

Would you 'rent a mourner(会葬者)'?(AOL, 3/27/2013)

A firm in Essex is advertising its services(業務), offering professional mourners to attend funerals, grieve(悲しむ), and mingle(一緒に話をする) with other guests. Its website says: "Whether you need to introduce new faces, increase perceived(気づく、理解する) popularity or simply increase numbers we are here to help!"

But is there any demand for this peculiar(風変わりな) service?

<The service>

The company has been around since early last year, and has had more than 50 bookings(予約) in that time. It has 20 professional mourners on its books, who will attend funerals for two hours for £45: for £90 they will come to the wake(通夜) too.

The website promises: "We will take your guidance(助言) on how you would like us to integrate and mix with your other guests." The client(顧客) will brief(概要を伝える) mourners before the service on the life of the deceased(故人), and the 'story' of who the professional mourner is pretending to be. They are not professional actors, so don't expect a BAFTA(映画テレビ芸術アカデミー)-winning performance, but they will be polite, respectful(礼儀正しい) and discreet(控えめな、慎重な).

Ian Robertson, the founder of Rent a Mourner told Jasmine Birtles of MoneyMagpie: "We tend to ensure at least two staff members attend each funeral so they can help each other during the funeral and wake. Our staff members are all good conversationalists(話上手) and well educated, so they can hold a conversation with anybody."

The company website says: "We are typically invited to help increase visitors to funerals where there may be a low turnout(参加者) expected. This can usually be a popularity issue or being new to an area, or indeed, the country."

<Not so unusual>

Professional mourning has been common for thousands of years in other countries. In the Far East, huge funerals featuring crowds of professional mourners are commonplace(ありきたりな). In Taiwan, the most popular professional mourners have celebrity(有名人) status - and the mourners are performers intended to express the grief of the family and friends of the deceased.

In the Middle East professional mourners are expected at funerals - and are even mentioned in the Bible. These professionals are often women - with the job handed down from mother to daughter.

They were also *all the rage*(大流行して) in Victorian times in England, when mourning became a national pastime.

<Trend>

As people travel across the world for work, the trend has spread - as has the need. It's not always possible for people to travel to a funeral across the globe, so hiring a mourner becomes a possibility.

Some professionals will also deliver a eulogy(死者に対する追悼), which could be useful in an age where the vicar(教区牧師) performing the service(儀式) is less likely to know the deceased, and family and friends may be too upset(どぎまぎして) for public speaking.

The website told Birtles that it was looking to expand as it had already had to turn down 60 jobs because they were too far to travel.

The Essex firm is not offering wailing(泣き叫ぶ), but will fit in with the expectations of the client. Robertson told the Telegraph: "The Middle Eastern way is to provide wailers - crying women - as opposed to the quiet, dignified methods we use."

But what do you think? Would you hire a profession mourner? Would you consider the job? Let us know in the comments.(539)