

# Tombstones Tell Her Stories

By BARBARA BURKLO  
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"Any people who are indifferent to the noble achievements of their remote ancestors are themselves unlikely to achieve anything worthy to be remembered by their descendants."

Leilani (Mrs. Robert) Cross of Soquel, a geneologist, firmly believes in these words by Thomas Macaulay, English author and historian, and last summer she and her family made a trip across country, seeking out clues to the identity of some of her ancestors.

"My husband told me to put Xs on the map on areas where I wanted to do geneological research," Leilani says, "and he said we would stop at as many as we could."

Bob, an airline pilot, also took the family to the Experimental Aircraft Association convention at Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

Specifically, Leilani wanted to trace her great-great-grandfather, who was born around 1757 in Ohio and for whom no records had been found.

She poked around in courthouses and cemeteries, talked with people, and finally, after a great deal of research and more correspondence, established the fact the ancestor, Christian Eby, had died in 1854.

Leilani urges anyone making a cross country trip to visit areas where their ancestors lived.

"It is a good way to get acquainted with people, too," she says. She found everyone she contacted helpful and even eager to participate in her research.

Somehow, poking around in old graveyards seemed to me to be a disheartening way to spend time, but after talking to Leilani, she convinced me Tombstones tell her stories, and to the serious geneological researcher, sometimes reading tombstones is the only key to linking whole generations together in an accurate way.

The condition of many old cemeteries in this country is pretty shocking, according to Leilani, who says she saw tombstones stacked up in corners of graveyards and many of them simply knocked over by groundskeepers as they mowed the lawns, and not restored back in place.

"County road builders go blasting through cemeteries — they're supposed to remove the remains and notify the next of kin, but this isn't always done," she says.

Leilani teaches a class in geneological research which meets weekly at the LDS Church, and her new classes will begin again in January.

She is a member of the Santa Cruz Geneological Society which, since its organization last July, now has 170 members. They are aiming for 200 charter members before the charter membership cutoff date in January.

Although Leilani and John Ballard, society president, are members of the Mormon Church, the vast majority of the society members are not Mormons.

Persons interested in joining the society may contact Mr. Ballard at 423-0615.

The society has taken on the

impressive task of plotting out every cemetery in the county which has not already been completely recorded, and making up a book of the information or stating where it may be located, for the interest of the general public.

The Felton cemetery is a focal spot at the moment, and Leilani says Mrs. Tina Brayton, 335-4201, welcomes any information from persons who have ancestors buried there.

"We need an awareness of our ancestors," Leilani says.

She believes geneological research reestablishes family unity ties and says her four daughters are "fascinated by their ancestors."

She's been working on her own family geneology for 13 years and has begun research on Bob's family history.

"I'm interested in making these names actually live," she says.

She finds most people are interested in their distant ancestors — some of them do the research to prove a patriotic lineage so they can join, for example, the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Whether or not you take up geneology, Leilani urges everyone to do these things:

"If you have old family pictures which are not identified, put the names on the back of each picture.

"Contact your oldest living relatives and get all the information you can from them.

"Remember, when you're young, you don't have time to listen; when you're old, you don't have anyone to listen to."



Leilani Cross, geneologist, carefully records information on a grave stone. She's a member of the Santa Cruz Geneological Society, which has taken on the task of plotting and recording all the cemeteries in the county which have not been fully completely recorded. Janel, above, and her other three daughters are fascinated by learning more about their own ancestors, Leilani says.

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