

Back to school despite summer cemetery fun

By Robert Richardson
Staff Reporter

If a summer job made a person rich and included as little work as possible, it would be paradise.

I, of course, could find no such job. So I had to settle for manual labor at Parkview Cemetery in Hastings for \$3.80 an hour.

The job really wasn't as depressing as it sounds. It included some very light moments and very touching ones.

Most of the time it was just there.

Lighter moments included racing mowers around the cemetery, sneaking up on headphone wearers and perpetuating the ghost rumor to those impressionable youngsters.

Like any city employee, cemetery employees loved their work breaks so much they extended them. We took a pre-morning break at 9:15 to get ready for the morning break at 9:30. We would also take a post-morning break at 9:45 to get revved up for the job we were going to do: lean on our shovels, then drive around to find a new place to lean. This wonderful cycle was repeated at lunch and also before and after the midafternoon break.

But no matter how much fun you make a cemetery job, you'll

always have moments etched in your mind. These special times always came around Memorial Day. Hearing a trumpet echo through the cemetery while playing a "Taps" solo for a deceased servicemen was beautiful. Seeing a family praying or leaving flowers at the grave of an infant gives you a pain in your stomach worse than doing a belly-flop off the high dive.

Away from the cemetery, I never stopped trying to utilize my journalistic talent this summer. I bothered my hometown newspaper until it finally gave me my big break. Belinda Carlisle was to be in a neighboring town. I was going to do a concert review and a possible interview.

Only allowed to ask the former member of the Go-Go's three questions, I flubbed one and called Carlisle's former band The Bangles. I couldn't understand why she wouldn't kiss me after the short interview, so I yelled out her age to everyone in earshot and was briskly escorted out.

So now where did I stand? The pop queen hated me and I couldn't become a "lifer" at the cemetery. Obviously, the only choice I had was to come back to college and spend more of my parents' money.

Montauk

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tal and get to the airport for my flight to Block Island.

I arrived at the hospital 10 minutes before my flight was to leave.

"You must be Miss Johnson," the ticket agent at New England Air said to me. "We've been waiting for you."

I was then informed that the flight might not leave because of the bad weather. Then, the "saltiest" man I had ever seen aside from

a carved wooden figure (blue sailor hat, white beard, wire glasses) said, "Miss Johnson, what will you do if you can't get back to Montauk tonight?"

I just smiled and said I'd have to stay in a hotel.

To my dismay, the flight did leave, and I flew in a seven-passenger plane to Block Island. The whole way, I looked out the window, thinking about how unbelievable the day had been.

When we landed (only 15 minutes later) my "salty" friend offered to drive me to the dock to get my

final Viking Ferry back to Long Island.

In a mere eight hours, I had traveled through three states and had been transported by land, sea and air.

I didn't receive a huge tip from "Tony" because I didn't see him in person at the hospital -- my connection time was too tight. I wasn't disappointed, because my boss paid for the Block Island T-shirt I had bought.

I had my day in the "jet set," but I realized I'm much happier just being normal.



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