

# Project Manager: 'Best Looking Job I've Been a Part Of'

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deal with," Sikes said. "We had to put in underdrain systems and do a lot of stuff that was kind of a surprise to many of us. Believe it or not we were putting in French drains three weeks ago 15 in. deep. It had something to do with the lateral shelves and the 10-ft. elevation across the roadways that the site had. It appears to be a lateral transfer of water migrating out into the roadways and we had to design a way to get that water off and out."

Page said the paving work Sikes completed was one element of a site job that ran easily with the natural contours of the land. He said the job didn't require much dirt to be trucked in.

"We brought in some dirt, mainly topsoil, about 60 loads on 10-wheel tandem dump trucks," Page said. "We were pretty much able to use what we had on site and more or less just smoothed out the dirt. You can stand at the gate and see the project through the pines and see the communal areas and ceremonial areas."

"Everything really worked well together," he said. "On a lot of jobs you may or may not be impressed with the site work and the way things flow, but this is probably the best looking job that I've been a part of as far as aesthetics. It's a good feeling to have been a part of it."

Coordinating subcontractors for the memorial details was more difficult, he said.

"There was laminated wood exposed beams and a lot of marble and a lot of cast stone and a lot of granite," Page explained. "There are buildings there, and they aren't big but we had a lot of specialized construction items going into the buildings, so trying to coordinate everything, the cast stone and the granite and putting in the round state seal — there are a lot of issues to work out when you have that many different materials coming into a job this size."

And there were challenges due to weather to be overcome, he added.



Crews work on the ceremony area at the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Glennville.

"We did have a couple of things hold us up a little," he said. "We had some rain issues to begin with and then we had the drought issues when it was really dry. That held us up for a little while when we couldn't get the conditions we needed for landscaping, but in the end it worked out really well."

Weather made getting equipment on site and in place difficult at times, Page said, but when the weather permitted the job went smoothly.

"We do use our own equipment, and since we subbed out the paving to Sikes and they had their own equipment we used ours to do the plumbing and drainage work in house with our backhoes on site. We've got a 31 four-wheel-drive John Deere backhoe and Sikes had their own motorgraders and compactors and excavators and bulldozers."

Veterans Administration officials said about half the site has been developed, and they're delighted with the end result.

"The workmanship is great," Cemetery Director Richard Dunlop said. "They had a keen eye for seeing that things were done exactly right. It was a pleasure working with them."

He explained that the V.A.'s goal is to locate a cemetery within 75 mi. of every veteran. Dunlop, a Vietnam veteran, said he's personally aware of the importance of such a memorial to those who served.

"In this area the interest has been very high," he said. "A number of veterans have been asking about it, and there were somewhere between 400 and 600 in attendance at the opening ceremony — that gives you an idea of the turnout this can generate from a small community."

Dan Holtz, director of health contracting and facilities for the Department of Veterans Services, echoed Dunlop's assessment of the need for such a facility.

"It's the second state veteran's cemetery in Georgia and the third fully operational veterans cemetery in the state; the other one is the Georgia National Cemetery in Canton, which the federal government through the Department of Veterans Affairs opened in June 2006," Holtz said. "So between the Georgia National Cemetery in Canton, the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Milledgeville and the Georgia Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Glennville, there are three cemeteries for veterans that are fully

operational. And there's a fourth facility in Andersonville, but that one's almost filled up and there's limited capacity there, so we're looking toward the future."

Holtz said the V.A. expects the facilities now in place will be sufficient for the next decade based on projections that call for 35 percent of veterans to take advantage of the opportunity. He said Georgia has approximately 750,000 veterans. For interment at the facility, he said, one must have served in the armed forces or be a retired member of the National Guard or Reserves. Spouses and adult dependents also are allowed.

"It's a very impressive place," Holtz said. "It's a memorial that's perpetual, and it's honoring those who served our nation either on active duty or post-active duty or following retirement. They've given part of their lives to the service of their nation, and they have comrades in arms, and it's a place to be buried with comrades and it's an opportunity for the nation to say 'Thank you.'"

For Sikes, there's more than a thank you built into the now-sacred ground and buildings at the memorial.

"This is one of those jobs. We always have to worry about finances and bottom lines, but if it comes down to it on a project like this one you just do it because it's the right thing to do," Sikes said. "Inherent to it was an attitude that every time we met with those owner-reps my concern was always for the long term, not the short term. My concern was more for quality issues than for financial reimbursement."

It's a tribute, he said, to those who gave so much.

"These guys allowed us to do all this crazy stuff we do every day," he said. "I don't know how you can repay a debt like that."

(This story also can be found on *Construction Equipment Guide's* Web site at [www.cegltd.com](http://www.cegltd.com).) *CEG*



Crews pave one of the cemetery's roads.



A Komatsu dozer grades the road to the maintenance area.