

WASHINGTON CEMETERY HISTORIC TRUST

Vol. 26, No. 2

"Heirs Who Care"

May 2002

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Strangers Rest Success Stories

In the August 1992 CCWCC newsletter, it was reported that member **David Gibbons** was searching for his baby sister's grave in Strangers Rest and had uncovered about 30 of the small numbered concrete markers. While hers was not among them, his discovery provided new hope that some of these "lost" graves could be found. CCWCC launched a concerted effort to find and mark graves in Strangers Rest. Nearly ten years and untold volunteer hours later, dozens of searchers have uncovered nearly 800 more hidden grave markers and a number of families have now placed headstones for their loved ones. We believe that at least 2/3 of the approximately 1500 single grave spaces in Washington Cemetery have now been located. But David's sister remained among the missing - until very recently.

In the last month, Trustee **Carl Young**, who seems to have a special talent for finding these hidden gems, has located graves of two children that our members have trying to find for many years. One was number X172, **Juanita Gibbons**, who died in 1940 at age 1; the other was number 381, **William Adolph Sepper**, who died in 1915 at age 2. It turned out that the area David Gibbons was searching was only about ten feet away from the right place. However, most of the markers he found were at a depth of 2" to 4", while his sister's was in the next row, and much deeper (about 8" to 10" below the surface). The search continues, as time and weather permit.

Confederate Memorial Day Services

On Saturday, April 27, 2002, over 160 people gathered in Washington Cemetery for Confederate Memorial Day services, similar to the event held here at this time last year. The United Daughters of the Confederacy, under the able chairmanship of **Betty Mann**, conducted a very moving ceremony. The cemetery looked beautiful and a brisk breeze showed off the many different historic flags that UDC brought in for the occasion. In addition, small flags were placed on the graves of all known Confederate veterans throughout the cemetery.

Headstone Transcription Project

This project is proceeding nicely. Sections A, B, C, and D are nearly completed, except for transferring the information from the transcribers' work sheets and plot layout diagrams to the burial database. The database entry work will probably keep Eleanor Beebe busy most of the summer. In the fall, we will resume reading headstones in the area south of the cemetery crossroad.

Our thanks to those who have worked on this project in the last three months: **Eleanor Beebe, Gov Clements, Carolyn Bonnin, Michele Bonnin, Laura Edstrom, Cathy Fitch, Beverly Gilstrap, Scott Gilstrap, Richard June, Frank King, Elizabeth Larimore, Mary Carolyn Lee, Bernice Mistrot, Gus Mistrot, and Eddie Yarbrough**. A special thanks to **Wolfram Von-Maskewski**, who spent a day transcribing and translating the many headstones in German, and to **Asia Polanski**, who was able to translate the one inscription in Polish.

Phase 7B Monument Repairs Completed

Bobby Schlitzberger has just completed restoration of 15 more headstones and cradles, at a total cost of \$2640. He also worked on both marble plaques on the gateposts at the cemetery entrance, so that the name **WASHINGTON CEMETERY** is now very clearly visible. They look so much brighter! The price also includes cleaning and treating the marble monuments to inhibit growth of algae. He is now working on about 100 more in Phase 8. The repaired monuments are as follows (in plot number order).

Section B: J. G. **Battaglia** (no dates), two **Harrington** footstones, **Augusta Thom** (1869-1959), **Ellis Benson** (1813-1896) & **Mrs. E. Benson** (1819-1894).

Section G: **Federicka [sic] Driver** (1845-1935).

Section H: **Mollie Bryant** (1899-1932), **Anton Limmroth** (died 1892, age 53), **Barbara Hillenbrand** (1844-1898), **William W. Getzie** (1859-1943), **Louise M. Getzie** (1866-1942).

Section I: **Frederick L. Rast** (1841-1913) & **Valaska Rast** (1848-1912), **John F. Ivy** (1854-1927), **Fred Bonn** (1841-1913), **Martha Bonn** (1841-1922).

Clements' Corner

The following articles are in the format of the new history book, but the first one will need to be condensed a bit.

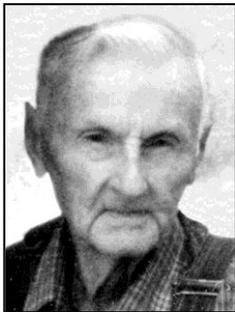
PLOT D-21 NE¼

EDDIE KOVAR

Submitted (2002) by Gov Clements, long-time friend of Eddie and Libby Kovar.

Eddie Edward KOVAR

(18 March 1911 – 19 February 2002)



Eddie was the eldest child of Joe KOVAR and Annie (SITTAH) KOVAR. He and his younger siblings, Johnny, Helen, and Valasta, were all born here in Houston. He attended Stevenson and George Washington Schools, but didn't go past the 8th grade.

He and Johnny would go down to the Buffalo Bayou, swim over, climb the embankment to the River Oaks Golf Course, and caddy for 25 cents. He said that was good money for a kid then. He obviously had a happy childhood. He said many times that his father would tell him often, "Enjoy these days, Eddie, it will never be like this again."

His father was a steelworker and passed good traits on to his oldest son. Eddie was very good at working with wood, and became a carpenter and furniture-maker. He began in October 1928 as a 17-year-old at Myers-Spalti Manufacturing Co.

He met Libby Pospisil at an SPJST dance, where his mama said: "Eddie, you see that girl, that's the girl for you!" They began to court and were married 26 November 1941, just eleven days before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In October 1943, 31-year-old Eddie Kovar joined the Navy as a Carpenter's Mate on the *U.S.S. Lubbock*. In February 1945, the *Lubbock* was off-loading Marines to hit the beach at Iwo Jima. His job was to repair the Higgins Boats (landing craft) that were moving the Marines from ship to shore. On their return to the ship they were all shot up and covered with blood. The decks were running with blood, and he had to repair them – get them ready to carry more Marines to the island. He was also offshore at Okinawa. He said when the big ships fired their cannons, the force was so great, he couldn't open or close his mouth and his ears hurt (the Navy didn't give them earplugs). On his return in late 1945 after 11 months' sea duty, he went back to his old job and continued there until he retired.

He and Libby made a well-matched pair. If you were to look up "animal and bird lovers" in an illustrated dictionary, you probably would have found their pictures. Family members related that on the infrequent visits they would make, it was Eddie and Libby in the front seat of the auto and dogs (plural) in the back.

With the death of Libby, companion of over half a century, something went out of him. He partially recovered from a broken hip, but then suffered several strokes, taking his last breath just 27 days short of his 91st birthday. As the minister said at the conclusion of his funeral service:

"A veteran, who was witness to some of the greatest and bloodiest battles of world history, he was no slacker or gold bricker and no mover or shaker on the public stage. But a man of simple taste, a good citizen, a taxpayer, who did his part to contribute to the public weal. There was no breathless announcement on CNN or TV news that Eddie Kovar was deceased! No flags were lowered at the revelation of his death. Congress did not pause for a "moment of silence" at his passing. But his life has been celebrated and his grave marked, and for those of us who knew him there will be a void in our lives from now on. We will miss the man in the Converse tennis shoes and the bib overalls."

Libby Frances KOVAR

(7 August 1913 – 16 May 1995)



Libby was born in Sweethome, Texas, the younger daughter of Frank POSPISIL and Emilie (KULHANEK) POSPISIL (see Plot D-020 SE¼). In 1935, Libby and her parents moved to Houston, where she married Eddie Kovar. Sadly, their only child, Blanche, died at birth, 22 June 1950. She is buried in Woodlawn Cemetery.

Always tender-hearted, Libby turned her affections to dogs, cats, ducks, birds, squirrels, etc. She was happy with her flowers, her pets, Eddie, and their life. When their home at 615 Sabine Street burned in 1989, they moved to 1530 25th Street, which gave her more room to continue her winning ways with flora and fauna. The Kovars were affiliated with the Bethel United Church of Christ on Shepherd, and were long-time members of SPJST Stefanik Lodge #142 at 5508 Nolda Street.

After the deaths of her parents, she and Eddie became volunteer workers in Washington Cemetery. The 1988 Washington Cemetery Centennial Book recognized their dedicated voluntary labor in the cemetery. Of the ten people singled out for special recognition, two were the Kovars: "They visit the cemetery almost daily, caring for flowers and trees, picking up trash and dead limbs, and reporting on anything that seems to be amiss." They would load up Eddie's truck with buckets of water to nourish the flowers, plants, and new trees (there was no water supply in the cemetery then). As they worked in the cemetery she would often tell Eddie, "This is where our long home will be." And so it came to be. She was a very private person – nothing ostentatious – always hard working. She lived a quiet and peaceable life, succumbing to cancer at age 81.

PLOT D-20 SE¼

FRANK POSPISIL

Submitted (1988) by Libby Kovar (dec'd) of Houston, daughter of Frank and Emilie Pospisil.

Frank POSPISIL Jr.

(20 August 1886 – 17 September 1970)

Frank came to America from Kutnahora, Czechoslovakia at the age of ten, together with his father Frank POSPISIL, mother Christina (BRADAC) POSPISIL, brother John, and sister Mary. The family settled in the little town of Sweethome, near Shiner, Texas, where they cultivated the land for their livelihood. Young Frank and his wife Emilie worked their own farm until

they came to Houston, in late December of 1935. He was employed by the city of Houston, working in the Street and Bridge Department.

Frank was a good handyman, to the delight of his neighbors, as he was always willing to help them when needed. Frank and Emilie resided at their home at 1803 State Street in the Sixth Ward until their deaths.

**Emilie (KULHANEK) POSPISIL
(6 January 1888 – 27 February 1976)**

Emilie was born in DeWitt County, Texas. Her parents, Nicodemus “Nick” KULHANEK and Victoria (CYNEK) KULHANEK, emigrated from the town of Lynchkron, Czechoslovakia, and settled at Sweethome, Texas to farm the land. At St. Mary’s Church in Hallettsville, Texas, she married Frank, and this union produced two daughters, Vlasta and Libby. Libby moved to Houston with her parents, and married Eddie KOVAR. Vlasta was married at the time her parents and sister moved to Houston, so she stayed in Shiner. Vlasta KRAUSE is buried in the Shiner Cemetery.

Emilie raised turkeys, had a vegetable garden, and loved raising flowers – roses were her specialty. She found time to sew clothes for her family, including shirts for Frank. Emilie and Frank were members of St. Joseph’s Church on Kane Street.

History Book Progress Report

Most of the progress on the history book over the last three months has been on the family photos, scanned and optimized by Trustee **Ginger Daily**; and the list of veterans, primarily Confederate veterans, researched by Trustees **Gus Mistrot** and **Bernice Mistrot**. Finalization of the biographies and indexing is continuing, though temporarily at a slower pace due to the time spent on the above activities.

New biographical material and photos are still being accepted, so if you have not yet submitted yours, there is still time to do so. If you can submit your stories by email, in a format similar to that for the Pospisil plot above, that will be easiest for the volunteers who are typing it, but we will be happy to

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Please return the entire form below with your check and mail to **Jim Daily**. All donations are deductible on Form 1040 (Schedule A). **PLEASE NOTE!!** CCWCC no longer exists. Please make all donations to WCHT.

receive it in any form that works for you, including handwritten, if necessary.

Treasurer's Report (May 1, 2002)

During the last three months, WCHT has received 53 donations from individuals. In addition, WCHT continues to receive funds from the **Randalls Good Neighbor Program** (WCHT #2810) and **Kroger Share Card**. To obtain a Kroger Share Card, please contact **Jim Daily**.

While WCHT is currently receiving funds through the matching gift programs of **ExxonMobil** and **J. P. Morgan Chase** foundations, many other corporations have matching gift programs for employees and retirees. All of these programs serve as great ways to help finance WCHT's restoration projects.

The total assets of WCHT amount to \$158,800, of which \$102,900 is held in the Improvements Fund for continuing projects. The unaudited financial statement follows.

Fund Balance – Jan. 31, 2002	\$165,900
Income – donations	2,000
Income – investments	<u>2,400</u>
Total Income	4,400
Expenses – newsletter and postage	600
Expenses – administrative	3,500
Expenses – gravesite restoration	<u>7,400</u>
Total Expenses	11,500
Fund Balance – April 30, 2002	\$158,800

The administrative expense was for the purchase of a computer and related software. The gravesite restoration expense was for completed work in Phases 7A and 7B of our restoration program, which included the repair and cleaning of 50 headstones.

WASHINGTON CEMETERY HISTORIC TRUST	
Donor Name _____	Phone Number _____
_____ 2002 Min. ANNUAL Donation (\$20.00)	Surname(s) of Deceased _____
_____ GRAVESITE RESTORATION	_____
_____ HISTORY/RESEARCH	Plot Number(s), if known _____
_____ TOTAL	Matching Gift from _____

New and Retiring WCHT Trustees

In response to the notice in the last newsletter looking for some new blood among the Trustees, two people stepped forward to volunteer their services, and two who have served faithfully for many years have taken the opportunity to pass the baton to a new generation.

Vic Gehring served as Vice President when **Carl Curry** was President of CCWCC, back in 1982-84, and has been on the Board of CCWCC or WCHT continuously since 1990. Vic was part of the crew that completed the cleanup and demolition of the caretaker's house in 1991. His dedication to the Strangers Rest project is legendary. On one particularly fruitful day, sometime after his 80th birthday, he single-handedly uncovered 20 markers. He has also been instrumental in securing grants from Exxon for the improvement of Washington Cemetery. He will continue to stay active in WCHT, to the extent his health permits, but in an emeritus status. We thank him for all the effort he has put into the restoration over the years.

Julie Itz served as Treasurer of both CCWCC and WCHT in 1996-98 and has been a Trustee ever since. The cemetery finances were converted to a new computer program during her tenure, a program that is still in use today. The Treasurer's job is probably the most demanding of the Trustee positions, as it requires keeping up with a continuous flow of information and, we hope, a steady stream of donations. We thank Julie for her dedication to the cause.

Elizabeth Larimore served four years on the CCWCC Board in the late 1980's, and since then has been an enthusiastic searcher in Strangers Rest. She

is also a member of the group transcribing the headstones for entry to the burial database. We welcome Elizabeth as a new Trustee.

Dr. Charles Jackson, a cousin of former CCWCC President Carl Curry, is the newest Trustee. He and his family have been active with the restoration of Washington Cemetery for many years, as members of CCWCC. We look forward to working with him to continue the restoration of the cemetery and its records.

Washington Cemetery Contacts

History Book Text: **Bernice Mistrot**

History Book Photos: **Ginger Daily**

Burial Database: **Eleanor Beebe**

Glenwood Annual Meeting on June 20

The Annual Meeting of Glenwood Cemetery, Inc. will start at 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, June 20, 2002, at the offices of Fulbright & Jaworski, 51st Floor, 1301 McKinney (Chevron Tower), Houston, Texas 77010. The primary purposes of the meeting are to elect the Board of Directors and to review the important events of the year.

All original Owners of lots in Washington Cemetery (or surviving spouses, executors, or descendants of deceased lot owners who have completed a Glenwood Declaration/ Proxy form) should have already received an invitation to attend this meeting.

If no one in your family has received the Declaration/Proxy for your lot this year, and you wish to become the representative for your family lot, please contact the Glenwood office at (713) 864-7886 as soon as possible. You may also write to Glenwood Cemetery, 2525 Washington Ave., Houston, Texas 77007.

WASHINGTON CEMETERY HISTORIC TRUST

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