhaps two dozen more.

But the numbers are of no concern to Cassity. Death is not a trend, he says, despite his agent calling him, hoping to cash in on the recent seepage of death into the popular culture with books such as "Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers" by Mary Roach, and the HBO series "Six Feet Under," on which Cassity has consulted. "Death is not going to just come and go," he says. "People do think it's sexy right now, and 'Six Feet Under' was sexy when it came out, but it's sexy because it's emerged and it's naked, and it's the last naked thing. Sex and death--and sex ends in 'the little death.' "

He stands up in the graveyard; it's getting dark. He says his wish for immortality, and his realization that "everyone had that wish," are what led him here.

"That's when I moved out of the cabinetmaker's beautiful parlor and into the cemetery," he says. "We're supposed to preserve memories. That's our task, whoever we are."

*

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For More Information

Home preparation of the deceased, without an undertaker's involvement, is legal in every state but New York, Louisiana, Indiana and Nebraska.

Final Passages, based in Sebastopol, Calif., holds educational seminars on home funerals; the next workshop is Feb. 17-20 in Seattle. It also offers literature about dying and death, including its own handbooks on home funerals, pre-planning and final disposition. (707) 824-0268; www.finalpassages.org

The Redwood Funeral Society is a nonprofit consumer organization, in Forestville, Calif., whose mission is "to protect and defend individual choice for dignified, ethical and fairly priced death care, through education, referral and advocacy." (707) 568-7684; www.funeral.org

Thresholds Home and Family-Directed Funerals, near San Diego, offers direct cremation and burial, as well as classes and events. (619) 390-1411; www.thresholds.us

Funeral Consumers Alliance is a federation of nonprofit consumer information societies that helps people make end-of-life choices. (800) 765-0107; www.funerals.org

Consumer Guide to Funeral and Cemetery Purchases is available free from the California Department of Consumer Affairs' Cemetery and Funeral Bureau, Suite 3080, 400 R Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. (800) 952-5210; www.cfb.ca.gov/funeral.htm

Information about the documentary "A Family Undertaking" can be found online at www.pbs.org/pov/pofv2004/afamilyundertaking

For more information about green burial sites in this article: Fernwood, (415) 383-7100, www.foreverfernwood.com; Ramsey Creek Preserve, (864) 647-7798, www.memorialecosystems.com

[[Illustration]]

Caption: PHOTO: (no caption); PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK HANAUER; PHOTO: Jerri Lyons has helped more than 250 people "pass over."; PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK HANAUER; PHOTO: Tyler Cassity; PHOTOGRAPHER: Courtesy of HOLLYWOOD FOREVER CEMETERY; PHOTO: Joe Sehee; PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK HANAUER; PHOTO: (no caption); PHOTOGRAPHER: MARK HANAUER

Credit: Nancy Rommelmann last wrote for the magazine about Microsoft's Smart Home.

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