

Coffee with the Mayor

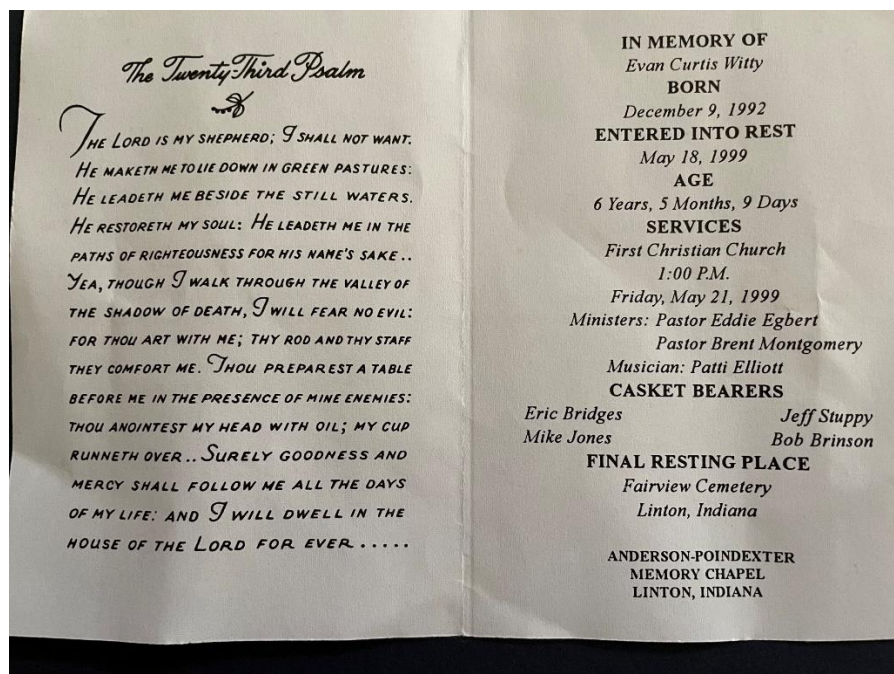
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Highland Grog is a flavored coffee available on occasion at Francisco de Borja. It was recommended by Claudia Walker and I could see why. It's good! Speaking of good, Quality of Life is a term applied to those aspects of a community that when made available enhance the lives of citizens. Good things like public parks, mini-parks, trails, dog parks, etc. I know several citizens have mentioned dog parks and utilization of the Conservation Club as areas they like to see addressed. In scoping out potential sites for a dog park I thought the old skeet range at the Conservation Club might make a nice site. Then John Cotter provided me with a draft of the 5-year plan for the Linton city parks. In that plan it mentioned Oak Grove, the city owned property north of Glenburn where the water tower is located. This city owned property is closer to the community so thought this would be a better location to locate a dog park. Okay, if we put a dog park there why not include playground equipment with benches for the parents and dog owners. John Cotter suggested adding a shelter house similar to the ones at Humphrey's Park. This would make the Oak Grove location, already owned by the city, a true mini park.

Ever present in my mind, considering this location, was what happened there on May 18, 1999. Evan Witty, oldest son of Mary Ann and Stephen Witty, was tragically killed when a fast moving storm caused a limb to fall from a tree killing him as his team was preparing to hurriedly leave ball practice. Knowing that, I thought it appropriate to change the name from Oak Grove to Evan Witty Memorial Park in his memory. This was mentioned to a few people to get their reaction and get a perspective of the idea and they all agreed it was fitting. Before going any further, I contacted Mary Ann to let her know what I was thinking and if she was ok moving forward. She readily gave her approval and was glad for the opportunity to have Evan remembered.

Visiting the location, I wanted to get an understanding of how it would look when complete. All remnants of when it was a baseball practice area have been removed and it's currently an empty field. John Cotter staked out the dimensions of a dog park which gave a perspective of size and available space. Brent Slover and I visited the site and he observed electricity had been cut off to the location but there were active cable lines attached to the utility poles. Looking ahead he agreed electricity could be run underground to feed needed utility lights. I contacted Tommy Groomer from Comcast about the cable lines. Tommy later contacted me and said they could reroute the cable lines eliminating the need for utility poles. I was feeling good about the plan for the Evan Witty Memorial Park and how it was taking shape. I asked Mary Ann and Stephen to come by the office and updated them on the proposed layout and actions to be taken and they were pleased.

Sue Ann and I are currently in the process of moving into a new house a couple of blocks from where we currently live. On Thursday the 8th, in the process of packing up, I disassembled one of the beds and looked in the boxes that had been stored under the bed for some time. Boxes that contained old photos, elementary works from our girls and many other forgotten items. There's a point to this. In my looking through these boxes I found this:



Needless to say, I was stunned in finding this at this time! Call it coincidence (if there is such a thing), fate, karma or whatever term you think best, it doesn't change the impact it had on me. Any doubts I had about this park becoming a reality were gone!

Actions have been taken this past week to remove a concrete slab in the area and the Department of Natural Resources has been contacted to deal with a possible sink hole. Estimates are being obtained for fencing, playground equipment, benches and shelter houses. Research has been completed to verify the city owns the property. Options for signs identifying the area as the Evan Witty Memorial Park are being obtained. Things are happening!

The following information is provided if you would like to contribute to this project. The non-profit organization Pride in the Park has been raising funds for several years to support updates to Linton's Humphreys Park. In discussions with the President Bob Evans, he has agreed to accept donations supporting the construction of the Evan Witty Park. Personal donations of general

support or for dedicating trees or park benches in memory of a family member are welcome. If you have any questions about donating you can send an email to lintonprideinthepark@gmail.com or contact me at jpreble@cityoflinton.com. Checks can be made out to Pride in the Park and mailed to Bob Evans, 2245 N 1175 W, Linton, IN 47441. Please note Evan Witty Project for any donation.