



THE
CATHOLIC
CEMETERIES

HERITAGE

A newsletter for friends of The Catholic Cemeteries

Standing on Sacred Ground

By Beryl Schewe

In the late 1800s, Nebraska's population soared. I know that's hard to envision. "Nebraska" and "population explosion" seem unlikely bedfellows, but these newcomers were people who ventured west on horseback and in covered wagons. They couldn't envision cars or planes, much less Google Earth to show them better real estate. Either Nebraska looked good enough, or they just got tired of heading west and stopped.

My great-grandparents were among the throng. They were Swiss immigrants, and my best guess is they found a German-speaking community — and in the nick of time. My grandmother Rosa was born in Nebraska soon after they settled. Like her parents, her first language was German. She was by heritage 100% Swiss, and by birth 100% American.

Seven decades later, my dad, half Swiss according to my math, decided to take his mom back to her ancestral home. Her parents had come from Engi, Switzerland, a tiny village in the mountains. My grandmother's family had been one of the first three families to settle Engi and thus had been part of the church registry. Births and baptisms and marriages and deaths were all recorded by my grandmother's ancestral church in the registry going back to 1511, when the village was settled. Centuries of the sacramental records were meticulously handwritten for the Blumer clan; page after page were found in the church registry. In 1511, there were no Catholic cemeteries in Switzerland. There were only cemeteries. Then, everyone was Catholic, so using the words Catholic and cemetery together was redundant.

My dad, an avid photographer, recorded this adventure in detail. We have pictures of my grandmother surrounded by a gaggle of young schoolchildren, all Blumers, all related to my grandmother who grew up a continent away. And in the photo array are pictures of the cemetery, headstones of the Blumer clan, the same Blumers meticulously noted in the church registry — centuries of Blumers. These were the brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, and parents and grandparents that Rosa's parents had left behind. They were the family she'd never met, but family who had informed her life nonetheless. Engi's cemetery was sacred ground for her. Based on my dad's photo record, my grandmother meandered through the cemetery reading worn headstones, wandering row to row.

Soon after she returned, my grandmother mentioned to me that she wanted to be buried in San Diego. My grandmother and grandfather

had not lingered in Nebraska, but had moved on and lived for decades in southern California, in a house that had a marvelously terraced garden with citrus trees, plums, avocados and peaches. This was her home, not the sod hut of her birth on the Great Plains or the mountainous terrain of Switzerland. More significantly, her husband, youngest son and grandson were already buried in southern California — her holy ground.

Having lived a farm-to-table organic existence decades before it was fashionable, my grandmother lived to 103. She died thirty years after she first mentioned her wish to be buried in southern California. We took her home to San Diego and buried her between her husband and her youngest son.

As we stood at her grave, I had a profound awareness that this was my dad's holy ground. His entire family was buried here — both of his parents, his only sibling, and a nephew.

For good and for bad, our families have launched us to where we are. We stand on their shoulders. And in the ideal, there should be a place, or places, where each of us and those who come after us can stand on sacred ground, pause, and reflect. 🌳

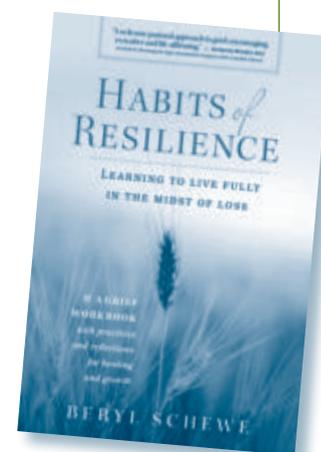


About Beryl Schewe

Beryl Schewe is the Director of Pastoral Ministry for Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church in Edina. She works with many families and individuals, encouraging the compassion and appreciation for one another which dwells inside each of us. She earned an M.Div from St. John's University in Collegeville, and became a board-certified chaplain following a year-long residency at Abbot Northwestern Hospital.

A valuable grief resource *Habits of Resilience*

Guest writer Beryl Schewe is the author of a recently-published book, *Habits of Resilience*, a grief workbook and resource for grievers and caregivers. It includes sections on decision-making, speaking to the dying, helping children cope with loss, and the importance of community support. Reflection questions and a 21-day challenge make this book a sure companion for anyone who seeks healing, and for all who need to remember that love always triumphs over death. *Habits of Resilience* is available on Amazon or through the web site of the publisher, 23rd Publications at pastoralplanning.com.



An excerpt from *Habits of Resilience*...

"Holidays and family times take on new meanings when we've lost a loved one through death. With some thought and care, holidays can become holy days, times of remembrance with stories and celebration.

When we are at the farm on a holiday, particularly Father's Day or Memorial Day, we often hike out to [Beryl's father-in-law] Mike's grave. The family plot is part of a pioneer cemetery that sits on a small hillock a few hundred yards from the farmhouse. Unlike the day of his burial, when we solemnly walked in procession in jackets, suits, and funeral attire, these impromptu gravesite visits are always a ragtag band of family in jeans and fleeces, with dogs running beside us, all of us dodging cow pies as we hike across the fields to gather around Mike's grave. We usually sing a song and say the Our Father. It is a simple time to remember Mike as a family."



Staff Profile

Field worker **Jordan Jones**: *“It’s a good feeling working here.”*

When Jordan Jones first started at The Catholic Cemeteries several years ago, some family and friends wondered why he would choose work that some consider morbid or odd. But his mother felt differently.

“I remember her saying to me, ‘Maybe God has a purpose for you there,’” Jones said.

Jones joined the full-time field staff at Resurrection Cemetery in 2014 after three years as a seasonal temporary worker. It’s an outdoor job involving considerable physical labor, including opening and closing graves, putting up tents for graveside services, trimming and weeding, setting markers and monuments, and overall cemetery maintenance.

Jones says he likes the fresh air and how the job helps him stay in shape. But there’s another dimension to his position that Jones finds particularly fulfilling — being present with people during times of loss, grief and remembrance.

“When there’s a burial service, we get the grave ready and then stand nearby in case any help is needed,” he said. “We’re there with people at these very important times.”

At other times, Jones enjoys helping visitors who come to Resurrection looking for a grave of a loved one, he said. “I can help them locate the grave, and they often tell me about their loved one who is buried there. Sometimes they ask me to help them trim around the gravesite and I’m glad to be able to do that.”

The father of four-year-old twin sons, Jones moved to Minnesota from Illinois before the boys were born. Working at The Catholic Cemeteries has helped him in the adjustment to a new community. “Being on the staff at Resurrection is like family, really nice people,” he said. “It’s a good feeling working here.” 🌳



Annual cousin reunion takes a different turn with cemetery visits

For 24 summers, the Olson family first cousins have gathered for a weekend of talking, laughing, and sharing memories of their grandparents, aunts and uncles and other relatives. The group of ten or so women have met at each other’s houses, taken road trips, attended festivals and stayed at resorts. But this past summer, for their 25th reunion, they decided on something different.

“Last Memorial Day, my cousin Helaine had visited a couple of cemeteries near Benson, MN, the area where my grandparents farmed and raised my mother and aunts and uncle,” said Patricia Kemper, a retired nurse who lives in Eagan.

“Helaine noticed that some of the graves of our long-deceased relatives were in poor condition. Why not go and clean up the graves, she suggested. Bingo! We had found a perfect project for our gathering,” said Kemper, a family genealogist who attends the Church of St. Peter in Mendota.

Over two days, the group convened and visited four church cemeteries in western Minnesota:

- At the Lutheran cemeteries of West Zion in Hancock and Our Redeemer in Benson, they found Olson family graves dating back to their great-grandfather and grandfather, who were immigrants from Laerdal, Norway.
- At St. Francis Cemetery in Benson, they visited the Irish Catholic side of the family, including the graves of Kemper’s father, a nephew and her brother. At St. Malachy Cemetery in Clontarf, they found other Irish descendents and many relatives.

According to Kemper, the task of cleaning the graves was divided up by interests and abilities of the various cousins. “The gardeners in the group attacked the gravesites, weeding and edging the sod back from around the stones, and then scrubbed the grave markers. Others helped out by watering flowers and running errands for supplies, while the artists in the group made charcoal rubbings of various gravestones,” she said.

In all, the cousins tidied up 18 family graves and learned a lot about their ancestors along the way.

“We confirmed, corrected and added to our family’s genealogy data, and shared many memories,” Kemper said.

The group also visited the two remaining Olson sisters — Kemper’s mother Helen, 99, and her aunt Inez, 87, both of whom live in Benson.

On the last night of the reunion, the cousins gathered to remember their ancestors, spouses, children and grandchildren with prayers — “For All the Faithful Departed” and “Prayer for Our Beloved Deceased” from The Companion Prayers of St. Anthony.

“From beginning to end, it was such a meaningful weekend for all of us, a reunion we will never forget,” Kemper concluded. “I would recommend it to any family.” 🌳



TOP: A grave marker gets a thorough scrubbing.

ABOVE: Charcoal tracings of gravestones were a remembrance for the cousins to take home.

Interested in planning a family reunion like the Olsons?

Stop by the offices at Resurrection, Gethsemane or Calvary cemeteries for help in locating the graves of deceased family members or other assistance with a family gathering.

Gill Brothers Funeral and Cremation Services

An enduring commitment to fetal burial ministry

Four times a year, parents who have experienced miscarriages come together at a special prayer and committal service at Resurrection Cemetery's Chapel Mausoleum. As part of the service, the individuals and families process to the cemetery's children's section where fetal remains of their children and of other families are buried communally.

Since The Catholic Cemeteries started offering the service and formal burial eight years ago, a significant contributor to the service has been Gill Brothers Funeral and Cremation Services, a fourth-generation family-owned business with three funeral homes and chapels that serve families in much of the metro area.

"Gill Brothers plays an extremely important behind-the-scenes role in this ministry to grieving families. We are very grateful for their commitment and partnership," said Sister Fran Donnelly, B.V.M., Director of Life Transition Ministries for The Catholic Cemeteries.



Mesa MacDonald and Dan McGraw

Each quarter, Mesa MacDonald, a funeral director at Gill Brothers, picks up fetal remains at three hospitals in the Fairview Health Services system — Ridges, Southdale and Riverside. She transports the remains to Resurrection for the service and burial. This also includes any remains brought to the funeral home by a family.

In addition, Gill provides small white caskets for the communal burials, which are also used for remains from the HealthEast Care System.

"For many families, the loss of an infant due to miscarriage still goes unacknowledged by family and friends, so it is gratifying to know that The Catholic Cemeteries provides parents with the prayer service and burial as a

meaningful and dignified way to have that loss acknowledged, at no cost to them," said MacDonald.

Actually, facilitating the burial of fetal remains is nothing new to Gill Brothers. It's something the funeral business began doing more than six decades ago, according to Dan McGraw, great-grandson of founder Michael Gill.

"Back in the 1940s, my grandmother had a close connection with the Sisters of St. Joseph, who operated St. Mary's Hospital that later merged with the Fairview system," McGraw said. "We arranged to handle the hospital's fetal remains, which were then buried in free graves at St. Mary's Cemetery (one of The Catholic Cemeteries) in south Minneapolis."

McGraw said the burial of fetal remains is important in a very fundamental way.

"The way you handle a fetus that died at 10-weeks gestation reflects on the way you handle the death of someone who dies at age 100," he said. "Following Catholic teaching, our family believes that there is an essential dignity in how the body should be treated at death, no matter what the age."

Besides partnering in the fetal remains ministry, the Gill family has a number of other strong connections with The Catholic Cemeteries.

McGraw's father, Neil McGraw, now age 90, served on the board of directors of The Catholic Cemeteries for many years, and many relatives are buried at Resurrection and St. Mary's. McGraw's son Joe has spent several summers since high school as a seasonal field worker at Resurrection Cemetery, while his daughter Mary Clare, a student at Visitation Academy, has helped clean the graves of Visitation Sisters as a high school service project.

"We are always pleased to partner with The Catholic Cemeteries as we share the same commitment to the Catholic community," he said. 🌳

Updates



Garden Mausoleum opens at Gethsemane

A new garden mausoleum at Gethsemane Cemetery housing 320 cremation niches and 120 casket crypts has opened directly behind Gethsemane's Chapel Mausoleum and the Children's Memorial. This outdoor building, constructed in the style of the Chapel Mausoleum, is highlighted with an overhang to provide protection from the elements.

Various locations and prices are available, and now is the optimum time to purchase in the new building when selection is at its best and pricing at its lowest. For more information or for a tour, contact Jules Bobst, Gethsemane's family service counselor, at **763-454-5072**.



New life for historic cemeteries

While historic cemeteries like Calvary in St. Paul and St. Mary's in Minneapolis may appear to be "full," new gravesites are made available by removing unused roadways in older sections of each cemetery. Thanks to this method, St. Mary's now has 100 new casket graves and a similar number of cremation graves available for purchase. In early summer 2016, new graves will be available in a similarly converted section of Calvary Cemetery. Both historic cemeteries also provide other above-ground burial options in garden mausoleums.

To learn more, contact the cemetery offices at St. Mary's and Calvary at **651-488-8866**.

Blacktopping completed at three cemeteries

A major area of roadway at the entrance to St. Mary's Cemetery was blacktopped this summer, along with the parking lot at Resurrection Cemetery office and the parking area at Gethsemane's maintenance facility. Watch for more roadway improvements in the cemeteries in 2016.

HERITAGE

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The Catholic Cemeteries
2105 Lexington Ave. S.
Mendota Heights, MN 55120
651-228-9991
info@catholic-cemeteries.org
John Cherek, Director



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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.

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

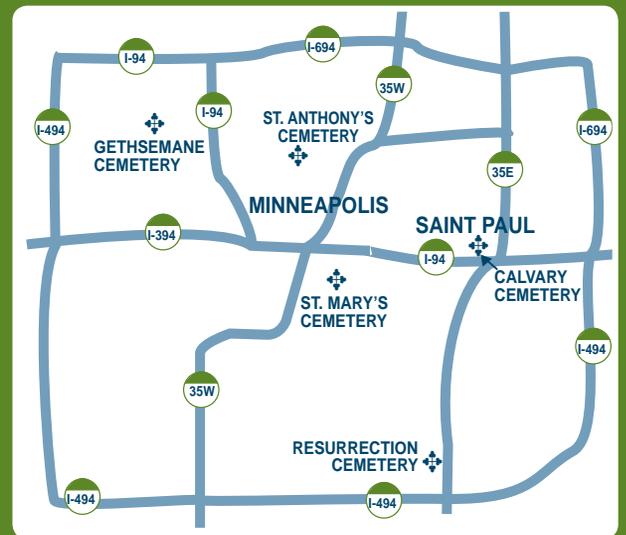
2729 Central Avenue NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418
763-537-4184

ST. MARY'S CEMETERY

4403 Chicago Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55407
651-488-8866

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www.catholic-cemeteries.org



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Please join us in supporting the ongoing ministries and beautification of The Catholic Cemeteries. Your tax-deductible contribution can be used to provide for burial of the poor, ministry to bereaved parents and families, and to beautify the cemeteries.

To make a gift:

- Clip and complete this form and mail with your check to:
The Catholic Cemeteries, 2105 Lexington Ave. S., Mendota Heights, MN 55120 —OR—
- Give online by going to catholic-cemeteries.org and click on Donate.

I want to support the ongoing ministries and beautification of The Catholic Cemeteries:

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- John Ireland Memorial Fund (Trees, landscaping and gardens) *Please direct my gift for trees to:*
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- Please charge my credit card: Visa Mastercard Discover American Express

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3-digit Security Code Expiration

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Your Name (Mr., Mrs. Miss, Ms.) please print _____

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City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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If this contribution is given in memory/in honor of an individual, please print his/her name:

In memory In honor _____

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Our thanks go to those listed below for gifts given to the donor funds of The Catholic Cemeteries between October 1, 2014 and September 30, 2015.

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