

Summer, 2006

# NEWS *from* OAK HILL

*The Newsletter of the Friends of Oak Hill Cemetery*

## Report of the Superintendent

The fiscal year May 1, 2005 to April 30, 2006 has been very busy for both the Board of Managers and me. Many long overdue improvements have been made to the gatehouse at long last. Booster pumps were installed in the central heating system, and the distribution and return lines were properly insulated. The gatehouse and office are now consistently comfortable throughout the winter months.

In November repairs and painting were completed on the gatehouse kitchen. For several years, the plaster walls had been flaking and failing due to outside leaks. The exterior brick was repointed and the inside re-plastered and painted. At the same time, a new water heater was purchased for the gatehouse.

New gutters and downspouts were added to both the gatehouse and crew's quarters, and a large portion of the garage roof was re-sheathed in March. As on the cemetery grounds, water was not going where it was supposed to, resulting in a very wet basement and rotting wood at the exterior mudroom wall. Snow guards were



*Dave Schaake puts final touches on replacement facia above the Gatehouse living room bay window.*

also added to avert heavy ice and snow from damaging the gutters and falling onto the lower roofs. The heavily damaged ornate facia boards bounding one such lower roof were completely replaced.

As a gesture of appreciation, the Board of Managers has created the Joseph Pozell Superintendent's

Endowment Fund as a part of the Oak Hill Cemetery Preservation Foundation, a 501(c)3 fund. The Board hopes to eventually endow the Superintendent's salary as well as provide funds for the upkeep of the gatehouse. We have received donations in the amount of \$50,000

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**Superintendent's Report**

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since the creation of this fund was announced in the last newsletter, including a generous contribution in the amount of \$10,000 for which we are very grateful.

I would be remiss if I did not thank all donors to that fund and the Friends of Oak Hill Beautification Fund in memory of Joe for thousands of dollars in donations. In March, Bartlett Tree Company pruned the ellipse area of the cemetery to alleviate the "jungle look" it had acquired. About every five years, Joe encour-



*The four excellent men who care for all 20 plus acres with our new truck. From left: Brian Williamson, Mainor Pinar-Torres, José Abraham Mejia, José Guzman.*

aged the Board to have major pruning done, and the effect is dramatic. The Friends fund is also being used to purchase summer annuals and other plant materials to further beautify an already exquisitely beautiful landmark.

Twenty-one pathway crypts for casket inter-

ments were installed on Nandina Path by Mark Sanders of Lorton Construction Company. The Board has approved more terraced niches for interment of cremation urns. This new increment will be designed differently as an experiment. The interments will be placed in a niche in the side wall and not in the step itself. Inscriptions will be placed on a piece of granite atop the wall. Through the years as we have constructed the terraced niches, we have received many comments about "stepping on the interred". At the suggestion of a prospective purchaser, the Board was willing to work with our contractor, Mark Sanders to ascertain if such

a design change were feasible. Mr. Sanders was able to create a design, and we all look forward to the finished product and to the response of future purchasers.

In May, the Georgetown Business and Professional Association, community, and Georgetown University dedicated a tulip magnolia at the cemetery entrance. The plaque reads as follows: "In Memory of Joe Pozell, Superintendent

of Oak Hill Cemetery, Community Activist, Washington DC Reserve Police Officer, Presented by grateful residents, businesses and Georgetown University May 10, 2006."

My days in the office are busy from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. and sometimes beyond. The many unfinished projects and new ones demand a great deal of attention and the usual phone calls and visits from Oak Hill visitors

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researching their families keep me and my new assistant Dorrie Hall, who works in the office Monday through Thursday, very busy. She has assisted me in many tasks as we have tried to clean out the vault and sort through the papers in Joe's office, so that the small area there is put to its best use, generally organize and evaluate what needs to be kept and what items are duplicates. The work has, at times, been physically and emotionally draining as I encounter notes and items that had been tucked away in Joe's own filing system. Dorrie has cheerfully performed many duties and is learning the details of the filing and computer systems as well as how to direct visitors to areas on the grounds. Her presence has enabled me to have more time to concentrate on the new aspects of management which were performed by Joe. There is no way Dorrie and I could have accomplished what we have in a few months without the help of the Vice President of the Board, David de Vicq. He helped organize the large number of maps, plans and surveys which were in no particular order and cluttering the vault. He and Dorrie devised a system by which we can easily find any plan we need by looking at a table index they created. David's presence, almost daily at the cemetery, has been very reassuring to me as there are situations every day on which I seek his advice. He oversaw the entire inside and outside gatehouse repairs which were very time-consuming as well as the new double vault installation and tree removals.

In addition to Dorrie, my long-time friend Cherie Cannon works in the office when I am on vacation or making a visit to my 88-year-old mother, who has developed numerous health problems. Cherie's many years of experience here assure me that visitors will be graciously greeted and assisted with their questions. My neighbor Bob Tobin is a devoted friend who is available for so many duties involving the cem-

etry, whether it be assisting with funerals, staying in the gatehouse at night for the security of the cemetery when all of us are on vacation, or troubleshooting our obstinate computers. I am grateful for his many kindnesses.

The other three Board members, John W. Gill, Patricia L. McGrath, and George G. Hill have also been very understanding and supportive of my efforts to manage the cemetery and I am so appreciative for every busy day. All four have spent many hours taking care of your interests and carefully weighing decisions which will affect the cemetery's fiscal and physical future. The cemetery is in good hands.

The groundskeeping staff of four men is maintaining the cemetery as well, if not better, than when the staff numbered five. Their remaining here after Joe's death shows their dedication to Oak Hill, and one need only look at the cemetery throughout the year to realize that. We are so fortunate to have a dependable and well-trained crew.

Mr. Gill's report is replete with exciting news of changes at Oak Hill along with an unfortunate report about our desperate situation with regard to at least six trees. In March, a tree fell from Montrose Park, and we were fortunate that the U.S. Park Service was instrumental in removing the tree (see David de Vicq's report) and that several employees from Columbia Gardens Memorials arrived in the afternoon to assist in uprighting some of the fallen monuments..

Thank you all for visits to the office, phone calls and cards and letters of condolence which I am still receiving. My son Joseph, who now resides at the gatehouse with me, and I are still quite amazed by how much you appreciate our 22-year relationship with you.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ella S. Pozell  
Superintendent

## Report of the President

The President of Oak Hill Cemetery herewith submits his Report for the year ended April 30, 2006.

Although our choice of a new investment manager coupled with a bit stronger market has improved the return on our endowment fund, operating expenses continue to exceed operating income and a modest draw down of the endowment was necessary this past year. We appreciate the contributions made by our lot holding families who share our passion to preserve Oak Hill's viability, and we count on their continued support and the support of owners of newly purchased lots to whom this is our first appeal. The contribution envelope insert identifies our 501(c)3 fund.

Although the 42 interments at Oak Hill this past year about equal the average annual number in the past twenty five years, it is of signal importance that well over one-half of those interments were in modern pathways and terraced niches rather than in the older more traditional lots whose interments have been steadily decreasing since the mid-20th century and whose inventory was exhausted years ago. A significant portion of the endowment draw down paid for 21 new casket burial spaces beneath Nandina Path. The first two of these just completed spaces sold this month as did the last two available terraced niches for cremains. We have awarded a contract to construct some ninety cremation sites around the Renwick



Chapel: a very desirable location. Final design of an improved concept for stairway niches (discussed in the Superintendent's report) has been approved and we expect to award a contract for initial construction very soon. Sale of this new inventory of burial spaces promises to quickly repay the recent endowment withdrawal and do much to help bring operating incomes to a healthier level. It is our intent to continue to upgrade designs and increase saleable inventory.

We finally "retired" our 21 year-old stakebody truck and purchased a heavy duty GMC Sierra four wheel drive pickup. Dennis Zaimes, who repairs our equipment and trucks, deserves great credit for finding the truck on the used market. The truck, along with our John Deere Gator 4 X 2, is perfect for our needs.

We have been advised by several arborists that we have six VERY DANGEROUS large trees which could fall at any time, and half of these are virtually inaccessible to cranes, normally used in their removal. The Board estimates that costs will average about \$35,000 per tree which forces us to prioritize and spread the work over a considerable number of months. Quite frankly, we need earmarked contributions to accomplish this work in a timely fashion.

Long-time lot holders and first time visitors will now be greeted by a new sign replacing the wordier old one just inside the main gate. The top line reads "Welcome to Oak Hill Cemetery",

*Wesley E. Pippenger, far left, was elected Corresponding and Recording Secretary at the Annual Meeting joining John W. Gill, President; George G. Hill, Treasurer; and David C. de Vicq, Vice President.*

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and we mean that most sincerely. We want Civil War researchers, biographers, naturalists, birders, photographers, sculpture lovers, local history buffs, genealogists, and cemeterians in general to come to know our grounds more intimately and to contribute their time and skills to ensure the cemetery's future. From those people who either call our office or stop in to introduce themselves and announce their interest, we expect to identify a core group willing and able to serve as charter members of the Oak Hill Preservation Foundation Board. The foundation board's function is both to develop preservation and improvement projects and to identify and secure supporting grants and gifts to enable their execution – as well as to husband the Joseph Pozell Superintendents Endowment announced in our last newsletter. If you are interested, please do contact Ella Pozell at 202-337-2835.

I thank my fellow Board members David C. de Vicq, Vice President; Patricia L. McGrath, Secretary; and George G. Hill, Treasurer for their

interest in the future of Oak Hill Cemetery. I am especially grateful for the amount of time David spends here. His direction and oversight of numerous projects are invaluable and allow the remainder of us, including the Superintendent, to focus on many other activities that fill each day. Although Patricia McGrath served only one year as secretary, she came to every Board meeting with creative ideas to enhance our investments and expand public awareness of our history and the continuing opportunity to acquire a site in Oak Hill. We wish her well as she spends more time in Massachusetts with her family. Wesley E. Pippenger was unanimously elected to succeed her as Secretary.

I thank our groundskeeping crew who remain dependable and skilled. We are so fortunate to have them laboring diligently for Oak Hill.

Respectfully submitted,  
John W. Gill  
President

## Book Announcement

As its first endeavor, the Oak Hill Cemetery Historic Preservation Foundation proudly announces publication of *Oak Hill Cemetery, Georgetown, D.C. Monument Inscriptions and Burial Data*, a two-volume work, written by Wesley E. Pippenger. Representing six years of concentrated effort, Wes has produced eight hundred pages of data which organize, record, and cogently present all that is written on the mausolea, monuments, markers, and plaques in the cemetery - and almost all that might be written but is not. After examining each inscription *in situ* throughout the some nineteen developed hilly acres of our grounds, the author reviewed the various classes of original (and unique) records kept in the Oak Hill vault. In these often fragile documents, he found data on those burials in our lots which are not recorded in stone or bronze. The same records allowed him to deduce what much of the now illegible lettering on the oldest and most weather-worn monuments once said. The 2005 Board of Managers and Superintendent Ella Pozell have contributed the funds to accomplish the printing, binding and packaging for a limited edition of 200 sets. Wes has contributed the copyrights and his extraordinary original work to the Oak Hill Preservation Foundation. All proceeds from the sale of the published work will also accrue to the foundation. – John W. Gill, *President*

## When Neighbors are Friends Indeed

On Thursday March 2nd, Brian Williamson, our grounds foreman, made his early morning tour of the cemetery and discovered that a massive oak lay sprawled across North Hill, its great limbs shattered and scattered by the fall as were some twenty monuments. The tree had stood 175 to 200 years in neighboring Montrose Park. Mike Papa, arborist for all of Rock Creek Park arrived within minutes (not hours or days) of Brian's call and made his way into the cemetery from Montrose's thick woods by walking the fallen tree across the crushed fence and mauled lots. It was some six feet in diameter and once 100 feet or more in height. Although law does not require the U. S. government to remove a fallen parkland tree from private property it may, and men like Mike Papa can make it happen. In the next couple of working days, his crew cleared and bulldozed an access road and created a level earth pad in the park to support a very large hydraulic crane capable of reaching 90 feet or more into the cemetery to lift out up to ten-ton loads. On Tuesday the 7th, Mike, his crew and a giant rental crane came early, stayed late and expertly removed the entire old oak. To prevent further damage, each cut and lift was calculated like



*National Park Service Arborist Mike Papa (right) and his crew.*

a move in the Victorian game of Jack Straws: to take out one piece at a time without collapsing the pile. Mike's experience and cool leadership, his men's skill and motivation and the cooperative spirit of the National Park Service are reminders of what it means to have a good

neighbor and of how very much the Park Service contributes to our community. Thanks, neighbors, for a job well done – and especially Mike, a true friend in our time of need.

David de Vicq  
Vice President



*Our first look at the scene on March 2nd. The Marbury Obelisk (shown upper left) survived.*

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**Contributions to Oak Hill Cemetery**  
*as of June 1, 2006*

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Program/General Fund*

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Mrs. Mary E. Weinmann  
Ms. Alice N. Wellman  
Mrs. Margaret W. Werling

Ms. Katherine J. Coffey - *In  
memory of the Guthes*

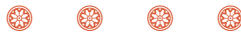
*Oak Hill Historic  
Preservation Foundation  
– Pozell Endowment*

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memory of Jim Hanley*  
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memory of William Calhoun  
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Mrs. Adlumia S. Hagner - *In memory of Randall H. Hagner, Jr.*  
Mr. Robert O. Myhr - *In memory of Ambassador Clarence Boonstra*  
Mr. Michael O'Brien - *In memory of William & Maria Magruder*  
Mr. and Mrs. John Slidell - *In memory of Hallie Slidell*  
Ms. Sally L. Snyder - *In memory of John D. & Dorothy Snyder*

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*Cemetery Hours*

Office and grounds: 9:00 am to 4:30 pm, M-F, closed Saturdays and National Holidays. Sunday (grounds only) 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, weather permitting. Please observe rules posted at gate.

*Board of Managers*

John W. Gill, *President*  
David C. deVicq, *Vice President*  
Wesley E. Pippenger, *Secretary*  
George G. Hill, *Treasurer*  
Ella S. Pozell, *Superintendent*

*We need your help.* If you currently reside in an apartment or townhouse, please contact us with your correct "Zip+4" number. This will help ensure that you continue to receive our mailings.

*Cemetery Materials*

Available in the cemetery office

*"Oak Hill Cemetery"*

A brief history – contains a map of the cemetery, list of notable people buried in Oak Hill and a brief history of our founding. \$3.00

*Oak Hill Note Cards*

Set of eight note cards featuring four scenes of Oak Hill Cemetery through the seasons. Envelopes included. \$5.00

*"Oak Hill in the Third Millenium"*

Descriptions of the burial spaces currently available in the cemetery. *Free*

**OAK HILL CEMETERY**

3001 R Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20007-2923  
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