

Old-growth trees at Crown Hill should be saved, preserved

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(Photo: Photo provided by the Indiana Forestry Alliance)

In Texas, where I grew up, we cherish trees — perhaps because they are so rare in arid, windswept areas. Banks of trees planted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps still protect precious soils from blowing away. I cannot see a bank of cottonwoods and cedars without remembering my own family's survival. At the Alamo in San Antonio stands our Heritage Tree, a mammoth 140-year-old

live oak, its heavy branches dipping and looping like tentacles across the Convento Courtyard. Our symbol of tenacity and survival requires engineered supports and tender pruning. Anyone who disturbs it gets arrested.

As a person who grew up in a place where you say, "the tree down by the creek," because there is, in fact, a tree down by the creek, I feel blessed to live among these beautiful creatures. I don't even mind the trash trees, as people call them. I mourn for the trees lost during storms and the trees that must be taken down to make room for development.

As far as I know, Indiana has no heritage tree. We only have the stump of the Constitution Elm, which succumbed to Dutch Elm disease. But we do have a 300-year-old Burr Oak growing just inside Crown Hill Cemetery, across from the Indianapolis Museum of Art and a few blocks from Butler University. What would that 300-year-old tree say if it could tell us what it has witnessed, how it survived the clear cuts, the storms, the diseases and the battles? The miracle of a 300-year-old tree in an old growth forest in the middle of a major city is a rare testament to the generations of thoughtful Hoosiers who saw no reason to disturb that ground. Those 14 acres could have so easily been the spot for a mausoleum or a parking lot.

Now, that 300-year-old tree will likely be cut down to erect a monument to our veterans. I believe in memorializing our veterans, but would they support cutting down a 300-year-old tree to build a monument to them. What would they say if we could ask them?

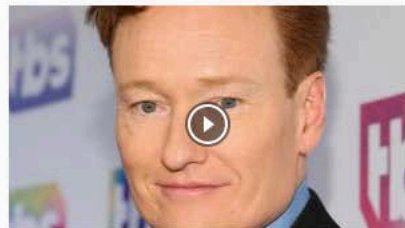
How do we preserve silent trees and memorialize silent veterans? Is a compromise possible? I hope so.

Carol Reeves

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