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Who's buried next to Mom? Man upset by cemetery's mistaken ID

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COLERAIN TWP. - David L. Bingham can't rest in peace.

Another man, another David L. Bingham, is already in his grave, lying next to his mother.

"My mom and I always talked about being buried next to each other," the very-much-alive David L. Bingham said.

"We used to joke about having a pipe installed between our graves so we could talk to each other. We'd laugh. We're a joking family."

He wasn't laughing during a recent visit to his mom's grave. He was sobbing.

As he cried, Bingham knelt in the Peace Garden section of Crown Hill Memorial Park & Mausoleum.

"Mom, I'm sorry this happened to you," said the weeping 60-year-old Vietnam War veteran from North College Hill.

Bingham rubbed his hands over his mother's bronze marker. He touched her name: Evelyn Helton Bingham. His fingers traced the year she was born (1915) and died (2005).

He then read the inscription on the neighboring marker:

"David L. Bingham Sr. Beloved son and father. Gone fishin'."

"That's not me," Bingham fumed. "I'm not a fisherman."

He's also not dead.

David L. Bingham Sr., formerly of Norwood, is not among the living. He was 55 when he died Oct. 29, 2006.

The two David L. Bingham are not related.

"I don't know who he is," Bingham said. "He's not my dad. He's buried in Pineville, Ky."

Bingham admitted that he doesn't visit his mom's grave. "I haven't been here since she was buried," he said. "Coming out here tears me up too much."

He learned April 23 of David L. Bingham Sr., beloved son and father, being buried next to his mother.

Earlier that day, he read an ad in The Enquirer stating that Crown Hill was "under new ownership." The ad asked plot owners to call to make sure everything was in order.

Bingham called.

"That's when they told me I was dead and buried," he said.

He voiced his objections. Then, he visited his mom's grave. That's when he saw David L. Bingham Sr.'s marker.

"I fell to my knees and started crying," Bingham said.

He contacted cemetery officials the next day. He was told that the error was "a paperwork mistake."

He said he was offered four options:

His mother would be moved to another grave where he could one day join her.

"I told them they had one less option," Bingham said. "She's not going to be moved. She loved that spot."

Evelyn Bingham's grave rests on a rise, three rows from the road and just across the street from Pleasant Run Middle School. Weekdays, the laughter of children spills from the school's playground into the cemetery.

David L. Bingham, when his time comes, would be cremated, and his ashes buried in his mother's grave.

"That's out," he said. "I hate fire."

Dig up and relocate the late David L. Bingham Sr. Then, some day in the future, the grave to Evelyn Bingham's left would be occupied by her son, David.

"I don't want to be buried in a used grave," Bingham said.

Bingham could be buried anywhere in the cemetery.

He told cemetery officials that he declined all of the above.

They said they would get back to him in two days.

"I have yet to hear from them," Bingham said.

A call placed to the cemetery by The Enquirer was met with "no comment" by a woman identifying herself as Crown Hill's administrator.

A call was placed Friday by The Enquirer to the cemetery's parent company, StoneMor Partners, in Bristol, Pa. An employee at the firm said, "Someone will give you a call."

StoneMor has not called back.

Meanwhile, Bingham suffers. He's already on 100 percent disability for post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I spent a year and a half in Vietnam - December 1966 to July 1968," he said. "I saw too many dead bodies."

Now, he's trying to cope with the problems at his mom's grave.

"This thing has sent me to the emergency room twice with anxiety attacks," he said.

He opened a folder and showed his emergency room papers.

"I shake constantly," he said as he struggled to return his papers to the folder.

"This has made a wreck out of me."

He can't get any peace.

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