



MARCH – APRIL 2021

Orange County Cemetery District

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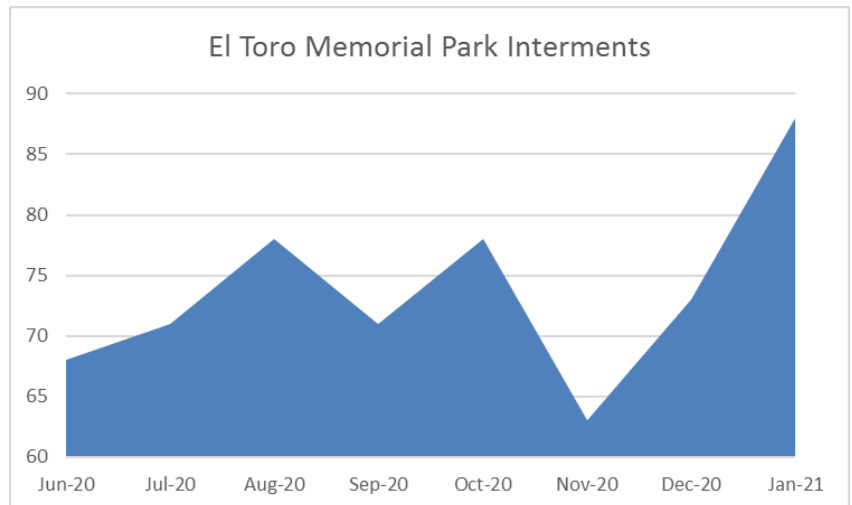
Surge In Burials Means Longer Waits for Interment Dates

When a loved one passes, the last thing families want to hear from the cemetery is that the first available burial date is more than a month out. It is also the last thing that cemetery staff want to tell grieving families.

Prior to and throughout the first months of the pandemic, the Orange County Cemetery District was able to quickly accommodate requests for burial, particularly from those whose religious or cultural practices required rapid interment. In 2019, a typical month at El Toro Memorial Park would see anywhere from 45 to 55 interments. El Toro's busiest month in 2019 saw 68 interments. Since July of 2020, El Toro's service numbers have consistently been in the 70's with January 2021 coming in at 88 interments.

But those numbers don't tell the full story. Staff at El Toro are now conducting interments seven days a week and have even started to schedule some burials on holidays. We have increased weekday services from three to four a day to try to keep pace with the need. In order to fit four services in on one day, we are asking families to limit graveside services to no more than 30 minutes. But even with those measures, there are simply more families needing burials, then there is time to conduct the interments. After scheduling the maximum number of burials that can be squeezed into one day, the only recourse is to push interment dates further out. In early February, the first available interment dates were being scheduled for early March.

This wave of deaths is impacting every facet of the funeral industry, including mortuaries and even our cement vault suppliers. In January, we



The number of monthly interments at El Toro Memorial Park jumped from 63 in November of 2020 to 88 in January 2021. In 2019, a typical month would see between 45 to 55 interments.

were notified by our main vault supplier that they could not keep pace with the demand. After calling every cement vault vendor we could locate in Southern or Central California, we found the same problem impacting every company.

Fortunately, we were able to locate a company in Georgia that makes polypropylene vaults guaranteed to last 50 years. The District was able to secure an order of 60 vaults to tide us over until the local vault companies can catch up.

As we approach the end of February, the need has not decreased. We are estimating that El Toro Memorial Park will conduct

86 interment services in February. As the vaccines become more widely accessible it is our hope that the worst is over.

While we are all weary of self-isolating and social distancing, we urge you to remain vigilant. Please wear a mask, wash your hands frequently, and avoid unnecessary gatherings with people outside your household.

To those families who have had to wait, or are waiting now, to inter a loved one, please accept our sincerest apologies and most heartfelt appreciation for your patience and understanding.

Community Support for a New Public Cemetery Needed Now

Several years ago, Anaheim Cemetery sold its last available casket interment space. In 2020, Santa Ana Cemetery also sold its last available casket space. El Toro Memorial Park is now the last public cemetery in Orange County with available space for casket burial. At the accelerated rate of sale we have experienced over the last few months, the District estimates that El Toro Memorial Park, also, will be sold out for full casket space in four to six years.

Why does this matter? If you have a loved one buried at one of the County's three public cemeteries you know first-hand, the economical advantages the Orange County Cemetery District offers to families. If El Toro Memorial Park sells out of casket space, and no fourth public cemetery is established, the ability to have a casket burial for your loved one will also disappear for thousands of our neighbors and fellow community members. The unfortunate fact is, that casket burial at private cemeteries, is either completely out of reach or at best, presents a tremendous financial burden for most people.

When public cemetery districts were first established in Orange County, it was because the public believed in the importance of maintaining and preserving the final resting places of its citizens in a dignified and respectful manner. A small portion of property taxes goes to the support of these cemeteries so that they are able to offer County residents the most affordable interment options possible.

With the help and foresight of the County of Orange Board of Supervisors, 283 acres of raw land in Gypsum Canyon was transferred to the District in December of 2018. The District received the land under the condition that 50% of the developable acreage be reserved for a State Veterans Cemetery and contingent upon the public cemetery conducting its first interment with ten years.

Since that time, the Orange County Cemetery District has spent over \$600,000 in site assessments, geotechnical surveys, preliminary site designs, and traffic studies. Preliminary cost estimates for infrastructure such as road construction, utilities, and site grading come in at about \$17 million. The first phase of public cemetery development is roughly \$35.6 million. Even with the \$11.3 million that the District has diligently saved over the last decade, total project costs of \$52 million exceed the District's financing ability. The District is currently looking at the design, to determine if any changes can be made to lower the costs for the first phase of public cemetery development.

If this project is going to move forward, we will need the continued support of the Orange County Board of Supervisors and approval from the City of Anaheim that has jurisdiction over the land at Gypsum Canyon. They must be made aware that the continuation of public cemeteries in Orange County is a priority for its current citizens as well as a necessity for future generations.

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD

Our leaders want and need your feedback. Please help us develop a new fourth public cemetery for the residents of Orange County. Contact your elected officials, and tell them that you support construction of a new public cemetery at Gypsum Canyon.

County of Orange – Board of Supervisors

Supervisor Andrew Do, District 1

Phone: (714) 834-3110

Email: first.district@ocgov.com

Supervisor, District 2 (Vacant)

Even though this seat is currently vacant, the office of the Supervisor can still be reached at:

Phone (714) 834-3220.

Supervisor Donald Wagner, District 3

Phone: (714) 834-3330

Email: Donald.Wagner@ocgov.com

Supervisor Doug Chaffee, District 4

Phone: (714) 834-3440

Email: fourth.district@ocgov.com

Supervisor Lisa Bartlett, District 5

Phone: (714) 834-3550

Email: Lisa.Bartlett@ocgov.com

Letters can be mailed to your Supervisor at:

County of Orange, Board of Supervisors

333 W. Santa Ana Blvd.

Santa Ana, CA 92701

Anaheim City Council

If you reside in the City of Anaheim, please show your support for this new cemetery by contacting the Mayor and the City Council.

Mayor Harry Sidhu

Phone: (714) 765-5247

Email: hsidhu@anaheim.net

Mail letters to the Anaheim City Council at:

200 S. Anaheim Blvd.

7th Floor

Anaheim, CA 92805

Garden of Innocence Service Scheduled for March 20th at 10:00 a.m. Help Us Honor and Remember Wyatt, Grace and Faith

Garden of Innocence is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the respectful interment of abandoned or unidentified remains of children. Since opening the El Toro Memorial Park Garden in 2016, 16 little lives have been laid to rest.

Due to the surge in burials that have been occurring since December, the Garden of Innocence Service at El Toro Memorial Park for Wyatt, Grace and Faith originally scheduled for January 23rd, had to be postponed. A new service date has now been scheduled for Saturday, March 20th at 10:00 a.m.

Services usually include a procession by the Knights of Columbus, a guest speaker, special music and poetic readings.

If you attend, please remember that COVID safety guidelines will be enforced. We ask that all attendees maintain a six-foot social distance from those they do not live with. Everyone must be wearing a protective face covering. Please bring your own chair if you require seating, as the cemetery cannot provide chairs at this time. Our thanks to all the volunteers who make these service possible.



*"If No One Grieves,
No One Will Remember!"*

Service Milestones for 2020 - Thank You Staff and Trustees!

Every January the District recognizes and honors those staff and trustees who have reached service milestones in the previous year. For 2020, the following recipients were honored:

Trustee Cynthia Ward reached her ten-year mark serving on the Board. Trustee Ward represents the Fourth District and has served as Board Chair for two terms and also chairs the Communications and Public Relations Committee. She operates a small consulting firm, specializing in the research, documentation, and restoration of historic properties. Her knowledge and expertise is of immense value to the District, particularly for historical tours and mausoleum restorations.

Cemetery Manager Bud Bales (pictured right) has now been with the Orange County Cemetery District for over 25 years. He started as a Groundskeeper at Crestlawn and after moving to Pacific View, was promoted to Superintendent. He became the Cemetery Manager at El Toro Memorial Park in 1995. All told, Mr. Bales has almost 40 years of experience in the cemetery industry.

Groundskeeper Malachi Rios has been with the Orange County Cemetery District for ten years. Mr. Rios has worked at all three of the District cemeteries.

Groundskeeper Felipe Romo-Chavez has reached his five-year milestone with the District and has

worked at both El Toro Memorial Park and Santa Ana Cemetery.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication in serving the interment needs of Orange County Residents.



Memorial Day Programs to be Virtual in 2021 – Flags Will Still be Placed

With the current COVID-19 restrictions recommended by Federal, State, and County agencies, the Orange County Cemetery District has decided to proceed with virtual Memorial Day Programs at all three cemeteries in 2021. Our Memorial Day Programs typically attract large numbers of people, and until the COVID pandemic is well under control, it would be irresponsible to put any members of the public at unnecessary risk.

Our Veterans, however, deserve to be remembered. It is important that their service and sacrifice is recognized and

honored. Flags will still be placed at every Veteran's grave for the holiday. In addition, the District will be reaching out to all the organizations and elected officials who faithfully participate in our programs, and ask for their virtual involvement for 2021. Our hope is that the community can log on to the District website on Memorial Day and see flags flying, wreaths presented, patriotic anthems sung, and inspirational words delivered – all to remember our Veterans.

Watch for our May/April newsletter with more information on how to view our 2021 virtual Memorial Day Programs.

ORANGE COUNTY CEMETERY DISTRICT

March/April Board Meetings

The Board of Trustees for the Orange County Cemetery District holds regular meetings the first Tuesday of every month at 10:00 a.m. at the District Office located at 25751 Trabuco Road, Lake Forest, CA 92630. **Until further notice these meetings are being video conferenced, but the public may also attend electronically. Please call the District office for the meeting link.**

Agendas are available at least 72 hours prior to each meeting and are also posted on our website at www.occemeterydistrict.com. In March and April, meetings will be held as follows:

- **Tuesday, March 2nd at 10:00 a.m.**
- **Tuesday, April 6th at 10:00 a.m.**

If you have any questions or need additional information please contact the District Secretary, Mary Funk at (949) 951-9102 ext. 110.

Flower Removal and Holiday Schedule

Every Wednesday, groundskeepers remove and discard flowers and decorations throughout all three cemeteries. Families are encouraged to remove their flowers and/or decorations on Tuesday night. You can then place the flowers back on the space on Wednesday afternoon. Please remember that the District policy only allows for two items to be placed on gravesites. This includes the in-ground flower vase and one other item. If gravesites exceed the number of allowed items, staff may remove and discard the excess items. Please do not leave items of great monetary or sentimental value on gravesites as the District cannot prevent theft.

Throughout the year, various holidays are recognized with extended periods between flower clean-ups. During these times, we do ask that you empty the vase and place fresh water in the container every four to five days to eliminate mosquito breeding sources, which can cause serious health issues. Your cooperation in this regard is greatly appreciated.



CEMETERY VISITATION HOURS

Anaheim Cemetery and Santa Ana Cemetery are open year-round for visitation, seven days a week, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

El Toro Memorial Park
 When Daylight Saving Time begins on March 14, 2021, the park will resume **Extended Hours and will be open for visitation, seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

Offices are open M-F from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 All offices are closed on the weekends and on holidays.

In honor of Persian New Year and Easter, flowers may be placed at El Toro Memorial Park on Thursday, March 11th and must be removed by Tuesday, April 13th. Flowers may be placed for Easter at Anaheim and Santa Ana Cemeteries on Thursday, March 25th and must be removed by Tuesday, April 13th.

Flowers for Mother’s Day may be placed at all District Cemeteries beginning on Thursday, April 29th and must be removed by Tuesday, May 18th.

A complete listing of the District’s extended holiday flower schedule for 2021 is available on our website at www.occemeterydistrict.com. Click on the tab for Flowers, Markers and Rules for more information.

Our Mission Statement & Values

The Orange County Cemetery District manages and maintains Orange County’s public cemeteries in a manner that preserves their beauty, dignity, historical and cultural values, and offers affordable interment service for County residents.

The Trustees and staff of the Orange County Cemetery District are committed to the following values:

- Integrity ■ Respect ■ Accountability
- Responsiveness ■ Empathy ■ Transparency
- Appreciation for Diverse Needs

