

Vandalism

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were the land for your house. The family has the right to tell you not to touch that plot," she said.

The lodge is responsible for the roadways between the plots and Adams said that it is difficult to care for them because the cemetery is 10 acres, the roads are rough and the Masonic Lodge has no money for maintenance.

She also pointed out maintenance work is all voluntary except for the mowing in the spring, with that money coming from gifts and the interest from the lodge's small fund.

"We've always had someone going to city council and they never want to do anything. They want someone else to take care of it. But there is no money for maintenance, plus the fact that the plots are owned by individuals, not by the lodge," she said.

Helm said some of the maintenance the lodge does is damaging to the cemetery. He pointed out scraped tomb stones and damaged walls and said the mower probably caused them. He also pointed to the graffiti on the abbey.

"The Mason's answer to graffiti is to paint over it in brown when the building is green," he said.

Adams said that the vandalized tombs have been placed flat so that a mower could go over them and that a mower can go over the tombs that are built flat. She also said that the abbey has been repainted several times and cream is the abbey's original color, the green is not.

Adams said the Masons really could use groups coming to them and offering to do work

through cooperative efforts.

Efforts in the past by groups such as the Boy Scouts have been good, Helm said.

"But what is needed is something a lot more comprehensive than that," he explained. He said a lot of money and effort will be needed to put the tombs back in place.

Helm's concern about the cemetery began about two years ago when he moved into his house on East 26th Avenue. He said broken beer bottles and noisy people on the roof of the abbey were so frequent that he called the police three times a week when he first moved in.

In the past year he said the noise level has decreased. He said this is due to a light he put up on the side of his house that shines all night and to a "No Trespassing" sign the Masons put up last month. However, he hasn't seen a change in police patrol of the area.

Helm doesn't think the people who come and drink on weekend nights are the real vandals, though.

"The most damage occurs in the afternoon. Saturday night kids just want a quiet place to raise hell and drink beer, not to vandalize," he said.

"The majority of vandalism is from angry kids who kick tombs over," he explained. As a high school teacher, he said he sees the vandals as kids who need a place to get out their aggressions.

"It's like a cycle. You treat something bad a long time then the expectation is to treat it bad again and it keeps getting worse," he explained.

Because of this cycle of neglect, he sees the issue is a matter of changing attitudes.

The kids who come in the afternoon to vandalize simply are following a pattern, such as "Well my brother did it and my dad did it," Helm said.

He said that in talking to some nearby residents he got the impression the cemetery always had been vandalized and that this was accepted.

"I really think if someone looked like they gave a damn about it then there would be less vandalism," he explained.

Both Helm and Adams pointed out that the cemetery is used for recreation: people run, walk dogs and spread blankets to watch the sun set.

"It's a lovely, peaceful place," Helm said. "The more you walk through here, the more you see," he said.

People still can be buried in the cemetery, Adams said. She explained the Masons can sell plots that were once alleys because when the cemetery was designed, more room was needed between plots for horses and buggies.

"Usually one or two people a year are buried there," she said.

About five years ago, the Masons had the dead branches in the trees cleared out because they constituted safety hazards. This helped lighten the grounds and create a more pleasant atmosphere, but vandalism still continues, Adams said.

As for the future, Helm said he thought about getting the cemetery designated as a city park. He said he hasn't talked to the city park district and that idea would take a one-time big grant to get things started and fix it up.

"If someone were to reconstruct it, there would still be evidence of vandalism but it

would at least be repaired a week or so later. This one-time vandalism always will be with us but what we can't stand is another 50 years of neglect," he emphasized.

Helm has talked to the city manager and the city council, and he has asked to be put on the agenda at the Mason's next board meeting. He also plans on

talking to the Historic Review Board.

"The more you walk through here, the more you see," he said.

Helm said he thinks that as the most historic cemetery in Eugene, it needs to be respected.

"I would think Eugene would be ashamed."

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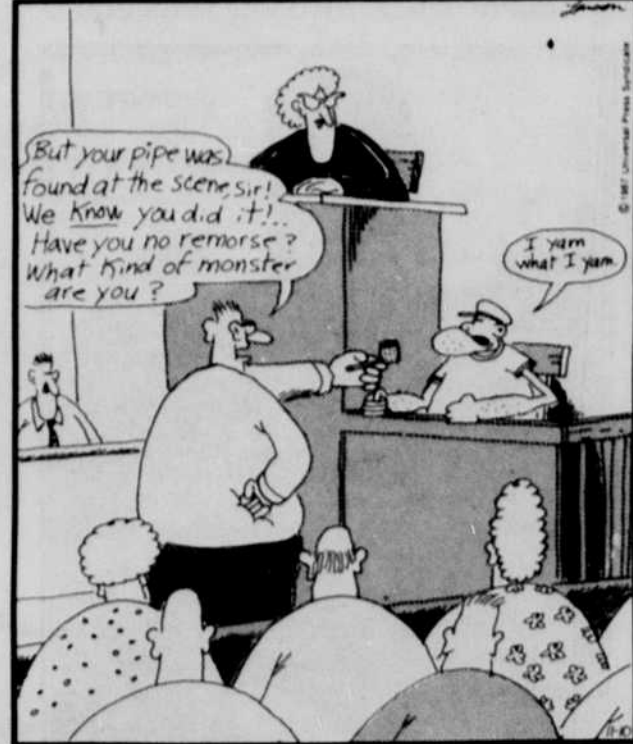


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