

Letting Glendale know of its losses

BY JANE PRENDERGAST | ENQUIRER STAFF WRITER

GLENDALE - If you live here and die, the whole village knows it.

The Glendale city flag flies at half staff outside the village hall for three days. A framed death notice hangs in the window.

That's the way this community of 2,100 says goodbye to residents and former residents, a tradition that started five years ago after Mayor Thomas Todd wondered aloud how the village might offer a last memorial to its dead.

Now, the honor is for Robert G. Neff Jr., who died Tuesday at 53 after a long illness.

A landscaper and landscape designer, he had been known in the community as the Charleston Gardener, the name of his former business. The flag will stay lowered through Saturday, then the window notice will be sent to his family.

Neff is the 13th person to be honored this year, the 103rd since the memorials began in April 2001.

His sister Cathy Neff, in from Arizona to take care of his affairs, was impressed by the tradition. "I was very touched," she said Thursday. "We all thought it was a really cool thing to do."

Village Administrator Walter Cordes said it's pretty easy. People don't hesitate to let him know if he forgets somebody. "If somebody dies and that flag's not down," he said, "I'll have three or four calls in no time."

He has learned, however, to wait for confirmation of rumored passings. Once, in the second year of the memorials, Cordes was told of a woman's death. He lowered the flag and typed up a notice.

He was surprised, of course, to see the woman later that day. She walked into the village hall to announce that despite reports to the contrary she was, in fact, not dead.

Cordes does have some work to do on the gilded frame he uses to hang the notices in the window.

"This has been used for everybody, for five years," he said. "I feel like I should keep it."

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Photo: THE ENQUIRER/ TONY JONES

Village Administrator Walter Cordes helps organize flying the flag at half staff after a death.

