Why Steal Cemetery Toilet? Ray Eisenbeis (1983)

by Tim Kjos, Editor Beulah Beacon newspaper

Why Steal Cemetery Toilet? Beulah Chairman Wonders of Theft

Now, who would want to steal an outhouse?

Mercer County has had more than its share of crime the last few years that has included items more worthy of stealing than a cemetery toilet of little monetary value. Perhaps, it was a crime of passion resulting from a childhood obsession to sit in a cold commode reading a Sears catalog.

Or maybe it was a non-farm resident who lacks sanitary facilities and desired a low cost septic tank.

Whatever the foolish reason may be, the Peace Cemetery Association has lost its wooden facility that had been a landmark since constructed many years ago as a government project, according to Ray Eisenbeis, association chairman, Beulah.

"It was in good, fair shape," remarked a serious Eisenbeis when first asked about the unusual theft. Later, Eisenbeis loosened and laughed that someone would actually steal the "white one-seater".

The cemetery is located 16 miles northwest of Beulah. It belonged to Peace Lutheran Church of Beulah which was dissolved in 1968. Although Peace Lutheran members have joined other churches, the cemetery is maintained for periodic visitation. Eisenbeis says during those visits, people still used the outhouse. But they can't any longer.

About three weeks ago, Eisenbeis drove past the cemetery and noticed the toilet was missing. He stopped at a nearby farm and inquired if they'd seen it, or noticed when it disappeared. Eisenbeis had little success. That week he placed a newspaper advertisement seeking any information, but there was no response. Eisenbeis placed another ad this week.

Eisenbeis is disturbed that someone would actually steal a toilet. "It's not a joke. Sure, you can laugh about it, but I'm serious. Otherwise, I wouldn't have put it (ad) in the newspaper," stated Eisenbeis.

The outhouse was bolted to a concrete base. He says the bolts were cut before it was lifted off the concrete. Since the structure was heavy, Eisenbeis speculates it required two or three guys to lift it onto a truck or flatbed. There was no damage to the cemetery itself.

Eisenbeis figures the outhouse can be used for any number of things, in addition to its traditional purpose. Perhaps, the thief or thieves are using it as a smokehouse or fish house. "Maybe the guy who stole it is using it to smoke some meat he stole," added Eisenbeis.

Eisenbeis is paying for the ad costs out of his pocket. He argues the issue's principal is that no one should be allowed to take something that isn't theirs. "If he can get away without being penalized, it gives me an idea to go out and steal something," he said.

Of course, Eisenbeis never thought someone would steal an outhouse. "Well they'll steal anything, usually something you'd never expect," he added.

Eisenbeis believes it is his duty to find out what happened to the cemetery's property and he won't give up the search. If he finds the missing outhouse, Eisenbeis pledged to sign a complaint and have the guilty party arrested.

In the meantime, the cemetery is without a facility. Eisenbeis said the association will either have to replace the toilet, or plant bushes. "We'll have to do something," he explained.