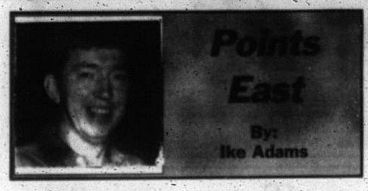


I had been dreading what happened last Saturday morning for nearly a year; not that I knew it would be the exact date of her funeral so much as the fact that, when it happened, I would have to be there. I am not normally much good to myself nor much help to anyone else around funerals.

Last Saturday morning, as the wind whistled through the newborn leaves, freshly dangling on old wild-cherry, ancient elm, and sturdy oak trees in Paint Lick's Manse Cemetery—where the gravestones date back to burials before Kentucky was even recognized as a state— and as a thunderstorm brewed and threatened to blow away the frail funeral home canopy under which we hovered, those of us, who loved her best, planted the remains of Dean Cornett back into the sacred soil of the community she had, for oh so long, called home, and so faithfully served in the process.

Born in Harlan County, Kentucky on Black Mountain on May 18, 1918, Dean was 85 years old. It's a story much too long for the telling in a newspaper column, but she wound up married and settled into Paint Lick in 1941. As a farmer's wife, she raised a family, cared for her kin, and did what you'd expect of a strong woman after her husband died at an early age. But when the kids were grown and on their own, Dean, as we hillbillies say, "cut loose".

She was an early organizer and employee of Community Action Programs in Madison and surrounding counties. She became Chairperson of the Democratic Party in Madison County for a spell. A force to be consulted, if not reckoned with, but always, always a devout advocate for those less fortunate than herself and she made a career of it. I don't know her precise history, but at some point in the late 80's she had to "retire".

Dean's so-called retirement, as best I can tell, lasted several minutes. To be polite, you have to take time out for coffee and cake with those who wish you well and Dean was probably the most polite person I've ever met. But I'd bet that any left-over cake got brought home and delivered to a family that she thought, really needed it.

So right away she hooked up with an extroverted, smart, motivated 8th Grader named Kevin Brown in Paint Lick and before you could say swat or squat , they had founded Friends of Paint Lick, rented a building and set up headquarters straight across the street from the Bank and right beside the Post Office.

Call it instant institution. The goal was, and I am paraphrasing here, to make the community feel proud of itself and set up a system where we could help each other out.

I was enlisted, by a call from Dean, and I'd never previously met her, to visit the building and see if there wasn't something I could do to help out because they needed money and they needed it bad and she knew I worked, at the time, for an organization who could afford to spare some cash and could I come down and talk to her for just a minute or two.

To say that it was love at first sight might be an exaggeration, but by the time I left, after that first meeting, I had swallowed Dean Cornett's hook, line and sinker. I knew that my life had been changed by this tiny little woman who would influence my thinking and my values for the rest of my life.

Beginning in the early 90's, I never let a week go by that I didn't stop in to see Dean at least once a week. Much more often than that we were on the phone. She cajoled me when I was down and out and preached to me when I was receptive to good advice and she always knew which or the other I needed as soon as I opened the door. She became both mother and mentor to me as she did to so many other adult children in town.

In short order she was arranging college classes (for credit mind you) with Eastern Kentucky University and several people in Paint Lick now have more than 60 credit hours. When a class was not large enough to justify the college sending out a professor, she called the University President and, in short order, we had college class being taught in the building. When the President told her that even he could not arrange the class unless she had two more students, Dean talked her granddaughters who were living on campus, to sign up for the course.

In 1990 someone nominated her for the U.S. President's Volunteer Award. She was one of 19 people in the nation to receive the award, but it never made the local news because Dean didn't think she deserved it. On the other hand she didn't know how to give it back without seeming ungrateful. She was later recognized as one of First George Bush's Points of Light which she pointedly refused to accept unless they made the Certificate out to Friends of Paint Lick in which case she would send somebody up to the awards ceremony.

First George's people called back and they reached a compromise with Dean. The Points of Light Award would go to Friends of Paint Lick if Dean showed up at the ceremony to receive it. It took some convincing by us all but, accompanied by her granddaughter, Kristin Stratton and a couple of other friends, Dean made the trip to DC. Come dinner time she was seated at the big table in the banquet hall and found herself elbow-to-elbow with Tony Danza who was starring in a television sitcom at the time and one of the few shows that Dean ever watched on TV. Truth be known, she probably started watching it after she met Tony but he made a big impression on her and I know for a fact that he called her months after the ceremony. I was there when she took the calls and she would just grin and look real happy but not much different than she did when I walked in the door.

She tried to bow out of appearances with CBS Sunday Morning and NBC's today show but they showed up in town anyway and Dean was cordial in suggesting that they talk to somebody else even though they had showed up just to speak with her. But we still made the news and Dean's selflessness only served to make the stories more intense.

Less than a year ago, Parkinson's Disease finally got the best of her and sent her to a nursing home in Richmond , but not before she had accomplished the dream of finding the funds to recruit a doctor, completely renovate the building next door to Friends of Paint Lick and establish an affordable health clinic for uninsured folk in and around Paint Lick.

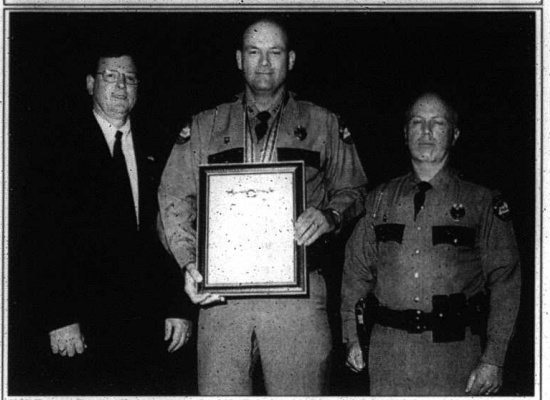
We are a far different community, here in Paint Lick, than we were before Dean made us realize what community and neighborliness is all about and we are far more fortunate than most places with a post office because we have been taught by a master not to just love and care for one another, but to celebrate and rejoice in our communal existence.

Dean Cornett, in the years that I knew her, loved stronger and lived the most selfless, most caring, life of anyone I've ever known. Whatever money she had to spare beyond her sparse needs, she gave away to folks she thought needed it more. Whatever energy, she had at all, she spent on others and her love for mankind was absolutely boundless.

I will miss her terribly, but this, I can tell you for sure; If Dean Cornett is not among the Saints of Heaven tonight, there is no hope to join that realm for anybody else I've ever known. Her funeral was a real celebration of her life. We laughed and rejoiced more than we cried. And I believe with all my heart that as the wind whistled through the leaves of those old trees, and the clouds rolled up that God, Himself, was right there with us, making a statement. It was a funeral that I will remember the rest of my days and one that I'm glad I attended.

Subscribe to the Signal

KSP Trooper Thomas Atkin, center, received his Trooper of the Year-Div. of Executive Services award from KSP Commissioner Patrick N. Simpson, left, and Deputy Commissioner Tim Hazlette, right.



KSP Trooper Darren Allen, center, received his Trooper's Medal award from KSP Commissioner Patrick N. Simpson, left, and Deputy Commissioner Tim Hazlette, right.

Allen awarded Trooper's Medal

The Kentucky State Police has awarded Mount Vernon native Darren Allen the Trooper's Medal. The award is bestowed on Kentucky State Police officers who perform a life-saving act under extraordinary circumstances.

In December of 2000, as a trooper working out of the KSP Richmond post, Allen and two fellow troopers responded to a woman being harassed by her estranged husband in violation of a domestic violence order. Upon arrival, the troopers found the couple locked in a bedroom, the husband kneeling behind the bed and the wife lying on the bed incapacitated. After the husband failed to respond to repeated verbal communications, the troopers made entry to the room and arrested the suspect. Subsequent investigation revealed that the female victim had been physically assaulted in the face and stomach, had been repeatedly choked to the point of unconsciousness and tied with her hands behind her back with duct tape.

"Trooper Allen distinguished himself by actions that helped to prevent the death of a victim," said KSP Commissioner Patrick N. Simpson. "On behalf of the agency, I express sincere gratitude for a job well done."

A seven-year veteran of the Kentucky State Police, Allen is a 1988 graduate of Rockcastle County High School and a 1992 graduate of Eastern Kentucky University.

For KSP Division of Executive Services

Atkin is Trooper of the Year

Mt. Vernon resident, Thomas J. Atkin, has been named "Trooper of the Year" for the Kentucky State Police Division of Executive Services. The honor is awarded annually to the officer who best embodies the highest standards of professionalism and dedication to duty at a post, division or branch.

A 10-year veteran of the Kentucky State Police, Atkin is a 1984 graduate of Knox Central High School and a 1992 graduate of Eastern Kentucky University. He is currently an instructor at the KSP Academy in Frankfort.

"Trooper Atkin distinguished himself on a day-to-day basis during the past year," said KSP Commissioner Patrick N. Simpson. "On behalf of the agency, I express sincere gratitude for a job well done."

Preventing Migraines

Presented by Dr. Kimberly Cornelius

Migraines can be prevented in two different ways. The first is to avoid the foods, stresses, and changes in life that can trigger the headaches. The other is to use a medicine prophylactically to decrease the frequency and severity of the attacks.

Foods that should be avoided include cheeses, red wines, cured meats, pickled foods, alcohol and caffeine. Food additives such as nitrates and monosodium glutamate (MSG) should also be avoided.

Stresses in life, irregular dietary habits, and lack of sleep or even excessive sleep can trigger migraines. A person should strive to maintain a regular routine; meals and sleep patterns should be kept consistent.

Medicines can be very useful in treating migraines. They can be used prophylactically to prevent migraines; or started at the very first sign of a headache to abort the headache. When abortive medicines are used, it is very important to start them immediately at the onset of a migraine.

Prophylactic medicines have been very popular and there are many to choose from. They are usually started if the frequency of the headaches and their effect on your daily life warrant their use.

Propranolol is a blood pressure medicine that is often the first choice. It is safe and can be taken once-a-day. Another category of blood pressure medicines, called the calcium channel blockers, provides useful prophylactic medicines.

There are also several other choices for migraine prophyslaxis. If migraines affect your life, it may be time to discuss it with your doctor.

Their Owners

Our Owners

There is a difference between corporate ownership and cooperative ownership, because we're owned by the people we serve. At a co-op, the people who use the power have the power.

Jackson Energy

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative

Our Readers Write

Dear Editor,

As Mt. Vernon Lions Club president, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Brodhead Lions club president, Keith Smith and secretary, Bobby Proctor and all the members for allowing me to participate in the preparation of the horse show at Brodhead Fair Grounds on Saturday, May 24th.

It was an honor to me as Zone Chairman, to help the Brodhead Lions Club and my community.

Also, for our community, I have been going from business to business in Rockcastle County, asking for donations toward the purchase of eye screening machines for our children. I apologize for asking for extra donations because of the recent horse show and magic show, but this is something that will stay in our community for a lifetime, for our kids and businesses and employees.

If anyone would like to make a donation, please contact me at 606-

(Cont. to A3)

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