

Editor
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Fayetteville's Regional National Cemetery is very special.

I'm a member of the RNCIC (Regional National Cemetery Improvement Corporation), which was the inspiration, some years ago of 5 WW2 veterans when they learned there were only 6 spaces left in the National Cemetery. Six spaces to bury only 6 veterans. These men organized the RNCIC to raise money to buy land adjacent to the cemetery. Of the five, the only ones I knew personally were William "Bill" Murphy and Milo Cumpston. Both were Marines, but I never held that against them. Their deaths were great losses. They were driving forces within our organization. Fortunately, others have joined to continue Murph's and Milo's work. We have continued to raise money and continue to buy land adjacent to the cemetery. We accept donations of all amounts, large and small.

These new members have brought new ideas. One constructed us a web site. It is beautifully prepared and easy to find. Just Google RNCIC. Last November, in honor of Veterans' Day, one of our members organized a Veterans Memorial 5k marathon. Marathoners came from all over America to participate. There will be another this year. But we always need more donations.

We did receive two donations that deserve note. Lorna Sterret, our Secretary, arranged for us to receive \$50,000.00. Her husband, the late Bob Sterret a veteran of two wars and a member of the RNCIC, would have wanted it that way. And there was another outstanding donation. Don Tyson, a man who did so much for NW Arkansas. Actually, he did a lot for America. Shortly before he died he donated \$75,000.00! We used those donations and others to buy more land. Currently we are making arrangements to buy another plot nearby. We have added space enough for burials until 2023. And we shall add more.

The director and staff of the cemetery do an excellent job. The volunteers and the men who prepare the burials maintain a beautiful cemetery. And there is something else that makes Fayetteville's cemetery very special.

It has been declared a National Shrine. There are only 6 others which have that honor.

Go there, dear reader. Walk through the cemetery. Listen to the sounds of silence. Read the names and service of the veterans buried there. If you listen carefully you can hear them whisper, or maybe that's the wind gently touching the leaves of trees and caressing the simple white markers. Stop and look at the headstone of Sfc. Clarence Craft. Unlike all the others it is inlaid with gold. My friend Clarence received the Medal of Honor for Valor Above and Beyond the Call of Duty on Okinawa. Perhaps you will recall the haunting melody of Taps. Look up at our flag. It flies day and night. The veterans buried there did not fight for that flag. They fought for the ideals it represents. It flies at half staff during burials. All should be proud of our National Shrine.

Budd Saunders
Durham