

editor's notes

Winona Post Editor-in-chief Sarah Squires

Lost and found at Woodlawn

I got married on September 10, 2011. 9-10-11 was a poetic day, when Kong and I got married in Kieselhorst Slough on a little sandbar on the river, a day to celebrate forever. But after he died in 2014, it became a more difficult day on the calendar for me. How does one mark such an occasion? Some years, I made special plans, others I didn't know how I'd feel until the day broke. This year, I had something special to do on such an emotional day. This year, I had a grave marker at Woodlawn to visit.

See, Kong was cremated, his remains are not at Woodlawn. But four years ago his mom and I chose a spot there, up against the woodland bluffs, near a grove of trees. We wanted a place to mark his life that we could visit, and until this year, it was just a grassy spot nestled against the forest. A few months ago, his grave marker was installed, and I decided that on September 10, 2019, I would go see it for the first time. I'd spend a few minutes talking to him, talking to the trees. Sprinkle a bit of catnip in the forest. (He was a cat lover, and I'd like to think there's at least a few adventurous kitties in the neighborhood who might come to visit from time to time.)

So on Tuesday night, I loaded up some catnip and headed to Woodlawn to celebrate. I have visited Woodlawn many times, but nearly all of them were with my friend Lexi. Her childhood friend, Jake Edstrom, is there, and she started bringing me to visit him before I ever worked at the Post or fell in love with the Edstrom family. These days, when we visit, we also remember John Edstrom; John and Jake's grave markers are engraved with some of the most profound poetry I've ever read, and our trips have always been steeped in reflection and significance.

The thing is, Lexi always knew where she was going.

As I drove into the cemetery on Tuesday night, it occurred to me that it had been four years since I'd been to Kong's plot. What I remembered was that it was nestled against the woods ... in a newer part of the cemetery. But as I drove along the curving, narrow roads and little bridges that crisscross Woodlawn's 60 acres of maintained cemetery property, I realized that my four-year-old memories were not strong navigational material. This might take me all night, I thought to myself, feeling rather stupid for not asking for the little map you can get at the office before it closes for the day.

I am not one to be deterred when my mind is made up, so I decided that, even if it took me all night long, even if I had to walk miles of the edges of this cemetery, I would visit Kong and have my catnip celebration with him. So I drove along the edges of this beautiful spot, discounting the areas that included older looking headstones. I'll just start on this end, I told myself, parking, and if I walk all night, that's OK, too.

I marched up to the edge of the line of forest where I decided to start, and I looked down. "Christopher 'Kong' Squires," the first marker read. I dropped to my knees.

What are the odds, in a 60-acre cemetery that is home to tens of thousands of precious loved ones, that I would find him at first glance? But then again, our love was always magic; of course I found him, of course I was drawn to him.

Still, I was struck with awe as I laid down against the cool stone that marked his life. In the distance, I could hear other families talking, children playing. Even on a cool Tuesday night, Wood-

lawn is glowing with love and remembrance, and I felt something so proud and special that his life is memorialized there, too. So many great, loved, beautiful souls are remembered there. It is profoundly lovely, a reflection of the beauty and history of Winona itself. Woodlawn is a treasure, I thought, as I said goodbye and drove past the other people there on Tuesday night.

Hours later, a tornado ripped through Woodlawn, causing destruction that cannot be described.

It's rare that a news event that doesn't harm people truly makes my heart stop, but on Wednesday morning, the thought of a tornado there struck me to my core. On Wednesday afternoon, when I went to photograph the aftermath, the pain was physical. This beautiful icon of Winona and the people we love, it has been devastated. My friend, Tim Leahy, said over the phone he couldn't describe the damage. A picture is worth so many words, he told me. But when I tried to photograph it, I realized. No one or two or three photos can possibly show the level of damage, destruction, that has happened here. There is no angle of the lens that can capture it. Dozens of hundred-year-old trees were ripped from the ground and tossed down the hillsides, bowling over precious headstones and markers. Dozens, probably 40 or 50 of the giant ones, their roots twice as tall as me. Tiny trees flew into other trees, giant branches everywhere. Bright pink flower bouquets were scattered amid the destruction. Roads were upturned and impassable.

I am obviously not from tornado country. I understand that stronger tornados that touch down on homes and harm and kill people are cause for much more distress. But to see the havoc and destruction on such a sacred place, a place I where I had just witnessed such love and solemn beauty the night before ... I was speechless. The devastation is unreal.

It doesn't help to know that Woodlawn was already struggling financially. The cemetery association has been barely squeaking by over the last few years, trying creative ways to engage us to raise money. One can only imagine how much it takes to respectfully maintain 60 acres of our loved ones, some of whom, like Johnny Latsch, probably only paid a few hundred dollars for their graves to be maintained into perpetuity.

So, my friends, those of you who have someone you love planted there forever. It is such a blessing that they will be remembered for eternity, that little children will toss a ball one day and stumble upon a marker that says Kong "scattered kindness," and think of what a man he might have been. Those who might stumble upon the poetry of John and Jake's graves and think deeply about the meaning of life.

We should all be grateful for Woodlawn and the way it has, and will, preserve the people in Winona we love, the ones who made a difference to this city and to us. Woodlawn absolutely needs us now. Please consider donating to help in the recovery. If Woodlawn ever needed you, it needs you now. Donations can be made to the Woodlawn Recovery Effort and mailed to Woodlawn Cemetery, 506 West Lake Boulevard, Winona, Minn., 55987, attn: Donations; or, visit woodlawncemeterymn.com.



letters

Stand together on September 20

From: Sam Streukens
Winona

I turned 23 the day after Labor Day, so I went to a town hall hosted by Minnesota's first congressional district Representative Jim Hagedorn to tell him I want a future. I've seen frequent disasters like Hurricanes Dorian, Florence and Harvey, I've learned about warmer temperatures leading to flooding in our communities, and I've heard from non-partisan sources that climate change is a national security threat. I believe climate change is human-caused because 97 percent of scientists agree that average global temperatures are rising primarily because of human emissions. Burning fossil fuels releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere that traps heat radiated from Earth, leading to a rise in sea levels, precipitation, and droughts that exacerbate extreme weather events and makes areas uninhabitable. Since Rep. Hagedorn and other leaders refuse to believe climate change is human-caused and nothing can be done, I am going to be striking in Winona on September 20 in the youth-led Global Climate Strike. We are demanding the switch to 100-percent renewable energy by 2030 through an equitable transition that leads to millions of jobs, protection and restoration of biodiversity, respect of indigenous land and sovereignty, implementation of sustainable agriculture, and environmental justice that invests in communities most affected by pollution and displacement. In solidarity with strikes happening in all 50 states and over 100 countries, all are welcome to join me for the Winona Global Climate Strike between 12-6 p.m. by taking a photo with the WINONA sign and posting it on social media with the hashtags #GlobalClimateStrike and #StrikeWithUs. A short, peaceful march with local youth and adult allies is also planned to start at 3:45 p.m. at the Hiawatha Valley Marines Shelter. The full event details can be found on Facebook under "Winona Global Climate Strike."

Thanks for helping to make Family Art Day a success

From: Vicki English
Chair, River Arts Alliance

On behalf of the River Arts Alliance (RAA) Board of Directors, I want to express our gratitude to everyone who helped make Family Art Day 2019 a wonderful success. Over 500 people attended on September 7, exploring their creativity through a variety of art forms. Family Art Day is always free and open to everyone of all abilities and backgrounds.

We thank the artists who guided the participants: Julie Johnston, Jennifer Weaver, Mary Singer, Brianna Haupt, Katwa "Lance" Ngari, John Durfey, Dirk Nelson, Tom Dukich, Pang Vang, Heather Casper and Carrie Frederich from the Minnesota Marine Art Museum, Michelle Cochran, Julia Crozier, Jill Kruse, Jill Marie Piggot, Anne Scott Plummer, Michelle Maslowski, Mary Denzer, Tanya Corcoran, Will Brzenzski, Kathy Delano, Lorraine Kilmartin, Lisa Douglas, Kathy Schoen, and Jamie Schwaba from the Minnesota Conservatory for the Arts.

It takes a village to produce this event, and we thank the following dedicated volunteers who set up, welcomed the participants, and assisted the artists, making sure that all the activities went smoothly: Barb Feiten, Margaret Kiihne, Barbara Hassing, Sheila and Kirk Enzenauer, Heidi Bryant, Kinsey Burdwood, Linda Sue and Dan Eastman, Cathy and Greg Schmidt, Steve Bachler, and WSU students, Anja Timm, Debra Oates, and Hannah Adamson. RAA Board members Catherine Tuggle, Sara Enzenauer, Sydney Swanson, Anne Scott Plummer, Joy Davis Ripley, and Julia Crozier were instrumental in planning and oversight. Anna VanDemark photographed the event.

RAA also couldn't have offered this event to the community without the generous support of our sponsors and individual donors, including businesses, and Marcy Faircloth, Karen Coleman, Catherine Tuggle, Cathy and Greg Schmidt, Sara Enzenauer, Debi Niebuhr and Eric Nelson, Bunny Bennick, Kathy Delano, and Jan Bunkow. We appreciate the support of the Winona Park and Recreation Department for its support and cooperation.

We look forward to providing this opportunity to the Winona community on the first Saturday of September every year. For more information about River Arts Alliance, visit riverartsalliance.org and on Facebook.

letters

Did you know?

From: Bud Whillock
Trempealeau Sportsman's Club

Earlier this year the Trempealeau Sportsman's Club received notice from the Village of Trempealeau that our 99-year lease had been terminated after only 36 years. Five assertions were made as evidence of a breach. These assertions are either wholly untrue, are not stipulated in the lease at all, or simply vague comments with no factual evidence. Nevertheless the club responded to these allegations as demanded by the letter. Now, for the first time, the Trempealeau Sportsman's Club has been given an opportunity to address the Village Board directly at the meeting of the whole board on September 19, 2019, at 7 p.m. We are confident that the evidence we will provide will correct the misrepresentations that influenced the Village Board members to make the unfortunate decision to terminate the lease.

We invite the village board members to visit the Trempealeau Sportsman's Club's clubhouse to judge with their own eyes whether these assertions constitute a breach of the lease. The Sportsman's

Club's grounds are always open to the public and we proudly invite anyone to enjoy our beautiful grounds.

Things you may not know about the Trempealeau Sportsman's Club:

- Did you know that the Trempealeau Sportsman's Club was founded 77 years ago in 1942?
- Did you know that the Trempealeau Sportsman's Club has awarded graduates of Gale-Etrick-Trempealeau High School with over \$50,000 in scholarship money?
- Did you know that we serve between 1,200 and 1,800 fish dinners to local citizens each year? The proceeds support the club's expenses, its programs and the scholarship fund.
- Did you know that the club has hosted thousands of children and their parents, over the years, at an annual event each December in which children get to visit with Santa, get a free bag of goodies and a free breakfast?
- Did you know that the Trempealeau Sportsman's Club has taught hunter safety and boater safety to hundreds of local youth through the years?

• Did you know that the Trempealeau Sportsman's Club improved the land and built the building entirely at no cost to the taxpayers and that the club continues to maintain the grounds and building all at no cost to the taxpayers of the Village of Trempealeau?

• Did you know that the Trempealeau Sportsman's has rented the clubhouse to local citizens hundreds of times for graduation parties, family reunions, wedding receptions, and celebrations of life, and that it has offered the free use of the clubhouse for youth activities such as scouting and children's fishing contests, for fundraisers for school groups, and for victims of misfortune? Often the club has provided food, drink, and gifts to such events at the club's own expense.

The Trempealeau Sportsman's Club prides itself on its community involvement through the years and wishes to continue to be a great asset to Trempealeau and the area community. We hope the citizens of Trempealeau continue to support us just as they always have.

Become a Dementia Friend today!

From: Lori Paulson
Senior Citizens Advocate
Winona Friendship Center

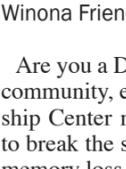
Are you a Dementia Friend? The Winona community, especially the Winona Friendship Center membership, is working hard to break the silence and the stigma around memory loss. Are you curious about memory loss, the most common types of memory loss and how to effectively communicate with someone living with memory loss? If you answered yes, you should become a Dementia Friend by participating in a Dementia Friends information session. It is

a free, one-hour information session that is interactive, informative and fun. You'll learn the five key messages about memory loss and be able to put your knowledge into use in our community.

Becoming a Dementia Friendly Community is a work in progress. By becoming a Dementia Friend, you are furthering our progress in creating a supportive and inclusive community for people living with memory loss and their care partners. The Winona Dementia Friendly Community Initiative Action Team set a goal of reaching 1,200 Dementia Friends in Winona by the end of 2019. To date, Winona has 898

Dementia Friends. Help us meet our goal!

A Dementia Friends information session can be done at a convenient time for any business or organization. Please contact the Senior Advocates at 507-454-7369 to schedule a Dementia Friends information session. Dementia Friends information sessions are also available at the Friendship Center and are free and open to the public on October 9 at 11:30 a.m., October 12 at 10 a.m., November 7 at 11:30 a.m., November 16 at 10 a.m., December 14 at 10 a.m., and December 20 at 11:30 a.m. Call the Friendship Center to register at 507-454-5212.

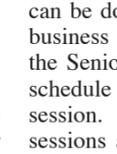


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