

People Are Dying To Get On This Website

With 2.8 million burial sites and thousands more being added every day, Jim Tipton's "www.findagrave.com" Website has become a huge online cemetery resource.

Tipton started the Internet site as a hobby in 1995 when he wanted to find out where certain celebrities were buried and couldn't find anything on the Web. The idea has been met with so much public interest that he now works at it full-time.

The site has grown into two sections - one with information on the graves of famous celebrities, and one with data on ordinary people who have passed away. The popularity of the site is due to both morbid curiosity, and the need of genealogists to find information.

Site-goers can search by name, location, claim to fame, or birth and death dates. They can leave virtual flowers on graves and submit their own listings, complete with memorial pictures, family photos and pictures of the actual headstone.

Marilyn Monroe, Christopher Columbus, Al Capone and Jimi Hendrix are just a few of the 11,000 celebrities whose information

can be found in the celebrity section.

As Tipton started entering data on famous people he learned that there was a demand for records on ordinary people.

"Burial information is a wonderful resource for people researching their families (genealogists). Most importantly, visiting a gravesite is a way of keeping the memory of someone alive," he says. "We aim to create a comprehensive virtual cemetery where loved ones can visit graves, leave flowers, etc. when they cannot do so in real life due to geography, finances and other circumstances."

Tipton says the submission rate to Find A Grave has just surpassed the death rate in the U.S., meaning more people are being added every day than are dying every day (in the U.S.).

The service provided by his site is completely free to the user. It's funded by advertisers. His goal is to create a comprehensive listing of burial places of virtually everyone in the world by getting data from cemeteries, cremation societies, etc.

"I've got 20,000 people looking at the site every day. It boggles my mind. The whole



Tipton's "www.findagrave.com" Website has become a huge online cemetery resource.

thing is really kind of a community and the site has a lot of loyal fans," Tipton says.

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Interesting Hobby: Searching Out Cemetery Records

Seventy-four year old Fred Kraege of Whitewater, Wis., created an interesting retirement hobby for himself by "digging up the past." He has so far researched 31 local cemeteries and compiled seven books at his own expense. His books are so detailed they now serve as a valuable source of data to genealogists and other people seeking information about deceased family members.

Kraege first found out there was a need for such information in 1985, when his mother passed away. He couldn't believe how poor the records were at many cemeteries.

"Since I love history, and I don't care much for TV, I just developed an interest in it. I was looking for something to pass the time, and this, I thought, was something worthwhile that needed doing," Kraege says.

He starts by traveling to a cemetery with a notebook, drawing his own map of the place, and writing down all of the information he can find etched into gravestones.

After typing up the information, he spends long hours in local libraries, searching through newspaper obituaries on microfilm, in an attempt to record the most complete

information possible. He also spends a lot of time in courthouses, studying the death records there. When he can't find the exact day and month on which a person died, he includes that fact in his records to prevent others from repeating his efforts.

The smallest cemetery he has researched had about 150 graves in it and the largest had more than 8,500. The oldest marker he has found was dated in 1837 and the oldest person's grave was one of a 110 year-old woman.

Kraege finds that about one-fifth of the people buried in cemeteries can no longer be identified because of crumbled or missing gravestones.

One of his six books is devoted to information on people who are presumed buried, but whose locations are unknown.

"It was interesting work because I learned so much about history and the people who have been buried in this area of the state," he says. "I've always been fascinated with George Esterly, the most prominent man that ever lived around here. He invented the famous Esterly Harvester and turned it into a

highly successful business. He later moved it to Minneapolis, but after his death, he was buried in Whitewater along with many of his family members."

Kraege's cemetery record books are available at various libraries and historical societies, as well as at the Genealogical Center in Salt Lake City, Utah. He enjoys helping people to preserve their histories so much that when people call him at home, he will often meet them at the Whitewater Public Library to assist them in finding what they're looking for.

In recognition of his efforts, he has been honored by both the City of Whitewater and the State of Wisconsin.

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Seventy-four year old Fred Kraege researches local cemeteries and compiles detailed books that serve as a valuable source of data.

Ride-On Combines Are Big Hit With Kids

Pedal tractors, move aside. Stan Williams, a corn and bean grower from Reed, Kentucky, made a couple of pedal combines for his daughters two years ago and then people started asking him to build them.

His first one was made at the request of his daughter (6 years old at the time) who, with hammer and some building materials in hand, asked him to help her make one.

Williams, who spends much of the winter in his shop, is an old hand at making what he needs or wants. It didn't take him long to design a small pedal powered combine his daughters could ride. Now that they're 8 and 12, the girls have "outgrown" the pedal combines, but their 4-year-old brother is thrilled with the hand-me-downs.

Williams started his combine design by ordering steering wheels and seats from a company that sells parts for pedal tractors. He then scaled the combines around those components. He crafted the combine body

from sheet metal.

His first one is made to look like a Case IH 2188, with red paint and realistic looking decals. The second model is built on the order of a Deere 9610.

Williams' first pedal combines have a grain head with rotating 4-blade reel, a lever to raise and lower the header, a grain tank and auger. The pedals, mounted just above the header, power the front wheels. "A chain from the drive axle runs to a counter shaft that goes to the bean head and powers the reel," he says. Recent versions have a more realistic looking 6-blade reel.

The rear axle has automotive-type steering and pivots in the center to adjust to terrain. A slow moving vehicle emblem adorns the rear of the combine.

He figures each combine costs about \$150 in parts and materials and takes about 45 hours of labor and shop time.

He's received requests for pedal combines



Stan Williams built these pedal-powered combines for his kids. One looks like a Deere 9610 and the other like a Case-IH 2188.

from dealers, farmers and their children. He's made a few of them in his spare time and would welcome calls from anyone who'd like to order one.

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