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THE IDLE AMERICAN

Upon Further Review...

Commentary by Dr. Don Newbury

Upon recollection of 2019, what are considered “top-of-the-heap” memories depend on who is doing the recollecting.

This has to be one of the most brain-scrambling beginnings ever unleashed during 17 years of column-writing.

Completing what I thought to be an “okay” discourse to a convention audience long ago, I experienced a “bubble-bursting.” The “flat-as-a-pancake” deflation reduced me to a small size, maybe even “extra small.” An overheard whisper bears repeating, its admonition worth remembering: “He’s a guy with hundreds of well-chosen words, interspersed with thousands that aren’t.”

This may be a “cheesy” way to look back, particularly when the intent is to extract some dignity or delight from our weary world in all of 2019. Dignity was thrown asunder, and not much was funny.

Dallas Morning News writer Cheryl Hall helped with her recent piece. It recounted the lives of three Texans who took their leave in 2019. She described Herb Kelleher, T. Boone Pickens and Ross Perot, Sr. thusly: “the likes of which we’ll never see again.”

She emphasized “self-made,” revealing examples about how these men of genius could quickly change cloaks of dignity

and delight as casually as Mr. Rogers laced up his tennis shoes.

They were great storytellers, Hall claimed, “using earthy humor to make profound points.”

She hit a home run describing the men’s “fashion statements.” She said Kelleher was “open collared, blue blazers and Aloha shirts, when he wasn’t Elvis or a Harley biker.” She depicted Perot as “dark suits, starched white shirts, ties and an American flag lapel pin,” and Pickens as “bright Oklahoma State orange and running shoes.”

She called all three “underdogs who turned self-made wealth into community property.” Her account--in the Dec. 15 business section of the DMN--is worthy of framing. It’s a trove of well-chosen words, with nary an ill-chosen word in the mix..

I never met these lauded men, but marvel both at what they accomplished and what they gave away. Obviously, they took seriously the late Dr. Billy Graham’s observation that he never saw a hearse arriving at a cemetery pulling a U-Haul trailer.

Filed away, though, I do have a personal note from Kelleher.

Folks who knew him strongly believe that “the man” indeed scrawled the note, and maybe even

licked the stamp.

The experience was recounted in my first book, but since it was read mostly by immediate family and a few close friends who claimed they did, it is “dredged up” for this year-end piece.

Only later in life did I feel comfortable enough to take off my shoes while seated on airplanes. For years, I’d been quietly impressed by bold fellow passengers who reduced footwear to socks.

Exiting the lavatory in my stocking feet, I was belittled by a flight attendant. “You mean you went in there shoeless?”

I responded, “I’ve seen Herb Kelleher do the same thing,” not knowing, of course, if he ever entered his planes’ general service lavatories, or had private ones.

“Well, he’s the only other person on the planet I can imagine doing such a thing,” she retorted.

At trip’s end, I felt the humorous moment worthy of sharing in a note to Kelleher.

Here’s his handwritten response, “Your recent letter ‘made’ my day. Welcome to the ‘shoeless lavatory club’, we are a rare breed.”

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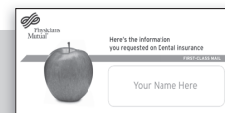
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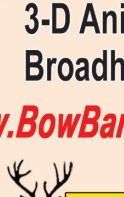
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Micky Masters

Micky Masters, 73, of Beaufort, South Carolina passed away on Sunday December 22, 2019. A celebration of life service was held on Saturday, December 28 at 2pm at the West Oaks Funeral Home Chapel. Visitation was held immediately after the service.

Micky Masters was born on September 5, 1946, and adopted by Jim and Johnnie Masters. She was raised and lived in Sulphur Springs along with her younger brother Jimmy Masters. She raised her two sons, Jay and Chad with husband Larry "Butch" Young. She then moved around and excelled at her passion of remodeling houses in Dallas, TX, Malibu, CA, Oxford, MS, and Beaufort, SC. She modeled for Neiman Marcus while still a teenager and had the gift to play piano by ear. Creative and artistic, she devoured any project, task, or hobby that she chose to undertake. In 1996, she married Bill Barnett, and quickly expanded her family to include 6 step-children. Micky is survived by sons, Jay Young and wife, Michelle; Chad Young and wife, Rhonda; grandchildren, Sara Young, Riley Young, Delaney Young, Kelsey Young, and Mikala Young; stepsons, Cooper, Seth, and Adam Barnett; stepdaughters, Mona Volk and Madeline Barnett; brother, Jimmy Masters and wife, Monte. She is also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, step-grandchildren and others that affectionately called her "Poppy".

Dorothy Mitchell

Funeral service for Dorothy Mitchell, age 87, of Sulphur Springs, were held at 2:00 p.m. Monday, December 30, 2019 at League St. Church of Christ. Interment followed at Old Saltillo Cemetery with her grandsons serving as pallbearers. Honorary pallbearers were Welcome Gene Barnett, Roy Penny, and Kenny Kirtley. Visitation was from 6:00-8:00 p.m. Sunday, December 29, 2019 at Murray-Orwosky Funeral Home. Mrs. Mitchell passed away Friday, December 27, 2019, at Rock Creek Health and Rehab.

Dorothy Mitchell was born December 30, 1931, to Theo Burnett and Willie (Sunday) Burnett in Benavidez, TX. She married Sidney Paul (Happy) Mitchell in Saltillo, TX on August 18, 1950; he preceded her in death in 1994. Mrs. Mitchell was a seamstress for H.D. Lee Co. for 30 years. She was also a union stewardess, owner and operator of Dorothy's Resale Shop, and a published author. Mrs. Mitchell was a member of League St. Church of Christ and the Winnsboro Church of Christ Ladies Sewing Group.

Mrs. Mitchell is survived by her children, Sherry Maynard of Sulphur Springs, Nancy Edge of Hagansport, Ernie Mitchell of Leonard, Paula Liles of Paris, and Travis Mitchell of Garland; grandchildren, Rodney Maynard, Jr., Brian Chad Maynard, Misty McCord, Jesse Edge, Paul Edge, Courtney Watkins, Bo-Dustin Oats, Mitchell Liles, and Amanda Mitchell; great-grandchildren, Zachary Ward, Zoie Ward, Christian Truncale, Cameron Truncale, Chad Maynard, Chase Maynard, Allison Edge, Alexander Edge, Samantha Edge, Cohen Watkins, Brayden Watkins; and her best friend, Mrs. Dodie.

She was preceded in death by her parents; husband; son, Sidney Paul Mitchell, Jr., and sisters, Alline Dunn and Georgia Richardson.

Arrangements were under the direction of Murray-Orwosky Funeral Home. The online register can be signed at www.murrayorwosky.com

Keira McGinnis

Funeral services for Keira McGinnis, age 9, of Yantis were held on Sunday, December 29, 2019, at Community Bible Fellowship Church in Dike at 2 p.m. with Pastor Ron Smedley officiating. Interment followed at Shooks Chapel Cemetery in Sulphur Springs with Johnny, Benny, Dennis, and Mike serving as pallbearers. Visitation was held from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday, December 28, 2019, at Murray Orwosky Funeral Home. Keira passed away on Monday, December 23, 2019, in Sulphur Springs.

Keira was born on July 01, 2010, to Brant McGinnis and Jamie Ryan.

She is survived by her mother, Jamie and father, Brant McGinnis; brothers, Tresten Toland and Jeremiah McGinnis; sister, Alyssia McGinnis; grandfathers, James Herring and Gary Horton; grandmothers, Kim Herring and Mary Horton; aunts, Samantha Taber, Sarah Jones, Jennifer Huffman, Suzanne Taber and Cristal Lunsford; uncles, James Taber and Carl McGinnis; numerous cousins.

Arrangements were under the direction of Murray-Orwosky Funeral Home.

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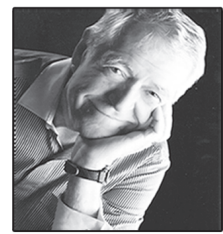
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Answers

A crossword puzzle grid with words filled in. The words are: THY, SERA, HCU, BZ, AGRE, BE, M, Y, I, O, S, T, L, P, V, A, O, L, J, U, B, L, J, A, N, A, A, T, W, S, P, U, L, E, R, K, A, I, S, O, C, I, N, O, U, S, V, E, I, O, S, I, T, W, D, S, M, L, S, K, O, P, J, E, C, A, U, I, C, C, A, O, L, I, A, C, S, A, L, N, O, B, S, T, I, L, G, K, T, N, S, R, Y, F, I, R, S, O, U, D, E, I, N, E, S, A, S, I, H, A, O, A, F, M, I, B, A, R, P, R, R, T, D, I, R, I, E, E, U, C, M, J, L, R, L, A, T, N, A, E, B, I, T, P, R, O, L, V, B, I, V, E, Z, L, E, O, P, E, E, W, N, A, D, A, I, S, S, E, M, T, I, V, U, S, E, M, H, M, O, B, R, H, P, U, I, S, R, A, B, A, V, E, O, D, A, C, V, O, K, U, B, S, O, A, N, A, L, D, A, N, V, N, K, A, N, V, W, A, R, C, N, W, N, K, G, I, R, K, H, A, E, N, I, V, M, I, M, G, L, E, O, I, I, I, N, E, U, I, L, V, D, A, V, A, A, L, H, I, H, A, S, T, R, I, T, C, N, H, O, E, A, M, A, R, R, N, H, T, N, I, R, A, S, S, A, S, O, V, N, R, R, O, J, A, I, I, A, E, H, S, R, R, M, N, L, B, U, D, E, G, N, K, K, N, U, E, C, I, G, K, A, O, H, O, S, L, O, O, Y, L, E, A, Y, N, O, S, T, M, T, S, E, P, A, D, U, B, I, N, L, E, C, E, A, L, U, X, E, M, B, O, U, R, G, N, R, E, B, N, L, B, O, R, T, O, N, B, E, L, F, A, S, T, P, E, A, O, P, L, N, E

WHAT IS IT ABOUT MASON?

Tumbleweed Smith



Tumbleweed Smith

Mason is a hill country town of 2,500 residents with a courthouse square that's hard to maneuver. It has an extremely dense population of characters. Perhaps that's what makes the town so interesting. You can hardly go there without having some type of unique experience. One of my favorite eating-places is Crockett Keller's Guns and Grub restaurant on the square near the Odeon Theater. One side of his building is the restaurant. The other half is his gun store. Crockett has some of the best seafood I've ever eaten. That's right. Seafood in Mason. Crockett spends 3 days

getting his oysters ready.

I spoke at the library in Mason recently and did a couple of interviews while I was in town. One was with Ethan West a barber (Square Head Barbershop) who walked the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail. Another was with Tony Plutino a river guide who knows about the best places in Texas to go canoeing. I also interviewed Jan Appleby who heads up the group restoring the elegant Seaquist House, one of the first mansions in the hill country. It was built in the 1880s and has 22 rooms and 15 fireplaces.

One of my early radio programs featured Mason County resident Fred Gipson, the author of OLD YELLER. That set a pretty high standard for future interviews in Mason.

Mason is known as the gem of the hill country, maybe because topaz is found in the area. It also has an increasing number of people interested in making wine. The bat cave just out of town attracts visitors and scientists who study the nighttime scavengers. Fort Mason has created interest among people who research pioneer days. The city is a welcoming community and has many transplants from Austin and other places. They quickly assimilate and find things to do, working with the library, museum, chamber or other organizations.

The list of characters I've interviewed in or near Mason includes Bill O'Banion who hit a golf ball 30 miles from Mason to another nearby town (took him several strokes). Bill Worrell the famous sculptor lives on the Llano River south of Mason. So does Laura Lewis, an artist who does murals in office buildings for Fortune 500 companies. Spider Johnson is an accomplished saw player. Gene Zesch is well known for his woodcarvings. Tom Hadley set high standards as a professional rodeo announcer. Tommy Splitgarber acted in some Hollywood movies. Raye Carrington taught fly-fishing to hundreds of people.

I've done reports on Mason's court house clock, the Odeon Theater (where the world premiere of OLD YELLER took place), the city's high number of tennis players, its historic homes, knife makers, storeowners, photographers, entertainers, historians, storytellers, cowboys and hunters. I interviewed one man long ago who took his pet llama for a walk around the courthouse square every evening. It just seemed like the normal thing to do. One man had a pet crow. You can be yourself in Mason.

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