

A North Hills resting place is nearly forgotten

By Caitlin Cleary
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On one side of Duncan Avenue in McCandless, they lie in vaulted caskets beneath the neatly manicured lawn of Allegheny County Memorial Park. They get flowers and visitors, diligent lawn care and crisp American flags.

On the other side of the road, the veterans of Duncan Heights Cemetery have been largely abandoned to time and water.

Their grave sites, many of them overgrown with trees and brambles, are littered with broken beer bottles and deer jawbones, bong pipes and aerosol cans left behind by huffing teenagers. The pine boxes that many of these injured, indigent World War I and World War II veterans were buried in have collapsed, forming 6-foot-long troughs in the ground.

Flooding and tiny landslides have shifted some of the headstones; others were moved and smashed by vandals, or have begun to tilt into a stream clogged with tires and rusting shopping carts. On one recent day, a feral cat crouched in the high weeds, nesting in the scraps of American flags left behind by veterans groups many Memorial Days ago.

As utterly forgotten as it seems, the Duncan Heights Cemetery has been the focus of concerned neighbors, veterans groups and township officials, off and on, for years. George and Mary Ann Bigelow, who live just above and behind the cemetery, have tried to solve the problem, researching Allegheny County land deeds, property maps and military burial records.

Many of the dead, both veterans and civilians, came directly

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