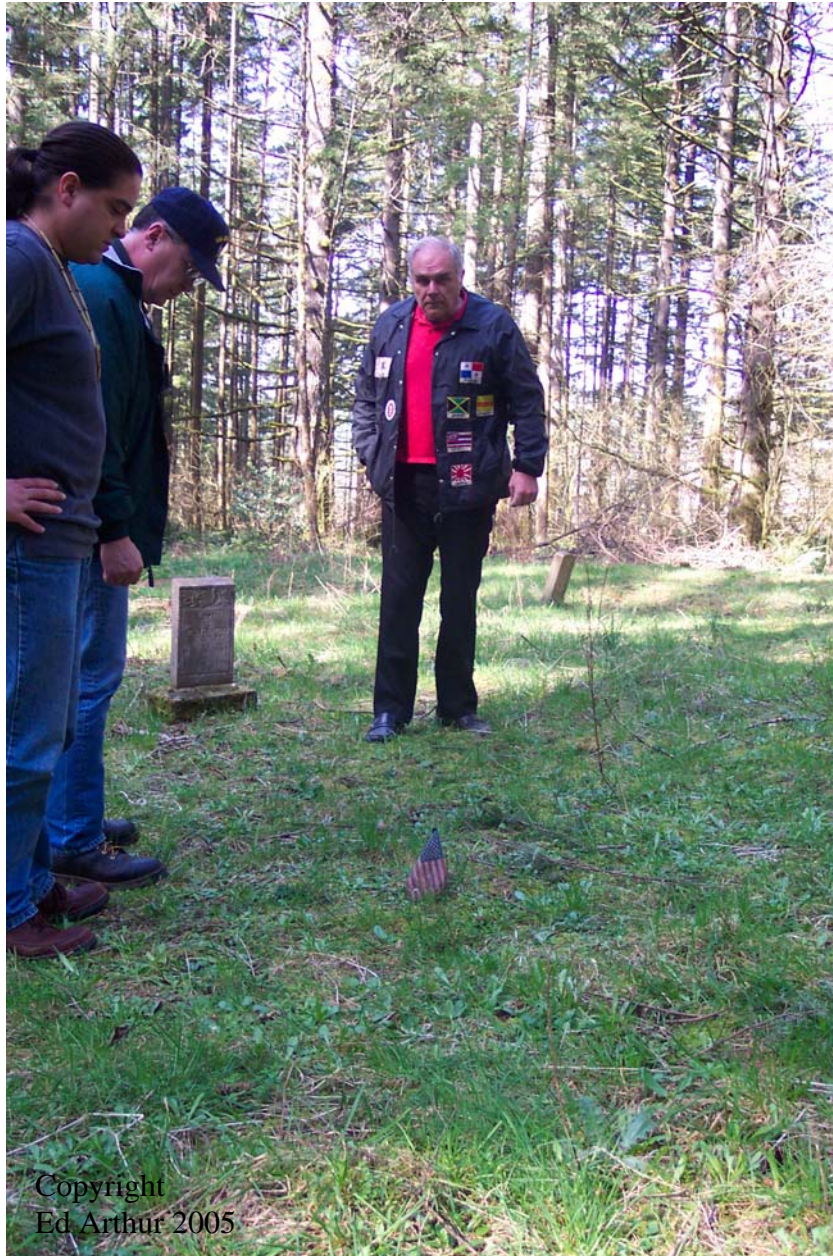


Area Veteran and the Cowlitz Indian Tribe Concerned Over Cemetery

Report
By
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Area US Veteran Chuck Mason, and Cowlitz Council Members Mike Iyall and Taylor Aalvik look upon a weathered American Flag in the Livingston Cemetery. In the background is a leaning headstone from an early 1900's US Infantryman.

On March 7, 2005, representatives of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe (Council members Mike Iyall, and Taylor Aalvik) and a representative of the area Veterans association (Veteran Chuck Mason) met at the Livingston Cemetery, which is pocketed adjacent to a closed US military installation in Clark County Washington, called Camp Bonneville. Camp Bonneville was announced for closure in 1995 as part of the Nation's Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act. The old military base is still under question by the Cowlitz Indian Tribe over cultural resource issues.

Chuck and Mike both served in the military during the Vietnam era. To the right, Chuck and Taylor looks upon a US infantryman's headstone with concern, as it leans over. Mike looks away from the site. It won't be much longer until the headstone topples with time, unless something is done about it. Chuck said "I'd like to see the area cleaned up, and more research done to find out whom else



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A plaque describing the cemetery's history would be great." There is also another marker indicating a US Civil War Veteran. Taylor Aalvik and Mike Iyall are there for other reasons as well. What draws there attention is a large mound of dirt which is located close to the Camp Bonneville boundary fence inside the Livingston cemetery, well east of the far west Camp Bonneville boundary. "I want to know just what the history and nature of this mound is," said Taylor. "There may be more here than what is led to believe to date, and I aim to find out." Taylor also explained to me of his discomfort to the upkeep of the cemetery. "There has been some upkeep, but there shows a lot of neglect. I have to find out and



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thank the individual who at least try's to maintain some integrity here." The question remains on why the Army excluded this cemetery, which is the final resting place of known past servicemen of the United States.

Mike, Chuck, and Taylor (far right) look upon a large mound of dirt in the Livingston Cemetery which is pocketed just outside Camp Bonneville property.

Another question is why has the cemetery not been kept up when being so close to a military base with servicemen buried there? This cemetery has positive indication of many more people buried here than what is represented, with many unmarked graves present. The Cowlitz Tribe is also concerned of a prehistoric campsite which has been recorded within the Camp Bonneville property, as well as bone fragments which have been found and unexplained in the historical documents.

The meeting with Chuck Mason and the Cowlitz Indian Tribe was to explore possibilities of a joint effort to identify a new US National Veterans cemetery. Chuck is looking for Tribal support for this cemetery which is needed. Last weekend at the Cowlitz Indian Tribal Council meeting, a motion was unanimously passed to support the possibility for a new cemetery, or expansion of the Livingston cemetery into the Camp Bonneville property in conjunction with Tribal concerns. More work is ongoing to look into changing the existing Camp Bonneville reuse plan to encompass Chuck's, and other area Veteran's efforts.

Clean up and other sometimes heated issues have plagued Camp Bonneville since its closure announcement in 1995. Primary issues have been the dangers of unexploded ordinance. This base was a primary training facility for target practices with a variety of weaponry. This remains an important concern to the surrounding community's safety. According to Christine Sutherland's (concerned community member to the Restoration Advisory Board or RAB) investigation of Camp Bonneville's fencing issue, there are many areas where the fence is totally down, leaving wide swaths of access for children to explore Camp Bonneville. This concerns many of the risks of a fatal accident involving unexploded ordinance from the old military reservation. Recently, Chairman John Barnett for the Cowlitz Indian Tribe wrote to the Commanding Officer from Fort Lewis, General Dubik, requesting that the fence be repaired. The Tribe waits for the General's response.

Taylor Aalvik started investigating issues on Camp Bonneville last summer. He is one of the newest members of the Cowlitz Tribal Council. Taylor takes over the Tribe's seat on the RAB, left behind by his Uncle Ronald (Sonny) Aalvik (Korean Veteran), who sat on the RAB before him. In October he stated at a Restoration Advisory Board meeting that he intends to get to the truth over Camp Bonneville issues. He continues to maintain that stance.

As the process of land disposal of Camp Bonneville presses on, new situations may change the outcome of this old military reservation's reuse scenario. This issue may have additional significance due to its near proximity to Fort Vancouver, which also has concerns from the Cowlitz

Indian Tribe as well as a multitude of area Tribes, and Native Hawaiians. "Hopefully, respect of the past will be properly investigated and addressed prior to any reuse of Camp Bonneville," Taylor states.



Development is closing in on the eastern boundary of Camp Bonneville, where many of the unexploded ordinances still may lie.

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