

THE NEW RESERVE ARMY • TIP SHEET GIFT GUIDE

Newsweek

November 17, 2003

HOW DICK CHENEY SOLD THE WAR

The Inside Story:
Why He Fell for
Bad Intelligence—
And Pitched It to
The President



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WIPEOUT: Some spring for insurance



SKIING

Six Percent Solution?

ON IRA DINKES'S second day of snowboarding last winter, he broke his wrist. The injury rendered useless his \$319 season lift pass at New Hampshire's Loon Mountain. So this year he's purchased protection: ski-pass insurance. For 6 percent of the price of a season pass, Skier Insurance Services of Kalispell, Mont., will refund your money if you accidentally kiss a tree; the company pays up to \$15,000 in evacuation costs and \$10,000 in death and dismemberment benefits. In its first month, SIS has signed up 75 people. But as their numbers grow, will an avalanche of complaints follow? Though ski lodges advertise season passes as nonrefundable, many have an unwritten rule that refunds money to anyone with a season-ending injury. Now a growing number of slopes are making season passes truly nonrefundable and passing the hassle of sorting refund claims to SIS. "In years when there's no snow, it always seemed like there were more refund requests for 'medical' reasons," says Bret Loeb,

ticketing manager at Aspen. Most life-insurance plans would cover an incident, and some mountains already cover evacuation costs, but that didn't stop Tessa Coker from an SIS plan: "I'm very prone to injury."

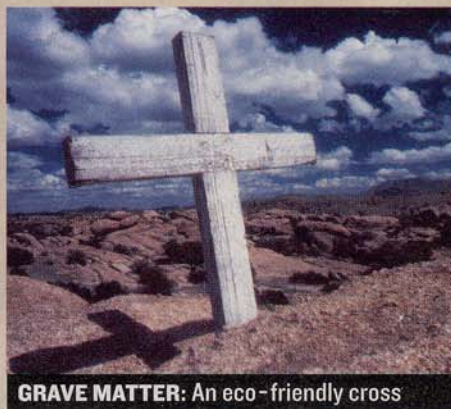
—JASON MCLURE

BURIAL Rest in Green Peace

Are you environmentally conscious for life? How about in death? That's right. It's not enough that you're made to feel guilty about your SUV—now the tree lovers are taking issue with your burial, too. So-called green cemeteries, hundreds of which exist in Europe and Africa, are catching on in the United States. Marketed as an alternative to burial in traditional wooden caskets (which remain intact for centuries) and cremation (which wastes energy and causes air pollution), these cemeteries have an environmentally correct solution: bodies are buried in biodegradable shrouds like a blanket or cardboard; individual headstones aren't permitted. This month Texas environmentalist and Universal Ethician Church Bishop George Russell is opening the country's third, and largest, natural cemetery on an 81-acre lot on the shores of Lake Livingston in east Texas. "A pickled body in a case" is not only bad for the environment, Russell argues, but it doesn't follow the Biblical concept of "dust to dust."

Don't buy into that? That's OK. You need only believe in the environment to snatch a plot; the cemetery will be available to all faiths and species. (Family pets are allowed.) Fido may be gone, but the planet will not be forgotten.

—BOB JACKSON



GRAVE MATTER: An eco-friendly cross

SCIENCE

Mother Knows Best

IF ANYONE EVER NEEDED science to throw her a bone, it's the woman in this photo. She's tired, she's overworked, she's got a screaming toddler who won't be mollified. We're betting she's lucky if she gets to skim Parenting; she's probably way too busy to read *Physiology and Behavior*. Which is too bad, because the latest issue contains some of the best news a mom could ever hear.

According to research done by Craig Kinsley at the University of Richmond, mother rats are less susceptible to stress than those who have never given birth. Re-

cent studies have shown that they also have sharper memories and spatial skills. After motherhood, the rodent brain undergoes what Kinsley calls "dramatic alterations." As levels

WAAAAHH! Mom takes the stress in stride



of estrogen and oxytocin surge, connections between neurons become more dense, and the glial support cells proliferate. Hormones may not be the only factors in play. Just being around babies may somehow encourage the brain to perk up, says Kinsley, even if "any human mother might think otherwise" after a few hours of baby talk. Female rats exposed to pups sprouted hundreds of new hippocampal neurons—even if they'd never given birth themselves. (Males grew new nerve cells, too, but only about 12 of them. Sorry, Dad.)

Of course, it's dangerous to read too much into the studies. Then again, the evolutionary advantages of "smart motherhood" are clear for humans and rats alike. Pregnancy hormones are largely the same across species, and early fMRI scans of pregnant subjects (of both species) have shown similar brain patterns. And as Kinsley says, "I like to think of humans as rats with two legs." And, of course, bigger and better brains.

—MARY CARMICHAEL