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Plastics Making the World Go Round

THE baby who today is swathed in synthetic diaper materials may look forward to being buried in a plastic casket.

Both may be paid for with "plastic money," as it is reported there are at least three credit cards in circulation for every man, woman and child in the United States.

A plastics firm executive recently declared: "Seven basic resins have become 700. We are seeing a plastics revolution!"

We wear more plastic clothing than we may suppose, because synthetic fibers mixed with cotton or wool are plastic materials just as much as the styrofoam confetti that scatters all over the place when you open a package stuffed with it.

Look around the room where you are. How many items do you see made of plastic that replaced products of wood or metal?

Radio and TV cabinets, draperies, upholstery materials, sewer pipe, stools, shelves, pans, lamps, carpets, wall coverings — you name it and you'll probably find somebody

makes it out of plastic.

You can buy all sorts of tools and appliances made of plastic that can't be repaired. Plastic pellets are fed to cattle to make them feel they've had more feed than they did. Some plastic products disintegrate at inconvenient times, while others seem to be non-biodegradable.

Plastics may or may not be better than other materials but they're selling. If you think of something that hasn't hit the market in plastic form, don't give up. It may be on the way.

Tea kettles that won't melt or feel hot to the touch are coming. We already have plastic skillets and other utensils. Heat tolerant plastics are being considered as engine components for automobiles.

More than half of all fluid milk comes in plastic containers. Polyethylene terephthalate has become the dominant packaging material for household chemicals. Plastics producers are going after the huge market for soft drink containers.

Use of plastic wrappings is reported to be growing at about seven percent per year, nearly three times as fast as the packaging materials industry. People use plastic as if they'd always had it.

Containers for medicines constitute only a fraction of the uses found for plastics in the health field. Plastic surgical devices may one day be supplemented by a complete line of plastic replacement parts for worn or torn human bodies. Plastic robots already are here.

Plastic and fiberglass caskets also have arrived. An Indiana manufacturer has announced he will offer plastic models at prices below wood and metal coffins. A California firm offers to videotape funeral services and processions on plastic, as well as to install a (plastic) record player in the tombstone to reproduce the deceased person's "last words" automatically when visitors arrive.

We are living in synthetic world filled with plastics but among the remaining realities of life are death and taxes.