

# Friends of Riverview uncovering history

## Volunteers map lost baby graves

By TERRI SANGINITI  
The News Journal

WILMINGTON — Sitting on an ATV, Jay Graf made deliberate sweeps over a 240-by-8-foot section of ground Friday on the east side of Riverview Cemetery.

Graf, who owns West Chester, Pa.-based Geo-Graf, was using ground penetrating radar to detect possible grave sites and markers beneath the ground in the cemetery's long-ignored baby section.

Until recently, the section was buried under an accumulation of dirt, discarded by vault companies that opened graves for funerals.

Over months, volunteers from the Friends of Historic Riverview Cemetery managed to clear the dirt and stash it — for the time being — in an open cinder block structure a short distance away.

"The volunteers started working on this section in May, moving a 12-foot-high pile of dirt with buckets, shovels and wheelbarrows away little by little," said Lee Anderson, who heads the group.

Then, Connie and Dan Cecil, of Cecil Vault and Memorial Co., loaned them a front loader which, along with the same volunteers, moved the remaining mound.

It was the first time in about seven years that the dirt was cleared off the baby graves, according to Grace Duffy, a former activist at the cemetery who led the initial charge of cleaning up the grounds.

After all the dirt was gone, what remained was a plot of lawn dotted by intermittent headstones.

Many of the graves, however, do not bear markers and may be buried, Anderson said.

According to the cemetery's database, upwards of 350 names of babies are listed as being buried there, with their date of death and if the grave has a marker, she said.



The News Journal/ROBERT CRAIG

Jay Graf uses radar to map any possible children's graves Friday in the Riverview Cemetery in Wilmington to help match the records of the hundreds buried there and unmarked. Graf has an ATV adapted to pull a radar device along behind that is hooked up to a machine to show an image of what is underground.



Jay Graf gathers data with a radar device attached to his ATV on Friday. Graf will take the data back to the office to interpret the results and give the printout to Lee Anderson, head of the Friends of Historic Riverview Cemetery group. The data will help the volunteers identify babies' graves that had been covered up with dirt.

Like most of the work being done at the cemetery these days, Graf volunteered his services.

Arriving at 9 a.m., Graf spent the first two hours laying out a reference grid and spray-painting hot pink markings every 10 feet.

Then, he proceeded to ride back and forth with a GPR device attached to his ATV that shot waves of radar 6 feet into the ground to help find any buried markers or graves.

"Anything down there the radar will pick up," Graf said, pointing out the changes in waves of the pictures received on a computer. "A burial is going to have a hyperbolic signature, such as a curvature indicating a grave."

Graf said he would take the results of Friday's survey back to the office and interpret them, then get the finished printout back to Anderson.

One volunteer, 86-year-old Skippy Lyness, has a vested in-

terest in the survey's results.

Her first-born son Tommy, who died Sept. 12, 1949, after six days of life, is buried in the baby section and his marker is missing. Lyness said she hasn't seen it in nearly a decade.

"It was a black marble marker with Thomas Eugene Lyness on it," she said. "If they don't find the marker, I'm going to have a larger one put on the plot."

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