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Kevin Buck Documents His “Tributes” in a New Book

Author Kevin W. Buck is a classic late baby-boomer. Growing up the youngest of 5 in a typical, middle class home in central New Jersey, he was exposed to the movies, music and television of several generations and he was, very obviously, paying attention. He is not one to go up against in an entertainment trivia match unless you are well prepared.

After visiting a few celebrity graves while paying his respects to some relatives, he decided to seek out the final resting places of those actors and actresses that had made indelible marks on his, as well as most other baby-boomers, psyche. His goal was to provide them with what he calls a “tribute”. These tributes are his way of thanking the entertainers for their contribution to our culture as well as their benevolent deeds off camera.

His tributes include a few big name stars such as Humphrey Bogart and Red Skelton, as well as many other actors who are not household names, but their characters certainly are. Names like Edgar Buchanan, Irene Ryan and Cliff Edwards are probably not familiar to most people, but Uncle Joe (from *Petticoat Junction*), Granny (from *Beverly Hillbillies*) and the voice of Jiminy Cricket sure are.

Kevin personalizes each tribute tying it back to a specific point in time that most people should be able to relate to. His careful research and loving descriptions of what these people meant to him will strike a chord in almost all baby-boomers and their families. The official release date for the book is October 31, 2012.

"This charming, down-to-earth book reflects what I believe is at the heart of every grave hunting adventure - visiting those who left us with fond memories and learning about their life as part of the experience"

Lisa Burks - Adventures in Gravehunting

Kevin lives in Shrewsbury, PA with his wife, two children and their dog, Jasmine.

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Recent Interview Questions:

1. Why grave hunting?

That's the number one question I get. My stock answer is that it gives me pleasure, but there's a whole lot more to it. Some people are into it for the architecture at the cemeteries; others are seeking out cool or unique grave markers. My motivation is to pay tribute to those actors, actresses, historical figures, etc. that have made an impression on me and have impacted who I am. Performing the research and visiting their final resting place is one piece. The other is sharing my tribute with others. It always leads to interesting conversations that include a lot of "Oh, yeah. I remember..." and "Wasn't she the one who...". People get a sparkle in their eyes when they relate fond memories. More memories, more sparkles. My hobby gives me an opportunity to see the sparkle in just about any one's eyes.

2. How do you handle those who say your hobby is weird or just plain creepy?

I don't make excuses for what I do. I do it because it feels right to acknowledge the people who mean something to me. As to it being creepy, I don't think so. Not even a little bit. I'm mostly outdoors, in the fresh air with serene, beautiful vistas to enjoy. I don't quite get why people are afraid of graveyards. My experiences in visiting graveyards on the west coast have been very different than those on the east coast. On the east coast, people stand at a loved one's grave, deep in thought. They put some flowers on the grave and then leave. On the west coast, a visit to a grave is a celebration. It sometimes includes chairs and a picnic lunch. It's a very different mentality. My theory is that it is the harsh weather that makes us different.

3. How do you select who you pay tribute to?

It ranges from me making lists of those I want to visit to stumbling across someone while researching other tributes. A good example of that is while researching my tribute to Dean Martin, I found Percy Helton. While not a household name, most people would recognize him for playing the drunken parade Santa Claus who was replaced by the real Santa Claus in *Miracle on 34th Street*. As soon as I found his information, I reconnected immediately to the character he played and remembered his line "A man has got to keep warm!". Percy appeared in many movies from the 20's through the 60's and many TV shows. His distinctive voice was always easy to spot.

4. What is it that you do to pay tribute to an individual?

Most of the people I pay tribute to entered the entertainment business to achieve fame, widespread notoriety or recognition of their craft. My tributes acknowledge their contributions, but focuses on what they meant to me personally. I know I'm not unique on what an actor meant to me for when I document it for others to read, it seems to strike a chord.

5. How did you come up with the title?

The title came from my failed search for the grave of June Marlowe (who played Miss Crabtree in the *Our Gang* film shorts). After obtaining new information as to her whereabouts, I turned to my friend and said "Looking for Miss Crabtree - again!" It felt good to me and I used the idea to bookend my project.

6. Why didn't you go with a mainstream publisher?

I talked with a few firms, but selling the idea of celebrity gravehunting is an uphill battle, at best, and I did not want to give up any control of the end product. I am very excited about what CreateSpace, and other companies, are doing to enable independent publishing. They have the tools and services that

allowed me to control every aspect of my book publication, from formatting content, creation of the cover and obtaining an ISBN number.

7. What was the most difficult part of the book for you?

Finding the right pictures and researching whether they were in the public domain or whether they needed licensing. The many versions of the copyright laws and some of the broad interpretation of them made things quite confusing. If had it to do all over again, I would have used some third-party services. The only other major issue was choosing whose tribute to include. I have visited more A-list stars than most people even think of. The advantage of gravehunting is that the people you are looking for are always “in”. I know a lot of people will think I have a lot of gall leaving out John Wayne, Elvis, Tony Curtis and so on with my first tribute book, but I didn’t want to write a book about just major celebrities. I wanted to write about both major and minor characters and performances that left a mark on my generation’s psyche.

8. Are you planning to write another book about your tributes?

I have performed enough tributes to fill a couple of books and I have plans of performing many, many more. As to whether I document them like I did with Miss Crabtree remains to be seen.

9. Are there any other subjects you would like to write about?

I have considered writing a book about all of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, including a visit to their final resting place, of course. I have also thought about writing about my experiences at the most memorable concerts I have attended where the music types range from Elvis’s crooning to Pink Floyd’s spectacle. Music is another topic where I never run out of things to discuss.