



Helen Marketti's Music Corner



“Hollywood, Remains to Be Seen”

It is a topic that generates interest whether we admit it or not. There are many among us who are fascinated with cemeteries, the architecture of tombstones, perhaps a thought of how the person lived and how they passed away. It seems to be more magnified if one is in Hollywood. Many cemeteries are the final resting places of famous “residents”.

In his book, “Hollywood, Remains to Be Seen” (Cumberland House), Mark Masek has taken that interest and has let us travel from the comfort of our own home to the places where the rich, the famous, the troubled and the lost have been laid to rest. Throughout his book, we are taken on a journey of where, when and how of our favorite celebrities.

“I’m originally from the Chicago area but would visit California at least once a year when I was in high school and college,”



explains Mark. “In addition to visiting all of the regular attractions, another thing we did was visit Hollywood cemeteries because it was free admission. Plus it also provided an opportunity to pay respects to the people who were in your living room every week on television. Visiting their gravesites allows you to show your respect for people who entertained you as you were growing up and their movies were a part of your life. The first celebrity grave I visited was Marilyn Monroe.”

Mark thought of writing the book as a helpful guide for readers and fans to know where their favorite icons are resting. “People often feel a connection to a celebrity and want to see where they are resting and pay respects as you would to a close friend or family member,” said Mark. “When people visit the sites in Hollywood, they are respectful. There are not any incidents of anyone vandalizing gravesites or anything like that. I think it just depends on the celebrity and what kind of fans they attract.”

Two of the most visited Hollywood celebrities are Marilyn Monroe and silent screen film star, Rudolph Valentino. Valentino has been gone for 87 years and still draws hundreds of fans to his grave every year. “He was one of the earliest of idol worship,” explains Mark. “There were some women who killed themselves when they learned



he had died. There was a reported woman in black who visited his grave every year on the anniversary of his death. He died at the age of 31 so that is how his image is remembered. Marilyn Monroe died when she was 36. She has now been gone longer than she was alive. The 50th anniversary of her passing was in 2012. Celebrities who have died young are frozen in time. We never get to see them age and I think that is what makes many of them so popular even today. People like Elvis Presley, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe and Rudolph Valentino are in the upper echelon of those who died young and we will never see them play character roles or guest spots on television because they didn’t live long enough for that to happen.”

The resting places themselves say a lot about a celebrity. We see monuments with pillars, fountains and grandiose landscaping, as is the case with father and son actors, Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Jr. and singer, Al Jolson. You will also find the basic and the simple, as is the case with Frank Sinatra and dancing legend, Fred Astaire. “I think how they are laid to rest says something about their character as people and how they wanted to be remembered,” said Mark. “Many celebrities did leave specific instructions with how they wanted things to be. I do know that Al Jolson was directly involved with how he wanted his resting place and for Douglas Fairbanks,



his is the largest and the most expensive for that time.” (Douglas Fairbanks, Sr. passed away at age 56 in 1939.)

As for famous musicians, “Michael Jackson might surpass Marilyn Monroe with visiting fans if they had access to his resting place,” said Mark. “He is resting inside a private mausoleum. Fans still come around and leave mementos outside of the door but no one can pay respects to him directly. Other musicians of popularity out here are Johnny and Dee Dee Ramone of The Ramones. Although Elvis Presley is buried on his property at Graceland, he indeed draws large crowds year round. For many, seeing his resting place is like a religious experience.”

“You would be surprised how many people DO like to visit cemeteries,” said Mark. “Cemeteries are quiet, peaceful, calming and restorative places. They are not scary or evil as some people’s misconceptions. As for celebrity gravesites, I think it reminds us of our own mortality and everyone is human. Cemeteries are like libraries. Every grave and every person has a story whether they are a celebrity or not and they all deserve respect.”

For more information on Mark Masek, his books, current projects and more, please visit: www.cemeteryguide.com

You may also find, “Hollywood Remains to Be Seen” on Facebook.

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