



## Upcoming Biblio Events

**September through February** **BOOK DISCUSSION PROGRAMS**  
Ada Community Library will begin its book discussion schedule in September. All programs begin at 7 p.m. 10664 W. Victory Rd., Boise. Telephone 362-0181

**November** **IDAHO LITERACY MONTH**  
Sponsored by the Idaho Coalition for Adult Literacy

**November 14-20** **IDAHO FAMILY READING WEEK**  
Sponsored by the Idaho State Library, 325 W. State St., Boise. Telephone 1-800-458-3271

**March** **LET'S TALK ABOUT IT PROGRAM**  
Sponsored by the Ada Community Library, 10664 W. Victory Rd., Boise. Telephone 362-0181

Vol. 6/No. 2 • October 1999

## "The IDAHO BOOKS OF THE DEAD Issue, Part 2"

**Diane Angoni, Keeper of Story and Place**

by Karena Youtz

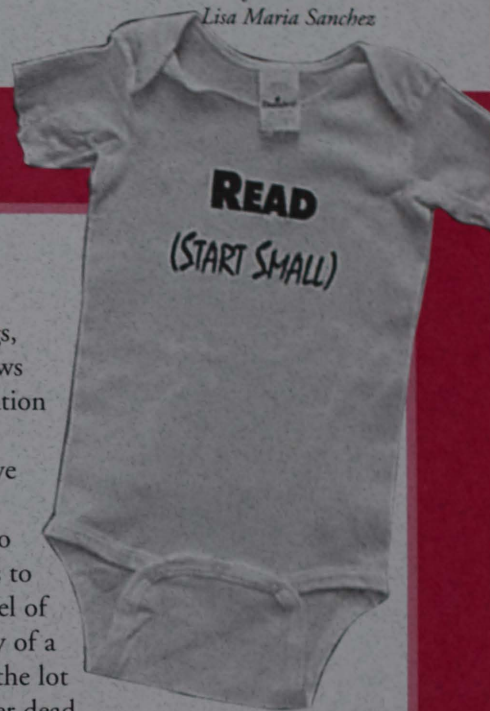
**Final Text: The Art of Headstones**

by Tamara Shores

Author of Biblio T-shirt  
Lisa Maria Sanchez

In this issue

Next issue..... **Platen Press in Idaho**



## Diane Angoni, Keeper of Story and Place

by Karena Youtz

— continued from the April 1999 ICB Newsletter

When she arrived six years ago, Diane Angoni recalled all the burials were "typed on cards and stored in index drawers." In reaction to what she termed chaos, Diane put all the names and their locations into her computer. Then she went through the books to make sure everyone was in the right place. That took two years. She spent another year out on the cemetery's grounds physically checking the names on the headstones against those in the books and on the Master Burial List. A Master Burial List is now printed out new each year in alphabetical order. Diane did all the research and data entry for this project of historical preservation, making it easier for people to find their roots.

According to Diane, some of the people searching for their ancestors are "addictive, obsessed with genealogy." For them she provides the Master Burial List along with other helpful information. She compiled a list of all the funeral homes in Boise along with their original names (if they have changed), addresses, and phone numbers. She has maps of a few Boise cemeteries. She made a list of all the other cemeteries in Idaho, but cannot vouch for their record keeping systems. Each cemetery does things differently. One suspects that they are not all as well organized as Morris Hill.

Diane says people are surprised by how easy it is to find someone at Morris Hill. They look up the name in the binder which holds the Master Burial List. Each entry includes section, block, and lot. Diane then directs them to the huge, laminated wall map which shows them where to go. If they cannot find the grave, she walks out with them, like a tour guide.

Approximately ninety percent of the occupied graves at Morris Hill are filled with the named, ancestors who can be found. The rest are listed as Burial Unknown. While this is not quite the horror of an unmarked mass grave, there is a terrible permanence to the forgetting of the identities of the inhabitants in these individual, anonymous graves. The Unknown Soldier in Virginia's Arlington National Cemetery is, in contrast, a celebrity. These Burial Unknowns vex Diane. She accepts them, but notes that the Catholic Church kept its own burial records until the 1930's for their sections, and did not do that very well. More difficult for her to think about are the Japanese and Chinese mine workers buried without names. The city made little or no effort to learn their identities when they were buried. This current of past racism frustrates her now in her own efforts.

In 1995, she was able to identify some unknowns in the Basque section of Morris Hill. She assisted Liz Hardesty, a local Basque, with a project that placed markers on the graves of the unknown Basque burials. A larger monument was placed in their honor as well. In 1996, the Basque people celebrated the accomplishment of history recorded, even with the names unretrieved. In gratitude, Diane received a basket of Basque specialty foods and wines.

Morris Hill Cemetery's sections are akin to unexpected neighborhoods, with infant, Catholic, Japanese, Chinese, and Basque sections. There are military dead, also. Their section is the most uniform, with identical white stones. There is an Islamic section. The Congregation Beth Israel synagogue has two of Morris Hill's seventy acres. Fraternal organizations like the Elks and Woodsmen of the World take up their own areas. Ada County has a section. There are fifty platted sections recorded in twenty-six section books.

The current section books are Wilson-Jones canvas sectional post binders like the green one Diane carried with her to help me find a grave. In these books, the blocks that stand for eight lots in the plat book show up divided into eight individual lots. The section books' divisions function as close-ups.

Section "I" is "the playground of forever" as my grandfather sentimentally called it when we walked away from my daughter's freshly filled grave. It is almost all children, with just the ashes of one father tucked in near his son. Recently, the city engineer platted the section just behind "I," right next to my daughter's grave. I bought one of those lots for myself.

Diane just buried her husband in Section "Q." "The country club set's" section, as she rightly calls it, holds Joe Albertson, the Tertelings, Hendrens, Ferys, and other locally powerful people in body or by deed. Diane thought her husband would enjoy rubbing shoulders with those guys. Some day, Diane will be buried next to him. The headstone already has her name and birth date on it along with a big, red rose. She looks at it now and wonders why she chose that rose. It is the symbol, though, of eternal romantic love. She might wear one to that celestial club, around her wrist, when she goes dancing with her husband.

The Morris Hill neighborhood divisions by religion, race, and class do not matter much considering the above/below ground stratification. Topside, Diane Angoni takes care of those below. Her role at Morris Hill is parental to the extent and in the variety of her tasks there. She speaks of the "satisfaction... attained from putting everyone in their proper place" in the records.

Her catalogue of the interred and inurned at Morris Hill has made her intimate with their names and locations. One night she woke in the dark with a name in her head, Mills. She went to work the next day and looked it up. The man, Mills, was listed as buried in two separate graves. She set things straight.

believe in those sorts of things, but she has to, now. She knows first hand. Necessary information pops into her head from nowhere. To those who believe in heavenly disembodied beings, and even to those who do not, Diane herself appears to be the manifest guardian angel of Morris Hill. When the family of a deceased woman found that the lot she owned was not next to her dead husband's, Diane went to work. She knew the family who owned the unoccupied lot next to the husband and asked the family to trade. They agreed. The woman was able to be buried next to her husband. This was not a small thing. In the unrelievable disappointment of grief people need the tangible comforts Diane provides.

Diane maintains a broader view as well. Of the first burial record book she says, "It's like looking at history." At Morris Hill history lives because Diane believes it is necessary to tell the stories of Morris Hill. It is important to us, so we can know our past, our place, and our people.

In order to tell this story Diane created still another book, a thirteen page booklet that is a walking tour of Morris Hill. It is a photocopied book of eight-and-a-half by eleven-inch paper stapled together with a choice of covers, colorful art deco designs or cranes, an Asian symbol of eternal life. The booklet can be purchased at Morris Hill's office for \$2.50. Diane's attitudes are clearly stated in the booklet's first paragraph. She tells us Morris Hill Cemetery has "served as a repository of the city's history and as a reflection of the growth and development of Boise, Idaho and the West. You will be asked to look at cemetery markers not as mute stones but as works of art and as commentaries on our society."

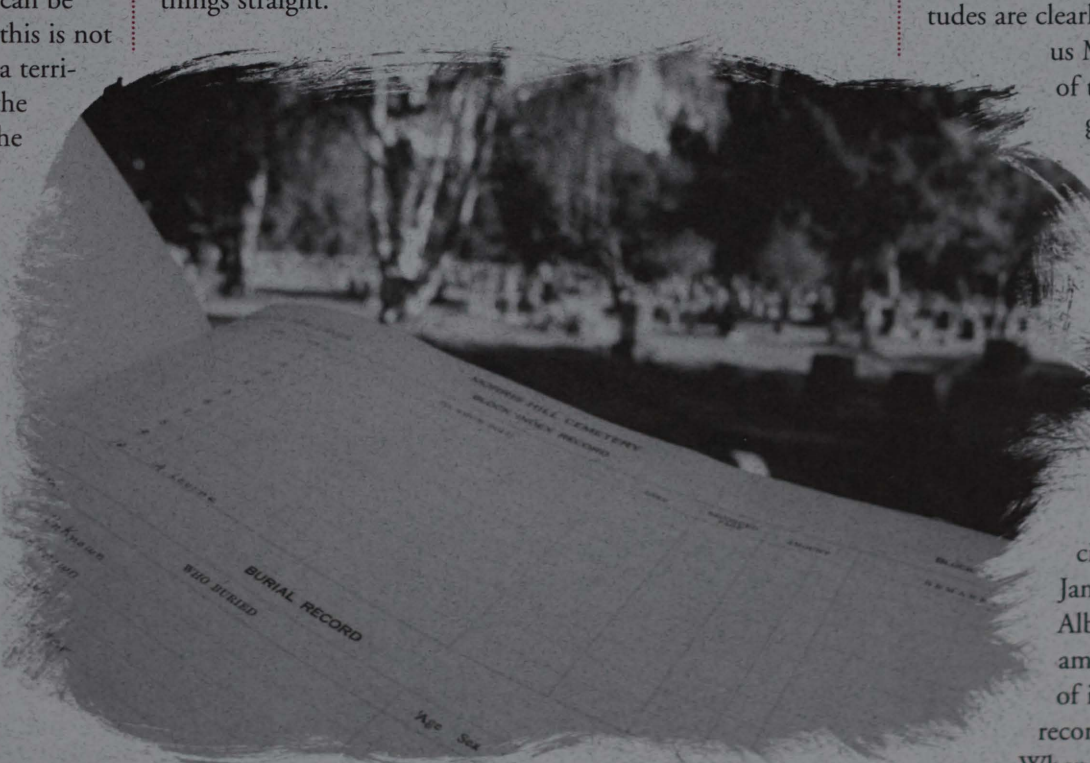
Diane hopes that the walking reader will emerge from the tour with an appreciation for history and reverence for those who created it. The reader is also told to acknowledge those who were never famous or made deep impressions. These people also are "the source of our heritage."

The historical figures who make up the official tour include Senator Borah, Senator Church, James Angleton of the CIA, supermarketeer Joe Albertson, and pioneer "Peg Leg" Annie Morrow, among others. Diane did her own research, some of it inspired by names she read in the first burial record book.

When she found out that John Jurko had been "hung for murder" in 1926 she went to the library. The defense argued that "he was mentally unstable due to being kicked in the head by a mule when he was younger." The newspaper did not run another story about him, but Morris Hill's records suggest that his defense was inadequate.

We also talked about James Angleton. Though Diane wrote a rather nice paragraph about him, possibly to maintain the tone of respect the tour has, we both agreed off the record that the former CIA director was a controversial figure.

The short paragraph she wrote about Joe Albertson, whose home was just across the street from Morris Hill, demonstrates deferential respect and affection. Instead of just listing his many business accomplishments and philanthropic activities, Diane wrote a more emotional tribute, "Joe is a Boise institution, much loved by all of us and he will live in all our hearts."

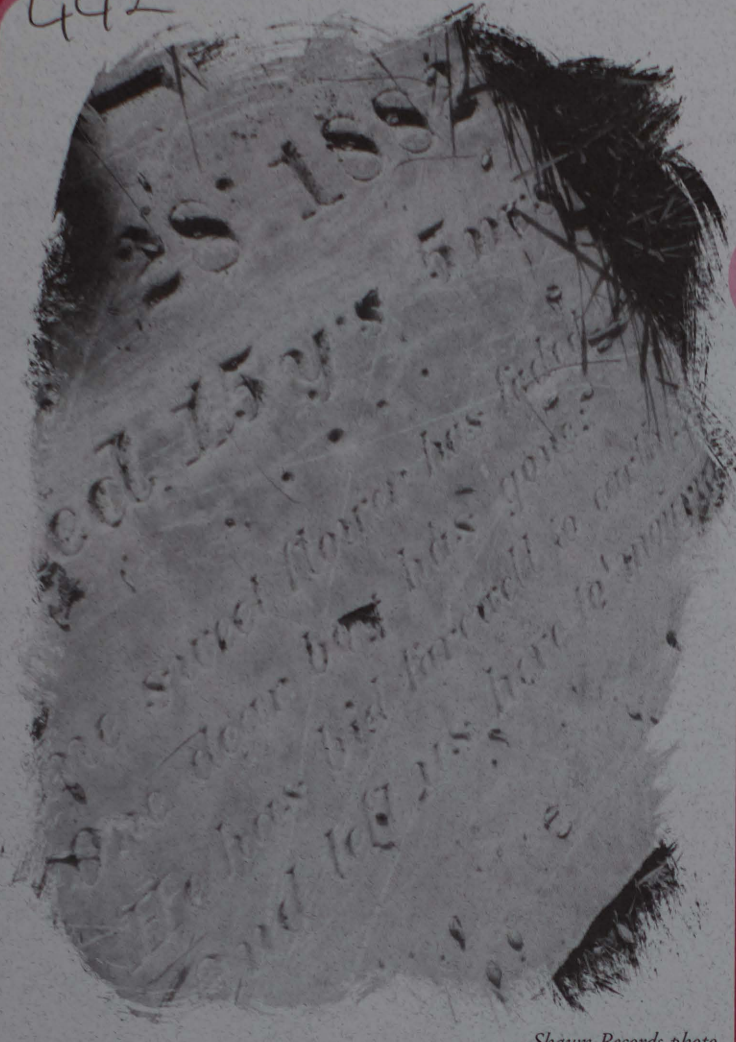


— Shawn Records photo

With over 28,400 people already in the cemetery and about 210 new burials each year (approximate maximum capacity is 40,000), Diane developed an extensive system for keeping names where they belong. Each burial is posted in the computer's burial index record, the plat map book, a section book, a receipt in the computer, the computer's section file, and the computer's burial file.

It is no wonder then, that when people show up at Morris Hill looking for someone, Diane often knows where the person is without looking it up in the master burial list. People think she is psychic. More than once she has known the name of a person someone sought, even when the seeker could not remember it.

Diane asserts she gets her information from the files and from the cemetery's guardian angel. She did not used to



— Shawn Records photo

### Final Text: The Art of Headstones

by Tamara Shores — continued from the April 1999 ICB Newsletter

**O**n every headstone there is an area called the panel that will be "frosted." While the face of the headstone is polished, the panel area is uniformly sandblasted to dull the surface before letters and lines are cut. This panel area will add contrast to the letters and lines, thus making them more defined on the surface of the stone; one might think of a panel being equivalent to a page. The entire panel area of the stencil is removed and the headstone is transported to a "banker"—a trolley of sorts—and moved into the first of two sandblasting rooms.

This sandblasting room was specially built for frosting and is in the first half of the shop. Using a fine, black, and sparkling sand composed of aluminum oxide (or carborendum) and propelling it with compressed air, the granite surface is slowly worn down. Steve Fouts pointed out that the rubber nozzle through which the sand is shot is frequently worn out and needs to be replaced.

The sandblaster uses a hand-held gun. Both Steve and his daughter Kari told gory stories of people accidentally dropping the gun and blasting themselves with a shot of high-pressured sand. The stories always ended with trips to the emergency room for arduous hours of having sand dug out of the unfortunate person's skin. No limbs have been lost, yet.

Inside the sandblasting room, the walls were lined with the same vinyl used for making the stencils, except here they were blackened by the sand. The headstone is wheeled in and set about a foot from a slot in the wall. Outside, a plywood partition with a small glass window separates the person working the sandblaster from the sand and air within the sandblasting room. He stands outside, peering through a little window and operating the gun through the waist-high slot. Flaps of vinyl hang loosely over this slot, through which the gun can be slid side-to-side. The flaps protect the person sandblasting from the toxic fumes of the sand. Behind the person operating the sandblaster hang sheets of vinyl which serve to block out light and minimize dust and noise. In effect, there are really two rooms for each sand-blasting room: the one in which the stone sits and the one in which the person sandblasting stands.

Once the panel area sandblasting is finished, the stone is wheeled out and the stencil is replaced. The next step in the process is working the letters and lines. These areas of the stencil are now removed and the headstone is wheeled into the second sandblasting room. The shop is almost imperceptibly divided into two halves. The second half of the shop houses another sandblasting room and is newer; it was added in 1977, the year Kari was born. A large air compressor and other mechanical workings of the new sandblasting room separate it from the older room.

Zirconium sand—also black, fine, and sparkling—is used in this second process. Not cheap, the sand costs about \$75 per 50 lb. box. Because of the cost, the floor in this sand-blasting room is vented. The sand slides into it and is recycled back into the system. A second ventilation system in the ceiling is filtered to minimize the loss of the fine sand.

The nozzle in this system is a Venturi; it spins the sand as it is projected toward the stone. The spinning sand creates a better, sharper cut than a straight air blast. In this way, it actually carves the stone. The nozzle in this system is also closer to the stone: about ten to eleven inches. The sandblaster is mounted on a motor-driven, sliding mechanism that automatically moves the nozzle side-to-side and up-and-down at a slow, even pace. Still, the person operating the sandblaster must monitor the cutting; let to go too long and it can "burn" the stone (go too deep). Too deep, and the sand "picks out" smaller areas of the panel face such as the insides of the letters "R," "A," "B," or parts of illustrations. The Boise Valley Monument Company prides itself on balancing that perfect depth: deep enough so that the engraving will last as long as the granite itself, but not so deep that the text or image are distorted.

After the panel and the letters and lines are carved, the stone is ready for highlighting. Without highlighting, the engraving isn't as pronounced. First, all stencils are removed so that the entire stone surface is exposed. For a sharper appearance, the panel is lightly coated in a white paint and the letters are filled with a black paint. Both paints are a "Lithochrome" which comes in additional colors as well. The additional colors are used to colorize images—such as flowers or scenes—on headstones.

Next, the stone is laid flat, and the whole surface is sprinkled with black sand. This sand is lightly brushed so that it fills the letters and lines but leaves the panel exposed. Then the entire area is sprayed with white Lithochrome. The paint not only lightens the surface, but also seals and protects it. Once dried, the sand is swept out and off and the letters and lines are painted black by hand. Finally, when all the painting is complete, the polished areas of stone outside the panel area is scraped with a blade to remove excess highlighter.

When Steve was first working for his dad, they acquired a wonderful new machine: the Nelson Stencil Press. This machine cuts sheets of vinyl into a stencil. The machine, as its name suggests, works like a letter press, cutting vinyl rather

than printing onto paper. Letters and images were still hand-set, but with the new machine, the step of hand-cutting vinyl was eliminated. Among the pre-made images to run through the press were flowers and decorations. At the time, most people didn't tend to order anything but standard images. Now, with computer stenciling, virtually any image can be converted to stone.

As the possibilities for images occurred to clients, strange requests were sure to follow. Both Steve and Kari agreed that a recent request for a marijuana leaf on a wife's headstone was not among their standard plant motifs. There are many requests for motorcycles, and once a gyrocopter, although Steve wondered why anyone would want a picture of the thing which killed him on his headstone. "And then there was the lady who wanted a picture of heaven on a headstone," Steve said. "When I asked her to describe it, she said it had a cabin and a lake for fishing."

The headstone business is changing with the kinds of headstones that are being ordered. Steve noted that as people attain a sense of permanence in the West, they are ordering more large family monuments with smaller, coordinating headstones for each family member. The question then remains:



— Shores photo

Are headstones the democratization of publishing? I never asked either Steve or Kari this question because the obvious answer is yes. Anyone who saves up the few hundred dollars for a headstone can get their name and some tidbit of information engraved on a stone and have it stuck in a field forever. It may even be a better option than the paper version of publishing: granite will last longer than paper.

In the West, the movement toward family headstones says something about how headstones do work like books. Like family bibles inscribed with the genealogy of births, marriages, and deaths, family headstone groups provide a history. In addition to names and dates, epitaphs and illustrations offer brief glimpses of each family member's personality, interests, or desires. The headstones become pages in a family album; the names and illustrations become text and graphics on those pages.

Beyond name and date, however, tombstones are not often factual documents. Haven't we all witnessed a headstone that trumpets a bit too loudly someone's virtues? Or what about those folk without headstones? Let us not forget that headstones are not reliable narrators. Headstones behave like personal essays in fractured haiku. At times they are elegant and reverent, sometimes flamboyant and confessional. But they are always a clue, an insight, to those behind and beneath them. Because headstones suggest an urge to transcend death, to conspire against the forgetful human mind, they mimic vanity press publishing and the desire to say, "I was here, too."

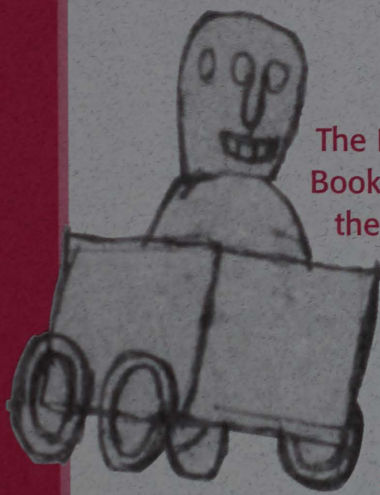
*Correction:* The Boise Valley Monument Company is located in Caldwell, Idaho. The writer would like to apologize for this geographical typo.

Diane is a trustworthy narrator for the place because she is a compassionate person, tangibly human in the best ways. She realizes that history must be known not for its own sake, but for ours. She works for the city, for the parks department, but for something greater as well.

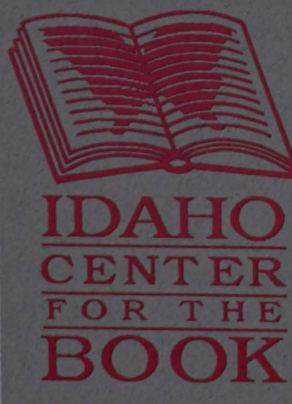
She chose to organize the cemetery records to facilitate ease of use for her replacement. In all of this she does not seem to be the least bit secretarial or bureaucratic. She envisioned and created the walking tour. She unshrouds the information people need.

In times of shock and grief it is things running smoothly that helps. Small words. Candy offered to a child. "I always had a desire to comfort those who are suffering grief," Diane says. Many of us have that desire, but very few find a way to do it. Diane admits helping people is wonderfully satisfying.

Diane Angoni does the work of civilization. She records, orders, and helps remember the dead. At Morris Hill, when a stone is lost to forces meteorological or delinquent, the plat books, the deed books, the burial index books, the section books, and the computer files remain. When Diane organized those volumes she made certain that no one known at Morris Hill will ever be lost completely. We still have our history and our storytellers, the luxurious conviction that our narratives must be spoken, recorded, and believed.



The Idaho Center for the Book is pleased to announce the availability of six James Castle facsimile books, and James Castle & the Book, a brief account of the artist's life and his books. The seven books, housed in a designer gunnysack, can be ordered directly from the ICB for \$19.95 plus \$3 shipping and handling.



The ICB Newsletter is published biannually in April and October.

Out-of-state subscriptions \$10.00 per year

Contributions, inquiries, requests for subscriptions should be sent to:

Idaho Center for the Book  
Boise State University  
Boise, Idaho 83725  
<http://www.lili.org/icb>

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