

This is Lieutenant Roger McCort of The Salvation Army in Eureka with today's Community Comment.

I am a treasure hunter, in my rare off-hours, and I enjoy spending time in ghost towns. While I've never found any real ghosts, if there are such things, I have often found myself possessed by a real feeling of the lives, trials, successes and failures of the people who lived there. The places I've made those connections best have always been in the cemeteries.

In many abandoned townsites, the cemetery is the last thing standing. Often no more than a few dozen grave markers in various states of repair, the overgrown wood or stone memorials have carved into them the last reminders of the lives they mark. Epitaphs may include names of family or friends, comments about a significant achievement of the interred, or perhaps just a pair of dates signifying the temporal bookends of that person's life.

I am particularly affected by the graves of children. Sometimes they have a smaller headstone or plot lined out. Other times their age is carved on the marker. Still others, it is just the dates which show that the tremendous potential of a human life has been cut short, taking whatever further contributions that person would have made with them. On a back road in central California I discovered a town ghosted by an epidemic; headstone after headstone reflecting dozens of lives ended inside the span of a few weeks – quite possibly the telling blow which brought an end to the settlement there.

The gnawing sadness created by so much lost possibility is hard to overcome. Yet, as powerful as it is in these places where health, chance, or misfortune have brought an end to a few or even a dozen lives, a more forceful grief rises up in the far larger plots where we bury those lost to the ravages of war.

Today is Memorial Day, set aside in the United States as a day to commemorate and honor those who gave their lives in military service to our country. Over our 240 years of existence, there have been close to three million whom we remember today. Three million lives ended before their appointed time, all while trying to support the ideals of liberty and security they felt exemplified our United States.

Our National Cemeteries are something to behold. There are 147 of them today, each carefully maintained. They have row after row of headstones, most uniform in size and shape, often stretching out over fields too large to see across. Thousands of them, arrayed in perfect lines, filling manicured meadows. Not everyone there fell in battle, of course, but it isn't hard to

find large numbers who did. The death dates tell the tale, and each of these hallowed grounds has groupings which share the results of our country's bloody history: The Revolutionary War, The Indian Wars, The Civil War, World Wars one and two, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and dozens more.

President Trump has proclaimed today as a day for Americans to pray for permanent peace. I, too, long for that day when peace takes hold, when no more are lost in service, no more lives are cut short by the arguments of nations, and no more potential wasted by an aggressor's bullet.

Today we salute those who have died in service and we pray that there may never be another one who needs to. That would be a treasure we would all like to find.

Grace and peace to you. This is Lt. Roger McCort for the KINS Community Comment.