



John Grogan

Give mother help for children's sake

I have been tossing and turning in bed lately. It's the sextuplets.

Their sweet little faces haunt me. They did not ask for this. They did not ask for the wrath rained down upon their family by angry Pennsylvanians, many of them mothers themselves. They did not seek the public-relations nightmare their parents, Kate and Jonathan Gosselin, brought on by setting themselves up for a mega-family they could not support — and then asking taxpayers to foot the bill for a Medicaid home nurse to help.

The Gosselins did this to themselves. They used fertility drugs, not once, but twice. They knew the risks and knew they could not bring themselves to selectively reduce the number of embryos. Is it any wonder the reaction, as I wrote last week, was so decidedly unsympathetic?

When I interviewed the mother, she radiated a sense of entitlement and inflexibility, prompting other mothers across the region to scold in surround sound: *You made your decision, now live with it.*

Many used the same expression: "Start taking responsibility for your own actions."

That's all fine and good — except that six innocent and defenseless children hang in the balance.

I should be snoozing soundly at night, but I see their faces. (You can view photos of the sextuplets at www.sixgosselins.com).

One now gone

In the dark, I see the face of another baby, too — one who did not make it.

Her name was Raya Donagi, and she also caught the nation's attention. Born with Down syndrome, she lived six months before her desperately dependent mother answered the voices in her head and slit the baby's throat.

Mine Ener, a distinguished professor at Villanova University then com-



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Preservationist T. Scott Kreilick will work with crane operator Sal Rispo today to right many of the toppled gravestones in Montgomery Cemetery. Many Civil War soldiers are buried at the West Norritown Township site.

Restoring gravestones, preserving memories

By Bonnie L. Cook
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Elizabeth Shaffer can, indeed, rest in peace, as inscribed on her tombstone at Montgomery Cemetery.

Today, a preservation expert and crane operator will right her headstone, toppled onto the grass by vandals, and gently nudge it back into place.

"What better day to do that than Memorial Day?" said T. Scott Kreilick, whose company, Kreilick Conservation, preserves outdoor monuments of stone and metal.

Kreilick, 46, of Oreland, and Sal Rispo, 41, crane operator for the George Young Co. in Philadelphia, will restore dignity to the grave site of Shaffer, who died in 1879.

Between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m., they also hope to reset more than 30 other markers pushed or fallen in the cemetery, which contains many Civil War graves, just off Hartranft Avenue in West Norritown Township.

Kreilick feels so strongly about keeping up with the damage inflicted by criminals and Mother Nature on grave markers that he is donat-



Many of the toppled gravestones weigh several hundred pounds. The volunteers hope to restore more than 30 markers to mark Memorial Day.

ing his services.

So is the George Young Co., a hauling and rigging firm best known for moving the Liberty Bell to its current site on Independence Mall.

If all goes smoothly, Kreilick will

continue the work on desecrated and displaced tombstones in a different area graveyard each Memorial Day. The Young Co. couldn't be reached Friday to learn whether it would participate.

See **TOMBSTONES** on B8



T. Scott Kreilick, a preservationist, walks among headstones at Montgomery Cemetery in West Norriton Township. He will help right toppled grave markers today in the historic graveyard, which includes the tombs of five Civil War generals.

LINDA JOHNSON / Inquirer Suburban Staff

A Memorial Day gift for historic Montco cemetery

TOMBSTONES from B1

Damage occurs when acid rain erodes the marble or granite face, Kreilick said. Settling ground can also cause headstones to pitch over.

But most distressing, he said, are stones deliberately pushed. Those should be reset promptly, Kreilick said, by attaching nylon rigging and inching them into proper position with a 50-foot crane.

The stones tend to weigh 200 to 800 pounds. Some need insertion of special pins in headstone and base to remain upright. Others need special ep-

oxy; still others need pins and glue.

"Like graffiti, if you don't address it immediately, it continues to build on itself, and vandals feel like they have free rein," Kreilick said. "There has to be a lot of patience and determination that they're not going to win."

West Norriton police are aware of the problem and try to catch vandals, but officials have said that the 40-acre cemetery located in a bend of the Schuylkill is remote and hard to patrol.

The restoration team chose

Memorial Day for its project to focus attention on the need to maintain the region's historic cemeteries, Kreilick said. Many are deteriorating.

Montgomery Cemetery is famous because it holds the tombs of five Civil War generals, Civil War foot soldiers, and former leading lights of Norristown. There are 4,448 graves in all.

Established in 1848, the burial ground's heyday came in the late 1800s and early 1900s. It had fallen into neglect, but cleanup began in earnest during the late 1990s.

The work continues under the Norristown-based Historical Society of Montgomery County, the cemetery's owner.

The society has had help: Boy Scout Troop 752 of Norristown, Troop 50 of Skippack, and Troop 100 of Philadelphia cleaned headstones and removed brush during the weekend of April 9.

The W.S. Hancock Society, of West Norriton, maintains the tomb of Civil War Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock and plans further improvements.

Some of the headstones returned to upright position today

will be those of veterans, others not; that turns on where the most damaged stones can be reached in one circular sweep of the crane.

More elaborate work could follow later to repair broken stones, Kreilick said.

"In this case, it's just resetting because we think that's a good way to make an impact," Kreilick said. "These stones need care. This cemetery needs care."

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