

Divorce attorney digs up wedding ring coffins

Humorous gifts help clients get on with new life

By [HELENA OLIVIERO](#)

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Published on: 04/08/08

Nothing celebrates a dead marriage quite like this: a coffin for wedding rings.

Lined with black velvet and covered with a smooth mahogany finish, the miniature wedding ring coffin is just big enough for a wedding band, diamond engagement ring and perhaps a few dried rose petals, tears -- or cheers depending on where you're at on your closure time line.



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Atlanta divorce attorney Melody Z. Richardson gives some of her clients a wedding ring coffin as a token gift.

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"When I heard about it, I went to the Web site and thought to myself: '*Must have. Must have,*' " said Atlanta divorce attorney Melody Richardson who recently purchased two of the boxes. "I just thought they were hysterical."

In the past, Richardson has given some clients champagne or massage kits with notes that read, "massage him out of your life."

But she couldn't resist this wooden box and plans to stockpile them at her office.

She's mailed one as a birthday gift to a male client "who has everything."

And the second 6-inch-long wooden box will go to a divorcing woman who "has a fabulous sense of humor but is still grieving."

For some men and women calling it quits, burying the past can have fits of humor and even inspire divorce parties -- complete with limos, voodoo dolls and banners that say, "Just *Divorced.*"

Tamika Gooden, a 32-year-old insurance adjuster who lives in Norcross, threw herself a divorce party last November at a nightclub featuring black silk roses, a black frosted cake and napkins that read: "Single Again."

Gooden was surrounded by 120 guests -- family, friends and divorcing strangers who heard about the party.

"I thought to myself, why be sad? This is a new part of my life," said Gooden, whose divorce was final six years after the initial breakup.

Since the early 1980s, the divorce rate has steadily dropped and is now at 16.4 per 1,000 married women 15 and older each year, according to the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University. Still, between 40 and 50 percent of first marriages fall apart.

Margot Swann, founder of Visions Anew, a metro Atlanta divorce support organization, said tucking a ring into a toy coffin or marking the end of a marriage with a bash carries symbolic closure.

"There's a legal closure to the marriage," she said.

"And it takes a while for our hearts and souls to catch up. Rituals like these can be very powerful."

After her divorce in 1996, which ended a 22-year marriage, Swann said she burned every card and letter from her ex. She said it was cathartic.

"I took all of the cards he had written me over 20 years -- birthdays and Mother's Days and read every one and cried, and then I burned them," she said. "I felt cleansed."