

One more day when police cemetery's neighbors find no peace in quiet

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Amy Devlin knew what to listen for.

When the single helicopter made its slow pass overhead Friday afternoon, its *thup-thup* signaled the arrival of the hearse.

She thought of walking outside for a cigarette, and heading in the direction of the cemetery next door. But Amy Devlin has seen enough police funerals already.

In the 3 1/2 years she's been working at the Livengrin Foundation, a Bensalem drug- and alcohol-rehab center, police have buried seven of their dead 100 yards away, at Resurrection Cemetery.

And each time the helicopters approach, the bagpipes wail, the bugle sounds, and the rifles repeat, the sound works its way into the century-old manor home where she counsels incoming addicts.

"It's the quiet that gets to me," said Devlin, who is 37, with brown bangs and blue eyes. The steady procession of police cars moves toward the grave site with the red and blue lights flashing silently.

Everyone at Livengrin bears some sort of witness to the funerals. Some are drawn to their windows and look across the thinned oaks, spruces and sycamores to see the giant American flags that hang from fire-truck ladders.

Spokesman Keith Mason, whose office is closest to the cemetery, marks time by the rituals. "I'll hear the bagpipes carry in the wind, and I'll think, 'It's too soon for that.' Then I'll realize they are only practicing."

A close family

For Devlin the funerals hit home. Her father was a Philadelphia police officer. An uncle and two great-uncles retired from the department. Her younger brother joined the Narcotics Strike Force, doing work that worries her.

A week earlier, she had drifted off to sleep with the television on when news of the shooting woke her with a start.

"The first thing I did was roll over and check my cell phone for a text message from my sister-in-law," she said. "I didn't know if my brother was working."

The officer down was not merely someone in the family of Philadelphia police. It was someone her brother knew.

John Pawlowski was 25. Devlin pictured the graveside scene, the young pregnant widow, the presentation of the crisply folded flag. "A little too intense" was how she put it.

There was a new receptionist, Diane Fabiani, at Livengrin. Devlin thought she might want to see what a police funeral looked like.

So she sent Fabiani and another colleague out into the cold, and she sat at the receptionist's desk. "Life goes on," she said.

Pageantry of grief

She was talking to a heroin addict planning to come in for treatment when the procession ended about 2:50 p.m. and the ceremony started.

About 15 minutes later, the receptionist returned, and Devlin threw on her coat and walked outside for that cigarette. She headed toward the cemetery, and about halfway up Hulmeville Road she passed through a corridor of condolence - bikers in leathers and dungarees. Some wore jackets that identified them as Patriot Guard Riders or Warriors' Watch Riders. Men and women, they had been standing at attention as the procession passed, each holding an American flag. Some had taped photographs of murdered police officers to their windshields. Some wore patches that read, "Sacrifice is shared" and "Friends of the forgotten."

Among the bikers, Devlin found her father. "Wow," she said. The emotion was palpable.

Her father, Chuck, said the procession seemed to be the biggest yet. She told him she'd missed it. "I was a little busy."

Back at Livengrin, she checked to see if anyone was broadcasting the funeral on TV, as stations had on earlier occasions when Philadelphia police had been killed. No one was.

"I guess it's getting routine," she said. "Can you imagine that? Routine."