

U.S. dead in a forgotten corner

Bureau pushing safety

By STEVE HAYNES

Americans off the cruise ships rounding the Mediterranean traipse through the American cemetery in Carthage, but not many.

Only a few hundred Americans a year see this lost corner of our country's history, tucked away in the hills of northeast Tunisia.

Here lie the remains of 2,840 American servicemen — and women — who gave their lives in the North African campaign. Those buried here represent nearly all the American dead from the first great sweep against the Nazi war machine.

The remains were gathered from temporary burial sites across Africa and, curiously, from Iran, where Americans ran a supply line up into the south end of the Soviet Union.

The cemetery was built in 1948 to consolidate these temporary sites and hold all the American war dead from North Africa — at least those who were not shipped home.

The paths bisecting the neat lawn of the cemetery are quiet. A couple strolling through the ranks of white marble crosses, broken only occasionally by a Star of David, are not hurried or bothered by other visitors. There are none this day.

Mike Green, the retired Marine sergeant who runs the cemetery, warns photographers not to take pictures of headstones showing names of the dead. People don't like that, he says.

Hair close-cropped and slightly graying, Green leads visiting editors to the tiny chapel, then outside to the tomb of an unknown American serviceman. They offer a small, brief tribute to the fallen, and Taps sounds.

Along the south, above and beyond the graves, a long limestone wall is scribed with the names of 3,725 Americans either missing in action or buried at sea: 3,095 Army (including many fliers), 615 Navy and 15 Coast Guardsmen.

The names read like a roll of the states. Most of them likely never imagined their only memorial would be in some forgotten corner of North Africa.

Ralph W. Long of Kansas is listed as a Navy chief commissary steward. Ruth E. Warlick of Texas was a private in the Women's Army Corps.

Another Kansan, Stephen Surbaugh, was a staff sergeant in the 428th Bomb Squadron, 310th Bomb Group. Bruce F. Scheer was a corporal in the 42nd squadron, 12th Ferry Group, bringing planes across the Atlantic.

Sidney J. Gibbs, a staff sergeant, served in the 438th Bomb Squadron, 489th Bomb Group (M).

Their ranks march down the wall to the flag, flying each day over this tiny piece of American soil, Mike Green's reason for being.



AMERICAN EDITORS joined Superintendent Mike Green (second from right) in a ceremony at the American Cemetery in Carthage, northern Tunisia. Only a solitary couple walked the paths of the neatly trimmed burial ground.

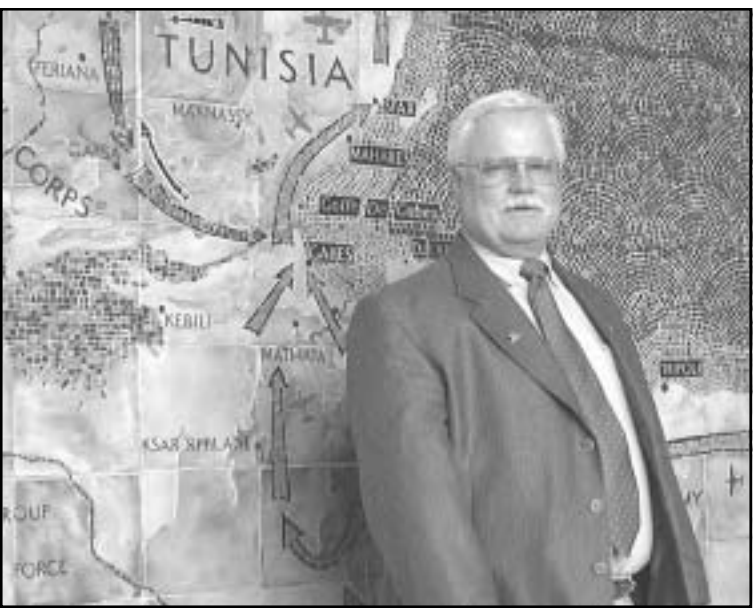
— Herald staff photos by Steve Haynes

Inside, photos celebrate the chairmen of the American Battle Monuments Commission. General Pershing held the job before World War II, and Gen. Mark Clark led the Allied invasion of Morocco and Algeria and led the expedition to free Tunis, came back to dedicate the cemetery.

There will never be another. Americans no longer leave their dead in shallow graves or bury them on foreign soil. Victims of war are flown home for interment, at home or in a National Cemetery on U.S. soil.

With modern science, there likely will never be another American soldier buried under a white marble cross, marked "Known but to God."

Mike Green does not care. He tends to his 2,840 charges and shepherds the occasional American visitor through his pride. He knows what price these soldiers paid. He only wishes more of us would come to see.



EDITOR Steve Haynes in front of a mosaic map of the North African campaign. He was one of nine American journalists to tour Tunisia.

To the Editor:

March 1-7 has been designated as Agricultural Safety Awareness Program Week to remind us that in the rush of completing the work on farms and ranches, everyone needs to take time to act safely.

The theme for 2004 is "Tractor Safety is No Accident." Tractor

Letters

overturns with no roll protection account for half of farm fatalities.

During Agricultural Safety Awareness Program Week, we ask everyone to remember these rules:

1. Know your tractor, its implements and how they work. Teach your family members and employees how to shut off equipment.
2. Use rollover protective structures and seat belts.
3. Be familiar with your terrain and drive safely. Use caution on slopes, slow down for all turns and stay off the highway when possible.
4. Never start an engine in a closed shed or garage.
5. Always keep your power take-off properly shielded.
6. Keep your hitches low and always on the drawbar.
7. Never jump off a moving tractor or leave the engine running.
8. Never refuel while the engine is running or hot.
9. Keep all children off of and away from your tractor and its implements at all times, and enforce a NO RIDERS policy.
10. Never be in a hurry about anything to do with your tractor.

You are important to your family and your community. Be safe!

Paul Shields, president
Decatur County Farm Bureau

Knights draw a 'thank-you'

To the Editor:

Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas would like to say thank you to all of the area Knights of Columbus groups that contributed to our organization this past year. For many years, people with developmental disabilities have benefited from the generosity and hard work of the Knights, who raise thousands of dollars through their Tootsie Roll sales drive.

Once again, thank you for making the needs of people with developmental disabilities one of your top priorities. You are making a great difference in people's lives.

Steve Keil, director
Developmental Services
of Northwest Kansas, Hays

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For more information contact Linda Terrell, 877-5219