

BURIED

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volved in the body donor program before the mid-1990s, told Harler the gift made by her relatives was "immeasurable."

"I said to him, 'Well, Dr. Terracio, let's go with your hypothesis that this was a magnificent gift,'" Harler told *The Gamecock*. "What do you do with a good gift, with a priceless gift that's given to you? What do you do with it?"

"And he said, 'Well, I put it up in a place where I treasure it.'

"And I said, 'Well, would you throw it in the trash can?'"

"And he said, 'Well, no.'

"And I said, 'Well, that's what you did with our parents and grandparents — you threw them in the trash. I don't consider that a treasured gift.'"

Amanda Bridges was less cordial. "I said, 'To me, it was the same as you flushing them down the toilet,'" she said. "There's no place to go visit, and when my 9-year-old goes up there now, she asks me, 'Well, mom, why are ma and pa buried with inmates? What did they do wrong?' And that's in that child's mind forever."

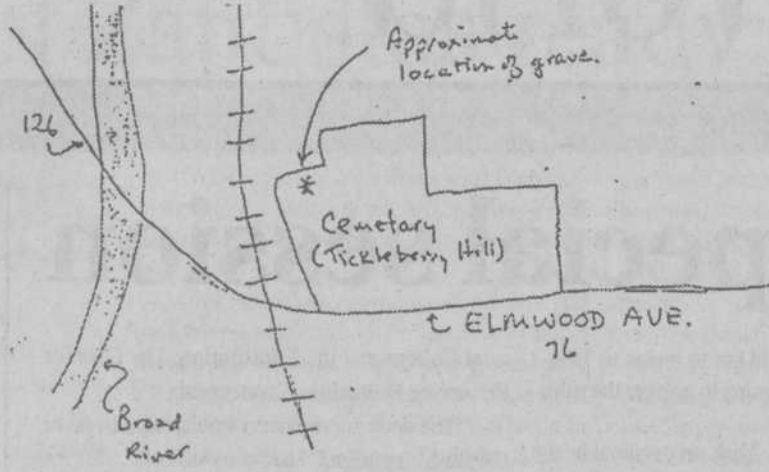
Harler said they had no idea the fence would have a South Carolina Department of Corrections sign on it. Bridges said she took her daughter there not knowing that. "It's not my fault. I took her there because she wanted to see where they were buried," she said.

Bridges later contacted the South Carolina Department of Corrections, which owns the plot. In an Oct. 16 memo from Samantha Hauptman, director for victim services, to David Jordan, director for executive affairs for the department, Hauptman wrote that she couldn't find anything indicating an agreement between USC and his department in a slew of department records stretching from 1976 to 1982.

"I was unable to locate any exchange, transmission or correspondence referring to an SCDC association, affiliation, or arrangement with the USC School of Medicine in these materials," the memo says.

"Me and my big ... mouth"

Harler said she has contacted Dateline NBC, who has expressed interest



The map USC officials sent Bridges after she originally asked about where her grandparents were buried. Bridges couldn't find the site.

Amanda Bridges then began calling people. She contacted her lawyer, who referred her to Michael Hart. She called *The Charlotte Observer*, which ran a story about the burials in their Sunday, Aug. 6 edition.

"If it wasn't for me and my big damn mouth, going to the news and all, they (the university) may not have said anything," Bridges said.

Bridges also called *The State*. But Christine Schweickert, who covers the university for the paper, declined to do a story. *The State* ran the *Observer* story Aug. 7.

"I will freely admit that I missed the importance of this story," Schweickert later told *Free Times*.

Arthur Weeden read the *Observer* story when it ran in *The State*. He began to wonder about his parents, former university employees who had worked in the university bookstore and donated their bodies to the university.

"Is this any way to treat family?" Weeden asked.

Weeden attempted to contact Henry Eichel, the writer of the story, but got no response. When another article ran in *The State* naming Hart, he contacted the lawyer.

Stories in *Free Times* and on local NBC affiliate WIS-TV followed. Bridges contacted state Sen. Andre Bauer, who has promised legislation when the legislature reconvenes in January if the School of Medicine cannot settle the matter.

Meanwhile, Hart was drawing up six lawsuits for the relatives of Carl Strange and the Bridges family. Weeden became the seventh plaintiff in the case against the university.

'We asked them for headstones. That's all we wanted'

Hart sent the complaints to USC ahead of time, in order to give them time to respond. On Sept. 18, Hart gave USC attorneys 30 days.

Eventually, attorney Daphne Sipes met with the plaintiffs. They gave the university another 30 days, as well as the terms they were looking for in the settlement.

On Nov. 17, the university asked for two more hours, Bridges said. Hart gave them until noon Monday, Nov. 20. The university never got back in touch with the plaintiffs.

On Nov. 28, Hart told *The Gamecock* that the plaintiffs had never actually wanted to sue the university.

"We just really didn't want to do anything that was going to be harmful to the university," he said.

Bridges agreed that the plaintiffs wanted to stop short of filing suit.

"We didn't, we didn't," Bridges stressed. "We asked them for headstones. That's all we wanted."

'This isn't quite what we signed the papers thinking'



The tombstones for prisoners buried at the Department of Corrections facility. Body donors were not given tombstones.

Bridges' white truck winds through the roads of Elmwood Cemetery. It reaches the back of the cemetery, and Bridges steers through a break in a chain-link fence. The truck rolls down a hill, through trees, before stopping short of a rusty fence that sets off the prisoner's field.

There is lock on the fence. According to Bridges, the lock was added after the first reports about her allegations started coming out.

"It's a brand new lock," Bridges said. According to Bridges, the site is a "desolate, horrible place to me. ... This isn't quite what we signed the papers thinking."

She said the only recourse now is

monetary compensation. "I'd like them moved. But like I said, you know, it's impossible," she said.

Bridges said the university could have avoided the uproar.

"All they had to do was get as a headstone and it would have been all over," she said.

As for Weeden, he said he's leaving the terms of the lawsuit up to his lawyers. As to whether the university can ever make the incident up to him: "I doubt it."

"They placed their trust in the university. They gave to the university. What did the university do for them?"

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Winter weather teases residents

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A major snowstorm forecast for parts of South Carolina fizzled Sunday, leaving little more than a dusting for most areas of the state. Snow fell on campus for more than an hour Sunday afternoon, but none accumulated.

Isolated storm totals of up to 5 inches were reported from Greenville and Spartanburg counties south to Greenwood. On the other side of the state, a different storm dumped about 2 inches of snow on Florence and Darlington counties.

But in between, salt and sand trucks sat idle as only enough snow fell to excite children coming out of church.

"This storm wound down quickly. The sun is out here," said meteorologist John Tomko from his Greer office Sunday afternoon, a little more than an hour after reporting moderate snow.

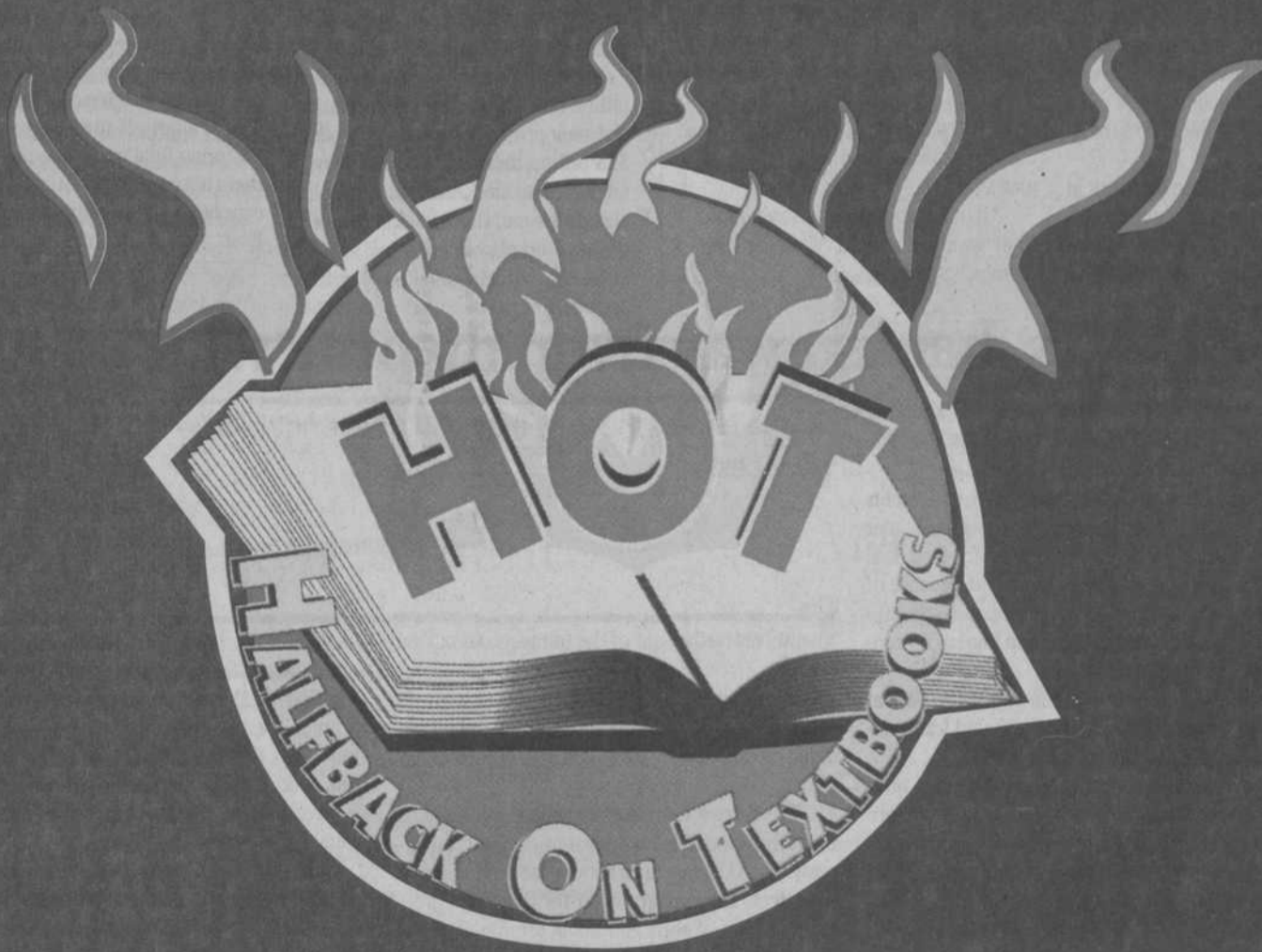
Several accidents were reported along Interstate 85 in the Upstate and the northern portion of Interstate 95 in the Pee Dee. But no power outages were reported and the snow was melting quickly in most areas.

Forecasters originally expected up to 8 inches of snow in parts of the state. But one system coming in from the west weakened, while a storm off the coast developed further north and east than expected, bringing the heavy snows to parts of eastern North Carolina.

The predictions of a crippling winter storm sent emergency management directors scrambling to prepare. In Columbia, dump trucks filled with salt and sand sat in the shoulders of major freeways. Drivers just watched as the flurries melted as soon as they hit the pavement.

The snow was South Carolina's second encounter with wintry weather in two weeks. Up to 2 inches of snow fell across the Upstate on Nov. 19.

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