

Melvin King - N/I

by Lynne Belluscio

I want to thank all the folks who helped place flags at Machpelah Cemetery on Saturday. We were through by noon and the cemetery looks wonderful with all the flags flying.

On Sunday, I caught the last part of a program on the CBS Sunday Morning show that featured a family that places flags on the graves of soldiers in the McPhearson Cemetery (I didn't hear where the cemetery was located.) Three generations have participated in this Memorial Day ritual for many years. Actually for a couple of years, I had three generations at Machpelah, with me, my daughter and her two sons. But what I saw on the program was something I would like to try next year. At each gravesite, they call out the veteran's name. "In many cases, probably no one has said this person's name out loud in many years except for our small tribute." We do call out the names. "Who are we looking for? Say that again. I think I saw it over here. Nope, I can't find him. Better take a look at the map again." But to stand at the grave and say the person's name I think is only fitting.

I worked with Frank Davis in Section B. It's the oldest section in the cemetery and we found all but one grave site. It's a hard section, because the lot numbers are in no particular order. The area is uneven and some of the stones are illegible. When we finished that section, Jim Spear and his

wife and I went through the 20 names listed for Section C. Four are listed as veterans of the War of 1812. Ten are Civil War veterans and one, John Twing, is a Revolutionary War veteran. Two are World War II veterans, including John Carmichael who received the Bronze Star. Yesterday I went back and photographed the stones and will put them in our memorial book.

Several years ago, we took the list of veterans and began to make copies of the obituaries or any information we had about that veteran's service. We are placing all that information in a memorial book. I was interested in First Lieutenant Eleanor Spittal, she is listed as being in the Women's Army Corps during World War II. She is buried in Lot 36 Section C. I found her obituary and learned that she graduated from Batavia High School, Class of 1932 and was considered one of the best tennis players in the City.

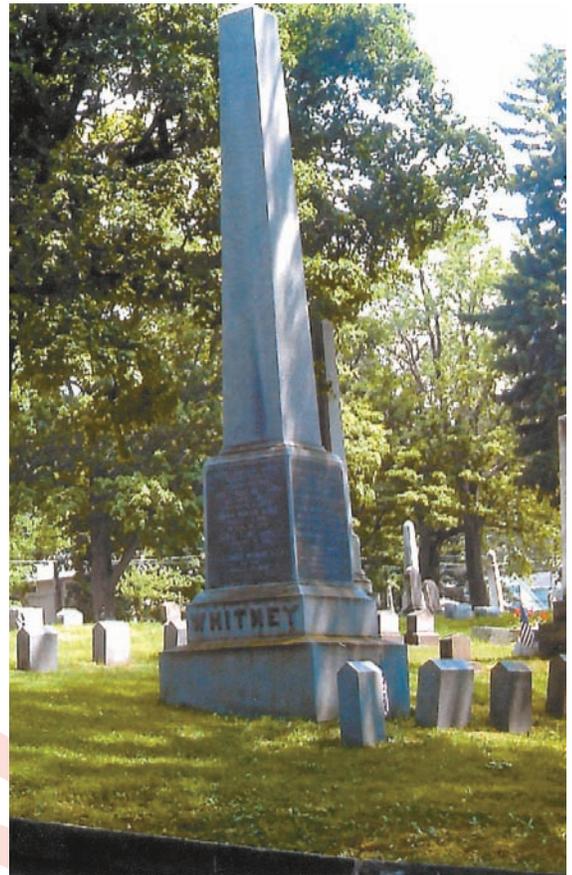
In 1940 she went to New York City and studied at Hunter College and when war broke out, she volunteered for the WACs. She trained in Fort DesMoins, Iowa. After the war, she owned the "Country Kitchen" on South Street Road and made jams, jellies, pickles and canned chicken. Tragically, she committed suicide in 1948 in Rochester and was buried in Machpelah.

Section B, Lot 121 is the final resting place of Melvin King, a Civil War Veteran. Next to his

name, in the cemetery files is "N/I" meaning no information. Well, I found Melvin King today in the records of the Grand Army of the Republic book and I found his obituary in the microfilm.

He was born March 7, 1832 in Stafford. He moved to Bergen and drove stagecoach between LeRoy and Bergen for Newton White and Philo Harris. Later he drove stage between Warsaw and Clarkson. He enlisted August 30, 1862 at Lockport as a Private in Company I 151, New York Volunteer Infantry. He guarded the B & O Railroad in Baltimore and followed Morgans Raiders through West Virginia. He participated in the Battle of the Wilderness, Gettysburg, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, Manassas Gap, North Anna River, the First Battle of Petersburg, Weldon Railroad and Monocacy.

He was wounded in the head at Cold Harbor and then was taken prisoner at the Battle of Monocacy on July 9, 1864. He was kept prisoner at Danville Prison from July 13 until February 17, 1865. He tried to escape through loose boards in the stockade and



Melvin King is buried in Section B at Machpelah Cemetery near the Whitney family monument.

was fifteen miles from prison when he was tracked down by bloodhounds and returned to prison. He then was transferred to Libby Prison. Shortly after he was released and sent to the hospital at Annapolis and discharged August 18, 1865.

When he returned home, he was elected constable, a post he held for many years. He also served as Deputy Sheriff for the county. Later he became the town assessor. He died in 1898 and was survived by his wife and two children. In his GAR file, he mentions that at Gettysburg "we had it hot and don't you forget it, but the most important event in my army life was my release from rebel prison."

We salute Eleanor Spittal and Melvin King for their service to our country and next year, Melvin will not be listed with a N/I after his name and we will call out both their names, when we place the American flag by their grave.

