Tombstones with Stories

By Gertie Espenan

Other than names and dates, tombstone inscriptions, appropriately enough, usually refer to things eternal.

But in Baton Rouge cemeteries several tombstone inscriptions afford the observer by poignant references to desires or ambitions that figured in the earthly lives which ended at these particular graves.

Take the tiny resting place of 5-year-old Harvey Jerome Alise in Roselawn Memorial Park, for instance. On it stands a stone that bears the engraving of a stagecoach drawn by four galloping horses, three black and one white. Here is the story Harvey Jerome’s family tells:

The boy, while visiting relatives in New Orleans, became fascinated with the replica of just such a stagecoach, drawn by horses of just these colors. He was not permitted to play with the toy, but his mother promised to buy him one like it on their return home.

Harvey Jerome, however, became ill, Polio. Every day, from the iron lung, he asked his mother about the stagecoach, but she was unable to find him the kind he wanted.

He died July 1, 1954. And the memory of that childhood dream lives on through the stone that marks his grave.

Then there’s the stone marking the grave of Daniel B. Morgan, guitarist who was a member of a Baton Rouge orchestra. It bears the picture of a guitar and a phrase from Morgan’s favorite hymn, “Just a Closer Walk with Thee.”

Sometimes, no explanation for the temporal inscription is necessary.

The miniature playhouse on the grave of a little girl in St. Joseph Catholic cemetery brings a lump to the throat of anyone who has ever had a little girl. The inscription on another tombstone at Roselawn reads: “Thomas Carol Jarreau, Sept. 27, 1933-May 19, 1958. And now an angel.” Topping this inscription—the figure of a tricycle.

This tombstone marks grave of Daniel B. Morgan, a Baton Rouge guitar player.

Figure of tricycle tops inscription on tombstone of 4-year-old Thomas Jarreau.