

Derby day

Some 228 young fishermen from preschool through age 14 participated in the Wallback Lake Youth Fishing Derby Saturday. The DNR stocked the lake Friday with 650 lbs. of trout, including 150 lbs. in an area roped off for kids. This was the sixth annual event at the lake, which in past years has drawn participants from nine counties and two states. "If they don't have a pole, we give 'em a pole," organizer Connie Sizemore said. Other events at the derby included a casting contest and a turkey calling contest.



Alaina Young, 8, of Laurel Creek holds up a trout she caught and a crappie caught by a friend Saturday morning at Wallback Lake.



Young anglers line the banks of Wallback Lake for the annual youth fishing derby.



Ethan Cunningham, 11, of Duck wades into the water in search of an elusive trout while, at right, Lainee Thompson, 8, of Ovapa dances with Bobber the Water Safety Dog, who was visiting from Burnsville Lake



PHOTOS BY
DAVID HEDGES



Paige Frame, 13, of Maysel waits for a bite on her line.



Luke Ellenbecker, 11, of Sissonville casts his line during Saturday's competition at Wallback Lake.

A letter to my heart doctor

Scott E. Miller, M.D.
Charleston, WV 25304

Dear Dr. Miller,

I had mixed feelings when I read your letter advising that you were retiring from your cardiology practice on April 1, 2015. On the one hand, you are to be heartily congratulated for a successful completion of an outstanding career. You have made your life's work the saving and prolonging of countless lives of West Virginians and others who came to you with the nation's number one killer, heart disease.

The care and treatment of the human heart, that absolutely essential organ of life itself, is of course one of the mostly relentlessly complex, difficult and demanding of all professional endeavors, and you were widely reputed to be one of the very best at



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and I are happy for you.

On the other hand, you present a new void in our lives. We would naturally be uneasy at this point about our future care. Yet, we are confident that you chose with thoughtfulness and great care the doctors who will take over your cardiology practice and your many patients, including both of us. We watched with interest as her brother-in-law, a dermatologist in Manassas, Virginia, as a prelude to retirement, carefully and

what you did. You certainly deserve rest, relaxation and recreation, possibly in a sunny southern climate, far from the stress and strain of serving seriously sick people. Mary Jo

deliberately chose the dermatology group that succeeded to his practice. So, with that observation and our highest regard for you, Mary Jo and I have every reason to be confident about our future heart care.

Looking back on my last office visit, I notice that we reminisced a lot. You were talkative. You mentioned several of our mutual friends and acquaintances. I did not then realize, but you did, that this was a farewell visit with a patient.

There are some things I don't recall that I ever thanked you for. We came into each other's life in 1995. Mary Jo and I were with my mother at the emergency room of Roane General Hospital. It was early evening; I had just left work. Mom was non-verbal then. She had a non-life-threatening stomach problem. She was in a bed in an ER examining room with Mary Jo and an ER doctor whom I never saw before or since except on that one occasion.

I was out in the hall. Suddenly, I began to be dizzy and nauseous. Both conditions accelerated. I decided I would fall over if I didn't find a seat. I quickly opened a nearby wheelchair and sat down. Soon, Mary Jo came out in the hall, took one look at me and called back into the room, "Doctor, you'd better look at Orton." The next thing I knew, I, too, was in an examining room bed.

The doctor asked if maybe my tie was too tight. I said, "No, that's part of my work uniform; I wear one every day." He had an x-ray taken and admitted me for observation. The plan was, the next morning he would look at me again. My mother and I passed by each other in our gurneys on our way to our rooms upstairs.

I didn't know it at the time, but Mary Jo became frantic. She could see that this was not the right thing to do. She called our family doctor, Dr. Pedro Ambrosio,

▶ LETTER / 8B



Spencer's Schreckengost sisters, from left: Michie Seabolt, Marjorie Tolley, Hallie Clarkson and Emma Rynnion, enjoy a visit in the activity room at Roane General Hospital's Skilled Nursing Facility. All but Rynnion, a regular visitor, are residents of the facility.

'The girls'

Schreckengost sisters still going strong in 90s

By JIM COOPER
Editor

*Sisters
Sisters
There never were such devoted
sisters...*

Living Berlin didn't have Spencer's Schreckengost sisters in mind when he penned those popular lyrics, but that's only because he hadn't met them. The four ladies, in their primes back in 1954 when the song debuted in the movie *White Christmas*, are all in their 90s today and still going strong.

Known affectionately as "the girls," these sisters just smile when they are told that must mean they are still young.

"Oh, boy!" and a shake of the head is the response from bright-eyed Mary "Marjorie" Tolley, the oldest at a robust 98.

Tolley is a resident of the Skilled Nursing Facility at Roane General Hospital. Sisters Michie Katherine Parsons Seabolt, 95, and Hallie Louise Clarkson, 93, also make their homes at the facility.

The fourth sister, Emma Grace Rynnion, the baby at 91, lives on Simmons Street with her husband of 68 years, Basil, and frequently comes to visit. The other three sisters are widows.

Michie was the first sister to enter the facility after a stroke several years ago. Marjorie was next, after falling on the ice and breaking a shoulder early last year. Hallie came a few months ago af-

ter breaking a hip. No one on the RGH staff can recall having three siblings at the facility at one time.

"I think it's great," Ruth Looney, Emma's daughter, said. "Mom can come visit them all in one place. They seem to get along well."

The sisters are the children of the late Aud and Cammie "Louise" Argabrite Schreckengost. Three more Schreckengost children who lived to adulthood are now deceased — Elmer Thurl, John Fleetwood and Charles Paul. The couple also lost infant twin boys, Hoy and Coy, in 1927.

Hallie said.

"And a cornfield," Marjorie added. "My goodness, that must have been a mile long to hoe each row."

Life on Spring Creek included oil lamps, the family's Model-T, Aud's baying hunting dogs, some cats and games recalled by Michie (marbles), Hallie (dominoes and checkers) and Emma (getting pulled in a wagon).

The youngest, Emma, remembers some of her sisters being a bit too reckless and sending her toppling out of that wagon.

"I've still got the scar!" she said,

"One thing I didn't do was rub snuff or chew tobacco. If I'd have tried that, I'd vomit."

The sisters also attended school for the first time after the move to Spring Creek. They attended the old Willow Bend one-room school that featured a pot-bellied stove in the middle of the room.

"People always called us 'Second-gost' because they couldn't say our name right," Marjorie said, adding that it took some time for the girls to learn how to spell their last name.

They remember recesses of jumping rope and playing ball and attending classes when the snow was "waist deep."

None of the sisters advanced beyond the one-room school and eighth grade except for Hallie, who completed two years at Spencer High School.

Emma recalls walking from home to town to work at Staats Pharmacy, for 50¢ an hour. Both Marjorie and Michie had jobs as maids and kitchen workers at the former Spencer-Roane Hotel,

which was at the current location of Premier Bank's main facility.

Establishing their own families was the priority for the sisters, with each spending their entire lives in this area. Together, they had eight children and 15 grandchildren.

"People have been friendly to us and we've had good neighbors," Hallie said. "We've had a pretty good life."

Laura Matics, the activities director at RGH Skilled Nursing, said the three sisters who live

► GIRLS / 8B

"I used to steal tobacco and chew it. I'd wait until Dad was asleep and dip my finger down in his pouch and get some."

The first memories the sisters have of childhood involve the family home in the Mace Hill section of Spencer, a white, five-room structure. The family later moved to a place with some land four miles down Spring Creek where Aud, who also worked for the State Road Commission and as courthouse custodian, began to operate a sawmill.

"He had a sawmill and anytime anybody called him to work, he went," Michie recalled. "My brothers worked too. They wasn't very old, but they worked."

Louise ran the household and helped supervise various farm chores.

"We had cows and a horse,"

pulling up a pants leg to prove it. Michie said she has memories of Marjorie "grabbing her and stretching her" while trying to get her off the steps in the house.

Asked if she was only playing, Marjorie responds, "Oh, yeah. I'd pick 'em up and spank 'em."

"No she wasn't playing," Michie adds.

"But we wasn't bad kids," Hallie notes.

Bad? No. Mischievous? Yes.

"I used to steal tobacco and chew it," Marjorie offers, her eyes sparkling. "I'd wait until Dad was asleep and dip my finger down in his pouch and get some."

"What did she say?" Hallie, who has hearing loss, asks and is told.



Cammie "Louise" Schreckengost (back) is shown with five of her children and the family's Model-T circa 1928. The children are, from left: Hallie, Marjorie, John, Emma and Michie.

A miracle named Solomon

I want to tell you about a miracle. Now you may not agree with me that this is a true miracle, even if you believe in miracles, which many people don't. I think, though, that you can be convinced, if you will only think long and hard about it.

First, I should start with a definition. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (1991) gives the word three meanings: "(1) an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs; (2) an extremely outstanding or unusual event, thing, or accomplishment; (3) a divinely natural phenomenon experienced humanly as the fulfillment of spiritual law." Okay, I can work with that.

My younger daughter Sarah married Joshua Kent in June 2005. In the late summer of 2014, she discovered herself to be pregnant. In January 2015 I had a birthday and (as usual) a few weeks later I received from



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her a nice birthday card. (I say a nice card, but really it was a little naughty). The great thing about this card, though, the priceless thing, was the message she wrote

on it. It gives an insight into the experience of being pregnant. Also, it is imbued with Sarah's ever-present dry sense of humor, which I find delightful. Here is what she wrote:

"Dear Dad, This is a new low for me in terms of my tardiness in sending a birthday card. Not only am I fighting my natural tendency to procrastinate, I'm also fighting mental and physical fatigue for which I re-

quest that you blame your grandson. Not Dave, although he does incite quite a bit of both types of fatigue in everyone present after an evening with him at the dinner table.

"I'm referring to the little guy who has for several months been forcing me to take him into account when considering everything I eat, drink, wear, inhale, read, purchase, plan, worry about, and decide. I look



back on my life and cannot think of a single person who has so totally dominated so many details of my day-to-day living so brazenly, with no apology, guilt or even awareness whatsoever. He is even dominating this card that is not to him, and that celebrates a topic — your birthday — that has nothing to do with him, other than the fact that if yours hadn't happened, his would not be about to, and the fact that he's such an extremely lucky boy to be about to have you as a grandpa.

"But I rest assured in the hopeful expectation that once he's born, all of this turmoil will be over and everything will calm down, returning to the peaceful, easy, laid-back life that it was. Right? Love, Sarah"

Now for the miracle I promised you: Solomon Josiah Kent was born March 26, 2015. He's a handsome

► MIRACLE / 8B



This Schreckengost family photo from 1969 taken under the farm's dinner bell includes, from left: Aud, Emma Grace, Hallie, Louise, Michie, John, Marjorie, Charles and Elmer.

GIRLS

From 1B

there seem to enjoy their current status.
 "They like to get their hair done in the beauty shop," Mat-ics said, "and they play bingo. Sometimes they argue just like sisters, but they sit together at meal times.
 "They all have separate rooms and roommates," she added. "They say, 'they'll see each other in each other's houses,' but sometimes they have sleepovers."
 Proving that through the varied experiences of four long lifetimes, the Schreckengost

sisters are just as close today as they were while they were growing up.

Posing for a photographer, they are more than happy to scoot their chairs, including three wheelchairs, side by side and put their arms around one another in a show of togetherness.

It's just like Mr. Berlin wrote about sisters...

All kinds of weather

We stick together

The same in the rain or sun.

Taken in approximately 1930 while visiting relatives at Sand Ridge in Calhoun County, this photo shows Louise Schreckengost (seated) with her girls, clockwise from top: Marjorie, Michie, Emma and Louise.



MIRACLE

From 1B

lad with an infectious grin and pleasant blue eyes.

"Now wait a minute, Orton," you may say, "that's no miracle. Thousands of children are born every day. Maternity wards are kept busy. It's certainly not "an extremely outstanding or unusual event!"

Well, hear me out. Consider little Solly's situation for a moment. First, the chances of the sperm and egg (that combined to make him) ever connecting were several million to one. Your chances of winning the Powerball lottery are almost a sure thing by comparison. Then the chances of his mother (from Spencer, W.Va.) and his father (from Shadyside, Ohio) even meeting, much less marrying, were slim at best. You can multiply these odds by themselves and double the result for every generation back and you can consider Solly happening to live on this planet a virtual impossibility. The same goes for every individual person you know, including yourself.

Now let's get to "outstanding or unusual event." Yes, it's true that the earth is teeming with humanity, with populations so dense in some places that there is widespread hunger and starvation. But this is only on the earth.

Consider the solar system with a massive star at the center (our sun) and huge planets like Jupiter and Saturn, or smaller orbs like Venus and Mars. There is nobody there. Nobody. Life can't exist there. They are too hot or too cold, too big or too small, too close to the sun or too far away. They don't have carbon, oxygen, hydrogen and the other elements necessary for life in the exotic and precise forms and properties necessary for life. Only earth has the Goldilocks effect (everything is "just right").

We live near the edge of a massive spiral galaxy we call the Milky Way. Closer to its center, the stars are too close together, with strong gravity pulls that don't permit planets to revolve around them. Also, most stars are hot or too cold to support planets like our earth, although many of them have planets. Many other stars are too big or too small.

There may be other planets around other stars that can support life, but not likely very many. Our earth, even if not unique is certainly rare. This small blue ball hanging out there in deep black space is an "outstanding or unusual thing."

Then, too, the laws of physics, the fine balance of forces that holds the atoms and molecules together, the laws of gravity, the speed of light, and so much more are finely tuned. If any one of them were even slightly different from what it is, matter itself as we know it could

not exist. Existence itself, in this sense, is a miracle.

Now let's return to Sarah's birthday card to me. During her pregnancy, Josh favored us frequently with ultrasound pictures of the tiny person developing in his wife's womb. We felt like we were part of it all. Actually, we had no idea what was actually happening in there. David Darling, a noted British physicist and astronomer, in his book *Equations of Eternity*, put this remarkable process so clearly and beautifully. Here is a small part of his description:

"With the embryo only a twentieth of an inch in length, the nervous system makes its appearance. Initially, it is just a flattened sheet, once cell thick: each cell apparently identical. But as these cells further divide, they start to differentiate and drift to specific sites. Before long, the brain emerges in miniature adult form, layer upon layer of neurons, each layer harboring cells of a distinctive type and shape. Then comes the most crucial phase: the formation of connections between the billions of individual neurons. Prior to this, the brain is no more capable of thought than is a heart or an interstellar cloud.

"It bids fair to be the most astonishing physical process in the universe. No sooner does a neuron reach its appointed place than it begins to sprout an axon—a conducting pathway that in time will carry electrical signals away from the neuron body to other nerve cells in the brain. Like an amoeba—strikingly so—the tip of the growing axon makes its way along. Thin fingers called filopodia stretch out tentatively from it, withdraw, then stretch out again in a new direction, as if groping for some elusive prey. And that is exactly what they are doing. The filopodia are seeking "sticky" surfaces to which they can bind and then pull toward, thereby elongating the whole axon. These sticky surfaces are specially shaped molecules—chemical signposts to guide the growing nerve cell."

After further remarkable steps in developing the brain, Dr. Darling goes into detail in the amazing development of the eyes. And he goes on from there. It boggles the mind (my mind that was created by the same process).

As I write this last paragraph, Solly and his mother are driving from their home in Charleston to our house in Spencer. I have a hug waiting for our latest little miracle. Now, have I made my case? Are new babies true miracles? Or are they simply ordinary things? Or is this merely the babblings of a dotting (or doddering?) old grandfather? Well, I believe it's a miracle.

Current vaccinations needed for school

As the countdown to the first day of school begins, parents need to make sure children are up to date on all vaccinations. West Virginia schools will not allow students that are behind on their vaccinations to enter school until their records are current. It's important for your child to get all the shots.

Each vaccine protects your child from different diseases, and each vaccine usually requires more than

one dose (shot). For the best protection, your child needs every dose of each vaccine. If your child misses a shot, she may not be protected. The bacteria and viruses (germs) that cause serious childhood diseases are still around. Each child who isn't vaccinated can spread those germs to other children.

Students entering kindergarten through sixth grade must show proof of immunization against Diphtheria,

Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Varicella and Hepatitis B. It is important to remember that some of the vaccines require more than one dose.

Students entering 7th and 12th grades require additional vaccines. Seventh grade students must have proof of a Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Acellular Pertussis) booster and the first dose of MCV4 (meningococcal/meningitis) vaccine. In addition, 12th

grade students must have the second dose of MCV4 if first dose was given before their 16th birthday.

College students are also required to show proof of immunizations and should check with their admissions office as to required and suggested vaccines.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department office in Roane County at 304-927-1480.

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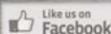
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Recipe for a hobby

Eighth-grader bakes cheesecakes and more

By DAVID HEDGES
Publisher

Q typical eighth-grader's hobbies might include playing sports or spending time on the computer. Caroline Frum, an eighth-grader at Spencer Middle School, likes to cook. One of her favorite pastimes is baking cheesecakes and her mother estimates that since February she's made about 60 for family, friends and fundraisers.

"I wanted a hobby that would take up some of my free time," the 14-year-old said, "and I really like baking. I make everything from scratch."

The first cheesecake she attempted was two years ago, for a big Thanksgiving dinner at her family's home at Billings that was to include out-of-town guests.

Her mother, Kim, principal at Reedy Elementary School, thought the recipe for a raspberry white chocolate cheesecake might be too much of a challenge for a chef who was only 11 at the time.

"I asked her, 'Are you sure you don't want some help?' Making a cheesecake is really hard, and it was a pretty complicated recipe," her mother recalled.

Caroline insisted on doing it herself, and the rest is history.

"It turned out really good," Kim said.

She's tried a lot of recipes since then, and the outcome has been the same – deliciously successful.

She's consulted with her father, attorney Richard Frum, along the way, but mostly she finds her own recipes, often putting a unique twist on them.

"I taught myself by finding the recipes and adjusting them to what I like," she said.

"She's on the phone a lot, looking at recipes," her mother said.

She's made Reese's Peanut Butter Cup cheesecakes, mint Oreo cheesecakes and a chocolate chip cookie cheesecake.

Her personal favorite is the Samoa cheesecake, named for the Girl Scout cookie of the same name. Like the cookie, it's made with toasted coconut, chocolate and caramel.

For her father's birthday she pulled out all the stops, coming up with a red velvet cake that had a layer of white chocolate raspberry cheesecake in the middle.

"It was really good, and really rich," Kim said. "We ate some of it and she took some to school and gave it to her teachers."

She's even made a special two-layer cake that was both a homemade carrot cake and a cheesecake. It was covered in cream cheese frosting with homemade whipped cream on top.

It was one of her most time-consuming creations so far.

"Each part required different steps," she said.

It can take several hours to make a cheesecake.

"It depends on how complicated the recipe is," she said.

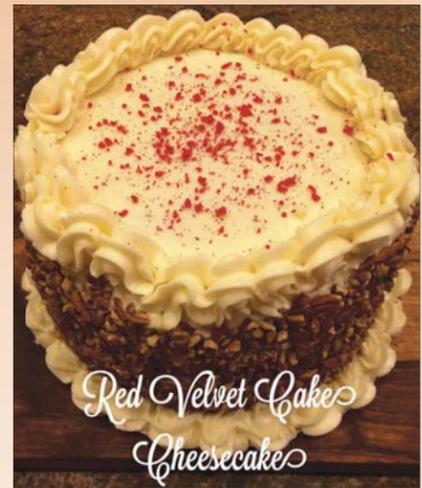
It may take an hour or more to mix up the ingredients for the cake, and another 90 minutes to bake it.

But that's only part of the process, Caroline, who usually makes her cakes on weekends, said. "The topping takes longer," she explained.

► RECIPE / 8B

Caroline Frum, 14, of Billings shows off some of the miniature cheesecakes she has made in her family's kitchen. These samples are Reese's Peanut Butter cheesecakes.

DAVID HEDGES / SPENCER NEWSPAPERS



And leave the driving to us

My daughter, who attended college in Nashville, Tennessee, in the late 1980s, travelled the 400 miles between home and school in a number of ways. At the beginning and end of each school year, when it was necessary to transport enough suitcases, trunks, boxes and hanging clothes to outfit an African safari, we made the trip in the family Buick.

She once caught a ride with Charlotte Patton, a Spencer girl transplanted to Memphis, who went many miles out of her way to pick Becky up. Several times she rode with other students, whose compact cars were so efficiently packed you could not breathe without disturbing the bags of laundry the driver was taking home to mother. A couple of times she flew. For some mystical reason, a Super Saver round-trip ticket between Nashville and Charleston was cheaper than a one-way.



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not take the Greyhound bus? In my youth I was a frequent rider of the great blue and silver behemoth. Bus stations, called post houses by Greyhound but no one else, were exciting places. Loudspeakers announced arrivals and departures in important-sounding deep voices to and from great and exciting cities.

When the announcer said "Express coach service

As Spring Break loomed closer one year, Becky couldn't find another student coming this way. She wanted to fly again.

I had a rare flash of inspiration. Why

now boarding at Gate Three for Huntington, Ashland, Mt. Sterling, Lexington, Louisville, Evansville and St. Louis, with transfers to Portsmouth, Cincinnati, Indianapolis and Chicago." I could picture throngs of people in those cities all lined up, watching for the bus to come.

Even today I am swept with waves of nostalgia whenever I smell diesel fumes. I might be the only person you know who enjoys diesel fumes. Taken in moderation, of course.

Besides, the bus was cheaper than flying. And it doesn't go way up there in the air. Anyway, the matter was settled. Becky was to come home by bus.

Her bus was to leave Nashville Friday at noon, central time. She had a two-hour layover in Louisville and would arrive in Charleston at two in the morning.

At noon on Friday, I was conferring with a client

about a hearing scheduled for Monday. At 12:45, he and I visited the scene of the controversy to take photographs. We returned to town, I dropped him off near his car and then drove to McDonald's for a quick late lunch.

As I walked in, a clerk told me I was wanted on the phone. How could anyone call me here? Until three minutes ago, I didn't know myself that I was coming here.

It was Sheila, my receptionist. Becky had called from Nashville. She was at the bus station. They wouldn't sell her a ticket. More precisely, they wouldn't take a personal check.

She had no cash. And her bus had left. Sheila gave me Becky's telephone number.

It was a pay phone. Becky told me her story. A friend

► DRIVING / 8B

RECIPE

From 1B

But not everything goes according to plan. Once she was making a cheesecake for a party at school and figured out she had left out some of the ingredients.

"I realized it before I baked it and started over again," Caroline said.

That meant she needed more ingredients to finish the job right.

"I was her runner to the store," her mother said.

Instead of the traditional graham cracker crust, Caroline makes many of her cakes with a cookie crust, from cookies she crushes by hand.

"Most of the cakes I make are with an Oreo crust," she said. "It depends on the cake, but I think an Oreo crust goes better with some of the flavors."

She makes everything from traditional cheesecakes, which are 8 or 10 inches wide, to mini cheesecakes that are four inches wide.

But cheesecakes aren't all that she makes.

For a fundraiser at her mother's school she made a three-layer dark chocolate cake with homemade whipped cream and fudge on top.

At Easter she made about a hundred truffle Easter eggs, and a like number of Easter ducks created out of Nutter Butter cookies dipped in yellow chocolate, with Reese's Piec-

es candy for the ducks' feet, wings and beaks.

Her creations have become popular.

"My friends ask me to bring stuff to school," she said. "They definitely like eating it."

She also cooks dinner for her family once or twice a week.

With all that time in the kitchen, you might think cooking was Caroline's only hobby.

In addition to being a straight-A student, she is an accomplished singer, having won the Roane County's Got Talent competition at last year's Coming Home to Reedy Festival. She's also participated in the Texaco Country Showdown at the Ripley 4th of July celebration the last two years and participated in a variety of local musical productions.

Sometimes she even combines her two hobbies.

"She puts on her music and bakes while she sings," her mother said.

While her cheesecake hobby might not be an indication, her mother says Caroline eats a very healthy diet that consists of more vegetables than anything else.

"She fixes it," Kim said of cheesecake, "but she doesn't eat much of it."



Frum has made more than 60 cheesecakes since February for friends, family and fundraisers.

DAVID HEDGES / SPENCER NEWSPAPERS

DRIVING

From 1B

and classmate had dropped her off out front and gone on back to the campus. The ticket agent wouldn't take her personal check. Of course not, I thought to myself. How can anybody expect a bus terminal to accept a check from an interstate traveler? On an out-of-state bank?

"Becky, get the ticket agent on the phone."

"I can't even get his attention. He's got a line of people he's waiting on."

"Get his phone number."

"Just a minute," she said.

"Sir, you'll have to use our pay phone out there. This is our business phone and we can't keep it tied up." It was the McDonald's manager. I had forgotten where I was. Becky gave me the terminal number and I hung up and adjourned to the pay phone just outside the door. All this took place long before cell phones became common (maybe before they were invented).

I reached the ticket agent. He remembered Becky, but he was sorry. He couldn't do anything for her. Rules are rules. He doesn't make 'em, he just follows 'em. Sorry. Maybe she could cash a check at a bank. There's banks four or five blocks away.

"She says the banks are closed on Friday afternoons."

"Well, that's right. I don't know what she can do, mister. Look, I've got people waiting."

I was desperate. I decided to take the only action available to me. I decided to blame my wife for the whole thing.

"Hey, I think that girl's almost in tears," I said. "I don't know what she and her mother were thinking about, her going in there with a \$90 personal check. She's stuck down there and... hey, let me give you my Visa number. Put it on my..."

"Can't do it over the phone."

"She's a college student, been in Nashville three years..."

"She coming back?"

"Well sure. What she's trying to buy is a round trip ticket. She's on spring break for a week, starting today. Can you take her watch and hold it, and let her pick it up when she gets back?"

"Hang on a minute..."

I waited for what seemed all afternoon. Finally, he came back on the phone.

"All right, I'll take her check. The agents are charged out with our tickets, and if her check's no good I have to pay for it. Give me your name and address."

I gave him my entire autobiography.

"Her bus left a long time ago. She'll be on the 6:15 to Wytheville, Virginia. She'll call you later and give you her itinerary." He didn't mention her watch.

I thanked him profusely. By the time I ate and returned to my office, Becky had left the message: arrive Charleston 9:36 a.m.

At 3:30 a.m. the phone rang. It was Becky, in Wytheville. She had a two-hour layover. Her luggage was not on the bus. The station agent said it might be on the next bus, or might be lost forever, in which case they paid claims up to a thousand dollars (the key words there are "up to"). She was tired and sleepy and worried and disgusted. She sounded like a wet kitten out in the rain would sound if it could talk.

I told her the story of the man who bought a ticket for a plane to New York. As he checked his luggage in, he told the agent, "Send

this one to Tampa, this one to Tulsa and this one to Tacoma."

"We can't do that," the agent said.

"Oh yes you can," the man said.

"In fact, that's exactly what you did the last time I flew."

Becky seemed cheered up. She probably just didn't want to hear any more of my jokes.

At 9:30 Saturday morning, Sarah and I pulled in at the new bus depot near Elk River in Charleston to pick up her sister. We got in line at the ticket window to inquire about the northbound from Wytheville.

A young man in front of us was trying to cash a personal check. The ticket agent, of course, was unable to get involved. The young man had out his military I.D. card. "This I.D. card is recognized worldwide," he said, plaintively.

"I'm sorry. Those are the rules. I don't make them."

I had heard this before.

"But I don't get into Louisville until six. I don't have any money to get anything to eat."

"Maybe you can cash it at a bank in the mall. It's only a couple blocks."

"My bus leaves in ten minutes."

I tried to recall a bank outlet at the Town Center Mall. I couldn't remember any. But I could remember a certain ticket agent in Nashville.

"Hey, you in the Army?" I asked.

"Navy."

"Here, tell you what. I'll loan you this and you can mail it back, okay?" I fished a five-dollar bill out of my billfold.

He offered me the check, a \$30 personal check from somebody else aboard the U.S.S. America, according to the words on the check.

I didn't take the check, but I gave him two fives. I wasn't carrying \$30 on me. He gave me his name and address: Clayton Paul Thaxton, U.S.S. America. Whatever that is. He thanked me. Several times. But he wasn't really thanking me. He was thanking an unknown faceless voice in Nashville who had taken a chance on an unknown traveler's out-of-state personal check.

Becky's bus was going to be an hour late, the agent said.

A few minutes later, as Sarah and I were discussing the various passengers sitting around in the terminal, such as the young lady with all her luggage, a book, a pillow, a Sony Walkman plugged into her head and wearing house slippers, obviously a seasoned bus traveler, the young man appeared again.

He had something for me. It was a fancy cardboard cover framing a world map and an eight-by-ten color glossy of the U.S.S. America, the huge new aircraft carrier, in mid-ocean, with fifty planes on the flight deck. He told us all about it. He was part of a crew of 6,500. This picture was for me to keep.

At eleven o'clock, as I pulled onto the interstate, I was on top of the world. Both of my offspring were in the car, the tape player was loudly blaring rock and roll songs of the fifties (my kind of music) from Sarah's collection, Becky's luggage would probably arrive this evening, or sometime, and we were on our way home. With a full-color photograph of the U.S.S. America and a deck-load of helicopters and F-16 fighter-bombers. Somewhere on a bus heading west was a young sailor who had finished his bagful of breakfast. I never heard from him again.

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LETTER

From 1B

who was at home (he lived nearby). He soon arrived. While he was in my hospital room, my nausea and dizziness began again. Dr. Pedro gave me a shot, something called tissue plasminogen activator, and called TPA for short, also called the "clotbuster shot." He then swung into action. He had quickly diagnosed that I had had a heart attack. The room was suddenly filled with nurses, sticking the nodes of EKG wires on my chest, inserting two IV sites into each of my arms, and getting me ready for a Medivac helicopter ride to Charleston. He also called you.

It was after dark when the aircraft landed on the helipad on the roof of Charleston Memorial Hospital, but you were there, waiting for me. You later told me that the TPA shot saved my life. I am confident that had I still been in my hospital room when the ER doctor would come in the next morning, his diagnosis would have been easy: I would be dead. In fairness to him, I was not having the pain that is usually associated with a heart attack. Just recently, I learned that

Jay Starcher, who was the Roane General pharmacist at the time, had lobbied the board of directors for a long time to stock the TPA medicine, despite its inordinate expense and relatively short shelf life. It was finally in stock just a short time before Dr. Pedro gave me my shot.

You gave me a heart catheterization and diagnosed my specific problem: a 95 percent blockage of a certain vital artery serving the heart itself. A balloon surgery was needed; however, the state of the art had recently advanced: you called in Dr. Mark Bates, who had developed a specialty in a new procedure. He placed a stainless steel stent in the balloon-widened blockage area to keep it from re-closing. Dr. Bates was a pioneer in this procedure, but had only performed it for less than two years. You told me not too long ago that my stent was the first one placed at Charleston Area Medical Center.

Since then, you have monitored me on semi-annual visits with examinations, EKGs, blood

analyses, periodic stress tests and an infrequent catheterization. On one of those in 2000, you called in Dr. Jay Requarth, a remarkable surgeon, to perform a four-way heart bypass operation. In 2014, you detected an atrial flutter, an electrical short-circuit, that required an ablation procedure, which involved cauterizing certain identified spots on the inside of my heart. You called in Dr. Brett Faulknier, who is an excellent specialist in that field.

In 2010, you examined Mary Jo and diagnosed an atrial fibrillation. You arranged for Dr. Faulknier to emplace a heart pacemaker in her chest. Your office also follows her condition closely on semi-annual visits.

When we arrive for our regular routine appointments, your spacious waiting room is always full. Many people in your large regular patient load are from Roane County. All of those with whom I have talked, and, I'm sure, most or all of the many others, are convinced that the sun rises and sets in you. We are all keenly aware that you are keeping

us alive. Now, we all know that the process of "keeping us alive" is, for heart patients, a day-to-day process: we are not promised tomorrow but we have today.

My story, that I have just now laboriously recounted, is only one example out of many. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of patients over your eventful career have, and have had, stories of their own as dramatic and eventful, many of them much more so, as mine. My story, though, is the only one I have, and it is probably typical.

Many men die of heart attacks at about age 57 or so. I did not. Thanks to Mary Jo and Dr. Pedro Ambrosio and Dr. Bates and Dr. Requarth and Dr. Faulknier and Jay Starcher and your outstanding nursing staff, especially Sally (after all these years I still don't know her last name), and most of all, you.

Because of them and you, over the years I have seen my only granddaughter, a small infant when I had my heart attack, grow into a fine young lady, a college sophomore. I met my first grandson, who was born in 2000, and have

watched him mature into a high school freshman. I gave my second daughter away to a fine young man in a beautiful outdoor wedding in 2005. Just a few days ago, on March 26, I met their child, my second grandson, who is lying asleep beside me as I write this.

Because of you and the others who have dealt with my heart, and with Mary Jo's, I have enjoyed these 20 extra years with her. We have seen a great deal of the world in this time and have experienced these family members who will carry on after us. I have enjoyed these 20 extra years practicing the profession

I love and being useful to my fellow inhabitants of this little corner of God's Earth. I also thank God every day.

Perhaps you consider yourself duly compensated for your work and your service. My debt to you, however, can never be repaid. After all, what is a life worth?

Mary Jo and I wish you the very best in your retirement and in all your future endeavors.

Thank you.

Your patient and friend,
Orton Jones

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BUSINESS BRIEFS

Lewis receives national awards

National recognition has been given to Spencer businesswoman Linda Lewis, Owner/Broker of Marketplace Insurance and a Division Manager for Health Reform Team, a national Health and Life Insurance Agency.

Lewis recently returned from Health Reform Team's National Annual Awards trip to Curacao, where she was recognized with three awards for outstanding achievement. One award was in recognition of being one of only three national producers achieving over \$1,290,000 of business in 2014, a second recognized Lewis as the No.



Lewis

2 producer in the nation and a third recognized her as the No. 2 Division Manager in the nation with over \$2,743,000 in business.

Lewis has approximately 20 licensed health and life insurance agents in her division who are spread over a territory from New England to Florida.

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PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE ATTN: FLOOD VICTIMS

A public meeting will be held at the Spencer City Building on Wednesday, April 29th 2015 at 2:00 P.M. for residents of Spencer who have sustained flood damage during flood incidents in recent years.

The purpose of this meeting is to discuss, and collect data for, the submission of a Hazard Mitigation Grant Program application which will seek to obtain funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to assist the City of Spencer in acquiring and removing structures from known flood hazard areas or elevating structures in order to raise the living space above potential flood damage.

This meeting is open to any individuals who wish to attend; however, those who have received flood damage are especially encouraged to attend.