

FEATURE

Cemetery director recalls 23 years of progress

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Bob Vogt gestured proudly to a small pond glistening in the morning sun. Not too many years ago, he noted, this sparkling body of water was nothing but an eyesore full of branches and dead leaves.

"It had gotten so that you could walk across it," Vogt remarked.

The pond — located in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery — is just one of many upgrades Vogt has overseen in his 23 years as executive director of the cemetery.

"Lots of things have happened in the last 20 years to make this a full-service cemetery and a place of beauty," Vogt said.

Vogt, 75, will retire from his director's post on May 1. Among his many accomplishments, he will go down in history as the first lay director of Holy Sepulchre, which is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year.

Vogt, a Rochester native, graduated from Blessed Sacrament School and Aquinas Institute. He went on to earn a degree in economics from Niagara University.

Prior to his arrival at Holy Sepulchre, Vogt spent three decades in the food industry. He held marketing and advertising posts with Ward Foods, Inc., and was later the general manager of Schuler Foods Division-Sunshine Biscuits Inc.

When he was appointed as Holy Sepulchre's director in 1973, Vogt brought many innovative ideas to his new position — even though he had no experience in cemetery work.

"When you're German, you think you can do anything," he joked.

The 332-acre cemetery, just north of Kodak Park between Dewey Avenue and the Genesee River, has taken on many new looks under Vogt's administration.

Some of the more noticeable changes include development of four garden sections, two shrine-burial sections, and the

Aquinas Follies will present five performances in May

ROCHESTER — The Aquinas Follies will present their annual musical variety show with five performances at Aquinas Institute, 1127 Dewey Ave.

Show dates are May 3, 4, 5, 10 and 11. All performances begin at 8 p.m., with the exception of a 2 p.m. matinee May 5 instead of an evening show.

Tickets are \$7 each. For the May 5 matinee, senior citizens tickets will be \$5 and children under 12 will be admitted free if accompanied by an adult.

Each show will include a mixture of musical selections. This is the 19th consecutive year of performances by the Follies, a troupe of adult performers. The group originated at Cardinal Mooney High School and moved to Aquinas after Mooney closed in 1989.

For ticket information, call Kay Geisler 716/621-8376. All proceeds will benefit Aquinas Institute.

Trinity Montessori School asks for auction donations

EAST ROCHESTER — Trinity Montessori School, 501 S. Garfield St., is seeking donations and advertising for its fourth annual silent auction Friday, May 3.

The school is asking area businesses to help it raise \$10,000 by donating services, gift certificates, items, and/or by placing an advertisement in the silent auction directory.

Trinity Montessori, which was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph 27 years ago, offers an alternative education program for children ages 21 months to 7 years.

For information, call 716/586-1044.



S. John Wilkin/Staff photographer

Bob Vogt, executive director of Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, will retire May 1 after 23 years of overseeing many improvements at the Lake Avenue cemetery.

Garden of the Sepulchre at the Lake Avenue main entrance. Holy Sepulchre has also added four community mausoleums, with full-size crypts and niches for remains.

In addition, Vogt is pleased with Holy Sepulchre's utilization of computer technology. The cemetery office now has 190,000 complete burial records on file — a project that "took three years with five people," Vogt noted.

"I think it impresses people that we're not living in the past," he added. "We're

constantly upgrading; that's what makes this job a challenge. We're always planning something. There aren't really too many dull moments around here."

Above all, Vogt upholds high standards because he feels that the people he serves — both deceased and living — deserve the best. For instance, he said, when the cemetery's board of directors undertakes a major decision, it "tries to take it as, 'We're the lot-holder. How would we feel about this?'"

"We're the caretakers for all this —

even those sections that are 100 years old," Vogt continued. "And, we want the place to look respectable when people come to visit. You've got to be people-oriented, and we have really developed a staff of personnel that are great with people."

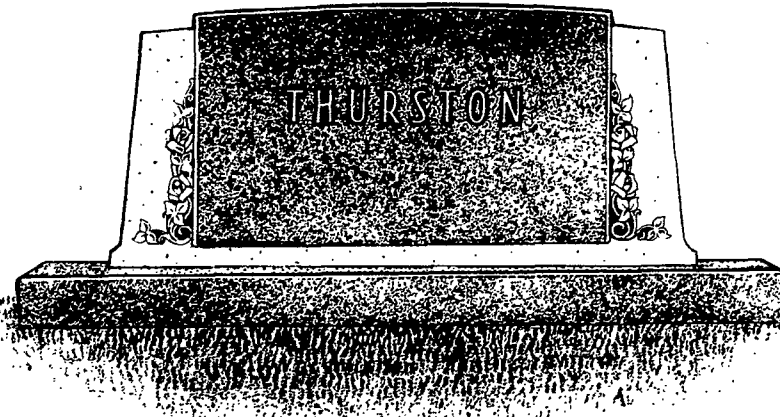
During his tenure, Vogt served as a diocesan delegate to the National Catholic Cemetery Conference. He has also held memberships in the Cemetery Association of Western New York, New York State Cemetery Association and New England Cemetery Association.

Vogt will be succeeded as Holy Sepulchre's executive director by James R. Weisbeck, the cemetery's business director since 1991. In addition, John C. Drexel, the cemetery's superintendent, is being appointed to the newly created position of assistant director.

In his retirement, Vogt plans to volunteer two days per week in the archives at the Rochester Diocese's Pastoral Center. The Brighton resident, a parishioner at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church, also plans to rejoin Holy Sepulchre's board of trustees after a two-year hiatus. In the meantime, Vogt anticipates several leisurely visits to the site of his professional devotion for more than two decades.

"I'm sure I'll be taking some drives through here," he said.

EDITORS' NOTE: A retirement picnic for Bob Vogt will take place Friday, May 3, from 2 to 6 p.m. behind Holy Sepulchre's office near the cemetery's Lake Avenue entrance. RSVP by Monday, April 29, by calling 716/458-4110.



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