

# 17th Annual Old Biloxi Cemetery Tour: *Love Is In The Air!*

By Laurie Rosetti

The historic Biloxi Cemetery, the resting place of pioneers dating back to the early 1700s, will once again come alive with captivating stories and characters during the 17th annual Old Biloxi Cemetery Tour.

The much-anticipated event is set to take place on Sunday, October 22, from 2 to 4 p.m., with an encore performance on Tuesday, October 24, from 5 to 7 p.m. The tour, renowned for its rich historical significance, is open to the public free of charge, although donations are warmly welcomed. The funds raised go towards the preservation and upkeep of the cemetery's oldest and most historic graves ensuring that Biloxi's legacy endures through the ages.

The Old Biloxi Cemetery is a living testament to the city's deep-rooted history, with centuries of stories etched into its tombstones and memorials. This year, the theme of the tour is "Biloxi Love Stories," highlighting the unique and heartfelt connections that

played out in our charming city. With eight captivating portrayals and two engaging story-telling sessions, visitors are in for an immersive journey through time and love.

This year's portrayals: Jake and June Mladinich; Brothers William and Adolph Ross who married sisters Ann and Margaret Allen; Captain George Duggan and Mary Ella Bennett Duggan; Willie and Tamelia Fountain; Maria and Miranda Younghans (mother and daughter); Laura Hinsdale (poet); Dr. and Mrs. William Tisdale; Vera Dukate Bond Chinn.

This year's story-tellings: The Jiminez Family will tell how they began decorating their family's plot for Halloween and why it is a great tribute to their family members. Briley Richmond will honor his grandfather and great uncle, Paneote Eleuterius and Demetrius Eleuterius and their great contribution during WWII.

This year's portrayals will be brought to life by a diverse group of participants, including diverse descendants of some of the featured individuals and the "Not Ready for the Afterlife Players" a passionate acting troupe dedicated to preserving and sharing Biloxi's remarkable history. With their enthusiasm and commitment to storytelling, visitors are sure to be

transported back in time to witness the love stories that have shaped Biloxi into the vibrant community it is today.

Descendant portrayals: Doffie Ross, Larry Fountain, Tamelia Fountain Schoendorf, Dr. Paul Tisdale, and Jill Tisdale Treutel.

"Not Ready for the Afterlife Players": Cree Cantrell, Mollie McCarroll, Mike Lacy, Karen Morgan, Wendy West, Bill Collins, Gabrielle Brou, Brandy Mills, Gracie Mills, Bailey Smith, and Kathe Newcombe.

When asked why he chooses to take part in the Old Biloxi Cemetery Tour each year, Cree Cantrell replied, "It's been said that we can't tell where we're going until we know where we've been. The Biloxi Cemetery Tour is just that, a celebration of where we have been as Biloxians. I am honored to participate in this annual event and help share and preserve our rich history of over 300 years. The highest honor I have had as a participant has been to portray my wife Colby's grandfather and local legend, Junie

Desporte. Since I never got the chance to meet him, diving into his colorful life and portraying him gave me the feeling of knowing him my whole life."

This year's Old Biloxi Cemetery Tour will be dedicated to the memory of Tina Ball Johnston. Tina starred in five consecutive Old Biloxi Cemetery Tours. She was a wonderful singer who also starred in many theatrical productions across the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Tina was a beloved teacher at St. Martin East Elementary School. She leaves behind her husband, Lee Johnston, and countless friends, relatives, students and fans.

Refreshments will be served during the event. Parking will be available at the Biloxi Elks' Lodge, along Irish Hill Drive, and some of the streets in the cemetery, making it convenient for all attendees to join in the celebration of Biloxi's rich history.

For updates on this year's tour, follow Preserve Biloxi on Facebook. The Preserve Biloxi Committee organizes this tour each year and is comprised of members from Biloxi Main Street, Biloxi Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, City of Biloxi, Local History and Genealogy Library, and Department of Marine Resources.

