

SEWS IN THE TOP

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Cemetery rededicated

By PHIL NOVAK
Special to the Standard

Miles Hershberg hopes his father and grandmother will once again be able to rest in peace.

Their headstones were among 45 toppled when the B'nai Israel Cemetery on Bunting Road was desecrated twice in one week this past April.

Police arrested two cousins shortly after, and Sunday afternoon the dignity was restored to the dead during a re-dedication ceremony at the cemetery.

"I just loved my father, and I think about him, but not about this," said Hershberg, a St. Catharines financial advisor. "I don't think this was a desecration of my father, I think it was an insult to the living. It bothers the people who are alive. It bothers our family."

Several hundred members of Niagara's Jewish community attended the re-dedication, including Allan Caplan, whose father's headstone was also overturned.

He said he was glad to see the sense of outrage that occurred among St. Catharines' residents, Jew and non-Jew alike.

"It's not something that anyone here is proud of and I hope this is the last act like this against any minority," he said.

"It goes beyond just the Jewish community, because this sort of violence could be targeted against any ethnic group and we have to have a vigil against hate in our society and we have to watch for it and recognize it."

Caplan and a number of family members all linked arms around two graves as Rabbi Martin Applebaum, who leads the B'nai Israel synagogue congregation, sang the traditional Jewish Kaddish, the prayer for the dead.

Uniformed police officers stood outside the cemetery, while inside two plain clothes officers melded discreetly into the crowd.

"We've had protection here before this event because it would have been a terrible thing, on the eve of this re-dedication, had something else occurred," said Niagara Regional Police Chief Grant Waddell.



Leo Possen 81, of St. Catharines, third from left, and his wife Ruth, second from left, light candles beside a monument about to be rededicated to the millions of Jews killed during the holocaust at a ceremony Sunday at the B'nai Israel Cemetery in St. Catharines.

photo special to The Standard by John Cain