

MEMORIAL VANDALIZED & RESTORED



CARRANZA MEMORIAL MONUMENT
from [American Legion](#) website

MONUMENT VANDALIZED AND RESTORED

BY THOMAS BARLAS, Staff Writer, (609) 272-7201

Mr. Barlas had written two articles which described the vandalizing of the monument in July of 2004 and its ultimate renovation. Over time, both of them have disappeared from the internet, but Mr. Barlas has very kindly supplied me with copies of the articles which I have reproduced below.

THEY WON'T LET GRAFFITI TARNISH FLIER'S HONOR

DEP RUSHES TO FIX MEMORIAL IN PINES

BY THOMAS BARLAS, Staff Writer,

from The Press of Atlantic City

Sunday, July 10, 2005

Dateline:

SHAMONG TOWNSHIP

Mel Carranza walks up to the monument to his famous second cousin and looks at the image of the fallen eagle chiseled into the graying limestone memorial.

He runs his fingers over the monument's timeworn letters and softly recites the inscription they spell out.

"Messenger of peace," Mel Carranza says.

The symbol and slogan are in sharp contrast to other markings spray-painted recently on the memorial to Emilio Carranza, the "Lindbergh of Mexico," who died when his plane crashed in the Pinelands here July 12, 1928.

"White Power" and "Die all Wetbacks" read some of the spray-painted phrases. There's also a swastika.

It's not clear why, after sitting undisturbed in a ring of pine trees for 71 years on the side of a quiet Pinelands road named in his honor, the monument to Emilio Carranza suddenly became a target for vandals.

It became a target Friday for another group - conservationists trying to remove the hate images and slogans in time for today's 1 p.m. annual memorial service for Emilio Carranza.

Members of Mount Holly's American Legion Post 11, which has maintained the monument since its construction, tried repeatedly since vandals struck in May to remove the spray paint. They managed to lighten the markings, but couldn't altogether remove the damage.

"We've really been working on this," said William Heller, who heads the Emilio Carranza Memorial Committee.

While Heller said Post 11 officials tried to downplay the incident so as not to give those responsible the publicity they probably wanted, news about what happened spread quickly: Mel Carranza said that he and Mexican government officials learned about the vandalism the day it occurred.

Mexican officials reportedly contacted Gov. James E. McGreevey's office about the memorial's desecration and McGreevey ordered the state Department of Environmental Protection, or DEP, to undertake restoration efforts.

The job went to T. Scott Kreilick, whose Pennsylvania-based company performed conservation work on everything from 3,100 marble headstones at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point to New York City's botanical garden.

The main job involved removing the remnants of the spray paint that seeped into the limestone, a situation made worse by the limestone's deteriorated condition, Kreilick said.

On Friday, Kreilick started what he called the "boring" process of applying a chemical paste to the monument in an effort to draw out the remaining spray paint. The paste is removed after it dries, and the process is repeated for as long as possible.

The backup plan involved trying to cover up the remaining spray paint with another chemical paste that contains ground marble.

The work continued throughout Friday.

DEP officials say the restoration cost will not be known until the work is finished.

In 1928, Emilio Carranza came within 300 miles of completing a nonstop flight from Mexico City to Washington, D.C. He made it after a stopover in North Carolina.

On July 12, 1928, he planned to take off from New York City for a nonstop flight back to Mexico City.

The weather was bad. U.S. officials forbade Emilio Carranza to fly in the raging thunderstorm.

But Emilio Carranza left after getting a telegram from his superior officer, who cabled, "Leave immediately without excuse or pretext, or the quality of your manhood will be in doubt."

Emilio Carranza took off at 7:18 p.m. Mel Carranza said that it's believed that Emilio Carranza held a flashlight out the window of his plane in an attempt to find and use railroad tracks as a directional guide.

There was no news of Emilio Carranza's flight until about 3:30 p.m. the next day, when a young boy picking blueberries found the wing of an aircraft in the pines here. A later search turned up Emilio Carranza and the remains of his plane.

Emilio Carranza still clutched the flashlight when searchers found his body, Mel Carranza said, and the telegram was found in a pocket of his flight suit.

Mel Carranza doesn't tire of telling the story of his famous relative, and says it was Emilio Carranza who influenced his career choice.

"I became a pilot because of him," said Mel Carranza, who retired after 32 years as a commercial pilot.

Mel Carranza lives in Grapevine, Texas, and first saw the monument in 1991 during the annual memorial service. He has returned for every service since out of respect for the work done by Post 11.

He is worried about the future of the monument, not only because of more possible vandalism, but its deteriorating condition.

"It's really weathered," Mel Carranza said, pointing to crumbling limestone blocks and the mortar that holds them together.

Mel Carranza said he hopes for some kind of joint U.S.-Mexican venture to cover the monument in marble, which would stand up better to weather and other circumstances. He said he's not sure how much such a project would cost.

Heller said Mexican children paid for the existing monument, sending all the pesos they could spare. Those familiar with that story frequently leave change at the base of the monument, he said.

The change was there Friday - one quarter, one nickel and five pennies.

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SECOND MAN CHARGED IN MONUMENT VANDALISM

BY THOMAS BARLAS, Staff Writer

from The Press of Atlantic City

Sunday, July 13, 2005

Dateline:

SHAMONG TOWNSHIP

State Police on Monday charged the last of two men who allegedly spray-painted racial slogans and symbols on the Pinelands monument to Mexican aviator Emilio Carranza in May.

Michael T. Dugan, 22, of Washington Township, Gloucester County, was charged with criminal mischief after an interview with law-enforcement officials at the State Police barracks in Red Lion, Burlington County.

A criminal mischief charge was lodged against 18-year-old Albert L. Boyson Jr., of Mount Laurel, Burlington County, on July 8. Boyson was

released on his own recognizance after being charged, according to State Trooper B. Gilbert.

Dugan is lodged in the Burlington County jail in Mount Holly, but not for circumstances surrounding the Carranza memorial incident. Gilbert said Dugan also was wanted in connection with another case that involves endangering the welfare of a child.

Rangers at Wharton State Forest here found the slogans and signs spray-painted on the 71-year-old monument May 16.

The incident shocked members of the Mount Holly American Legion Post 11, which has maintained the monument since its construction. This was the first incident of vandalism in the monument's history, they said.

Gilbert said interviews with Dugan and Boyson failed to reveal any real reason for the vandalism, which was apparently done "just for fun."

"It was a random thing," Gilbert said. "They were in the woods. They had spray paint."

Suspects questioned in connection with an unrelated incident, Gilbert said, implicated Dugan and Boyson in the Carranza memorial spray-painting.

Officials with Post 11 weren't available for comment Monday.

Post 11 officials tried unsuccessfully to remove the spray paint from the monument, a task made difficult by the deteriorating condition of the memorial's limestone.

Gov. James E. McGreevey eventually ordered the state Department of Environmental Protection to clean up the monument in time for last Saturday's annual memorial service. A historical conservationist worked through the day on Friday, using chemical pastes to both draw the remaining spray paint out of the limestone, and then cover up what couldn't be removed.

Gilbert said the work left little of the spray paint visible.

Carranza is dubbed the "Lindberg of Mexico" and remains a hero in Mexico.

In 1928, Carranza came within 300 miles of completing a nonstop flight from Mexico City to Washington, D.C. He made it after a stopover in North Carolina.

On July 12, 1928, Carranza planned to take off from New York City for a nonstop flight back to Mexico City.

The weather was bad and U.S. officials would not allow Carranza to fly in the raging thunderstorm.

But Carranza left after getting a telegram from his superior officer, who cabled, "Leave immediately without excuse or pretext, or the quality of your manhood will be in doubt."

Carranza took off from Roosevelt Field - the same field used by Charles Lindberg at the start of his cross-Atlantic flight - at 7:18 p.m.

There was no news of Carranza's flight until about 3:30 p.m. the next day, when a young boy picking blueberries found the wing of an aircraft in the pines here. A later search turned up Carranza and the remains of his plane.

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