Art Modell reenacts the famous double homicide as he helps induct Ray Lewis into Hell's Hall of Fame

So he's dead.

Now what?

For years, I had my celebration for this special day all planned out. Champagne, fireworks, dancing, carnal passions. The works, really. Full spread. All on top of his freshly planted grave. So when I heard last night he was gravely ill, I figured I'd be happy and ready to celebrate when I awoke to the inevitable news this morning.

Strangely enough, though, I didn't experience great joy and rapture at the imminent passing of Art. It made me a little sad actually, which is strange because I despise the man and everything he did to my fair hometown. I despise his running Paul Brown out of town, even though I wasn't even born when that happened. I despise his running Marty Schottenheimer out of town. And most of all, of course, I despise him running out of town.

He kicked an entire town right in the franks and beans for his own personal profit, a loyal town which had done everything they could to support him (outside of respond to Art's blackmail to build a new stadium on Art's personal timeframe irrespective of the economics involved in a struggling city). The "football team" we got in return for his treachery is a sad shell of its former self, and a disgrace to the glorious colors and the legacy of the past. We got an empty soul of a stadium, a veritable "Factory of Sadness", and an apathetic and detached owner that ran the team like a drunken hobo performs brain surgery.

Art was the type of person I *should* hate, and in who's death I *should* revel. But here I am, a little melancholy about the whole thing, and certainly not feeling right about having the off the chain celebraish I had planned. Why is that?

I guess for one thing, I'm awash in the realization that human life is indeed greater than athletic rivalry. Let's all keep that in perspective. Football is a game, a sport, something to amuse us and help us escape from the ennui of our mundane existence. Human life is a precious and valuable commodity that we as a society necessarily put above all else. Even the worst of humans, such as Modell, should rank above the best of sport achievements in our moral priority. Note that a special exception exists for those who actually take and destroy human life, like Osama Bin Laden and Jerry Sandusky – we are decorously allowed to revel in their deaths because of the depraved indifference with which they treat other lives. And while Modell did behave with depraved indifference toward Cleveland, it is certainly quite different when the damage is the removal of a football team over the removal of life or innocence.

Being honest, though, I don't think I'm sad for Art as a human. At best I was depravedly indifferent to his life, and his passing as a person fills me with no special sadness. Upon reflection, I think to me that his death marked the end of an era, a tangible link to glory days of the Cleveland Browns from my youth. By actively hating the living black soul of the man who stole that from me, I was able to keep that era alive in my heart. "We would be great now had he never moved," I told myself, and as long as he was there to rest that prop of courage for my soul on top of, I had the glory days of the past alive and well inside of me. But now, he's gone, and I'm faced with the grim reality of Shurmur's Shitheads performing miserably in front of an emasculated crowd in the Factory of Sadness every Sunday. Forward is the only way I can look now, as the past is now dead and soon buried, and the journey ahead does not promise pleasantry.

So strangely for me, I find myself not celebrating his death (but won't begrudge you the opportunity to do such). I certainly won't celebrate his life today, or remember anything positive from it – of that I am certain. To me, Modell is now merely the nearly invisible scar on my knee from falling off my bike 30 years ago, a scab long since picked off and flicked away, and the associated painful memory nearly forgotten.

Might I relieve myself on his grave someday? Sure, if I'm in the neighborhood and have to pee, I'd gladly make his corpse my urinal mint for a moment. But I won't seek it out, because that whole chapter of our past, good, bad, and ugly, is now gone for me. Some hate is now removed from my soul, and the sting of the honest reality of the current state of Cleveland Browns football replaces it.

So “now what” indeed? Well, today I guess we all just move on. That chapter of our past has officially departed, and all the baggage with it is now checked to its final destination. It's kind of ironic and appropriate this happens right before the first game of the season under new ownership.The book of the Browns is now officially yours, Mr. Haslam. Please steward it more effectively than Mr. Modell did.