

A small tribute to a "giant" human being

Richard
Anderskin
Editor
Mount Vernon
Signal

A tribute to a friend.
In approximately 1974 a very big eighth grader arrived at Mt. Vernon Elementary School.
His family had been in Israel as missionaries for many years before returning to the states.
His father was originally from Mt. Vernon and decided to bring his family home to Rockcastle County to finish raising his three children, but also to continue the Lord's work.

Todd Fields' family founded cliffrock retreat a christian retreat in the Pongo area of Rockcastle County. Todd, who was a missionary, along with his wife, Lynnette, in Honduras was murdered Friday in Guatemala by a group of bandits, as he was taking American high school students on a retreat.

I have many fond memories of the big guy, because he and I went in the same class and we hit it off immediately.

Todd quickly became a friend of just about everyone he came in contact with.

When push came to shove the big guy always stood his ground, but Todd had a heart of gold.

That is obvious by the 13 years that he and his wife devoted to the mission field. Before that they were in the Peace Corp.

Todd worried about other people and Todd would stand behind you, even if he thought you might be wrong, but he would also offer advice on doing right.

When school started that year, we were getting ready for grade school football and Todd was quickly approached about playing football. After all, who wouldn't want a man the size of Todd on their team.

I'll never forget what Todd told the coach.
Todd had learned to play soccer while in Israel and Todd asked if the coach thought he might be good enough to kick for the team.

The coach at the time just smiled and told Todd that he thought he could do more than that.

Todd went on to be a very good player at Rockcastle County High School and a very good teammate.

who you could always depend on. There are many funny stories about the big guy, but I am going to relate just a couple.

When we were juniors I played end and Todd played tackle.

Todd was concerned about winning, because he was a strong competitor, but he also was afraid he might hurt someone because of his size and strength.

Todd would simply pummel the man in front of him from his tackle position on a running play and then come back to the huddle and question outloud whether we thought the player was hurt.

Some of us, including his future brother-in-law would always say who cares, its football.

Todd would then hammer him again and voice aloud his concern for the man's safety.

So being Todd, the diplomat and the humanitarian, he got where he would tell the lesser evil across from him if they would just lay down, he wouldn't hurt them.

Nine times out of ten it worked.

Todd was our place kicker my senior year and I held for him. We were in a game one night and Todd, who probably wore a size 18 shoe, missed the right part of the ball on an extra point one time, kicking my left hand and breaking my little finger. However the big guy was strong enough that even though my hand was between his foot and the ball, it still sailed through the uprights.

There are many more funny, serious, heart warming stories about Todd, that his family and friends will remember.

Todd gave his life to the work of helping other people and last Friday he gave his life to save other innocent people.

Todd was driving several American high school students to a retreat when bandits in another van pulled up beside him.

Todd tried to run them off the road, but was unable to after they shot him once.

From all indications, Todd realized what was about to take place and pulled off the roadway and navigated his life for the lives of those with him.

Todd was shot through the heart the second time, but the others with him were unharmed. Everyone was robbed - but because of Todd's actions everyone else was left alive.

Todd left two daughters, 10 and 14, and his wife of 20 years behind. He also left other loving family members and friends behind.

I think part of my problem in life has been that I don't look up to a lot of people.

Todd Fields was a person that I always looked up to because of who he was and his actions. He was simply a "Gentle Giant" of a man.

So long big guy.

George Collins, who wants to publicly know only that he lives somewhere on the bank of the Kentucky River between Carrollton, KY and the Head of Rockhouse in Letcher County where, he maintains, the River really starts, called me up on his cell phone last Sunday night.
"The law ain't looking for me that I know of," says George, "but on general principals, I'd just as soon they didn't know exactly where I'm at until I get a chance to buy a fishing license."
"You have till Monday. Your 2002 license don't expire until March First," I told him.
"I know that," said George. "But the last ones I bought expired in December of 1979 and I just keep putting it off. Besides that, it costs less now to license a car than it does to legally catch a bluegill so I'm not in any big hurry to be law-abiding."

I knew that George was calling on a cell phone because that's what it said on the caller ID thing I pay to screen out telemarketers and anybody else who calls me without identifying themselves and letting me decide whether or not I want to talk to them. Generally I don't take calls unless they have a name and number pop up on the caller ID game. Don't bother calling me if you are ashamed of who you are.

Fortunately, I have an answering machine, or voice mail as they call it these days, and George left the following message: "Okay Adams, I'm going to call back in two minutes. I know you are home because it's too cold for you to be outside. If you don't answer when I call back, I will go to my grave cursing you." Click. I took the next call and even though it was as obscure as the first, I had recognized his voice on the previous message.

I called him several names that seriously questioned his ancestry and he replied in turn. That's the way we sacrilegious hillbillies greet when we love and haven't seen each other in awhile and if we ain't in church or a funeral home.

So Collins goes to telling me about catching oodles of channel catfish and sauger at an unnamed spot below a lock on the river and by this time I knew he was far below the mouth of Rockhouse. On the other hand, there are 11 locks on the river over the course of 150 miles so he wasn't giving much away.

"I heard your early garden washed off," George finally said.

I don't remember advertising it in the paper but it is common knowledge that my first planting of the season did not fare well in the mid-March flooding.

"Yep," I said. "I'm gonna have to plant peas and stuff all over again but I'm used to it."

"Not if you come and see me," said George. I pulled up on the bank around this bend in the river last night and there on the sand bar was the purliest patch of peas and lettuce and kale and spinach and mustard and green onions that you ever saw grow and not a weed in it."

"What's that got to do with my garden," I asked?

"Wellllll," he said, "there was this big old order envelope from Parks Seed Company with your address on it fastened to a backer stick and stuck right in the middle of the patch."

Click.
It's heartening to know that the garden I had wash away here on Lowell Branch is thriving well somewhere between the head of Paint Lick and 150 miles downstream toward the mouth of the Kentucky River.

Enjoy George, but don't be calling back unless you're willing to share a mess of peas.

Our Readers Write

Dear Editor,
To whom it may concern about the Adams and Singleton Cemetery.
Someone has been vandalizing that cemetery for the past 6 or 8 years with four wheelers, humans trampling and tearing off flowers, tearing up the

to see this happen, especially 4 wheelers and human beings.

Please let us know who it is.
Thank you,
Gladys F. Higgins
Mt. Vernon, Ky.

Dear Editor,
I hope you will give me the chance to clarify myself. My reasons for being against this war.

First, Bush manufactured the war Iraq had no connection to the 9/11 event and, as you know, none has been established.

Second, I don't respect W Bush because he failed to serve in Vietnam and deserted his Texas Air Guard unit for almost 200 days. When apprehended, he refused to take his flight physical.

But, you brought up ex-president Bush, Sr. He did serve honorably, except when he pulled out of his line bomber he left his wounded gunner and boyhood friend in the seat behind him to ride it down and die.
I served proudly in the U.S. Navy, was present at the failed "Bay of Pigs" landing on Cuba. Back to Cuba in 62 for the missile crisis, also have the Vietnam Expeditionary Medal. I served all around the world, including 26 months in the Mediterranean, Sea. I gave up my youth to preserve our freedom and I do support our men and women in this war.

Thank you kindly Mr. Anderskin.
Jim Norton
Lake Linville

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ramblings...

by perline m. anderskin

It was fun to follow Kentucky basketball through their season this year. After their loss to Louisville, I was despondent for several days but, boy, they bounced back and gave us a lot of fun. It used to be that the children, spouses and grandchildren would gather at our house to watch the important games. It was a zoo. But it was fun. Nowadays, with their various family obligations, there's usually just Jim and I and sometimes Allison, if she can't find absolutely anywhere else to go.

Jim is a person who can sit and watch a game with very little, if any, emotion. Meanwhile I want to dissect every foul called, every play called and generally assure everyone I'm hearing things, usually a long distance, that I'll have only been

consulted I could have done a much better job of 1) calling the foul 2) calling the play or setting the entire system up to being with.

Saturday's loss to Marquette was not as traumatic. We had just heard of the death of Rick's boyhood friend, Todd Fields and that event made me able to put that loss into perspective and really not care.

Rick was shaken badly by the news. He and Todd were good friends who had not interacted a great deal in years mainly because of Todd's and his family's 13-years of service as missionaries in Honduras. But, his memories of Todd are nothing but good and the limited contact I had with him are the same.

Our condolences to the Hammons and Fields family and to his wife, Lynnette and children, Savannah and Sophia.

Take a Walk

Presented by Dr. Kimberly Cornelius

Exercise does help. In a decades-long study of Harvard graduates, it has been shown that people who exercise regularly have less obesity, osteoporosis, hypertension, and a lower death rate.

It does not necessarily help to become obsessed with a certain activity for a few months or years, such as running, and then quit, or go skiing a couple times each winter. To be most useful, exercise does not have to be extremely vigorous, but is most done on a regular basis. Walking is one of the best exercises for this.

Walking has many advantages. It does not require any special equipment other than good shoes, and it does not require any special buildings or fields. It can be done anywhere and can be incorporated into a person's daily activities of getting the mail or going to work. Virtually anyone can do it.

Even in the winter it can be a good exercise. When it is too cold or icy outside, a person can walk in shopping malls, or do volunteer work in hospitals, nursing homes or in community projects. Walking can also be a good starter program for more vigorous sports such as running, swimming or tennis.

Injuries are uncommon with walking and the exercise keeps the bones strong by helping prevent the loss of calcium associated with aging.

Walking does not burn quite as many calories per mile as running, but it still is an excellent way to help reduce your weight. The weight loss and cardiac benefits can be further increased by vigorous arm swinging or carrying small hand weights.

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