

Presentation by Dr. Harold Cook at the Cemetery Dedication
January 21, 2011

We are here today to dedicate the historic mental health cemetery which has languished in a state of neglect and disrepair for more than 60 years. We are now at the culmination of a remarkable 3-year journey to restore this cemetery and provide for a proper final resting place for those buried here.

About 3 years ago I was contacted by Carolyn Mirich (who will speak to us in a few moments) about the sad state of this site. Over the next 3 years Ms Mirich mobilized state resources, pushed prodded and cajoled us to do the right thing. It was not always easy but the measure of her success is all around us. From a weed and garbage strewn field we now have created a proper memorial and a final, dignified resting place for 100's of souls who were ignored and often badly treated in life and then forgotten and shunted aside in death. For one individual this journey took her home. Annie Summers was buried here in 1946. For more than 60 years her family and her tribe knew nothing of her whereabouts. Two months ago her remains were claimed by the Yerington Piute tribe and today she is reunited with her tribe and her family.

It is both ironic and opportune that we are here today. Nevada is experiencing perhaps the worst economic conditions of its history and as a result mental health services are experiencing funding cuts and service cuts. It is ironic in the sense that while we honor these dead we must reduce services for the living. It is opportune in that we can use this occasion to reaffirm our commitment to do the best that we can to, preserve what we can and to continue the work that honors these dead by honoring the living with the best services and treatment we can provide. The work that has resulted in this ceremony is important and long overdue. The work that we do after this ceremony is equally important and is the measure of the honored place these dead will continue to have in our lives.

Thank you