

"It feels like a big family gathering here. I've studied their family histories and now I'm finally meeting them."

Psychologist Lee Anderson,  
author of a new book on Riverview Cemetery

# New book tells the tales behind the tombstones

Psychologist collects memories of Riverview Cemetery's past

By TERRI SANGINITI  
The News Journal

Strangers Howard Bock, 76, and Gunnar Molin, 84, sat under a big shade tree Sunday afternoon in the rear yard of a Fairfax home swapping stories about their ancestors, now captured for posterity in the pages of a new book about Riverview Cemetery.

Written by Chadds Ford, Pa., bereavement psychologist Lee Anderson, the book is titled "Riverview Cemetery: Reading the Stones, a Collection of Memories from the First State."

Anderson invited everyone who contributed to a private book signing Sunday at the Fairfax home of her mother, Betty Anderson. For the most part, it was the first time Anderson had met the people behind the stories, she said.

"It feels like a big family gathering here," she said. "I've studied their family histories, and now I'm finally meeting them."

Bock, an avid genealogist from Newark, was busy talking to Molin about his uncle Howard Lacey, a taxicab driver, who was found bludgeoned to death Jan. 1, 1919, inside his cab on Philadelphia Pike on the outskirts of Wilmington. All of his uncle's money was left behind, he said. Police never captured the killer.

As Molin listened intently, Bock explained how his grandfather erected a 9-foot monument to Lacey in the family's large plot facing one of the interior roads at Riverview.

"When my granddad died in 1935, my mother and grand-



The News Journal/GINGER WALL

Lee Anderson (left) shares a copy of her new book with Charlen Fanny at a book-signing party for contributors Sunday afternoon in Fairfax. Anderson is a bereavement psychologist in Chadds Ford, Pa.



The News Journal

## IF YOU GO

Lee Anderson will host a book signing and slide show from 2-5 p.m. Sept. 25 at the Brandywine Hundred Library, 1300 Foulk Road.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

The 220-page, self-published book is available for \$29 plus shipping and handling through Anderson's Web site: [www.timesonline.com](http://www.timesonline.com)

# Riverview: Descendants swap stories of their ancestors



The News Journal/GINGER WALL

Ken Copeland looks for the entry on his great-great-grandfather Kenneth Copeland at the book-signing party Sunday afternoon.

## FROM PAGE B1

mother hired a contractor to come out and turn the monument away from the road," Bock said. "They didn't want people reading it. They didn't think it should have been inscribed in the first place that he was 'murdered in a taxicab.' They got upset about it, so they turned it."

Bock's recollection about his uncle is one of about 40 stories he contributed to Anderson's three-year project about Riverview.

"A lot of Wilmington's history is told through the eyes of the storytellers through their recollections," Anderson said.

The 220 people, who contributed 1,000 stories, are from all over the country and as far away as England.

Anderson conceived of the book over several years while she and her mother visited the graveyard to cut the grass around her father's grave.

At the time, the nonprofit cemetery was being operated by the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lodges 1 and 34 and the Knights of Pythias Grand Lodge. The owners abandoned the property and filed for bankruptcy in 2001 after being investigated by the state Attorney General's Office for complaints of poor maintenance, bad record-keeping and cases of misplaced bodies.

Anderson and a lot of other families with loved ones in the cemetery were forced to cut the

grass themselves in the interim.

In early 2003, the cemetery was handed over for \$1 to the Rev. Tom Davis, pastor of the Restoration Christian Fellowship Church, along with \$150,000 to be put in trust for future maintenance. The name of the cemetery was then changed to Riverview Gardens.

Davis is now being investigated by the state Attorney General's Office following continued complaints about poor maintenance and failure to respond to plot owners.

## Memories shared

Anderson, now 50, recalled how as a young girl she used to walk in the "beautiful quiet park" known as Riverview Cemetery with her grandparents, who lived nearby on Jefferson Street.

With many of her relatives buried there, she decided in 2001 to invite other families with loved ones in the cemetery to submit stories about their family members to be included in a book.

In the 1950s, Riverview was

the first cemetery in the state to be integrated. That's why it was important to Anderson that the African-American community be represented in the book, she said.

"The stories were coming in slowly for a while, so I kept extending my deadlines," she said. Her completed books arrived at her home on Friday.

## Remembering the dead

Names of the contributors are alphabetized, along with names of the deceased.

"There's a paragraph for each person," she said. "It's very endearing - how much they love these people and what they remember, the ordinary things in life like, 'She always had a good cup of coffee ready.'"

Madeline E. Lambrecht, past president of the Association for Death Education and Counseling, described Anderson's book as a connection of generation to generation, individual to individual.

"It's especially important in these days of e-mail, because we

don't write letters anymore," Lambrecht said. "This is a new way, yet an old way of sharing those memories."

Molin, of Sharplesy, said his late wife, Thelma, wrote a story about his mother, Marie E. Brosch Molin, who traveled to the United States from Sweden in 1907, at age 17. Brosch Molin spoke no English when she came here to work as a nursemaid for the children of Russell H. Conwell, founder of Temple University in Philadelphia.

Molin and Bock traded stories for about two hours at the book signing on Sunday.

"I always say, 'If your family has been in Delaware more than 150 years, then you and I are related,'" Bock said.

Molin promised to read all of Bock's family's stories. And Bock promised to read his.

"If I like them, I may add you to my family," Bock said with a laugh.

Contact Terri Sanginiti at 324-2771 or [tsanginiti@delawareonline.com](mailto:tsanginiti@delawareonline.com)