

An odd way to put a person to rest?



My mom, Steve's mom, Tom's mom, Sue's mom, at her husband's final resting place in Dixon National Cemetery. Robert wasn't our Dad; he passed away 31 years ago, much too soon. But he was a good guy who made our mom very happy these past 8 years, and he had a great family we got to spend some time with.

This morning started earlier than normal, and Thursdays already start earlier than I'd like. But today my wife and I drove to Dixon to put my mom's husband, Robert, to rest. There was the usual wondering why it takes a funeral to bring interesting members of an extended family together, often for the first time, and too often for the last.

You go through the usual stuff, bringing the casket from the hearse to the outdoor pavilion where the service is held, hearing from his family (good people, even if they might cancel out my vote), and since he was in the military, the playing of Taps and the folding of the US flag, which is presented to the spouse of the deceased. In this case, the flag was first presented to Robert's disable son, Rick, who then presented it to my mom. A very touching moment.

But the odd thing? After all this, you expect to accompany the casket to the burial site. Like in the movies. But even in death, perhaps especially in death, life isn't like the movies. We are told (the couple of us who asked, because this wasn't pointed out otherwise) that the body would be buried "sometime" during the day and it wasn't something that they made any effort to encourage seeing. In fact, it was discouraged.

This.
Seemed.
Odd.

We found out that the burials are generally finished by 4pm, always by 4:30. So, after an extended-family lunch in nearby Vacaville, followed by a pretty disappointing trip to see what remains of the old Nut Tree and its train, my wife and I headed back to the cemetery, ahead of my brothers Tom & Steve, who were escorting my mom, to see if it was "safe" to bring her back to see where he'd been buried. (This after previously discussing whether there might actually be some good reason to not see the grave site.) To me, it just seemed terribly incomplete to leave Robert in the hands of strangers for the rest of the day. To say he was "laid to rest" by people who didn't know him, his resting place unseen by those who knew him, seemed to not just lack a sense of closure, but forbade it.

Fortunately, my wife and I managed to find where he had been buried (not an easy task since nobody was in the cemetery office, but I got a bit nosy and found a hand-written ledger detailing the schedule of the day, including the specifics of his burial). Section 3, #425. It took a bit of walking through Section 3; it wasn't clear where the numbers were written, nor was it obvious any work had

been done in the section. Which, of course, meant I had walked right past it, in plain site. One of the few with any flowers placed upon the earth.

I called my brother (Steve) telling him we'd found the site and how to get there and, by the way, they'd better make tracks because it was 4:15pm and the grounds closed at 4:30. The last thing I wanted was to have my mom get so close and fail. Not going to happen. Thankfully, there were no gates anyway, and nobody posted to keep people away or kick people out. My mom got to spend some time at the site, and I think it was better for her that she was able to do so, than go back home and wonder when she'd be coming back.

The funny thing is, I'm not into burials; my intent is to be cremated, as my dad was. But if you are going to choose earthly burial for your remains, then, to me (and I've said "to me" many times here; I recognize others will have differing views), there is value, closure and peace in seeing his final resting place.

How strange to suggest it's odd, unusual and not recommended to see one's final resting place at the end of the day.