

LIFE CARE

LEADER

2018 Edition



An American Airman
Robert Friend

A Pearl in America
Perlita Aquino

A Life Well Traveled
Dwight Letchworth



CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

On March 4, 1995, an 80-year-old man passed away at his home in Delray Beach, Florida. His death captured national attention.

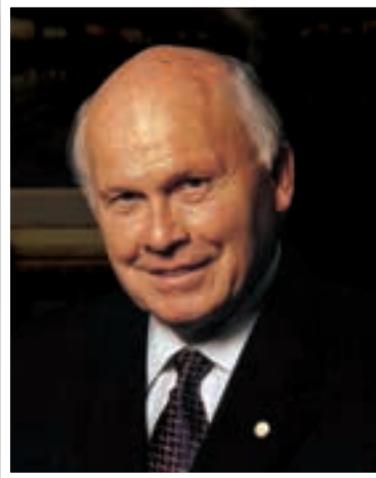
What was it about the life of this man that warranted attention on the pages of *The New York Times* and other news publications?

Well, he established a process to touch the lives of millions and millions of Americans and others around the world – in a quiet, simple, yet helpful activity.

His name was Victor Dorman, and he changed how Americans buy cheese by putting the paper between the slices. “What’s that?” you say.

The Dorman Cheese Co. was founded by Dorman’s father, Nathan, an immigrant from Lithuania, who began delivering cheese in Manhattan by horse-drawn wagon in 1896. Until the late 1940s, cheese had been sold in bulk and sliced in grocery stores. Kraft introduced a package of sliced cheese but, at the time, the packages were not vacuum-packed, so air could get in and the shelf life was not long.

Victor Dorman was the first to use a process called *interleaver*, created by the U.S. Slicing Machine Company, which cut a slice of cheese,



placed it on a conveyor belt and with mechanical fingers laid down a sheet of paper or parchment. Dorman became famous for his company’s registered trademark: *The Cheese with the Paper between the Slices*.

Think about it. Dorman graduated from a prestigious college (New York University), fought in World War II and lived an impressive and successful life. But in the end, it was one quirky little thing that left a lasting impact.

What will you be remembered for? Oh, your story may not make the front pages of a newspaper or a segment on the nightly news, but you have a unique opportunity to affect the lives of others in powerful ways.

We get lots of letters here at corporate about experiences families have in our buildings.

Some contain commendations; others express concerns. One came from the wife of a man who was a resident at Life Care Center of Plymouth, Massachusetts, for a year and a half before passing away last December. Here is how she described the performance of the staff:

“The staff there made him feel like family to them. They sang with him, recited poetry with him, hugged him when he needed it, chatted with him, even brought him little gifts at times to perk him up when his spirits were low. They were totally aware of his medical needs at all times, and responded to them immediately.”

Those are lifelong, precious memories for that woman and her family. Scenes like these are repeated all across our company. They are important behaviors to be remembered.

And very impactful on the lives of those we serve.

Much more so than paper between slices of cheese. 🧀

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Forrest L. Preston".

FORREST L. PRESTON
Chairman

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A P U B L I C A T I O N O F L I F E C A R E C E N T E R S O F A M E R I C A



Cover photo by David England Photography

Life Care Leader is published annually by Life Care Centers of America for our residents, the corporate family and friends of Life Care.

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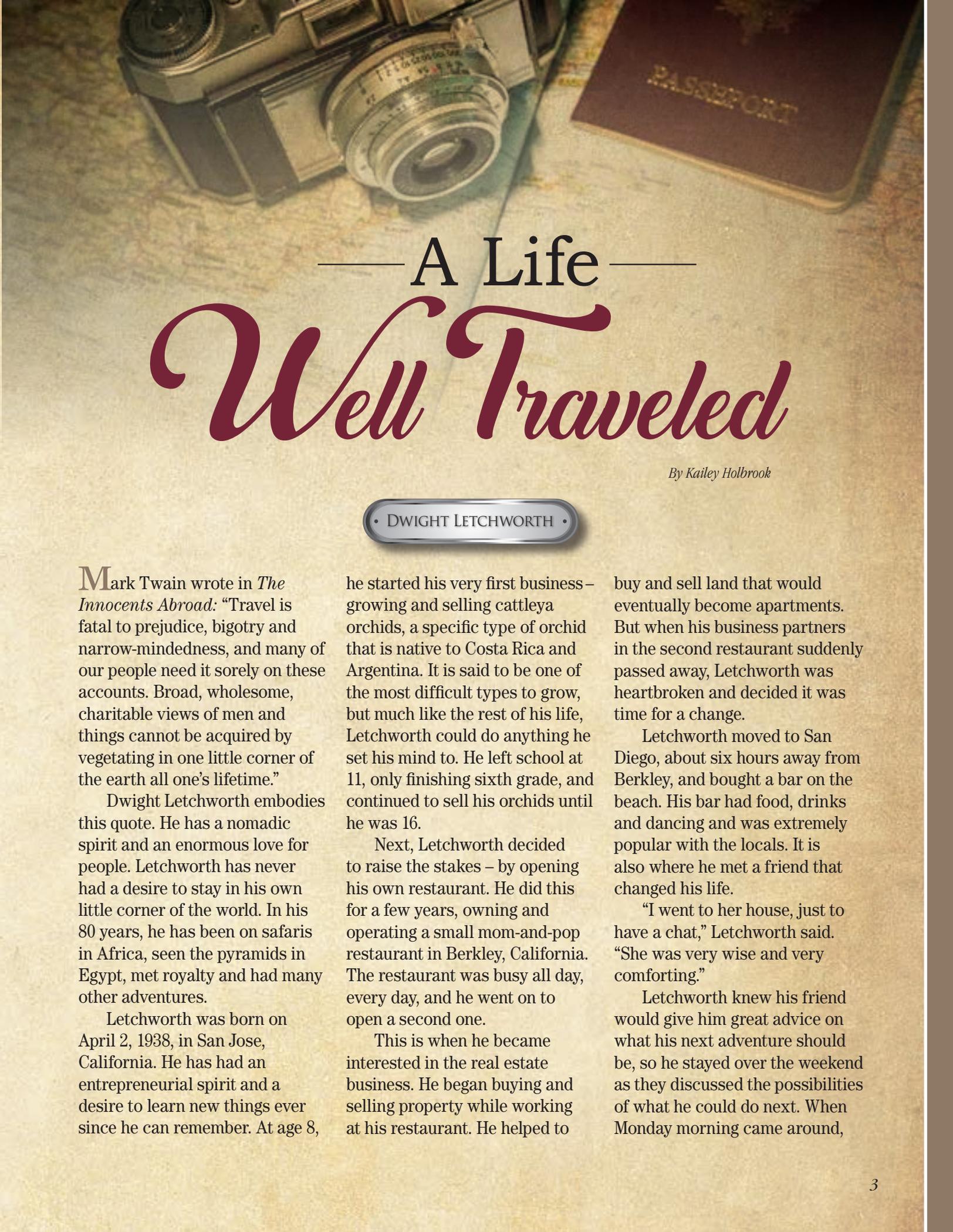


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— A Life — *Well Traveled*

By Kailey Holbrook

• DWIGHT LETCHWORTH •

Mark Twain wrote in *The Innocents Abroad*: “Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime.”

Dwight Letchworth embodies this quote. He has a nomadic spirit and an enormous love for people. Letchworth has never had a desire to stay in his own little corner of the world. In his 80 years, he has been on safaris in Africa, seen the pyramids in Egypt, met royalty and had many other adventures.

Letchworth was born on April 2, 1938, in San Jose, California. He has had an entrepreneurial spirit and a desire to learn new things ever since he can remember. At age 8,

he started his very first business – growing and selling cattleya orchids, a specific type of orchid that is native to Costa Rica and Argentina. It is said to be one of the most difficult types to grow, but much like the rest of his life, Letchworth could do anything he set his mind to. He left school at 11, only finishing sixth grade, and continued to sell his orchids until he was 16.

Next, Letchworth decided to raise the stakes – by opening his own restaurant. He did this for a few years, owning and operating a small mom-and-pop restaurant in Berkley, California. The restaurant was busy all day, every day, and he went on to open a second one.

This is when he became interested in the real estate business. He began buying and selling property while working at his restaurant. He helped to

buy and sell land that would eventually become apartments. But when his business partners in the second restaurant suddenly passed away, Letchworth was heartbroken and decided it was time for a change.

Letchworth moved to San Diego, about six hours away from Berkley, and bought a bar on the beach. His bar had food, drinks and dancing and was extremely popular with the locals. It is also where he met a friend that changed his life.

“I went to her house, just to have a chat,” Letchworth said. “She was very wise and very comforting.”

Letchworth knew his friend would give him great advice on what his next adventure should be, so he stayed over the weekend as they discussed the possibilities of what he could do next. When Monday morning came around,

his friend had to go back to work, and so did he. He got in his car and headed back on the highway toward San Diego. He knew he would have to go through the Sepulveda Tunnel, a tunnel that passes right through the middle of LAX, Los Angeles' international airport.

"As I was driving along, toward the airport, my car started to turn by itself, into the parking for the airport," Letchworth recalled. "I was a little bit scared because I didn't know what was going on. The hair on my arms and my neck started to stand up. I thought: this is very weird. Why did my car turn off into the airport?"

He decided he would take a chance.

Letchworth parked his car and walked toward the American Airlines terminal and then up to the ticket office.

"I asked the man working the front desk if American Airlines flew to India," he said.

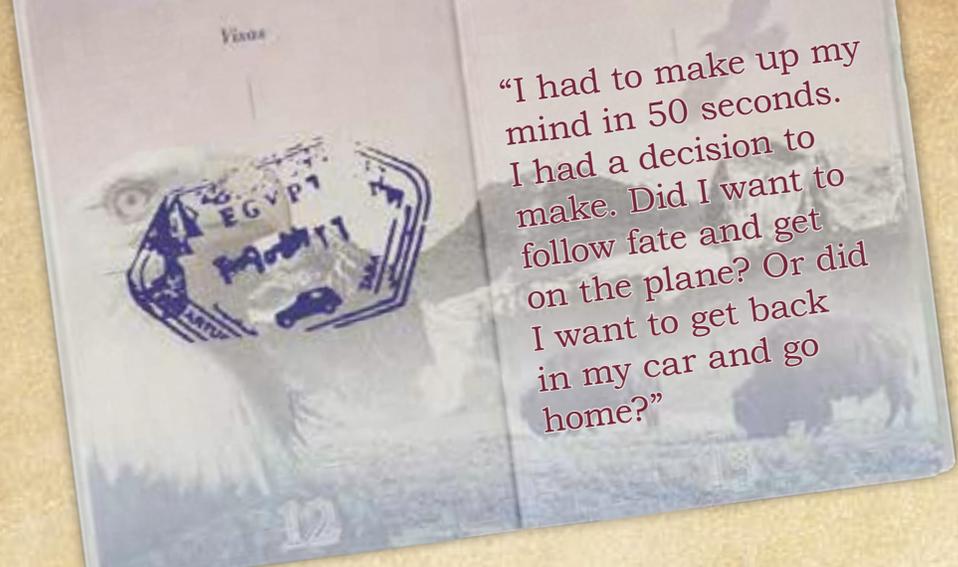
The American Airlines attendant told Letchworth that the airline did indeed fly to India, three times a week. The flight originated in New York City and went from Los Angeles to Tokyo to New Delhi, then

finally to Frankfurt, Germany. Letchworth would go on to visit each of these cities.

"The flight just landed from New York," the attendant told him. "You can board in 20 minutes."

All Letchworth had to do was purchase a ticket, and he could see the world.

"I had to make up my mind in 50 seconds. I had a decision to make. Did I want to follow fate and get on the plane? Or did I want to get back in my car and go home?"



"I had to make up my mind in 50 seconds. I had a decision to make. Did I want to follow fate and get on the plane? Or did I want to get back in my car and go home?"

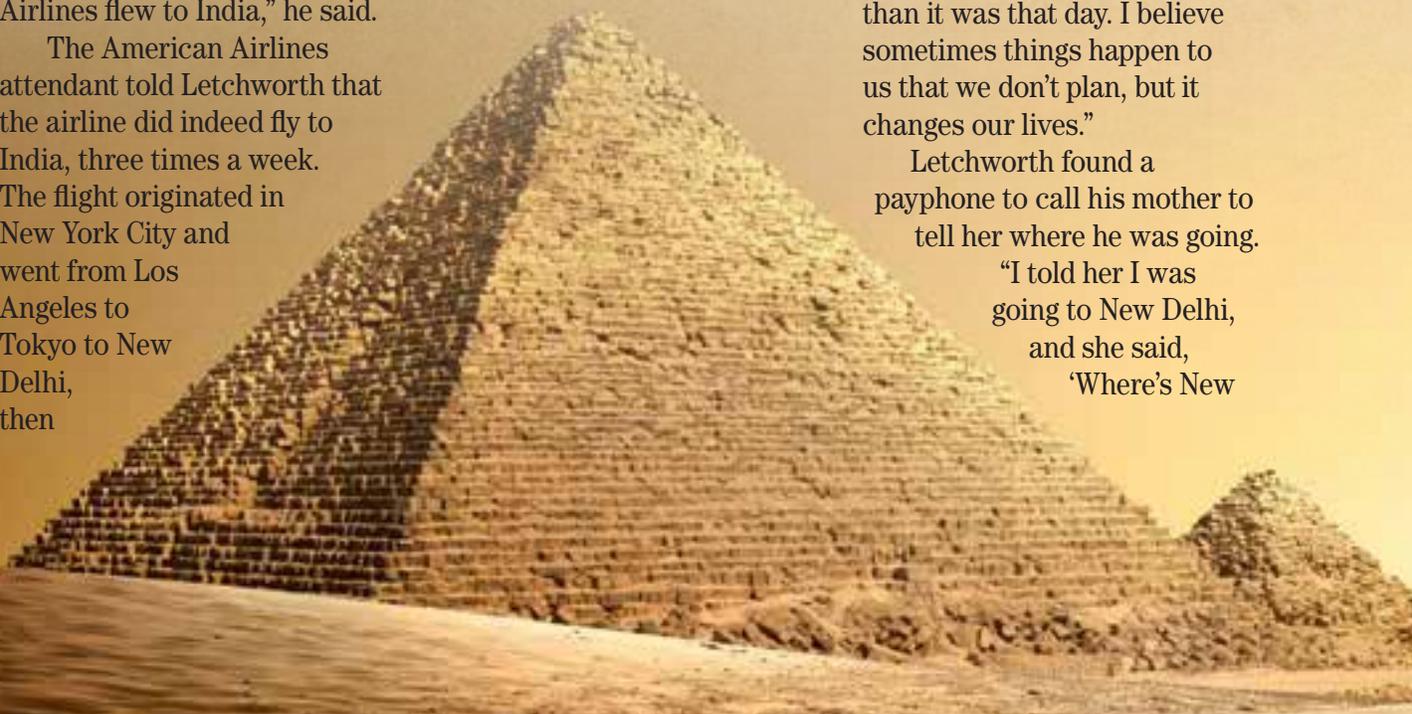
It's not every day that fate intervenes in our lives. But on that day, it did for Dwight Letchworth. He asked the attendant if they had any seats available, and the attendant told him yes – one.

Since Letchworth had stayed with his friend before heading toward the airport, he already had a bag packed, and for reasons he can't explain, he had brought his passport.

"The hair on the back of my neck started to stand up again: it was a spiritual thing," Letchworth said. "If I had planned the trip, it wouldn't have been any easier than it was that day. I believe sometimes things happen to us that we don't plan, but it changes our lives."

Letchworth found a payphone to call his mother to tell her where he was going.

"I told her I was going to New Delhi, and she said, 'Where's New



Delhi?” He remembered. “I told her in India, and she said, ‘Where’s India?’”

She told him to be careful since the only other time he’d been out of the country was on vacation to Mexico. When he sat down in his seat on the plane, it dawned on Letchworth what a major decision he was making.

“I thought maybe I was making a mistake,” he said.

He cried all the way across the Pacific Ocean to Tokyo, but when the plane landed he wiped away his tears. From Tokyo, he went on to visit New Delhi and many other places.

In his 28 years abroad, Letchworth held many different jobs and met all kinds of people. In Frankfurt, he worked in an elderly care facility, not unlike the Life Care facility he lives in today. At 40 years old, he worked as a nursing assistant and once again easily picked up a new skill. He worked for that company’s facilities in all of their various England locations in Bath, Manchester and London. When he got tired of that, he packed his bags and bought a one-way ticket from London to Cairo.

Letchworth knew when he arrived in Egypt that he would not be able to speak the language.

“They welcomed me with open arms,” he said. “They started teaching me, and I started learning.”

Letchworth picked up the language and began teaching English to the locals.

“In two or three weeks, I was booked solid. I had never taught English before, but I taught myself how to teach English and became rather famous for it.”

Letchworth had a two-bedroom apartment and



converted the second bedroom into office space, where he would give his lessons. He not only taught English to the local Egyptians but also to Japanese students who had come to Egypt with their parents who were working in construction there. Just like with the orchids and nursing, Letchworth quickly picked up the skills needed to do a great job.

While in Egypt, he met some Americans who encouraged him to travel to Kenya and go on a safari.

That is where he met Lord Erskine, a British soldier and administrator who served as a Member of Parliament. His wife invited Letchworth to stay with the couple in Kenya.

“They asked me to stay, and I thought that was a great idea. I could really learn something.”

Letchworth stayed with the couple for a few months before returning to Cairo to teach.

Letchworth returned to the States some years later, after suffering a stroke during an English lesson. Today, you can find him at Hallmark Manor in Federal Way, Washington, where he enjoys telling his many stories of travel and fate. He has the spirit of a true adventurer with a heart for different people and their cultures.

“One of the things my grandmother taught me when I was very young, was that I was born in the image and likeness of God,” Letchworth said. “One of the manifestations of God is love, which meant I was love. That helped me a lot. I had no animosity toward anybody, and I loved everybody I met. That got me on the right side of everything.”

Indeed, it did. 🙏



Photo by David Smith



The Circle of Life Care

JUDY SLAGLE

By Piper Evans

She's a natural caregiver, has a sharp mind and is a significant part of Life Care history in the quaint town of Rutledge, Tennessee.

Judy Slagle was born and raised in Rutledge. Coincidentally, she grew up just two miles away from where Ridgeview Terrace of Life Care is now. While growing up on a farm, Slagle was an only child who spent most of her time with her grandmother, who she treasured and called Mamaw. Her grandmother taught her everything, including the importance of caring for others.

Slagle attended high school in Rutledge, and upon graduation, she put in an application to work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. She was hired and even went through the background check but rejected the offer.

"Something told me that wasn't the direction that I needed to go," recalled Slagle. "If I had

taken the job, I wouldn't have met my husband."

Slagle started working at Standard Knit Mill, instead. She worked beside a lady who told Slagle that she needed to meet her friend Jake. Unfortunately, Slagle worked day shift, and Jake worked third shift. However, their paths eventually crossed. As fate would take its course, one day Jake was leaving from work as Slagle was coming into work, and they finally met. Little did she know, this friend of a friend would become her forever sweetheart of nearly 54 years.

Jake and Slagle had an adventurous marriage that involved traveling, volunteering together and raising two children: Michael, who they nicknamed Mikey, and Janeene. Mikey served as a state trooper; sadly, he lost his life in an accident five years ago.

Jake worked for the highway department and devoted his time to the community. He volunteered



for the rescue squad and was a truck driver for 25 years. His job as a truck driver took him around the country. Slagle was sometimes able to accompany him, and together, they traveled everywhere from Oklahoma to New York.

A scary, almost tragic event happened on one occasion when Slagle took a trip with her husband up north.

"One time we traveled to Pennsylvania, and while we were away, Janeene was home playing in the yard," said Slagle.



“She didn’t know that there was poisonous fertilizer in the yard, and the toxin had gone through her pores. It was rare and dangerous, and they didn’t think she would pull through. By the time they got in contact with me, she was already better. I believe that her being fine was a miracle of God.”

One day, Slagle received a different sort of phone call from a friend.

“Come down here right now,” the friend demanded. “They are taking in applications

these years, not so much,” laughed Slagle.

She was hired as a certified nursing assistant; before the facility opened its doors, it was her job to make all of the beds.

“Back then the sheets were flat, not fitted,” recalled Slagle. “It took a long time to make the beds up.”

Another unique first for Slagle is that her husband, Jake, while volunteering with the rescue squad, transported the very first patient to Ridgeview Terrace in 1978.

often went on calls with Jake when an emergency occurred.

“He would drive the truck, and I would help the patients in the back,” remembered Slagle.

Eventually Slagle was promoted to a restorative nursing therapy management position. She was the person who treated residents after therapy to make sure they kept moving and kept up with essential information. Back then, bed lifts had not been invented yet, so Slagle had to physically lift each resident out of his or her bed. She also had to write everything down about the resident by hand. It was before the age of computers; she had to use pen and paper as her tools to store information.

Slagle’s memory held a deep sea of data, which was important in a nursing management position. She knew almost every detail about her residents and their equipment. She kept up with charts and wheelchair counts and was quick to answer questions whenever asked.

“At meetings, she knew off the top of her head how many wheelchairs were accounted for,” said Lisa Cabbage, the activities coordinator. “She knew tedious information like the weight of a resident and how to adjust the wheelchair for them. You could ask her anything and she would know it.”

Slagle’s caring heart poured out through her career at Ridgeview Terrace. One Christmas, she decided she

“He would drive the truck, and I would help the patients in the back,” remembered Slagle.

at the new nursing home facility they are building!”

“But I’m not cleaned up,” argued Slagle. “I’m in my shorts!”

Her friend would not let up until she came down to apply.

“So I just went and applied in my shorts,” laughed Slagle. “They hired me right then.”

Slagle began her career at Ridgeview Terrace of Life Care two weeks before the facility opened.

“Back then, the facility seemed so big, but after all

Slagle worked as a certified nursing assistant at the facility for 11 years and then moved into a management position. She had a sharp mind, was a fast learner and eventually proved to be one of the best caregivers the facility has ever had.

Slagle’s caring nature extended past her job at Ridgeview Terrace. She recalls a time before ambulances or 9-1-1 were in her county, when the rescue squad did everything. Slagle and Janeene



wanted every resident to feel extra special. She went out on her own time and purchased a teddy bear or stuffed animal for each resident, to give them as a Christmas present. She had help from her co-workers and managed to make sure everyone had a present. That year, Slagle won a facility customer service award because of her compassionate spirit.

Slagle also respected all of her residents and became like family to them. She recalls one of her favorite residents from years ago.

“She was so sweet and hilarious,” shared Slagle. “She was very dear to my heart.”

As the holidays approached that year, Slagle invited the resident to her home for Christmas dinner. The resident did not have family, and Slagle saw fit that she spend Christmas with her family.

“She was a part of the family,” said Slagle.

Over the years, the Ridgeview Terrace staff and Slagle’s family became intertwined. Slagle and her daughter sometimes babysat some of the staff’s children, and

Janeene also worked with her mother at Ridgeview Terrace on and off for 10 years.

Slagle formed an especially tight bond with one of the nursing directors, Connie McNulty, who became like a daughter to her. Today, Slagle even claims McNulty’s children as her grandchildren.

After 31 years of dedication to Ridgeview Terrace, Slagle decided to make it her personal home. Slagle is still like family to the staff and residents and claims she has the best room in the place. She said she would never live anywhere else.

While living at the facility, Slagle enjoys many hobbies. She loves to watch Animal Planet and play bingo, but coloring is her favorite activity. She claims that coloring just lets her “get lost.”

“She will be so focused on coloring, and my husband and I will come in and stand for about five minutes,” said Janeene. “She will not know we are in the room because of how focused she is.”

One of Slagle’s favorite coloring books is one that McNulty gave her of the Psalms.

“As long as you color, you keep your mind busy,” said Slagle.

Slagle also has an interesting solar-powered bobblehead collection in her window. The figures dance until the sun goes down. Her daughter and son-in-law buy them for her and change them out when the seasons change.

One bobblehead in particular is very dear to Slagle’s heart. Her husband passed away two years ago, after almost 54 years of marriage. Soon after, a nurse at Ridgeview Terrace bought Slagle a bobblehead that reminded her of Jake and Slagle: it depicts a boy and girl kissing.

Looking back, Slagle says she was called to be a caregiver and help people. She has always loved the elderly and caring for them. Caring is important to her; it’s a value she believes was instilled in her as a little girl by her grandmother. Caregiving is a true calling for Slagle, and she says she would not trade her Ridgeview Terrace of Life Care experience for anything. 🧑🏻‍🎨



Photo by Jack Schulz Photography

A Life of

World-Class Service

• THOMAS SMITH •

By Marab Whitaker

The year is 1946. Thirteen-year-old Thomas “Tommy” Smith wakes up at 3 a.m. to get ready for the day. His business, Tommy’s Pastry Products, delivers wholesale bakery products between the hours of 4 and 8 a.m. to local restaurants. After he delivers the goods, Smith heads to school. When school is done for the day, he will continue making sales until 7 p.m. to various grocery stores that have heard about his amazing products. The next day, he will get up and repeat the process.

Smith’s life has been marked by hard work, dedication, passion and success – even at an early age.

Smith was born on Aug. 31, 1933, on the outskirts of Phoenix. He lived with his mother, father and three siblings – his eldest sister, Selena, his older brother, William Bradley, and his youngest sister, Bertha. His father was the perfect picture of success for Smith, having paid cash for their house and consistently providing for their family. Smith’s father started White Sewing Machine

Company, located in downtown Phoenix, when Smith was 6 years old. Shortly after starting the business, his father was diagnosed with tuberculosis, making him unable to do much physical labor. He told Smith that he was going to teach him how to run the family business and take care of sewing machines.

“My dad wanted to be sure that my mom had income for the rest of her life,” said Smith. “He wanted to be sure his family was taken care of.”

Smith began training at the age of 8, so when his father passed away when Smith was 13, he was well prepared to take over the family business. The next summer, Smith and his mother visited his uncle’s dairy farm in Coopersville, Michigan, and he made \$600 rebuilding the farm’s harvesting equipment. He used the money he earned to buy a truck, which enabled him to make deliveries for the new business he started, Tommy’s Pastry Products, which delivered wholesale bakery products, such as pies and donuts, to 12 different restaurants in the Phoenix area.



One of the restaurants had two bus lines, Trailways and Greyhound, that he also provided for. Some of the restaurant workers had family members who had grocery stores that also wanted his products, so he started delivering in the afternoons too. At one point, one restaurant was taking in \$150 of product a week – a nice amount in 1946.

Smith was the sole employee of the company, and though he had to sell the business a year and a half after starting because he was taking on too many hours, he was able to use the money to do nice things for his family.



For example, he was able to pay for one of his sisters to get ready for her first prom. He took her to the department store to get a dress and “fixed up,” and a couple of hundred dollars later, she was able to “meet the world.” Smith also purchased a house – in full with cash – at the age of 19.

That house is where he was standing when the love of his life, Elsie, laid eyes on him for the first time.

Smith’s sister, who went to school with Elsie’s sister, told him that Elsie had fallen into a rose bush watching him paint the house. Elsie’s dad was reluctant to let Smith court Elsie at first, but when he

found out Smith paid for the house at 19 and could provide for Elsie, he let the two start dating, which led to marriage.

“I didn’t know when I would be married, but God told me that he was going to get a lady for me,” said Smith. “And now we have been married 64 years.”

The marriage began on an interesting note because of Smith’s service in the Korean War. In 1952, right before the 4th of July, he and Elsie were planning on getting married since Elsie was about to turn 16. However, the draft took him overseas to Korea three days before the marriage was to take place. He came home on leave to get married and have a honeymoon during the Christmas holidays, and he was supposed to have several days with Elsie before going back. However, as they checked into the hotel for their honeymoon, his leave was cancelled and he was called back to active duty.

Smith’s service during the Korean War was like everything else in his life – full of accomplishment. After completing basic training, he was assigned a position as a baker and served meals to men working night shift in the war. While serving a meal, he overheard a conversation between two men who said

they were having trouble with pumps at a station. Smith told them he was unsure if he could solve the problem, but he would try if given the chance. The next morning, he was taken to the pump station, figured out what was wrong and got the pumps working.

That evening, Smith was assigned a new position as a temporary sergeant. His next task was to help put lighting around the new plane runways on military bases in South Korea, and due to Smith’s hard work, the three-year project only took one year. His 23 months of service were recognized when he received a special thank-you ribbon from the South Korean government for his efforts. Only 30 of those ribbons have ever been made. Due to his service, Smith now has a special, pre-paid reservation in the U.S. National Cemetery in Phoenix for himself and Elsie.

Smith’s time after the war was spent doing what he loved to do – helping others and doing whatever he could to provide a good life for his family. He started out helping his neighbor, Clayton Davis, with his bakery routes for a few months so Davis could take time off to visit his sickly father. He then did more electrical work and later wound



Photo by Jack Schulz Photography



up working on locomotives, rebuilding the units of the batteries.

“I did things a lot of other people wouldn’t do, because that is what my dad taught me to do – to take responsibility,” said Smith.

Smith’s brother-in-law was looking for an electrician for a new company that worked on taking copper out of the ground and turning it into copper plates to make various items. Smith worked for six years on the project, helping

Upon retiring in 1995, Smith represented 38,000 employees of the public building sector of general services administration, and was identified as being the No. 1 employee. He received multiple plaques for his accomplishments and a thank-you note from President Bill Clinton.

“God put before me different things to do in life that enabled me to help people along the way,” said Smith. “I am still doing that. If someone

Smith has now been at Life Care Center of North Glendale, Arizona, for almost two years and is still going out of his way to help others.

“You need to always keep your ears and eyes open,” Smith said. “If you can help somebody, do it. If someone is down, you can always cheer them up a little bit. It might change someone’s life – you never know.”

Thomas Smith has lived a fulfilled life. From running successful businesses to

“God put before me different things to do in life that enabled me to help people along the way.”

the company develop in the copper industry, and now the company is worldwide. After a brief stint in California with a sugar company, he then went back to electrician work, taking care of electrical motors for the government and putting in security systems for armories in Los Angeles. As the 1984 Olympics were approaching, he was asked to develop security systems for the Olympics, and before he finished with that, he was asked to set up communications for the Olympics.

needs help, I want to change their attitude about life.”

Amidst his many successful endeavors and accomplishments, Smith will tell you that his success is defined by his favorite accomplishment – his children. He has two boys – Thomas Smith Jr. and James Charles Smith – four grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. Smith stated that he sees the success of his family continuing to spill onto his grandchildren, and he is happy God is using his family in such amazing ways.

being awarded a ribbon by the South Korean government, from running security for the Olympics to being recognized for his work ethic by President Clinton, his accomplishments are outstanding. However, despite all of the accolades, his heart is for serving others. People who carry that mindset – people like Thomas Smith – are the ones who change not just the world as a whole, but the worlds of individuals. People like Thomas Smith make an everlasting impact. 🙏



Photo by Jillian Pancini

Diamonds



ARE A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND

By Dara Carroll

On Monday, July 12, 1943, the Sox sent a rookie pitcher to the mound in the first half of a day/night doubleheader. The fresh-faced teenager lost the game, but cemented a place in baseball history.

Her name was Ruth Born, and she wasn't playing for *those* Sox. She was pitching for Indiana's South Bend Blue Sox, one of four teams in the inaugural season of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, a league popularized by Tom Hanks' 1992 movie "A League of Their Own."

The league was the brainchild of Chicago Cubs owner and chewing gum

magnate Philip Wrigley. With America engaged in World War II, baseball executives

RUTH BORN



were concerned that Major League Baseball would be suspended because so many

fans and players – including greats like Ted Williams and Joe DiMaggio – were

being drafted and serving overseas. At the same time, the men and women supporting the war effort on the home front were working harder and longer hours. They needed entertainment and a way to take their minds off the war.

Wrigley's answer was to start a professional girls' league, playing a hybrid of baseball and softball. Softball was one of the most popular sports in America at the time, so he sent scouts around the nation and up into Canada,

searching for standout female softball players to try out for his new league.

Bay City, Michigan-native Ruth Born was one of the lucky recruits. Born on Aug. 8, 1925, to Henry and Lily, Born began playing softball as soon as she was old enough to swing a bat. She also loved to help her father, a produce farmer. Her hours on the farm soon paid off on the diamond.

“The farm work really built up my arms,” she mused. “I worked hard and had a lot of muscles from lifting squash, celery and radishes all day long.”

Born’s father decided she needed a sturdy backstop to practice pitching at home. He thought his fishing shanty would be a great target, but soon second-guessed himself: his hard-throwing daughter developed a fastball that smashed the floor of his shanty into smithereens.

“Dad was good-natured about it,” said Born. “He was just surprised!”

In the years that followed, Born found opportunities to play softball wherever she

could. One of her proudest moments is the memory of leading her team at Riegel Elementary School to win the city playground championship four straight years. She also started playing for the local Moose Club when she was



just 13, which was quite an honor because she played on a men’s team. With her on the mound, the team won the Inter-City championship for three straight years.

In 1943, Born spotted an advertisement about the upstart girls’ league and

wrote to the league office for more information. She was offered a tryout and earned a place on the South Bend Blue Sox – one of only 60 roster spots in the entire league that year. She took a train to Indiana and joined the team midway through the season, which had started in May. She couldn’t join the team earlier because she and her older sister, Christine, were needed on the farm.

“I was only 17 years old, so my mother had to sign for me to play,” said Born.

An underhand hurler, like all of the AAGPBL pitchers in the league’s early years, Born says her pitching style was simple, but effective: “We didn’t use the windmill back then, but I still had a good fastball and a changeup that really broke their backs.”

Life with the Blue Sox was a far cry from life on the farm.

Born and her teammates practiced or played seven days a week. The pay was good – about \$75 a week – but the girls had to follow strict rules to uphold the “all-American” image the league wanted to put forth.

Players attended Charm School, which was quite an

education for Born and other girls from rural backgrounds. Their charm school guide covered everything from beauty routines to clothes to etiquette.

Additionally, the league's Rules of Conduct ensured the girls acted with grace both on and off the field. Failure to follow the rules meant stiff fines.

Players were prohibited from smoking, drinking and wearing shorts or pants in public. Their hair was to be shoulder-length or longer; shorter hair had to be in curls. Off the field, modest makeup was always required, and each girl was to have her own AAGPBL beauty kit available to her at all times.

Team uniforms also perpetuated the all-American girl image, featuring short-sleeved, pastel-colored dresses with flared skirts and contrasting belts, knee-high socks and ball caps.

The short skirts were impractical. They often got in the way when pitchers like Born did their wind-ups, and sliding into bases usually resulted in nasty strawberries. But to Wrigley and other league executives, image was everything.

"They were selling a product,"

explained Racine Belles second baseman Sophie Kurys. "They wanted us to be feminine and (at the same time) play like Joe DiMaggio."

The 1943 season started Memorial Day weekend, and the early games were sloppy, as the girls got used to the new league rules and playing with new teammates. However, by the time Born joined the Blue

Sox in July, excitement over the league was booming.

"At first, (the fans) came out of curiosity," explained Born's teammate Dottie Schroeder. "But when they saw how good we were, they were hooked."

Newspapers around the country started promoting the



“Queens of Swat” and “Belles of the Ball Game.”

Born and her teammates stayed with host families in South Bend and became local celebrities.

“There were always a lot of people there to watch us and cheer us on,” said Born. “Our fans included Major League players, who we got to know. They came to our games, and I went to their games.”

It was an amazing experience, but Born felt overwhelmed.

“I was in over my head,” she explained. “I realized I was out of my league, and I wanted to continue my education.”

When the season ended in September, Born decided to hang up her cleats. Hoping to join the Women Airforce Service Pilots, she earned her pilot’s license, but at just

“Our fans included Major League players, who we got to know. They came to our games, and I went to their games.”

over 5’3”, she was deemed too short, so in 1945, she enrolled at Valparaiso

University to study psychiatric social work. She became one of the first professional athletes to ever attend Valparaiso. While there, she played intramurals

and even pitched for the Valpo men’s summer league softball team, a feat that was a rare accomplishment for a girl of any age.

“I was a bit of a novelty,” she said. “But they needed a pitcher!”

After graduating with a degree in social work in 1947, Born spent several years, pitching for the Valpo Queens, a fast-pitch women’s softball team. She led them to back-to-back Indiana state runner-up finishes in 1951 and 1952 and helped them reach the Amateur Softball Association Championship playoffs in her first seven years with the team.

Eventually, Born moved to Chicago and attended Loyola University. After completing her master’s degree, she stayed in the area and spent the next 25 years working for the federal government in child welfare.

“I did whatever needed to be done for families and children,” she said. “I helped people who needed money, and, at times, I had to take people to mental facilities. When I retired, I was in charge of child welfare over a six-state area.”

Although Born’s job was demanding, she still found time to travel



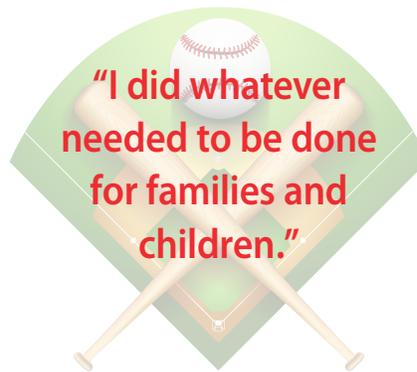
and stay involved in her community, joining a league of women voters and serving on several Lutheran boards.

Of course, she had time for sports, too. She enjoyed playing basketball, tennis, volleyball and, especially, golf. On June 9, 1973, she experienced her greatest moment on the links: she shot a hole-in-one. It's an accomplishment she still takes great pride in!

In her lone season with the AAGPBL, Born posted a 4 – 5 record and a respectable 3.59 ERA. It was enough to etch her name in history. The AAGPBL lasted 10 more years and opened countless doors for women in sports. The league is honored with a permanent exhibit at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, listing the name of every girl who broke barriers and played in the inaugural 1943 season, including Born.

Today, Born lives at Life Care Center of Valparaiso, Indiana. In addition to her recognition in Cooperstown, she has also been inducted into the Valparaiso University and Bay City halls of fame.

Ironically, during an exhibition game in 1931, another female teenage pitcher named Jackie Mitchell struck out future Yankee hall-of-famers Babe Ruth and



Lou Gehrig in a single inning. It was an incredible feat for anyone, yet alone a young girl, but a few short days later, baseball commissioner Kenesaw Mountain Landis banned women from professional baseball, saying it was “too strenuous” for them.

An embarrassed Ruth chimed in: “I don’t know what’s going to happen if they begin to let women in baseball. Of course, they will never make good. Why? Because they are too delicate. It would kill them to play ball every day.”

Less than 15 years later, Ruth Born and her teammates took the field and became the girls of summer. They proved that girls do have elite athletic skills and the stamina to perform at the top levels of any sport. Ruth Born showed us what we’ve always known: diamonds really are a girl’s best friend. 🍷



AN AMERICAN AIRMAN

By Heidi Pino



Photo by David England Photography

ROBERT FRIEND

Short-term resident

Today, men and women of all races and colors can serve together in the military, and for many young people, the thought that America's armed forces were once segregated is a foreign one.

Yet, such was the case during World War I and World War II.

Part of the change and acceptance of comrades-in-arms may very well be due to the famous and valiant Tuskegee Airmen, men of color who served their country in the skies and helped America see that, black or white, each soldier and pilot contributed to our country's greatness.

Lake Forest Nursing Center in Lake Forest, California, was privileged to be a temporary home for one of these brave men, Robert Friend, in spring 2018 as he spent some time at the facility doing rehabilitation.

Born on Feb. 29, 1920, in Columbus, South Carolina, Friend was the son of an Army sniper trainer. His family moved to New York City not long after his birth. As African Americans, he and his brother had an early taste of diversity growing up in a Jewish neighborhood. In a television interview from 2012, Friend recalled that they were the only blacks in his school but that he didn't find that unusual.

Friend was destined to challenge racial attitudes.

Graduating high school in 1938, Friend went to college at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. While he majored in physics, he also took up an interest in flight, due in part to reading glamorous accounts of flying in magazines. He took his academic classes during the day and flying classes at night, along with four other young men.

"My first flight was in a Piper Cub," Friend remembered. "It was a great experience. I enjoyed the beauty of things from those higher altitudes."

America had started encouraging young people to learn how to fly after Charles Lindbergh returned from Europe with reports that the continent was mobilizing. Several colleges, including Lincoln, became part of a Civilian Pilot Training program developed as a result.

Friend earned his pilot's license in 1939, which is a story in itself. Because his instructors were black and not authorized to license new pilots, Friend had to fly to New Jersey to meet with a white pilot to achieve his credentials.

As World War II began, Friend tried to join the military but was not allowed because he had to have at least two years of college. When he was ready to start his third year, he was finally able to enlist. He was told to report

to the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama.

At the time, through a government and civilian contract, Tuskegee was the designated location for a new program of training "non-whites" to fly in battle. The military called it "the experiment."

Friend trained there for eight months, living on campus. On the ground, he and his fellow trainees studied aerodynamics and meteorology, and for firsthand experience, they headed to nearby Morton Field, a grassy area since the school didn't have an actual airstrip.

"The experience was great in the fact that I was learning how to fly," Friend said. "How they did it by separating us from the white pilots wasn't a great idea based on the fact we ended up flying with our white counterparts for our country."





Photo by David England Photography



UPON ARRIVING IN ITALY, FRIEND WAS FIRST ASSIGNED TO FLY COVER FOR SHIP CONVOYS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, CHECKING FOR ENEMY SUBMARINES.

After graduating in Class SE-43-K, Friend went to Selfridge Air National Guard Base in Detroit, where he practiced in P-39s, the aircraft he started off in when he went to Europe in early 1944 with the 332nd Fighter Group of Tuskegee Airmen.

"I was anxious and excited," Friend said of his feelings when he shipped out.

Upon arriving in Italy, Friend was first assigned to fly cover for ship convoys in the Mediterranean, checking for enemy submarines. Because he was not in the Navy, however, he wasn't allowed to shoot enemy ships, only to report them to the Navy.

Things soon got more dangerous. Friend's first mission was a fighter's sweep in North Italy, where he and several other pilots were looking for opportune targets. Suddenly, seemingly out of nowhere, German aircraft appeared and started shooting at them. Friend quickly started

maneuvers and successfully dodged the bullets.

"You learn that fast," Friend said in a July 2015 interview for the San Diego Air and Space Museum.

Friend's Red Tails, named as such because the Tuskegee Airmen had painted the tails of their planes red for easy identification, were often assigned to escort bombers to their withdrawal point. As the war went on, these pilots learned to respect and appreciate the Red Tails looking out for them. The bombers would fly relatively low, and sometimes German aircraft would try to attack them. That's when the Red Tails would swoop down from even higher up and try to shoot down the enemy. Many bombers were able to reach their targets and make headway in the war thanks to the work of these valiant men.

"Most of our assignments were routine since we stayed in position to protect the bombers," said Friend. "However, when the target was considered of high military value, the enemy would concentrate their efforts on protecting them more closely."

Friend and his compatriots started out flying P-39s but also flew P-47 aircraft in 1944. Things changed quickly, however, when the P-51 Mustang airplane was developed.

The 332nd was entrusted with these new, faster, more fuel-efficient, more maneuverable and longer-range aircraft for carrying out their missions. Friend's first flight in a P-51 took place on July 4, 1944. It took him and the other pilots some practice to get used to the faster torque, but soon, they were using the planes to zigzag above the bombers and excel at their missions. The P-51's superiority has often been credited with helping the Allies win the war.

When they weren't flying, the 332nd Fighter Group was stationed in Ramitelli, Italy. Friend and his fellow Tuskegee Airmen lived in tents, four men to a tent.

Friend remembers a time they had company and shared the story with Sharon Allman, activity director at Lake Forest Nursing Center.

"The weather was so bad that the bombers had to land and share tents with [Friend and his comrades]," Allman said. "The bombers were shocked

when they saw the all-black squadron and inquired where the pilots were. After getting over the initial shock, some of them preferred to sleep in their planes, and others shared tents with the squadron. When [Friend's] tent pal had to leave, he turned and looked at Bob and said, 'I have learned a lesson I'll never forget – your cooks are better than ours.' Bob thought this was so funny and interesting and realized his temporary tent pal didn't care about the color of his skin at all."

In his 2012 TV interview, Friend shared some of his thoughts on this colorblindness.

"There's nothing in this world like a common purpose to bring people together," Friend said. "Americans are Americans. Not African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Indian-Americans or anything that needs to qualify it."

The Tuskegee Airmen certainly proved that race has nothing to do with talent. They received more than 150 Distinguished Flying Crosses for their victories and services for the Allies and helped to win the war.

Friend remembers engaging enemy fighters about seven times.

"I shot two down on one of our first missions, and I didn't see either one of them hit the ground, but I saw the pilots come out," Friend recalled in his 2015 interview.

At another time, Friend had to parachute from his plane and convince the locals that he was not German.

Thankfully, Friend was never injured.

After the Germans' surrender, Friend flew one last reconnaissance mission to Germany to make sure the enemy knew the war was over.

Friend spent a little time in Germany, and in his 2015 interview, he talked about meeting a German woman.

"She said, 'I'm sure glad you all did it because we couldn't.' She was talking about getting rid of Hitler," Friend said.

By the end of the war, Friend had flown 142 missions and had risen to the rank of operations officer. In that role, he not only flew missions but also discussed mission information and plans.

Friend remembers being sad to have to turn in his airplane when he prepared to return to the States. Flying had gotten in his blood.

It's no surprise that even after World War II, Friend stayed in the Air Force,



serving a total of 30 years. His next assignment was at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in special weapons development, and it was at the base's college hospital administration office that he met his wife, Anna.

During Friend's years in the Air Force, he served as assistant deputy of launch vehicles, foreign technology program director and director of the Unidentified Aerial Phenomena program. He also served in the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Friend eventually ended up in Irvine, California. He has eight children.

After completing his rehabilitation at Lake Forest Nursing Center, he went to live with his daughter Karen Crumlich.

Today, he looks back with pride in what he and his fellow Red Tails accomplished and at the country they were able to help build for new generations. Although prejudice unfortunately still exists, America is no longer a country of segregation. As Friend might put it, it's a country of Americans. 🇺🇸





Photo by Vick Larney

icing on the Cake

By Deanna Disbro

RUBY CAGLE

Ruby Cagle sits cheerfully next to a window in her home at Life Care Center of Hixson, Tennessee, surrounded by framed mementos and historical keepsakes from Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. After suffering a stroke, Cagle has difficulty communicating, but these treasures tell of her adventurous life and the brilliance stored inside her amazing mind.

Bombing of Pearl Harbor

Cagle was born and raised in Maine, where she spent the first 16 years of her life with her parents. Her father, a mechanic, journeyed to Pearl Harbor to work on the base in 1940, leaving Cagle and her mother in Maine. On Dec. 7, 1941, Japan launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, killing more than 2,400 Americans and injuring an additional 1,000. The next day, Congress approved President Franklin D. Roosevelt's declaration of war on Japan, and



the United States entered into World War II.

The attack on Pearl Harbor caused significant damage to the U.S. Pacific Fleet, completely destroying the USS Arizona and USS Utah. Civilians and military alike worked to repair the ships and clean up the devastating carnage left in the wake of the attack.

Nearly a year after the attack, Cagle and her mother left their home in Maine and sailed to Pearl Harbor to join her father. Years later, the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* published portions of Cagle's journal entries of her dangerous journey to the island in the midst of war.

"We were being chased," Cagle wrote. "Our ship zigzagged back and forth for days to lose the sub. Women were told to put on life jackets and stand by to be lowered into small lifeboats if we were struck by enemy fire. The water was a long way down from the upper deck. I could picture sharks running around our boat."

Hawaiian Life

Fortunately, Cagle and her mother arrived safely to Pearl Harbor, only to be greeted by a paradise clouded with fear. Citizens were required to carry a gas mask with them anywhere they went in case of another attack. Cagle would lie in bed at night listening for sirens announcing an air raid and the need to move to a bomb shelter. Despite the constant threat, she found ways to enjoy her new home. Her son, Ben, recounted Cagle's memories of riding motorbikes through the pineapple fields with friends, learning to surf

and living an exciting life for a teenager in the midst of war.

"I loved it," said Cagle. "I loved it. I loved Hawaii."

Not long after arriving in Hawaii, Cagle applied for a job as a secretary. She was given an important message as part of her application process and told to recount it in detail the next day. When she recalled the message verbatim, she was hired as a confidential secretary for Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Pacific Fleet and Area Allied air, land and sea forces during World War II. Because of her exceptional memory, Cagle served as a verbal courier for Nimitz. At that time, there was great fear of espionage and the interception of messages. So Cagle would verbally relay messages to various military personnel. She was also the only person allowed to get Nimitz' mail, which was often classified documents.

As his secretary, Cagle was the gatekeeper for Nimitz. When dignitaries came to Pearl Harbor, his office was the first they visited, and Cagle was responsible for greeting and scheduling meetings for them. In her time working for Nimitz, Cagle met Eleanor Roosevelt, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Bob

Hope and many others. When Winston Churchill barged into the office with his entourage one day, 17-year-old Cagle had to stop him from walking directly into Nimitz' office.



*"I loved it," said Cagle.
"I loved it. I loved Hawaii."*



"Excuse me, Sir," she stated. "You'll have to take a seat. He's on the phone with the president."

Cagle's parents eventually divorced, and she and her mother began living in barracks that at times could get rowdy, making it difficult for them to sleep. She told her mother that she would be speaking with

Admiral Nimitz about their situation. Her mother protested, saying, "No, don't do that! He's running a war!" But it didn't stop Cagle.

Ben recounted the conversation his mother had with Nimitz: "So she goes in the next day and says, 'Admiral Nimitz, I'd like to talk to you, please.' So he goes, 'Yeah? What is it, little lady?'"

Ben said Nimitz got up and walked around his desk so he could sit in front of Cagle and make her feel more comfortable. She told him about the problems she and her mother were experiencing in the barracks. They were moved into a nicer home the very next day by orders of Nimitz.

Cagle's mother worked driving a truck on the island. One day she came home excited to tell Cagle about a nice young mechanic she worked with named

Berton Cagle.

"She just thought my dad hung the moon," recalled Ben. Soon, Cagle thought the same thing. She and Berton would ride around the island together on his motorbike on their days off. They fell in love and were married in October of 1945, a month after the Japanese surrendered.



Back to Tennessee

Cagle, her mother and Berton moved back to Berton’s hometown of Jasper, Tennessee. Cagle’s mother lived in a house next door, and Ben described the two as inseparable.

“We were really close together,” shared Cagle.

Cagle’s adventurous life continued in Tennessee with raising three sons, working for the Tennessee Volunteer Army Ammunition Plant in Chattanooga and supporting her husband’s career. Berton ran a free ambulance service

in Marion County for years, owned a mechanic shop, and was the first fire chief in Jasper – and the longest-serving constable in Tennessee history. He also worked as a criminal investigator in Marion County and assisted the FBI and Secret Service on many cases. Ben recounted that people trusted his father and would open up about what they knew in regard to crimes taking place in their town. The family received multiple threatening phone calls throughout Berton’s time fighting crime. While she was nervous about the possible ramifications of his career, Cagle believed in her husband and the work he was doing.

Berton passed away in 2008, and a few years later, Cagle suffered a stroke during surgery. She now resides at Life Care Center of Hixson, where she is visited often by her family, as well as individuals paying tribute

to her service during World War II. In 2016, the *Chattanooga Times Free Press* published an extensive article on Cagle, entitled “Living in wartime: Marion County woman recalls her life at Pearl Harbor during WWII.”

Then, on June 1, 2018, Cagle was honored by hospice and Lt. Gen. Rick Ellis, who presented Cagle with a certificate for her time serving in Pearl Harbor. She also recently received a Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition from Congressman Chuck Fleischmann “in recognition of outstanding and invaluable service to the community.”

Cagle has lived a life of devotion to her country and loving dedication to her family. Over the years, she often recited a mantra to her children that encompassed how she approached life with gratitude and a sense of adventure: “After Pearl Harbor, everything else is icing on the cake.” 🧁



A GENTLEMAN'S GUIDE



★ TO DANCING THE AMERICAN DREAM ★

• LEONARDO SCOLOMEIRA •

By Zackery Dean

Jitterbug dancing requires skill, grace and a touch of flare. For Leonardo Scolomeira, nothing comes more naturally than a little spring in his step and grace in his movements. After all, what would you expect from the 1938 South Shore Jitterbug champion?

Scolomeira, better known to family and friends as “Dapper Dan,” was born on May 14, 1920, in Quincy, Massachusetts. One of 10 children, Scolomeira was left to his own creativity to find a way to stand out and make an impact. For him, that meant jitterbug dancing, entrepreneurship, Swarovski crystal and hot dogs.

Growing up in the 1920s, Scolomeira is part of a unique generation that embodied what many view as the “American Dream.” Having lived through the Great Depression, three major wars and countless other significant moments in our nation’s history, this generation constantly strived to better themselves and their families by working harder each day and risking it all to make a way for a more rewarding life.

Scolomeira started work as a grave digger in Princeton, Massachusetts, after dropping out of school in the eighth grade. During the height of the Great Depression, working instead of going to school was necessary to take care of his family. This was the start of Scolomeira’s lifelong commitment to taking care of those around him. From there, he completed an apprenticeship to become a cabinet maker but found an amazing opportunity that would take him across the country instead. By signing up to dig wells with the Conservation Corps, he had the opportunity to travel to Wyoming and experience a different way of life.

After his return from Wyoming, Scolomeira cut stone for a monument business, which was an extremely risky move; most stonemasons died before they reached their 50s due to

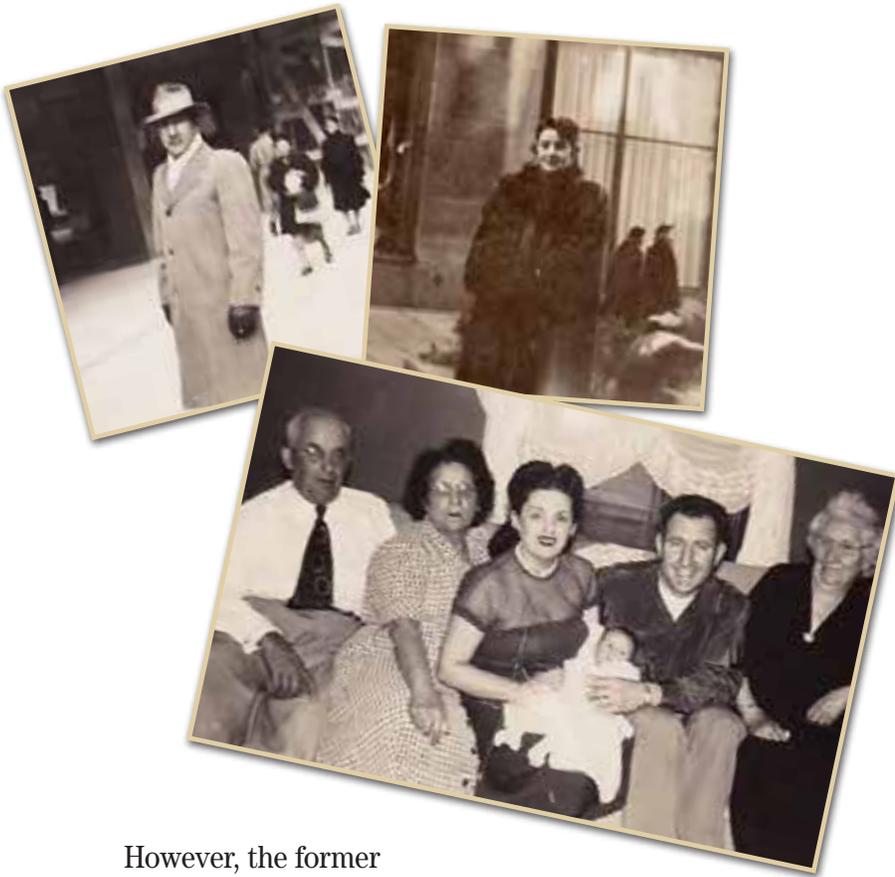
inhalation of small, almost imperceptible stone fragments.

During the height of World War II, Scolomeira shifted his focus, working in the Boston Shipyard and manufacturing chains that kept enemy submarines out of the harbor. But in the late 1940s, when he was out dancing, Scolomeira’s focus shifted once again.

Darlene Gerard was out dancing with a friend on a night that Scolomeira happened to be in the same club. Once he spotted her across the room, Scolomeira instantly knew he had to ask her for a dance.

“You might as well step on my feet like the rest of the men here do, then,” replied Darlene sarcastically, assuming that Scolomeira had no clue how to dance.

Photo by LeClerc Photography



However, the former jitterbug champion had a few tricks up his sleeve.

After a few spins around the room, Scolomeira gracefully ended his dance with Darlene. Getting her phone number from a friend, he left knowing that Darlene would turn into someone special.

He called Darlene and set up a date. His friends bet him \$10 that she would stand him up, so Scolomeira accepted the bet and drove to meet Darlene. He lost \$10 that night when she never showed.

After a few days, Scolomeira called Darlene to ask why she stood him up and to, of course, inform her of the lost bet.

“Bet them \$20 this time, and I’ll be there,” said Darlene.

Scolomeira couldn’t resist the bet, and a few days later,

he won back double his money after a successful dinner date with Darlene. On their second date, Darlene was introduced to Scolomeira’s family, to whom he said, “Mom, this is the woman I’m going to marry.”

Darlene rolled her eyes and dismissed his prediction, but he was right. In 1950, Darlene Gerard became Darlene Scolomeira, and so began the couple’s years of adventures.

Scolomeira opened a diner in Plymouth, Massachusetts, while Darlene worked at a beauty shop. The two, along with their three children, began to make a living for themselves. But the adventures were far from over.

After a sudden loss of business in the 1960s forced Scolomeira to close down the diner, he worked in the shoe

business and courier service throughout New England until Darlene came home from a visit with her sister in 1962 with a radical idea.

“We’re moving to California,” Darlene informed Scolomeira.

Always doing what he could to give his wife her way, he packed the family up and traveled across the country. While in California, Scolomeira and Darlene decided to take a risk, purchase an RV and travel the country selling jewelry made with Swarovski crystals. The venture was a success, and the couple traveled to 45 states over the span of 15 years. Eventually, Darlene grew weary of traveling, so the couple decided to retire back in Massachusetts. However, Dapper Dan wasn’t quite finished with his entrepreneurship.

Scolomeira was tipped off to the selling of a mobile hot dog stand in Plymouth. Never shying away from a new opportunity, he bought the stand and placed it at the corner of 128th and 58th streets. For almost a decade, Scolomeira sold hot dogs from his stand and quickly found himself a staple in the community. He was known for his generosity along with his delicious food, often giving full meals away to those who couldn’t afford them. People came to know him as a true gentleman, always going out of his way to help others.

Scolomeira remained in the hot dog selling business until Darlene became increasingly ill as a result of Alzheimer's disease. Even though he was struggling with his own personal health issues, he put everything else aside to take care of his beloved wife. When he could no longer take care of her and she went to stay at a nursing facility, he drove to see her every day, making sure to take time to sit and talk to his wife. Darlene's passing in October of 2011 only furthered his desire to form strong relationships with others and be the most outgoing version of himself he could be.

"Women do so much for men that they don't have to, just because," Scolomeira emphasizes. "They deserve so much respect for everything they do, and they don't get that enough. They deserve to be treated like queens."

Aside from Red Sox baseball and dancing, Scolomeira insists there's only one thing that brings him true happiness.

"Happiness to me is helping other people. It's seeing other people happy and putting a smile on their faces. That's what makes me happy," Scolomeira says.

Scolomeira puts his love for making others happy to good use at Life Care Center of Raynham, Massachusetts. An active member of the Resident

Council and a friend to all, he quickly made himself irreplaceable at the facility. Whenever the facility hosts a dinner, he is called on to make a toast, and without hesitation he accepts the invitation every time. He can be found frequently at the spa or dancing with others any place he can. His love for people extends far beyond his close friends.

"I just love it here," says Scolomeira. "Everyone is so nice, and I love getting to know every person who comes into the building. I just want everyone to feel loved, to know they're loved and valued."

And so, with grace, composure and a bit of an adventurous spirit, Leonardo Scolomeira has truly shown those around him how to dance the American Dream, one exciting day at a time. 🐾



Photo by LeClerc Photography



A Pearl IN AMERICA

PERLITA AQUINO

By Heidi Pino

Pearls signify beauty. They are stunning reminders of the rewards of overcoming challenges in life. They are also valuable.

It is fitting, then, that Perlita Aquino received that name from her parents, meaning “little pearl.” Even more fitting, perhaps, since pearls come from the ocean.

Aquino wasn't born in the landlocked state of Kansas, where she now resides at Life Care Center of Wichita. Her heritage is from a very different land, the Philippines.

On Feb. 23, 1948, Aquino was born in a small home in Manila with the help of a midwife. Her parents, Pedro and Jobita, had grown up in different provinces of the Philippines and met in that city, married and started a family.

At the time of Aquino's birth, her father was in law school, and when he graduated, he became a criminal justice

lawyer. The family, which then included seven daughters, moved to Quezon City, northeast of Manila. The family grew even larger, with another daughter, Eileen, born into the family after the move.

Aquino had a happy childhood and upbringing. She loved school, especially math, and became a star student. She enjoyed reading and preferred to read rather than go outside and play, though she didn't neglect her household responsibilities of collecting the family's chickens' eggs after doing her homework. She also fed the pigs and cleaned up after them.

Owning a car was expensive, and the traffic in the area was dangerous, so the family often traveled by foot or bus. The only catch to that was that with such a large family, the Aquinos had to get to the bus stop early so that everyone could find a seat.

One place the family liked to go was Manila Bay, where they would play in the water and enjoy watching the sunsets.

Aquino remembers being close to not only her siblings and parents but also her maternal grandparents (sadly, Pedro lost both his parents to cholera when he was only 9). Their grandfather made the girls their own mancala set to play with, and their grandmother would often come over and help their mother cook. The kids were shooed out of the kitchen while the women were fixing the food, which included traditional Filipino dishes like pork adobo.

As Aquino got older, she also learned to cook. She enjoyed home economics classes in high school and would use recipes from her mother's hometown.

High school was fun for Aquino, and her natural aptitude for math shone through.

Aquino had a happy childhood and upbringing. She loved school, especially math, and became a star student.

1974: Perlita on her way to the US from the Philippines



Her teacher even had her help other students with the subject. She was a well-rounded student, however, and also enjoyed being active and playing sports like volleyball, ping pong and badminton.

“Perlita was always there for me, and that is very important,” said her youngest sister, Eileen. “When I was in elementary and high school, I considered her my second teacher. She tried her best to help me through my homework assignments. I admire that she was very patient with me. Even though there came times when tears were in my eyes and I wanted to give up, she would encourage me to go on and tell me that I would get it in time.”

In the Philippines, high schools and colleges were often the same buildings, which was the case with Aquino’s school. While her oldest sister went to a Catholic university, Aquino and her other sisters all attended Far Eastern University, even though it cost

“Perlita was always there for me, and that is very important,” said her youngest sister, Eileen.

a lot of money for the family. Education was important to them, a value that Aquino continues to hold on to today.

Aquino decided to pursue a degree in chemical engineering as she started college in 1966. The studies were rigorous, and Aquino stayed focused and learned all she could. This didn’t mean, however, that she didn’t have time to go on dates to Manila Bay or go to the movies from time to time.

Graduation opened the doors for Aquino to a fascinating career. Her first job was for the Philippine Public Works Hydrology, serving as a lab aide and taking samples of water and collecting data.

Meanwhile, one of Aquino’s sisters, Elizabeth, had immigrated to the United States, to Kansas City. She was a nurse and had married a man in the Air Force who served out of McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita. Elizabeth started the visa process for her parents to also move to the United States.

It was a long process. Five years later, in 1974, Pedro and Jobita packed up and moved to their new country. They got jobs working for Cessna Aircraft Company, with Pedro becoming a sheet metal assembler.

The “land of opportunity” also called to Aquino, and she followed her parents in November of the same year, leaving her friends and her boyfriend behind.

Aquino remembers wearing light layers onto the plane and then being very cold disembarking. There was even snow, which Aquino had never seen before!

With Aquino’s experience and ability to speak English, she landed a job as a laboratory aide for the Red Cross.

During that time, Aquino adapted to life in the U.S. and learned to appreciate her new surroundings. The weather was colder, and the culture was different, but there was much to enjoy, including taking Kentucky Fried Chicken along to the lake in Augusta, Kansas, for picnics! Four years after her move, she officially became a U.S. citizen.

1975 Wichita, KS



In front of the Arkansas River

When Aquino was asked what she likes about America, she said, "Everything is perfect."

When Aquino was asked what she likes about America, she said, "Everything is perfect."

Moving to America meant some changes, but Aquino has never set aside her culture and has kept many traditions and values. She lived with her parents for several years after her move, and eventually all the Aquino sisters moved to America. Aquino and her siblings drove their parents to work each day since their mom and dad never learned to drive.

Aquino's Catholic faith also connected her with like-minded new friends and opportunities. She enjoyed attending mass at different churches throughout the area.

One of Aquino's friends shared a job opportunity with her at Koch Industries, a large corporation that deals in a variety of industries, including chemical-related ones. Aquino

applied for a job and was hired quickly. Soon she was analyzing data for the company on a computer.

Koch was not the only big company Aquino worked for during her career. She also worked as a chemical engineer for Mobil Oil at its refinery in Augusta. At that time, she moved out of her parents' house and got an apartment.

Even though she was living on her own, Aquino stayed close to her family and would take trips around the country with her sisters. She especially enjoyed their visit to Washington, D.C., where they got to tour the White House, and trips to Florida, where she got to go to the beach.

Aquino eventually decided to take a break from engineering and worked as a waitress at a Chinese restaurant for a while, and it was during this time that trials came. She developed breast cancer in 2008, though with the support of her family and friends and her faith, she is now a cancer survivor.

Unfortunately, cancer was not the only disease to hit Aquino. She suffered a stroke in 2012 and was no longer able to live on her own.



Aquino moved in to Life Care Center of Wichita that year, and her sister Eileen thanks God that she has found a good home for Aquino.

"Perlita is special to me," said Eileen. "I appreciate her so much. She is one of a kind."

Eileen and several sisters visit Aquino frequently, and though the stroke has impacted her life, she is still able to enjoy a lot of activities, including attending mass, painting, doing crossword puzzles and playing bingo.

"She enjoys many projects and is always willing to participate in activities," said Natalie Merten, director of rehab services at the building. "Perlita is a joyful presence in our facility."

That, indeed, is what a pearl is, and as Perlita Aquino looks back on her life experiences, they shine forth like these precious and beautiful gems, drawn from the ocean. 🌊





Photo by David Smith

Bracing for IMPACT

• BOB BURLESON •

By Ryan Faricelli

Bob Burleson was born on March 1, 1935, to a poor sharecropper and his wife in rural North Carolina. The Burleson family was large, with eight children, though three passed away young. They were a loving family that always supported one another, and this humble beginning, combined with Burleson becoming a devout Christian when he was 14 years old, started Burleson down a path toward making a difference through kindness and faith.

When Burleson was a young teenager, they moved over the mountain to Johnson City, Tennessee. He didn't date much, since he had no car and no money. During Burleson's senior year of high school, however, he met Dimple, the young lady who would eventually become his wife of nearly 60 years.

"I'd like to say I loved her from the very start," Burleson shared with a devilish laugh. "But I didn't. I didn't like her at all."

Dimple was flirtatious and became close friends with Burleson's sister, so she was at his house quite a bit. Dimple liked

Burleson right away, but he didn't care for her.

Burleson's faith was central to his life, and his social life revolved around church activities. Dimple attended the same church. Being around her so much showed Burleson what a great girl she really was, and she eventually won him over.

The two fell in love and got engaged. After initially scheduling their wedding for April 1957, the young couple became impatient and moved the date up. Then they did it again. They kept moving the date sooner and sooner until they finally decided they couldn't wait any longer. They set the final date for Dec. 21, 1956, but it almost didn't happen.

The night before their wedding, Burleson's father had serious surgery. Supported by his faith in God, Burleson stayed the entire night with his father. The morning of the wedding, Burleson's father insisted the wedding go on, so with his father's blessing, Burleson married Dimple later that afternoon.

"She was my Christmas present," said Burleson, proudly.



Burleson briefly attended a trade school for electronics before deciding he didn't like it and returned to Johnson City. After working a job mixing mud for a stonemason for the summer, a friend pointed Burleson to Fillauer Surgical Supply. He took a job in the orthopedics division, working with orthotics and prosthetics.

"I jumped at it when I got there," Burleson recalled. "It was \$1 an hour, and I was trained very well by [owner] Carlton Fillauer, who was a very nice man. I stayed there building braces and artificial limbs. It was unique, it was different, and it looked to me like it was a good chance."

After a stint in New Mexico working for another prosthetic and orthopedic company,

Burleson was offered a position at the Fillauer plant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. After some time there, Burleson left Fillauer and opened his own business in 1965.

“My wife and I had always wanted our own business,” Burleson explained. “I already had a good relationship with a lot of doctors, so we did quite well from the start. Everyone laughed at me because we didn’t have any money. ... I worked for three or four years, day and night, because I couldn’t afford help.”

Dimple assisted Burleson around the office and with fitting braces and artificial limbs on female patients. Many long nights were spent in the workshop to ensure their success.



Eventually, the Burlesons purchased another small business of the same kind and renamed the entire company Southeastern Orthotics and Prosthetics. During this exciting time, their family began to grow, and soon Burleson and Dimple had five daughters.

“[Dimple] worked along with me and took care of the family,” said Burleson. “I don’t know how she did it. My wife was great with [the girls]. She was a good mom and wife.”

Burleson’s youngest daughter, Amy Moses, remembered her father’s devotion to his family, adding, “He would work all day. Then, he’d come home and help Mom give us a bath because he said that was the highlight of the day for him.”

“He always saw the good side of people and was very forgiving.”

The success of the business eventually allowed the Burlesons to hire help. John Gilbreath was just a teenager when he moved to Chattanooga and began working for Burleson.

“I was fortunate to hire a very fine young fellow who was referred to me by an old boss of mine from Fillauer,” Burleson recalled. “When he came in I thought, he’s just a kid! But he was an unusual kid. He was honest to the core, eager to learn.”

Burleson and Gilbreath developed a wonderful working relationship. They often adjusted an artificial limb for an impoverished mountain man who would try to pay his bill in dead possums. On one occasion, Gilbreath caught him

stealing a bar of soap from the workbench. Instead of drawing attention to the theft, Burleson told Gilbreath to put a second bar out for him to take, as well.

“I had some people say I had more patience than anybody they ever saw,” Burleson said about working with patients. He quickly laughed and added, “Some people took a lot of patience!”

“I never heard him raise his voice or use a swear word in 24 years,” Gilbreath said of his mentor. “He always saw the good side of people and was very forgiving. He felt that was what the good Lord wanted. He was a model Christian.”

Burleson’s faith influenced his entire life, even how he ran his business. He always made sure Gilbreath received all the training he needed to be successful, including putting him through college. When times were difficult in the mid-1990s, he took money from his own retirement funds to avoid having to lay off his staff. Another time, one of his employees survived a deadly car accident. Burleson stayed at the hospital with the young man all night after the accident and helped counsel him as he recovered. He also served children’s hospitals and childhood birth defect clinics.

“The entire time I worked for him, I don’t think that he ever sent anyone to collections,” Gilbreath shared. “If someone couldn’t pay the bill, [he believed] the

company would make up for it somewhere else. He just forgave it. That was the kind of guy he is.”



In 1991, Burleson and Dimple decided to branch out from the church they had attended for many years and partner with about eight others to form the Briarwood Baptist Church. Located just outside Chattanooga in Ringgold, Georgia, the church began in a tiny house but quickly outgrew the space. First, they moved the church into a single-wide trailer, and then to a double-wide trailer. Soon, they built a permanent building. The thriving church is still in existence today.

“My dad gave me a really great representation of a father, particularly my heavenly Father, because he has always been a godly man,” Burleson’s daughter Lisa Hunt said. “I’ve really been able to understand how the Lord loves me because of how my dad loves the Lord. We all have things that rock our faith, but not Daddy. He stands strong. He’s very solid in his devotion and prayer. That’s his anchor, and it always has been.”

In addition to his faith, family was incredibly important to Burleson. He and Dimple

built a large home in Ringgold to house their entire family. The open floor plan made it so everyone was always together.

“They are the parents everyone wishes they had,” Moses said. “Our house was always the house everybody went to.”

With five daughters, Burleson was noticeably outnumbered, and as his family grew, so did the ranks against him. Today, in addition to his five daughters, he has nine granddaughters and one great-granddaughter.



“All those girls, how do you stand it?” Burleson joked. “I just loved them and took care of them, and they were good to me. I could talk girl talk as good as anybody. I had four sisters, so I knew a little bit about it already. I find that there’s something sort of special about a daughter and her father.”

In 1999, Burleson retired. In making plans for the future of his business, he looked no further than Gilbreath.

“He turned out to be the best employee I ever had,” Burleson bragged. “In fact, I sold the business to him! He’s

almost ready to retire now, which tells you how old I am. He was a good friend.”

After enjoying retirement for a few years, Dimple became ill.

“Mom was very sick for her last 10 years,” said Moses. “[Dad] took care of her. He was the sole caretaker for much of that time. There wasn’t anything he wouldn’t do for her. He was so patient, and he was so loving. He never complained. He never begrudged any of it, and he would do it all over again in a heartbeat.”

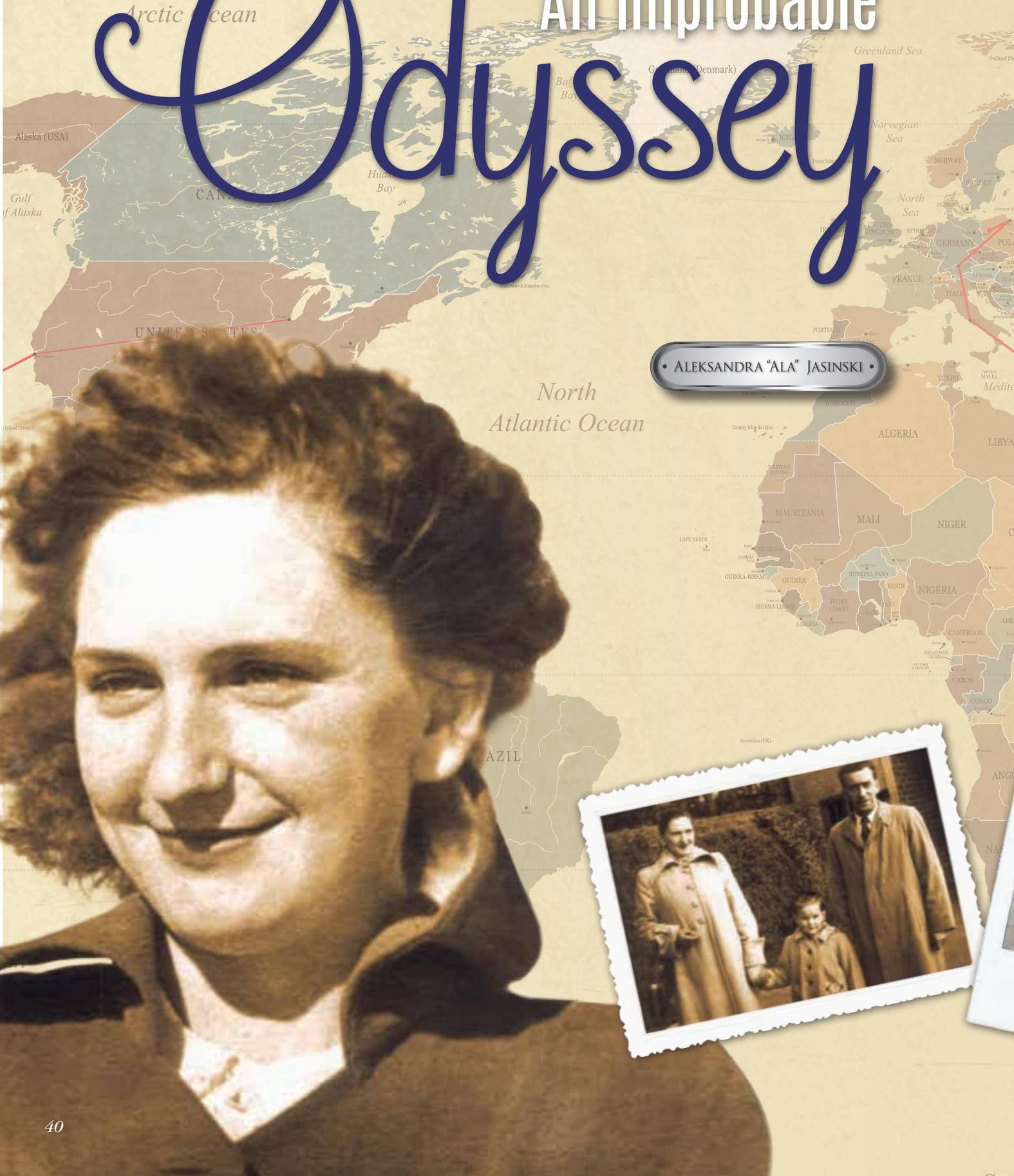
“I sure do miss her,” shared Burleson. “When she died, it was like someone had cut off my right arm.”

Today, Burleson resides at Life Care Center of Ooltewah, Tennessee. One of his granddaughters lives in the house he and Dimple built, and he is delighted that it continues to be a blessing to his family. At Life Care, he is still serving others, tending to the library and sitting as chairman of the Resident Council.

“They came from so little,” Moses said of her parents. “They always said that the Lord blessed them abundantly so that they could give to others. Daddy’s always been that solid, steady anchor. They broke the mold when they made my daddy. He’s truly phenomenal.” 🙌

Odysey

An Improbable



• ALEKSANDRA "ALA" JASINSKI •

By Hannah Buckingham

Aleksandra “Ala” Jasinski’s story defies all odds. It is woven together by fateful encounters, bravery and the tenacity and triumph of the human spirit.

Jasinski was born in Leszno, Poland, in 1927, during an era known as the Second Polish Republic. The country had gained its independence following World War I, and was experiencing slow but steady economic growth. Jasinski’s father, Marcin, was a physician serving in the Polish military. Marcin’s wife, Agnes, was also a physician but died in a car accident when Jasinski was just 7. Her father remarried a woman named Anna, who raised and cared for Jasinski and her siblings.

Jasinski had an older brother named Lech and a younger sister named Wanda. Jasinski and Lech were often mischievous, while their sister was a tattletale. The trio had a special bond nonetheless.

Every summer, Jasinski and her siblings spent time on their grandparents’ estate outside of the city. Her grandfather raised Arabian horses there, and Jasinski treasured these carefree moments with her family.

Arctic Ocean

Indian Ocean



Photo by Ashley Nicole

Jasinski's father emphasized the importance of education and encouraged his children to pursue their dreams. Lech attended boarding school in his early teens where he befriended a young man named Karol. The two boys decided that they were going to run away to America and mine for gold. Before they could carry out their plan, they were intercepted by Marcin, scolded and sent back to school.

On Sept. 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. The Polish Army was defeated within a matter of weeks. Nazis systematically arrested or executed citizens of Poland, including many members of Jasinski's family.

Shortly after the invasion, Nazi soldiers arrived at Jasinski's house in Leszno and ordered the family to vacate the premises immediately. They gathered what they could while the Nazis burned Marcin's medical books, even though he had studied at a German university.

"He said, 'You're burning your own books,' but the Nazis didn't care," said George, Jasinski's son.

Marcin was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp while serving in the Polish Army. The Nazis transported Jasinski, her stepmother and her siblings by train to Inowroclaw, a city in north-central Poland. Lech was eventually sent to Germany to work in a forced labor camp,

along with other able-bodied young men.

Before the war, Jasinski had been a Polish Girl Scout. Frustrated by their Nazi oppressors, many Girl Scouts, including Jasinski, became involved in the Polish resistance movement. Jasinski became a courier and delivered secret messages between partisan groups.

She was eventually caught and arrested by the Gestapo in 1942. Jasinski had just turned 15. She was sentenced to Stutthof, a concentration camp in northern Poland. Meanwhile, Lech had been caught writing anti-Hitler graffiti on a fence while laboring on a farm in Germany and was sent to Auschwitz, the largest concentration camp established by the Nazi regime.

Contagious diseases, overcrowding, starvation and mass killings made survival at Auschwitz nearly impossible. Lech died in 1942. He was only 17 years old.

Word of Lech's death eventually reached Jasinski's family. Desperate to save her daughter from the same fate, Anna gathered the family's valuables and offered them to Nazi officials, in hopes of winning Jasinski's freedom. They took the items, but refused to let her out.

When she was first imprisoned, Jasinski was placed in huge barracks with bare cement floors. Prisoners slept on hay and potato sacks. They were constantly hungry and forced to stand at attention for hours at a time, usually beginning around 4 a.m.

For breakfast, prisoners were given a bit of lukewarm or cold water and a small piece of bread made out of acorns and flour. They spent most of the day sweeping the barracks and cleaning the toilets. Then, prisoners received some watered-down soup and a small



piece of a potato. Their day would end with a small amount of hot water and a stale piece of bread.

Eventually, Jasinski was sent to work in the rock quarries. She was forced into grueling labor for up to 12 hours a day. The meager food rations remained the same. Many of her fellow inmates died from weakness and hunger.

“She was one of the lucky ones,” said Anna, Jasinski’s daughter. “She survived.”

In January 1945, Stutthof prisoners were forced to evacuate and march toward the interior of the Nazi regime. The winter was especially harsh that year, and the prisoners did not have shoes or coats. Many of Jasinski’s fellow prisoners did not survive the march. The remaining captives were taken to a BMW airplane engine factory in Bavaria for forced labor.

Fortunately, the factory was liberated by American soldiers in May 1945. Jasinski was left severely emaciated.

One day, a young hospital administrator working for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration noticed Jasinski waiting in line for her food rations. As fate would have it, the young man was Karol, Lech’s friend from boarding school. He recognized her and introduced himself.

Karol was instrumental in nursing Jasinski back to health. He made sure she

was immediately seen by the hospital staff and given proper nutrition to help her regain her strength. Without Karol’s help, it is likely that Jasinski would not have survived. Karol and Jasinski started dating and fell in love. The couple married two years later.

For the next five years, Jasinski and Karol were moved throughout Germany and Italy from one refugee camp to the next. They were hopeful that a country would eventually allow them to stay. Finally, Australia accepted them. British ships were transporting refugees to Australia from a port in Italy, so the couple made their way there. After they arrived, they had to wait six months to leave because an outbreak of typhus had occurred at the refugee camp, and they were all placed under quarantine.

Finally, the couple arrived in Adelaide, Australia, only to be told that they had to stay in another refugee camp for another year-and-a-half. Karol attended engineering school during the day, while Jasinski worked nights scrubbing floors. It was during this time that their daughter, Anna, was born.

Though the couple enjoyed their time in Australia, they felt it was far from the rest of the world. Karol had a cousin who lived in Chicago, and he contacted her about the possibility of moving to the States. She helped sponsor the young family, and in 1956, they immigrated to Chicago.

“The journey from Australia to the United States was interesting,” laughed Anna. “I was a small child then, but you had these propeller planes that took a very long time. You would spend several days island hopping. We were in New Zealand, New Guinea, the Fiji Islands, Canton Islands, the Hawaiian Islands and then finally San Francisco.”



After living with Karol's cousin for a few weeks, the couple moved into their own apartment. A year-and-a-half later their son, George, was born.

When George was 9 and Anna was 16, Karol suffered a heart attack and died. Though tragedy had struck once again, Jasinski remained resilient.

"My mom had to become the head of the family and tried to take care of us with a widow's pension and whatever else she could do," said George.

"She led by example," shared Anna.

Jasinski worked various jobs from retail to restaurants, and did whatever she could to support her children.

A few years later, Jasinski reconnected with Karol's best friend, Feliks. They had met in a refugee camp, and Feliks was now living in Ontario, Canada. The two were married in 1974, and Jasinski and her son moved to Canada.

Despite the hardships they had faced, Feliks and Jasinski were extremely happy and felt as if they had a new lease on life.

"It was beautiful there," recalled George. "Summers were beautiful, but the winters were harsh. It was really cold, but so beautiful, and an idyllic time."

Jasinski was always known for her quick wit, fantastic cooking and elaborate dinner parties. Anna and



George have many fond memories of their mother and Feliks befriending other expatriates and inviting them over for dinner.

"Our house was always filled with people who my parents had befriended," shared Anna. "Many had the same post-war, refugee background, and many of them had also lost their families. Mom and Dad created an environment where everybody could come together, and we would call these people 'Aunt' and 'Uncle' and treat them as if they were our family."

In 1998, Feliks suffered a fatal heart attack. Jasinski remained in Canada for another five years, but since she was getting older and both of her children now lived in the United States, she decided to move to Elkhorn, Nebraska, to be closer to her son.

Today, Jasinski calls Life Care Center of Elkhorn home. Her son and daughter-in-law frequently visit her, as do her grandchildren and Anna, who travels from Boston.



Jasinski's story of survival is truly a miracle. Even in periods of darkness and sorrow, she persevered.

Both her children are grateful to have been raised under her tenacity and positive resolve.

"No matter how bad times were or what kinds of bad things were happening to you, she would always say, 'It's bad, but it's not as terrible as what I went through, and I survived it, so you can too,'" shared George. 🙏

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

What would *you* do? There were three of us heading down busy Interstate 75 toward Atlanta late on a Saturday evening when darkness descended, and the headlights on the car went out. A predicament? You bet. Here's the backstory.

My wife, Lola, and I were part of a pulpit committee that had called a young preacher – Dr. Marvin Gibson – from Texas to be the new pastor for First Baptist Church here in Cleveland, Tennessee. He and his wife, Jane, had been to the church-owned pastorium to settle in, and he had returned to Texas to close out some obligations there.

He was flying in to Atlanta that Saturday night, arriving about 11 o'clock, and would preach his first sermon as pastor the next morning. Jane, Lola and I were to be at the airport to pick him up.

We were in a Buick automobile purchased from Cletus Benton, owner of Benton Pontiac-Buick dealership in Cleveland. When the lights went out, about 8:45 p.m., we pulled off at a Dalton, Georgia, exit and into a service-station area, hoping to get it fixed. Instead, we discovered the alternator had failed, and the station didn't have one in stock.



Perhaps, I thought, Benton would know the Buick dealer in Dalton, could call him and ask if he would allow us to have a loaner vehicle. Instead, when Benton answered the phone (by then about 9 p.m.), he asked where we were, and said, "I'll be right there."

Upon arrival, he handed me the keys to his station wagon, told us to go ahead to Atlanta, and advised that he would drive my car to Cleveland, have it fixed, and it would be ready on Monday.

"But Cletus," I said, "the lights are not working."

"Oh, I'll get a charge on the battery, and that ought to be enough to get me home," he replied. It turned out, that didn't help, and he drove my car 30 miles to Cleveland in the dark.

Is it any wonder that as long as Cletus Benton was alive I bought new cars from him? That incident occurred

in 1973, and it remains one of the most powerful examples of customer service I have ever experienced.

Benton had a number of businesses in Cleveland, including the town's first Holiday Inn (which, at that time, was ranked among the top 10 Holiday Inns worldwide), the Star Vue Drive-In Theatre, Shoney's restaurant, Burger Chef, Cinema Theaters and Baskin-Robbins.

He could have asked any of his approximately 600 employees to help us, but he chose to do it himself.

People matter, and a measure of Life Care's success is how we build relationships. Customer service is the foundation of all that we do in our business.

During the 2017 annual management meeting, we honored eight division winners for doing *Whatever It Takes And Then Some* – associates who set the standard for serving.

For the 2018 meeting, we will choose more practitioners of the art of customer service. They are the people who show us how others should be treated. 🙏

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beecher Hunter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

BEECHER HUNTER
President



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