

## The Value of cemeteries...

Time now for me to put down some of my thoughts so far...As you can imagine, as a cemetery owner, I get asked a lot about "why on earth did you ever buy a cemetery?" My first response is the usual, practical answer, "between my wife and I, there are over 100 of our ancestors and relatives buried there!" Ok, that doesn't seem to be the complete answer, and some see right thru that answer. Yes, there is more. "because nobody was taking care of it anymore" and "because the opportunity presented itself" and "if I didn't, it would have gone to he\_\_!" and "I remember this place from when I first came here in 1966, when they buried my cousin here, right over here...see.." and...how many private citizens do you know besides me that can say they own a cemetery?

You ain't buying that either, are you. Well, do we ever, really fully understand our decisions and choices, and when we reflect, did we act on logic or instinct? Did we go with our gut or our head? God works in mysterious ways.

So now, after almost three years of "owning" a cemetery, what have I learned, what have I regretted, what will I do now? Do I have "buyer's remorse"?

If given enough time, I could probably fill chapters in a book, already, and some day I just may. But my most recent revelation has come from some successive Saturdays spent with my 7 year old grandson there, with the pretense of going there to work, and "pick up sticks", you see, the trees there drop little sticks, all the time, especially when the wind blows, and we fill in sunken graves too. Graves that were made from before about 1930 will all most likely "cave in" on themselves at some time in the future, leaving a deep pit for the lawnmowers to avoid. Not good. I also discovered that my grandson, Jacob, can really take good photos with my Nikon cameras. So, because he gets easily distracted from our appointed duties, I give him the camera and tell him to shoot what he wants, and we can look at the images when we get home.

So now after a few weeks of this, after looking at the images and reflecting on his questions he posed to me while at the cemetery, I am noticing a few things emerging as a trend. The kid is fascinated with "war". This alone could be a chapter for psychologists etc. and I could go on about it for a long time, but after I emerged from the din, I realized that this place, this cemetery, and most likely all cemeteries, are a place where people, especially young people, living, breathing people, can come to and learn a whole lot about things in the physical and spiritual world of today, right in one small spot, one small place on earth. And I am providing a service and that opportunity to do so.

Historically, schools take field trips, they usually go to museums or other "cool" places...I think with the proper guidance and preparation, cemeteries should be added to the list as well, and the younger the age, the better, so I offer my cemetery to any school wanting to take a field trip there. I will leave the curriculum up to the "adults" and chaperones, and I will continue to take my own field trips there with my grandkids, and use those opportunities to educate them well, set an example, and explain the world's complexities to them as best and most accurate as I can

When will you visit a cemetery with someone?