

Officials ask for help identifying stolen headstones

By
Troy Shinn
The Daily Courier

GRANTS PASS, Ore. (AP) - Got time on your hands? Want to help solve a local mystery?

The public is being asked to help identify the few remaining grave markers that have yet to be identified from a criminal case last year. Other memorials in the case have already been traced to local cemeteries.

The markers were discovered inside the house of Matthew Jason Millwood, 49, during an April 2017 Rogue Area Drug Enforcement Team search of his home on Southwest Isham Street in Grants Pass.

In total, police seized 15 headstones or pieces of headstones, as well as drugs and guns. Millwood was sentenced in December to just under two years in prison for crimes that included the unusual charge of “abuse of a memorial to the dead.”

“I’ve never seen in my career someone who goes and steals headstones,” said newly retired Grants Pass police Detective Pete Jenista, who recently handed off the case to the Josephine County Historical Society.

Millwood claimed in court records that he was a caretaker, but Jenista said he wouldn’t give any more details to police as to why he had taken the markers or where they all came from.

Police were able to trace most of the grave markers to nearby cemeteries, including Pleasant Valley Cemetery near Hugo, Sloan Pioneer Cemetery near Wilderville, Rock Point Pioneer Cemetery in Gold Hill and Granite Hill Cemetery just west of Grants Pass. The origins of some remain harder to track, however.

That’s where officials hope the public can help.

“Normally we would have these maintained as evidence, but the District Attorney said to take photos and return them to see if we can’t get them back where they belong,” Jenista said. “If they aren’t restored to their proper places, the Josephine County Historical Society will be the stewards of that property.”

The remaining markers have indeed been turned over to the Historical Society in Grants Pass, which has so far been able to trace two of the remaining markers: brass placards belonging to the Cameron Family that were taken from the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Cemetery, off of Foothill Boulevard.

“We tracked down their obituaries, too, but really we’re taking photos of everything we find to see if they can be matched with our inventory,” said Pat Heumann, research coordinator for the Historical Society.

The inventory she’s referring to is the brainchild of Jean Boling, who used to volunteer for the Historical Society before moving to Idaho. Boling possesses possibly the largest and most in-depth inventory of grave markers and sites for Josephine County cemeteries.

“I’ve always been hooked on cemeteries,” Boling said. “It’s fascinating how people handle their dead. So I started this database years ago to track where everyone is.”

With photographs sent from the ladies at the Historical Society, she found the Camerons quickly with the names and dates provided on the metal placards found at Millwood’s residence. They were husband and wife and both interred side-by-side at the Odd Fellows Cemetery.

When a marker has a full name a date range, it’s easy to connect to a plot or to a family.

Where things get tricky however is with the remaining stones, which have only initials and in some cases no birth or death dates.

Boling is sure these are footstones rather than headstones, meaning they may belong to family plots or some other area of the older half of Granite Hill Cemetery. Footstones usually have only initials.

“I’m almost sure they came from there,” Boling said. “There’s one plot up there that I never got photos of, but I’m pretty sure that’s where these old stones came from.”

Complicating matters further is that Boling says it’s typical for the initials on footstones to be first and middle names, rather than first and last names.

Either way it will still require someone with time and energy to go and check the sites, something that the cash-strapped Josephine County Parks Department, which is responsible for Granite Hill, can’t do.

“There is no way I could even begin to have staff make any kind of determination,” said County Parks Director Sarah Wright. “You’re dealing with a cemetery that has zero funding.”

And the footstones could theoretically have come from any number of historic cemeteries, Wright said, many of which are in the same boat in terms of resources to track down missing markers. Couple that with the fact that some sites are so old they don’t have proper records.

However, that’s what it will take at this point. If some graves are missing markers, Boling says they can be cross-referenced to those with the initials in the inventory.

The initials on the stones are as follows: FT, GL and RR.

A couple other markers were completely blank, either because they were broken off of larger memorials or because the families didn’t have the resources to provide more information of the loved one who was buried there - wherever “there” was.

Anyone with information can contact the Josephine County Historical Society at 541-479-7827.

Healthy U News: by Nicole Rensenbrink

One of my favorite sayings is, “We’re pack animals; not lone wolves.”

Research backs up this claim. A field of study developed by Dr. Dan Siegel asserts that the mind is located not only in our heads: it is also in our guts, our central nervous system, our hearts and between our relationships. Isolation stunts the brains of infants and is the most common cause of early deaths for seniors.

Imagine you are an alien, looking down on the earth, and could view 7.6 humans busying about like 7.6 billion tiny sticks in some form of motion or lack thereof. Then one says, “I get to do what

I want and it’s nobody’s business but my own!”

Imagining myself as that alien, I’d laugh.

Our lives are never just our own. We were born to parents and raised by them and/ or others who invested a lot of energy (for better or worse) in our care. We attended schools that were graded on our ability to learn. We had neighbors whose lives we made more or less pleasant by our music listening levels. We’ve had friends who looked to us for solace and for fun. We’ve had loves who’ve tolerated our many failings. We’ve had vulnerable

family and community members who can’t survive without our generosity. And we’ve had employers who rely on us to make their businesses run.

Life on earth doesn’t happen in a vacuum. It’s joyful, messy, playful, aggravating, loving, tedious, sorrowful, interesting and strenuous. Most of those feelings are related to what others did or didn’t do, whether they were with us or we were alone.

Though it’s certainly possible to be overly intrusive and controlling, we truly are our brothers’ keepers. People are logically resentful when they pay for those

who could easily pay for themselves. It’s equally true that it’s cruel to expect those with limitations to perform at the same level as those without. And, it’s not codependence that lends weight to the saying that ‘parents are only as happy as their least happy child.’ It’s hard-earned love.

In order for human beings to thrive, we must treat each other (ourselves included) kindly, responsibly, respectfully and compassionately. We all depend on it.

The staff and volunteers of Healthy U present this column as part of their mission to promote health in the Illinois Valley.

Church News

Community Bible Church

In 38 minutes
Psalm 89:47-48 (NKJV)
47 Remember how short my time is; for what futility have You created all the children of men? 48 What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?

Hawaii is a lovely place, full of things to see and do – from volcanoes to marvelous beaches. It has much worth experiencing. Recently it was a place of terror and confusion – all over the wrong push of a button. An emergency alert was sent out that declared, “Ballistic missile threat inbound to Hawaii. Seek immediate shelter. This is not a drill.” Then came 38 minutes of not knowing what was going to happen – life, death, injury, or escape? With the current conflict with North Korea and the threats made by the North Korean government, the seed had already been planted that there was the possibility of an attack, so it was easy for people to believe a missile was headed their way.

One woman said, “It was the longest and most scariest 38 minutes of my life. I just sobbed for a moment because I was so scared, but it only lasted for maybe not even a minute because there wasn’t time. I needed to get down to my kids. And I just went down into the bathroom and we just sat there and I told them, ‘Let’s pray.’”

Another couple was on their honeymoon. “John and his wife woke up on their honeymoon that morning to a startling alert:

A ballistic missile attack was imminent. The emergency alert was blasted over the hotel’s public address system and sent to peoples’ mobile phones across Hawaii just after 8 a.m. local time. The message that appeared on phones read in all caps, ‘BALLISTIC MISSILE THREAT INBOUND TO HAWAII. SEEK IMMEDIATE SHELTER. THIS IS NOT A DRILL.’ John and his wife immediately grabbed their belongings and left their hotel room in picturesque Maui in search of a safe place. Everyone else was doing the same. ‘A very chaotic and nerve-wracking scene,’ said John. . . ‘some people were crying, a lot of people were frantic.’”

People often fail to prepare for the future, be it the virtual certainty of an earthquake off the Oregon Coast or a hurricane in Florida. Some things are impossible to plan for. Some people don’t even plan at all; they just hope for the best.

I believe the worst event a person fails to plan for is their death. According to the Bible, death’s impact and results are eternal. I would think that people should at least be motivated to investigate about what happens to them after they pass from this life. It’s worth considering while you have more than the 38 minutes left – as the people in Hawaii thought they had.

See you Sunday.

**In Christ,
Pastor Dave**

Places of Worship

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www.bridgeviewcc.org

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Bible Study 11:15
Pastor Charles Byrd
Church (541) 592-3218
Madrone Adventist School
541-592-3330

IMMANUEL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
200 Watkins St., CJ
Phone 541-592-3876
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Sunday Worship - 9:15 a.m.
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28569 Redwood Hwy. CJ
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Sunday Service 10:30 a.m.
Thursday Seekers 7 p.m.
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www.ivpraisecenter.com
- COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH**
Pastor Dave Gordon
113 S. Caves Ave., CJ
Office: 541-592-3896
Email: cbccca@gmail.com
Sunday Worship - 10:30 a.m.
Christian Academy
Pre-K to 12th grade
Awana - Wednesdays - 6 p.m.

ST. PATRICK OF THE FOREST CATHOLIC CHURCH
407 W. River St., CJ
541-592-3658
Fr. William Holtzinger, Pastor
Mass - Sunday 11 a.m..
Sacrament of Reconciliation
Sunday - 10:30 a.m.
Holy Days TBA

TAKILMA BIBLE CHURCH
10343 Takilma Road, Takilma
Pastor Dan Robinson
Bible Study / Prayer Time
9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship 11 a.m
Wednesday Bible Study
7 p.m

First Baptist Church of Selma
18285 Redwood Hwy., Selma
541-597-4169
Pastor Monty Pope
Sunday School - 9:45 a.m.
Worship - 11 a.m.
- GOOD SHEPHERD LUTHERAN CHURCH**
East River Street
& Lewis Court, CJ
Annemarie Richardson
Lay Pastor.
Sunday School - 9:15 a.m.
Sunday Worship - 10 a.m.
Church Phone: 541-592-2290
www.goodshepherdlutheraniv.net

VALLEY EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH
498 Laurel Road, CJ
P.O. Box 1248
Pastor Marvin Porter
Sunday School - 9:45 a.m.
Worship Service - 11 a.m.
evfree@frontiernet.net
541-592-6160

FOUNTAIN OF LIFE ASSEMBLY OF GOD
451 S. Junction Ave., CJ
541-592-3956
Pastor Mark McLean
Morning Worship
9:30 & 11 a.m.
Wednesday - 7 p.m.
Adult Bible Study

ST. MATTHIAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH
25904 Redwood Hwy., CJ
541-592-2006
Rev. Bryant Bechtold
Sunday Worship
Service 10:30 a.m.
- THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS**
209 S. Junction Ave., CJ
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Sunday School - 11:20 a.m.
Priesthood, Relief Soc. - 12:10 p.m.
Bishop
Larry Hammersmith
541-592-3919

Illinois Valley Baptist Church
541-592-6149
Located in the old Chapel on Lister St.
(between Caves Ave & Junction Ave)
Sunday Worship 10:30 AM
Wednesday Bible Study, Prayer & Youth Program 7:00 PM
Ladies Bible Study
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