

FROM DEAD BODY TO PERSON: THE HANDLING OF
FATAL MASS CASUALTIES IN DISASTERS

In the earthquake which devastated Tangshan, China in 1976 official documents were leaked indicating that at least 655,000 people were killed. How the Chinese dealt with this large number of bodies is unknown. But the problems must have been multiple and massive.

Certain wartime situations suggest some of the difficulties and concerns. For example, American forces recapturing Manila in the closing months of World War II, found themselves faced with an estimated 40,000 dead bodies, some of them in the open streets, most under rubble and debris or in destroyed buildings, a few in temporary shallow graves, and still others stacked like cordwood in morgues, basements or in unused hospital storerooms. The ordinary civilian agencies for handling the dead simply had disappeared during the two months of fighting within the city. There were problems of finding, collecting, removing, transporting, identifying, using existing cemetery or park space, and burying mostly putrefying and deteriorating bodies. Many of the Japanese military had died in high rise buildings with destroyed stairwells, or jammed in sewers, wells and dungeons, and sometimes had the additional obstacle of being booby trapped. The bodies or parts of them often had to be laboriously removed by stevedore hooks. Once a body was recovered, sex and age often could not be determined, much less nationality. The question of mass burial and the need to allow some Catholic Church religious involvement in the burial process of Filipino civilians had to be considered. Army trucks were almost the only vehicles available and the dump trucks used acquired a distinctive odor despite cleaning twice a day. After a few days, men on the burial details experienced nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and sleeplessness and usually needed to be relieved within a week, although the work went on for eight continuous weeks. As a report on the event observed, the methods of disposal "evolved were improvisations made necessary by the totally unexpected and unplanned for occurrence in that unfortunate period of history."

Deaths on an Everyday Basis

Of course, death is something a community of any size has to face every day. The handling of dead bodies is, therefore, a regular necessity. To be sure, the daily deaths with which any community is faced may vary somewhat according to season and certain social times, such as the rise in the death rate after holidays. Nonetheless, there are certain stable and predictable aspects which distinguish the daily toll from those deaths resulting from disasters or wartime catastrophes.

The daily deaths will be both absolutely and relatively few in number. In the whole United States in 1977, deaths averaged 5,203 a day. In the largest metropolitan area, New York City, the daily deaths typically number around 212.

The deaths which occur in most communities are generally expected in a statistical if not in a directly personal sense. That is, given the distributions of age and illness in a population, it is all but certain that a given number will die in a given day. The problem of handling these dead is hardly unanticipated.

Also, the deaths tend to be dispersed with no concentration of them in any given place. Hospitals and nursing homes may have a disproportionate number of deaths. Nevertheless, at the time of death, those that die tend to be dispersed in different localities except perhaps in the smallest of communities.

There are also clearly recognized steps in stages in both the handling of dead bodies, and expressions of bereavement, grief and mourning by the survivors. Different cultures and societies have institutionalized a variety of ways for dealing with this daily problem and the strong affective reactions involved. In American society, at least, the leave-taking ceremonies associated with the funeral process stand out.

Finally, in almost any community there is a fairly complex funeral industry and profession with personnel, facilities and equipment to deal with dead bodies. In fact, in American communities there probably is an oversupply of such resources for the typical daily demands for the required and expected services. A city such as Columbus, Ohio with a population of three quarters of a million in its county area has 61 funeral directors.

But how are the dead handled when there is a sudden deviation from the everyday situation just described? How are dead bodies treated when they are absolutely or relatively many in number, unanticipated and unexpected in their appearance, concentrated rather than dispersed in their location, and where the response to death and the existing professional social organization for dealing with dead bodies cannot follow the usual path for that community. That is, how are mass deaths handled in a disaster?

Deaths in Disasters

Sudden deaths in the tens and hundreds of thousands as a result of catastrophes and disasters have occurred in many places around the world at different periods of time. In recent wars, 78,000 suddenly died from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and another 37,000 in Nagasaki. Mass bombings over only several days killed 145,000 in Dresden, Germany. Actually, sudden single non-wartime disasters have often killed more than single wartime events. In probably the worst sudden civilian catastrophe of all time, historical accounts indicate that around 830,000 died in an earthquake in 1556 in Shensi Province, China. In the last decade, perhaps 500,000 were killed by a typhoon flood disaster in Bangladesh, and another 40,000 and 70,000 died in earthquakes in Nicaragua and in Peru respectively.

American society, up to the present, has been spared catastrophes with such massive numbers of deaths. The single worst killer disaster has been the hurricane flood which hit Galveston, Texas in 1900 and resulted in around

6,000 fatal casualties. Ranking second is the Johnstown flood of 1889 which killed about 2,000. Oddly enough some very well known disasters such as the San Francisco earthquake and the Great Chicago fire produced the fewer deaths than the third and fourth worst but little known disasters in the United States, namely a hurricane that caused the overflow of Lake Okeechobee, Florida in 1928 which resulted in 1836 deaths and a forest fire around Peshigo, Wisconsin which killed 1,200 in October, 1871. In fact, since the 1776 birth of this country, there have been only half a dozen sudden disasters which have led to over 1,000 deaths.

However, disaster death tolls in American society mounting in the hundreds are not as rare. A few such incidents are sharply etched in the collective historical consciousness of the society such as the Cocoanut Grove night club fire in Boston on November 26, 1942 which killed 492 or the Texas City explosion of 1947 which produced 561 casualties. In earlier times, the Iroquois Theater fire in Chicago in 1903 killed 602, and 812 perished in the overturning of the anchored Great Lakes excursion steamer, Eastland, in 1915. Replacing to some extent the building fires and transportation accidents of the past, are plane crashes which now routinely kill 80-100 persons and are edging upwards as the aircrafts get larger. Recently, a plane crash in San Diego killed 144.

While absolute numbers may not always be high in American disasters, the totals can be relatively or proportionately high for the given community involved. There can be as many deaths in a few minutes as a community might normally sustain over a period of months. In the Rapid City flash flood of 1972, the 238 killed were about half the total number of deaths which normally occurred in the community during a typical year.

The study of Mass Deaths

Although death has come very much alive as a topic of interest and concern in recent years in American society, mass death has been largely ignored. Current writings on the subject deal almost exclusively with the death of one person. Thus, until the last few years, the recently burgeoning social and behavioral studies of disasters have not paid much attention to the matter even though the first systematic disaster research was on the ship explosion in Halifax, Canada which killed over 1,400 in 1917. When massive fatal casualties have been involved in disasters, concern has been with the problems of the living and keeping the living from dying. Thus, such incidents as the Cocoanut Grove night club fire generated interest and study in preventing "panic" in such situations in the future and in how severe burn cases could be more effectively treated. At most, and only in passing, some attention has been paid to the affective reactions of survivors who lost family members in mass emergencies.

However, about five years ago, the Disaster Research Center (DRC) at the Ohio State University initiated some systematic research on the handling of mass casualties in disasters. Three kinds of studies have been undertaken.

- 1) We have made indepth and extensive studies of some of the larger mass casualty producing events in American society in the last few years. Thus, we studied the whole process of handling the dead from the initial search and recovery effort to the final burying of several hundred dead persons in the Rapid City, South Dakota flash flood, the Big Thompson flash flood near Loveland, Colorado where 139 died and another estimated 30 bodies never found, and the Beverly Hills Supper Club fire in Kentucky, which produced 166 deaths. In each of these cases, DRC sent field teams to the disaster site to observe specifically the search and rescue and other activities in

connection with those killed and to conduct indepth interviews with officials, rescue personnel and relief workers directly involved with fatal victims of the disaster.

2) In a series of other disasters, while prime focus was on other disaster problems, DRC also looked at varying aspects of the handling of the dead. These include such events as the Indianapolis, Indiana Coliseum explosion with 31 fatal casualties, a nursing home fire in Fitchville, Ohio which left 63 dead, the San Fernando, California earthquake which killed 65, a plane crash in Georgia which resulted in 31 deaths, and the Buffalo Creek Dam disaster where 118 died.

3) Finally, DRC reexamined as part of its overall study, earlier gathered data on the treatment of the dead in several events outside the United States. In particular, we looked at the handling of the fatal casualties in the 1963 Vaiont Dam overflow disaster in Italy which left over 1,800 persons dead and an earthquake in Iran which killed about 12 000. The observations made in these studies were used to examine similarities and differences in the handling of the dead in disasters in different societies although our primary interest is in the problem in contemporary American society.

Our studies have started to uncover certain distinctive patterns in the handling of mass deaths. This is true with respect to the overall response, i.e., what the community and its organizations do when faced with such a situation. The tasks undertaken with respect to dead bodies also typically exhibit certain characteristics.

Such common elements would not be surprising if it were the result of prior disaster planning. However, no American community is really prepared for fatal mass casualties. Even when preparations have been made, they are only very partial at best. Plans tend to be limited to such matters as

which group should search for bodies, technical matters involved in physical identification, and where temporary morgues should be set up. Almost all bodies from the Beverly Hills Supper Club fire were brought to a nearby town. Predisaster plans by an energetic hospital administrator about possible locales for temporary morgues considerably facilitated the whole process. However, we have found almost no planning at all regarding psychological and social aspects of handling many and often disfigured bodies. The general consequence is that unlike some other areas of disaster response, what occurs with the dead is seldom the result of any prior planning, usually of none at all.

The Overall Response

The overall response is characterized by three features. When a mass disaster occurs, there is an initial quick response to doing something about the dead. Rapid efforts are made to find bodies, to collect them, and to prepare them for later handling. Within an hour after the Indianapolis Coliseum Holiday on Ice Review explosion, bodies were being carefully and neatly laid out in rows on the ice rink which was quickly deemed suitable as a temporary morgue. Although valuables were removed from the bodies for safekeeping, items of identification were left untouched. In less spatially concentrated disasters, the same rapid and spontaneous response frequently starts within a few hours. While some of the search for dead bodies is commingled with a hunt for injured, the former is carried on even when the latter is not a problem. There is an unspoken but felt pressure for safety, rescue and relief personnel to at least locate, if not retrieve, dead bodies as quickly as possible.

The second major characteristic of the overall response is its primarily symbolic or noninstrumental nature. That is, in many disasters, objectively,

it would be often easier to leave bodies where the person was killed. Instead, labored and extended efforts are almost always made to dig bodies out from underneath debris, rubble, earth or mud. As an Italian general observed of the Vaiont Dam disaster where digging by thousands of soldiers for over 1,800 bodies went on for over a week, "It's absurd to dig down 10 feet of rocks and stones to find a body so we can rebury it in only 5 feet of dirt." But the remark, of course, highlights the point that far more is involved than the simple matter of physically finding bodies to bury them again. As great as the reluctance is to leave bodies in their natural burial situation, there is even greater resistance to disposing of bodies in other sometimes clearly instrumental ways. For example, piling and burning the recovered bodies in the same way as animal carcasses, or simply having mass burials. Both of these ways of disposing many bodies are sometimes used, but always with extreme reluctance and usually over the violent objections of kin and friends of the dead. In both the Iranian earthquake and the Italian dam disaster, the public authorities had to abandon plans for mass burials due to the strong public outcry when such a disposition of bodies was proposed. A purely instrumental approach disposes of the dead as bodies whereas the living want to treat the dead as persons.

Finally, although the initial, rapid, overall response is unplanned, it relatively quickly assumes an organized form. A division of labor in the process of handling the dead tends to emerge. In the Loveland flash flood, for example, there were both professional and volunteer body handlers who engaged in relatively few overlapping tasks as indicated in the chart below. The professional body handlers included funeral home directors, morgue attendants and coroners, and they were generally involved in initial information gathering for identification, embalming, positive or legal identification,

death certification, body distribution and final presentation of the body. The volunteer body handlers came from such groups as police and fire departments, the National Guard, the sheriff's office, private and public investigatory groups as well as such occupations as dentistry, nursing, mental health, helicopter pilots and the clergy. They primarily undertook such tasks as searching for and actually recovering bodies, transporting and cleaning up cadavers, and participating in both initial information gathering and the later positive or legal identification. The latter were the only two body handling tasks in the Loveland disaster, where professional and volunteer body handlers overlapped.

BODY HANDLING DIVISION OF LABOR IN A DISASTER

Body Handlers

Task Structure

	Professional Body Handlers	Medical Professional Volunteers	Safety Personnel Volunteers	I.D. Expert Volunteers	Misc. Volunteers
Search			X		
Recovery			X		
Transportation			X		X
Clean-up			X		
Identification	X	X	X	X	X
Embalming*	X				
Storage*		X	X		
Positive I.D.*	X	X		X	X
Death Cert.*	X				
Distribution*	X				
Presentation*	X				

*tasks in normal death situations; i.e., professional body handlers tasks

Specific Body Handling Tasks

A disaster setting and the existence of mass casualties can combine to create a highly complex situation in which body handlers must work. Community disasters by definition interrupt ordinary routines of living and working. Widespread physical destruction may hamper attempts to return to normal. Major disasters, with communications and transportation in disarray, can be disruptive to community life for days. The emergency period in the Loveland and Rapid City flash floods lasted for four or five days.

Within such a disrupted social environment mass fatalities can compound difficulties and problems. The everyday materials, equipment and facilities are usually too scarce for the number of bodies that are present. For example, there is almost always a shortage of immediately available coffins. Also, as already noted, the number and types of body handlers must be expanded significantly. A disrupted and resource-scarce situation is hardly the kind of social setting in which professional body handlers, such as local funeral directors, typically operate.

Even if the disaster is very localized and focused as in many transportation and large fire disasters, the body handling process will deviate sharply from everyday routine. Of necessity, there will be different than normal death related tasks such as extricating bodies from debris, collecting dismembered corpses, and/or concurrently handling the dead as other disaster tasks proceed. In the Beverly Hills Supper Club disaster, the dead were being collected together within 45 minutes after the outbreak of the fire; however, twice, the dead bodies had to be collectively moved on stretchers because the locations outside the club where they were being assembled were believed to be threatened by explosions from the still raging fire.

Not only are there differences in disasters and non-disaster settings, but there are also important contrasts between the body handling processes carried out by professionals in "normal death settings" and those carried out by volunteer body handlers following mass casualty disasters. The contrasts are apparent even though the workers in both settings adhere to strong cultural rules which specify that lifeless human bodies must be handled with respect. However, situational constraints in disaster settings force the workers involved to be rather flexible in their actions to insure respectful handling of the dead.

What are some of the basic differences in these death settings? Why is it not possible to utilize exactly the same professional body handlers and their routine procedures for "normal deaths?" First, rather than dealing with one body at a time, the handlers are confronted with a large number of bodies and, hence, a much greater work load. Second, as a consequence of this overload and the necessity of acting quickly, the inclusion of workers who are not professional body handlers from funeral homes becomes essential. Third, in the normal death, a funeral director typically carries out a "one-person" act in the handling process from start to finish. In the disaster situation, however, a complex division of labor emerges which revolves around a detailed task specialization of professionals and volunteers. Additionally, this new work system alters the relationship between the handlers and the bereaved in that most body handlers have no contact with the involved families. Finally, in a normal death, the body handling occurs primarily in one locale after the body has been removed from the place of death. While this may also be the case following collective death in a disaster, the process may be divided between several locales. This decentralization of locales will itself reflect the nature of the body handling task specialization.

In the disaster setting, a wide array of phenomena converge into a relatively systematic relationship. This convergence takes on the form of a temporary body handling system with its own unique structure or roles and behavior guidelines. The roles and guidelines are considerably different from that of the normal death setting. It is imperative to look further at their impact on the actual work of body-handling. We will begin by sketching out the task structure of the routine, and single body handling. As discussed by Pine and others, this work is conducted mostly in private in specialized work environments and is a relatively simple process consisting of only six general tasks: positive or legal identification, death certification, distribution/delivery, storage, embalming and presentation.

While the task structure for a normal death is relatively simple as defined by cultural and professional standards, it is expanded considerably and becomes more complex following a disaster. Our research shows that there are certain tasks which "must" be carried out with respect to body handling in the American culture. While these requisite tasks include the six generally involved in normal death, they are preceded by five new tasks which result from the disaster setting. These new tasks actually make it possible to subsequently treat the bodies as they would have been treated in a normal death, but without the execution of the new tasks drastic changes in the care of the dead would have to be implemented, e.g., mass burials. In sequential order the new tasks are search for the bodies, recovery of the corpses, their transportation out of the disaster stricken area, clean-up of cadavers and initial identification. Therefore, the body handlers in a mass casualty disaster carry out eleven discernable tasks although the six ones necessary during ordinary times are not necessarily carried out in the normal sequence after major disasters.

As we follow the process of body handling in mass casualty disasters, we actually follow a person-to-object-to-person transformation of the dead. That is, initially a child, a Mr. Z or a Ms. Z is missing and presumed dead in the aftermath of a disaster. The volunteer body handlers begin their work by looking for specific persons who were at the site of the disaster when it occurred. However, it soon becomes apparent given the magnitude of the casualties that what will actually be sought are human forms rather than specific persons. These human forms, i.e., bodies, will be the foci of intense efforts of the body handlers aimed at the restoration of their "personhood." This is actually the main thrust of the new tasks in the disaster setting. As the bodies reach the final stage of the transformation, i.e., restored identities, the professional body handlers relieve the volunteers and conduct the traditional American body handling process.

A closer look at each of the body handling tasks will give us an appreciation of the complexity and extensiveness of the care of the dead in mass casualty disasters. The value that this culture places on individuality and belonging is demonstrated through these task responses.

The search involves canvassing the entire area effected by the disaster agent in order to sight and record the location of all the bodies. Searches may be done informally or they may be formally organized. Typically in the initial stages nearby family members, friends and neighbors begin the search. This also may be a matter of notifying the authorities that someone is missing and presumed or known to have been in the disaster area. A formal search is usually organized by law enforcement personnel and volunteers in order to respond to missing person reports. The nature of searches varies considerably and is dependent upon the location and the nature of the disaster. For example, the search for the dead after the Big Thompson flash flood

required helicopter crews and trained mountain search and rescue clubs due to the inaccessibility of the devastated river canyon area. In Xenia, Ohio heavy duty chain saws and power winches were needed to enter collapsed buildings after the tornado. However, in the Vaiont Dam disaster in Italy, use of heavy equipment was set aside for the more laborious manual employment of picks and shovels because it was felt buried bodies might be damaged in the search effort.

Hunting for victims, quickly initiated after a disaster, will generally continue for several days particularly if it is uncertain how many persons might have been victims. The search concludes when either all known missing persons are found or when there is no hope of finding more bodies. At the Beverly Hills Supper Club fire, crews painstakingly searched for three days before finding the last two bodies. In the Consol Number 9 mine disaster near Farmington, West Virginia, where 78 were killed in 1968, the search for 19 remaining bodies was not completely abandoned until ten years after the event.

In a major disaster setting, it may be one thing to locate a body and quite another to recover it from wreckage or debris. It is the removal of the bodies from the stricken area which is the focus of the recovery task. Not only must recovery teams frequently struggle to gain access to the bodies through substantial physical barriers which sometimes endanger their own safety, but these workers must also deal directly with bodies which often seem to be less-than-human in form and condition. A fire recovery may involve extremely fragile remains of bodies while a flood recovery often involves bloated, heavy bodies. Even at this early stage in the process there is the feeling that the workers should be conscious of the ultimate need to restore identity to the remains they handle. The major post-recovery

criticism of Spanish officials in the aftermath of the Canary Island plane collision of two 747 jets which killed 576 passengers was that "the bodies were removed from places where they were found in the wreckage with no apparent efforts being made to note or mark their locations..."

Considerable attention is usually given to protecting all identity evidence of the body and its surroundings. Contrary to ghoulish images of cadavers being stripped of valuables, unusual care is taken in American disasters to make certain nothing is removed from the body. In fact, sometimes when shoes are removed so tags with relevant information can be placed on the toes of the corpses, the loose shoes are transported with the bodies to the morgue. Normally, the body and small personal belongings are placed in a body bag or blanket so that everything can be carried together.

The aim of transporting the bodies is to move them from the disaster stricken site to a work area for body handling. At this early stage, each body is normally not individually moved by a separate vehicle but rather a few or many bodies will be transported in the same carrier. The size of the carrier will determine how many bodies make this journey together. Helicopters seldom can take more than ten; one-and-a-half ton Army trucks may carry in the teens. Nevertheless, care is taken to transport members from the same family together and corpses are kept covered. As one body handler noted of this phase in a disaster: "there was as much respect shown for them as possible. It wasn't a matter of just tossing bodies around like potato sacks or anything like that. They were gently placed and moved."

When a body arrives at the work area, the first task attended to is cleaning it. This clean-up is a response to both obvious and subtle needs of the body handlers. The obvious reason for the clean-up is to give the workers a clear image of what they are dealing with. To do this, mud is washed off flood victims, hair is washed and combed back away from the face, smoke is washed off fire victims' faces, etc. More subtly, however, this task precedes the initiation of efforts to restore an identity to the body. Therefore, the clean-up reflects an effort by the body handlers to restore a "human composure" to the body. It is basically an act of respect by the workers.

As one worker in a mass casualty situation said:

"We tried to keep the victims as presentable as possible. Our nurses gently washed with washcloths and soap and water their faces to get the soot off and to straighten out their hair, put their arms at the side. I don't think anyone told them to do it. Each one was covered with an identical white plastic shroud so you didn't have to look at somebody's suit coat laying over your loved one's face or something like that."

The restoration of a legal identity to a body in a mass casualty disaster is not the simple act of closing a hospital chart on a recently "terminated" patient in a normal death situation. In fact, it is such a complex process that it is divided into two steps in disaster body handling. The first identification task consists of collecting and recording any and all identity information. Physical characteristics such as sex, skin color, hair color, eye color, height weight, etc., are noted. Age is estimated. Finger prints may be taken. Dental impressions are occasionally made. Photographs are taken. Distinctive characteristics such as tatoos, pierced ears, surgical scars, etc. are noted. Additionally, at this point the body is tagged with an "identity number." This number also accompanies the records of the identity information and all the personal effects. Nothing

is discounted as evidence since it is a body and not a person which is being handled.

Although in a natural death, positive identification is a simple matter of the next-of-kin acknowledging the identity of the body, in a mass casualty disaster the task is more complicated. While one set of workers is gathering identity information from the body itself another set of workers is compiling a list of missing persons and identity information on the missing from friends and relatives. Families are asked to bring photographs, dental records, distinctive medical charts, etc. which may aid the positive identification efforts. This information is then compared with the information gathered from the body. In most disasters, this cross-comparison is done by hand; although in Loveland after the flash flood, the data was fed into a computer in order to match names with bodies. When the body handlers believe that they have a positive identification for a body, they will then ask a family member to view the body to confirm its identity. Almost always, up to that time, potential identifiers are kept away from the bodies.

When survivors are first exposed to the bodies of their relatives or kin, the transition from body to person is clearly being made. An incident in the morgue after the Beverly Hills Supper Club fire perhaps illustrates the point. Those coming to identify the dead were initially led to an explicitly called "processing line." But as a key body handler in that instance noted:

"I quickly after changed--took that sign down and used the word 'identification' because I felt the word 'processing' was psychologically undesirable both for the workers and for the families because it implied a certain coldness, I guess. So we changed it to 'identification line.'"

The establishment of a positive or legal identity is perhaps the most significant task in mass casualty body handling. At this point the body

has once again become a person. There is irony in this in that it gives great relief to families with missing victims since they no longer have to face uncertainty. The legal system is grateful for this identity step will ease the eventual processing of insurance and estate claims. The funeral directors are appreciative for they may now assume the role in body handling which they know and are comfortable with, and the volunteer body handlers have a sense of relief that all their work has not been in vain.

At the time of the positive identification the family is asked to notify a funeral director to pick the body up at the morgue. Prior to the funeral director's arrival, the coroner or medical examiner fills out and files the certificate of death which specifies identity, date and cause of death. With this completed, the body may be transported (distribution/delivery) from the temporary morgue to the chosen funeral home. This time the body travels alone unlike its trip out of the disaster area. Private transportation of bodies is, of course, customary in this society. The re-establishment of the customs of body handling continues throughout the remainder of the tasks (embalming, presentation of the body and finally storage--cremation or burial).

A Matter of Importance

Handling the sudden appearance of a large number of dead bodies does not seem to be well planned for in any society. In the absence of such preparations, the whole process slows down as efforts are made to turn bodies into persons. In this process of personalization, considerable respect is shown in handling bodies.

It is clear something very important and very fundamental is being tapped, for the dead are not "socially dead" unless the "right" steps are

taken leading to an individual funeral. Even when unusual circumstances are involved as in the more than 900 dead among the Jones cult members in Guyana, considerable effort has been made to avoid abbreviating the process of circumventing the personalization. It is notable in this particular instance, that many bodies were held in storage either because they had not been identified as in the case of many of the children or because relatives and friends of the deceased had been reluctant to claim bodies and provide them individual burial. The individualization and respectful handling of the dead described as necessary in these pages had not been possible, and, thus there had not been closure on the process. Consequently, hundreds of bodies, not persons, remained in storage in Delaware for months.

To the dead it may not matter but it does to the living. It may be true as said in Genesis III in the Old Testament that, "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." However, our study suggests that human beings and societies will attempt to intervene in that transition if certain things are not done. The living will, if at all possible, not let go of the dead until the body involved is respectfully turned into an individual person.