THE CATHOLIC CEMETERIES
The Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

FALL/WINTER 2011

HERITAGE

A newsletter for friends of The Catholic Cemeteries

Mark Green pauses by his family's monument at Resurrection Cemetery.

A solemn sense of ownership

By Mark Green

Mark Green is a retired teacher, genealogist and former president of the Minnesota Genealogical Society. He attends St. Mary of the Lake in White Bear Lake, MN.

When I was five years old, I made my first trip to Resurrection Cemetery. It was 1952 and my grandmother had just died. I didn't understand much about death but sensed even at that age the gravity of the feelings of my parents, aunts and uncles, and other relatives, many coming here from thousands of miles away. The experience was the beginning of a lifelong relationship with Resurrection, and the first inkling in my young mind that the word 'cemetery' meant something very important.

In the years that followed, our family made frequent journeys from our Como Park home in St. Paul over the two-lane highways to the cemetery in Mendota Heights — and my fascination grew. In my child's mind, it seemed like it took hours to get there. I remember Resurrection's old entrance, which went suddenly down a steep hill into this lush green park with its field of white monuments. At my grandparents' grave, Dad would get down on his knees in the grass, instructing us to do the same, and then lead us in prayers, his eyes filled with tears.

We would get back in the car and drive through the cemetery, my dad pointing out the gravesite of my aunt, a nun, and those of the many other relatives and friends buried there. He told us that he wanted to be buried at Resurrection when his time came. I now see that with each trip, he was teaching me the importance of the land, of memorializing the existence of people, and of the bond of family. My sense of awe and reverence deepened.

Into adulthood, I began exploring cemeteries in Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin — some overgrown, wild and forgotten; others, like Resurrection, lasting memorials to the common person. I got interested in genealogy, took my family on visits to historical cemeteries and became an ancestor hunter, eventually serving as president of the Minnesota Genealogical Society.

By the time my father died in 1984, we had discovered more relatives who had been buried in the lovely landscape of Resurrection — the graves of great-great grandparents surrounded by sons and daughters, aunts and uncles. My mother now rests there as well. I know one day I will be among them.

Through these years of visiting, exploring and reflecting, I have developed a solemn sense of ownership of these places called cemeteries. It's true that thousands of years from now, Resurrection may not exist; we know that we do not own the land forever. But if inhabitants of the distant future discover our cemeteries, they will know that people of faith recognized the importance of a person's life, and that we honored them in this special way, in these special places.

From near and far, Larpenteurs came to Calvary

Dozens of descendants of A. L. Larpenteur, one of St. Paul's earliest citizens, gathered at Calvary Cemetery in St. Paul in August, as part of a family reunion drawing relations from across the U.S. and from France.

Calvary is the resting place of A. L., the first Larpenteur to settle in St. Paul, and of more than 120 other descendants of the extended Larpenteur family.

"We were delighted that Calvary was part of this large family reunion," said John Cherek, director of The Catholic Cemeteries. "This cemetery has served generations of area families, including many early leaders of the city of St. Paul such as A. L. Larpenteur. It is truly a rich repository of the history of the city as well as the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis."

The reunion idea started several years ago after Marcia Kremer of St. Paul connected with her distant cousin Michele Murnane of Seattle while doing online genealogy research. Murnane had discovered family descendants in France and, after visiting them, suggested the reunion in St. Paul.

"When the first Larpenteurs settled in Minnesota, it was the land of opportunity and they went on to make a mark on the city of St. Paul," said Kremer, who attends Lumen Christi in St. Paul. "So it is fitting that we visited Calvary in their memory."

Reunion guests visited the marker of A. L. Larpenteur, for whom Larpenteur Avenue in St. Paul is named.

The team of volunteers organized by Patrick Finnegan paused for a group photo.

Spades and brooms were the tools of the day for Finnegan's team.

Patrick Finnegan, left, supervised the restoration of the markers.

American flags adorned the cleaned and elevated headstones.

Scouts restore Civil War headstones at Calvary Cemetery

The historic headstones of Civil War veterans buried at Calvary Cemetery in St. Paul have been given new life, thanks to the leadership of Eagle Scout Patrick Finnegan of Roseville.

For his Eagle service project, Finnegan, 18, organized an effort to uncover and elevate about 75 sunken headstones.

Originally upright, the headstones are made of Georgia marble, which deteriorates in Minnesota's harsh winters. Over time, many of them toppled over. So, about 50 years ago, cemetery staff laid all of them flush with the ground.

As the years went by, the headstones gradually sunk several inches and grass encroached, making the stones nearly invisible.

Jon Louris, operations manager at The Catholic Cemeteries, had long wanted to do something about the problem. So when Finnegan inquired about possible cemetery-related ideas for his Eagle project, restoring the Civil War section was at the top of Louris' list.

"We just don't have the staff resources for this type of restoration. I was delighted when Patrick accepted this challenge," Louris said.

On September 17, Finnegan's team of fellow Scouts, family and friends arrived at Calvary ready to work. Over several hours, under his direction, they cut away the sod and cleaned the stones, and then elevated them by adding layers of sand.

By the end of the day, the section had a tidy new appearance, with an American flag placed at each gravestone.

"Patrick did an outstanding job on this project, and we are so appreciative for the assistance of all the volunteers who helped him," said Louris. "Now these historic graves of men who served our country so long ago have the respectful appearance they deserve."

Patricia Ratajak and family service counselor Tracy Flanagan outside the Chapel Mausoleum at Resurrection Cemetery, where Peter Cook is interred.

In life a loner, in death remembered

Peter Cook was always a loner. A bachelor with no family, he lived by himself for years in a small St. Paul apartment, his only companion a little dog named Louie.

But Cook was blessed with a friend. Patricia Ratajak had been his co-worker at a company for many years before both retired more than a decade ago. In the years since then, Cook would occasionally stop by unannounced at Patricia's house.

"He'd want to show me his car or his dog or just have coffee," she said. "But he'd only stay a few minutes. Then he'd be gone and I wouldn't see him for a long time, sometimes years."

Once she got a Christmas card from him, in which he wrote, "To my one and only friend."

"For some reason, Peter wanted nothing to do with people. That's just the way he was," she said.

About five years ago, on one of those rare visits, Cook handed Ratajak a copy of his will. "He asked me to take his dog if anything ever happened to him," she said. "I was stunned that he named me in the will. But there was no one else in his life."

Ratajak hadn't seen Cook for several months when she got a call in July from the coroner. His body had been found in his apartment, his death due to natural causes. He was 79.

Left with the responsibility to handle her friend's affairs, Ratajak contacted Resurrection Cemetery — Cook had specified it, and Ratajak's own parents and sister are buried there. She worked closely with family service counselor Tracy Flanagan to arrange for burial in the Chapel Mausoleum.

"Patricia is a lovely and very caring person," Flanagan said. "She took this responsibility very seriously, and made dignified and respectful decisions."

At the committal service, Ratajak and her daughter, joined by Cook's landlady and Flanagan, paid their last respects. Father Paul Morrissey, SM, offered prayers.

Cook's little dog Louie now lives with Ratajak. "That Peter was so alone in the world is just so sad," she said. "It breaks my heart that he had no one else. I don't want him to be forgotten."

Updates

Hundreds in attendance on Memorial Day

As has become an annual custom for many families, hundreds of visitors were present over the Memorial Day weekend to remember their loved ones at mass and to visit and decorate their graves. Archbishop John Nienstedt presided at the Memorial Day mass at St. Mary's Cemetery, Archbishop Emeritus Harry Flynn at Resurrection Cemetery, Auxiliary Bishop Lee Piche at Gethsemane Cemetery, Fr. Kevin McDonough at Calvary Cemetery, and Fr. Earl Simonson at St. Anthony's.

Special masses to be held in December

Masses of remembrance will be celebrated at Gethsemane Cemetery and Resurrection Cemetery in the chapel mausoleums on Saturday, December 10, 2011. Invitations are being sent out to the newly bereaved. For more information, contact the respective cemetery office at Gethsemane or Resurrection, or visit our web site's upcoming events page.

Matching gift offered to support Peaceable Kingdom Garden

Antonio Pilla and Marne McLevish, co-chairs of the Peaceable Kingdom Volunteer Committee, have announced that an anonymous donor will match all donations made to the Peaceable Kingdom Garden Fund at the Resurrection Cemetery Chapel Mausoleum. This matching gift program will expire on May 31, 2012.

Mr. Pilla provided the initial funding for the completion of the first phase of the garden and raised an additional $20,000 to finish off all elements of the garden. However, if the garden is to be completed as planned, $80,000 remains to be raised.

A unique feature of the garden is an opportunity to memorialize by name the important people in our lives who have died. Inscribed paving bricks with the name and years of birth and death of a loved one will form the patio area of the garden. The paving bricks are not limited to honoring only those interred in Resurrection; instead, it is open to anyone who wishes to create an enduring tribute to someone dear to them who has died. The donation for an inscribed paving brick is $500.

To make a donation of any amount to the fund, use the enclosed envelope. To arrange for a paving brick, contact The Catholic Cemeteries office at 651.228.9991 or visit **www.catholic-cemeteries.org**.

Remember, all donations will be matched through May 2012.

Adopt-a-Marker: Restoring the gravestones of pioneering priests

A campaign is now underway to raise funds to replace 64 deteriorated grave markers of priests from the Archdiocese's earliest days, who are buried in Calvary Cemetery in St. Paul and St. Mary's Cemetery in Minneapolis. Parishes and other organizations are invited to "adopt-a-marker" for a donation of $350, the cost of replacing one of the headstones.

More than $2,000 has already been raised due to the generosity of attendees of the Memorial Day Masses at Calvary and St. Mary's and the dedicated leadership of Phil Harr and the Knights of Columbus Council 435 in Minneapolis. Mr. Harr is seeking other area Knights of Columbus councils to support this project.

Fr. Kevin McDonough, pastor of St. Peter Claver Parish in St. Paul and Sagrado Corazon de Jesus in Minneapolis, who spearheaded this fund drive, expressed his hope that other Catholic organizations and associations like the Knights of Columbus, along with parishes that were served by these pioneer priests, will join in the cause to preserve the memory of these early builders of the Archdiocese.

Sunburst Memorials of St. Cloud, the supplier of granite memorials sold by The Catholic Cemeteries, is providing the markers at a significantly reduced cost to support the success of this program. The Catholic Cemeteries will install the memorials at no cost.

Donations of any size are welcome. Checks made to The Catholic Cemeteries, with a notation for the Priests' Section Fund, can be sent to The Catholic Cemeteries, 2105 Lexington Ave. S., Mendota Heights, MN 55120. For more information, please call 651-228-9991.

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CEMETERY HOURS

Every day of the year, cemetery grounds are open from 8 a.m. to dusk (generally 5 p.m. in the winter). All cemetery offices are normally open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and on Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon at Resurrection and Gethsemane.

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT
www.catholic-cemeteries.org

The Catholic Cemeteries of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

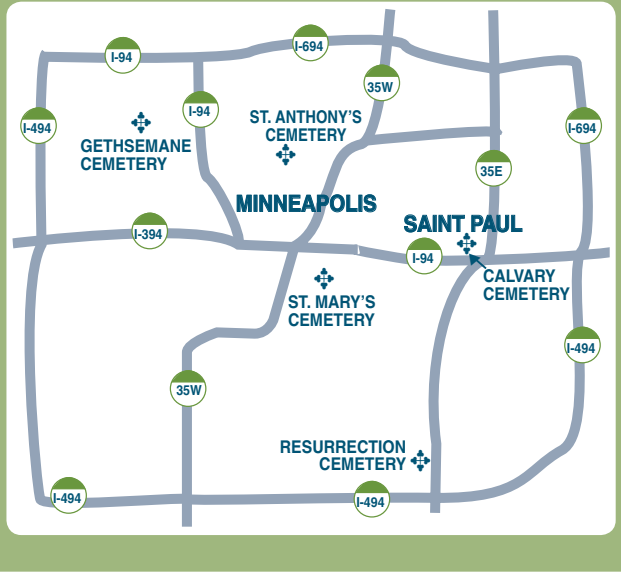
CALVARY CEMETERY
753 Front Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55103
651-488-8866

GETHSEMANE CEMETERY
8151 42nd Avenue N.
New Hope, MN 55427
763-537-4184

RESURRECTION CEMETERY
2101 Lexington Ave. S.
Mendota Heights, MN 55120
651-454-5072

ST. ANTHONY'S CEMETERY
2729 Central Avenue NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418
763-537-4184

ST. MARY'S CEMETERY
4403 Chicago Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55407
651-488-8866



Children's Memorial and Prayer Garden at Gethsemane Cemetery

An aunt remembers her beloved nephews

Last January, Linda Goynes shared the story of her two nephews with staff of The Catholic Cemeteries during Mission Day, an annual retreat day opportunity for cemetery staff to reflect on their ministry to the bereaved.

Both young men were murdered in Omaha — Arius, 22, in 2009 and Lendale, 21, in 2010. Both are buried in Omaha.

Goynes came to Mission Day as the guest of Patty Stromen, parish administrator at Church of the Ascension in north Minneapolis. Stromen talked with staff about the vital partnership between The Catholic Cemeteries and her parish in addressing the needs of bereaved parishioners and neighbors of the church.

Linda Goynes (center) with Don Warner and Patty Stromen at the Children's Memorial at Gethsemane Cemetery.

In appreciation, the staff of The Catholic Cemeteries offered Goynes the opportunity to inscribe the names of Arius and Lendale on paving bricks at the Children's Memorial and Prayer Garden at Gethsemane Cemetery in New Hope.

In late September, after the new bricks were set in place, a prayer service was held at the Children's Memorial. It brought together Goynes with Don Warner, who with his wife, Linda, funded the Children's Memorial. The Eden Prairie couple designed and funded the garden in memory of their daughter, Angela, and as a place for healing and hope for anyone coping with the death of a child.

"For Linda and others who have lost someone dear, the opportunity to have the names of their loved ones permanently set in a beautiful garden of remembrance is very significant," said Sr. Fran Donnelly, director of LifeTransition Ministries at The Catholic Cemeteries. "We are so appreciative that the Warners created this special place for bereaved families."

In Appreciation

Our thanks go to those listed below for gifts given between October 1, 2010, and September 30, 2011.

John B. Alvarez
James A. Audette
Arthur Beckmann
Betty Berg
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