

Men of Gabriels were invaluable

In My Opinion

By ELIZABETH MENKE

TO THE EDITOR: Camp Gabriels is a place in our area that has done so much for the people of the North Country, not only in the hiring of their work force but in the service the camp men have provided to many organizations and towns across the northern section of Franklin and neighboring counties.

I want to tell you about a job done this past summer by a very dedicated group of men from Camp Gabriels. Two teams of camp men with two compassionate guards worked about four weeks in very hot, dry weather at Webster Street Cemetery to help the Adirondack Chapter DAR with their effort to restore this historic site. The work done by these men would have been in the thousands of dollars if the chapter had to pay to have it done.

The entire length of the interior road was lined with huge tree stumps left after the trees had been removed because of the Ice Storm years ago. They were very unsightly and as far as the chapter was concerned we would not be able to spend money to remove them. The upkeep of the grounds and repair and erection of the monuments is our top priority. Tree stumps and scrub trees and bushes would have to wait.

The camp in Gabriels was contacted. The day I met with the guards, they asked me what I would like to have done. I pointed out some small trees and a back section on the fence line that would look better if it was cleaned off. Karl, one of the guards, asked me if I would like some of the trees in a section of the cemetery where there was a grave taken down. In this section, we had not done a lot. In fact, we were very surprised when after Bryan cleaned the area a grave was found. Until that time we thought that it was just all wild trees and shrubbery.

I mentioned the tree stumps lining the road inside of the cemetery and asked if it would be possible to have the tops chipped so that Bryan could mow the lawn area easier and also give a neater appearance to the cemetery. To my surprise they not only said yes but all of the stumps plus some in the cemetery proper have been dug out and removed by the camp men. This was all hand work. They did not have machinery to do the digging or the filling. The roots were huge, as thick as some small trees, and they had to go deep, dig under them and then cut and remove the pieces. All of this debris was hauled to the back of the cemetery and when they were done they loaded the town trucks and had it removed. This labor was intense. It was labor and it was hot. Our only cost for all of this work was to supply a portable toilet for their use. If we had to pay to get that work done it would not have happened.

Anyone familiar with this cemetery can see the vast improvement with the work these camp men did. It was well worth their effort. The grounds look so much neater now and the mowing to keep it that way will be a lot easier for Bryan. I know that a crew also worked on a historic

cemetery in Chateaugay last year. They are giving back to the community. Our local history is preserved.

The men are able and willing to help. If the powers that be would weigh the good that comes from Camp Gabriels and what it has done for so many programs they may find that to close it will do a lot of harm to many people, towns and organizations. By keeping it in place the programs that have been so successful can continue. These programs are not new. Years ago the historical society in Malone had a crew work on the interior of the museum.

This is a very good program. It should be allowed to continue.