

## Letter to the Editor: What is an Open Field Death?

Written by Gallupsun Staff  
Friday, 22 May 2020 01:47

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When I lived in Gallup unattended/unwitnessed death from exposure/hypothermia/addiction was a common occurrence. Based upon the article I read in the April 24, 2020 *Gallup Sun* **unattended** death on the streets of Gallup and within the city limits is still a common occurrence, sad. It appears that Covid-19 may have exacerbated this problem.

Before moving I remember that the Mayor (McKinney) decided that this was a negative portrayal of the City of Gallup to denote exposure/hypothermia/addiction deaths on and around the streets of Gallup. He decided to call these sad incidents Open Field Deaths because it was not such a negative reflection of the reality for street people and homeless individuals in Gallup.

Why change the name of an unfortunate death to something like an open field death? Because it doesn't sound so horrible? There are very few landscapes in Gallup that resembled a field and most of the deaths occur in other areas such as the street or alley. Tourists may wonder what could be dangerous about the sports fields and parks in Gallup. Of course, there are not any Warning Signs about the dangers of Open Fields in Gallup because there are not any inherent dangers. The dangers I would expect in the sage brush/juniper landscapes would be rattle snakes, maybe a scorpion and they are not fields.

Following are some explanations of what a "field" really is:

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*noun*

noun: **field**; plural noun: **fields**; noun: **the field**

1. an area of open land, especially one planted with crops or pasture, typically bounded by hedges or fences. "a wheat field"

What does field mean? A **field** is an area of grass, for example in a park or on a farm. A **field** is also an area of land on which a crop is grown. ... A

**field**

is an area of land or sea bed under which large amounts of a particular mineral have been found.

To label the unfortunate passing of the homeless and addicted in an unattended setting as an Open Field Death is disingenuous and demeaning to that individual. Call it what you want, the problem still exists and is part of the culture of Gallup. But, if you really want to make the situation look a little better than it really is, why not call these unfortunate deaths something a little more realistic like "Unattended or Unwitnessed" if exposure/hypothermia/addiction deaths on the streets is unpalatable. Most of these passing really are unattended or unwitnessed and unfortunate and should not be common.

***Sincerely,  
Mark Hammond  
Albuquerque, N.M.***