



UNTIL DEATH DO US PART, ER, PARTY.(funeral services)(Brief Article)



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SPENDING | More Americans plan for happier endings, pulling the plug on traditional FUNERAL SERVICES.

LEAVE IT to babyboomers to flout convention, even when they're on the way out. Almost half of them want their families to throw a big party when they die, according to a survey by industry leader Batesville Casket Co. As a result, funeral homes are offering theme services.

Out: somber organ music. In: a jazz service with the casket resting on stereo speakers blaring the deceased's top ten. Out: a softly lit chapel. In: a sports haven where guests sit in squishy leather recliners and watch Super Bowl clips.

Wade Funeral Home in St. Louis has a viewing room outfitted like a homey living room, down to the antique furniture. Family members bring pictures to hang on the walls, along with other personal items to honor their loved ones. Most providers don't charge extra for creative services, but you will pay more for special casket features, such as Batesville's add-ons that lend a hunting-lodge motif.

Making a grand exit can be as simple as releasing butterflies, doves or balloons in a final tribute. For a truly celestial send-off, at www.celestis.com you can arrange to launch a loved one's cremated remains into Earth's orbit (at a cost of \$5,300) or to the moon (\$12,500) and then track the voyage online.

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