



The Way I See it

By
Doug Ponder

As many of you already know, one of our former Rockcastle County High School teachers was killed in a two vehicle accident on Monday night at the intersection of Hwy 461 and Hwy 150 in Mt. Vernon.

Moments before the wreck, I was talking on the phone with the Rockcastle Rockets Head Coach Benny Blanton. This is a weekly routine for me as I call him to get the Rockets stats and get his opinions of the games on their schedule for the following week.

Blanton said that he had just left the RCHS gym and was driving home after the freshman Rockets game. While I was talking to him on the phone, I noticed that he started to become distracted by something. Blanton then proceeded to tell me that he observed a wreck at the intersection of Hwy 461 and Hwy 150. He told me that I probably needed to drive up to the accident as it looked like a serious wreck and something that I could use in the *Signal*.

After hanging up with Coach Blanton, I jumped in my SUV and drove to the wreck. For those of you who know me real well, you know that I am a very optimistic person. So at first, I actually thought the wreck would be nothing more than a typical "fender bender."

As I pulled up to the intersection, I got out of my vehicle and proceeded to the wreck with my camera in hand. My primary goal at wrecks is to take my pictures before any of the towing companies haul off the wrecked vehicles. So I am always on the lookout for Josh Thompson, Marvin Mink, David Mink or Perry Mink to make sure none of them are making any sudden movements at a wreck scene. If I find all of them standing still and idle, then I know that I have some extra time to get all the pictures I need.

While taking my pictures Monday night, I still was not aware that Rick Barnett was driving the white Hyundai Sonata and that he was the one who was killed in the accident. As I said before, my main goal is to always take the pictures I need at a wreck before I leave and I will always call the police the next day to get all the information for the articles and captions. This is the advantage we have as a weekly newspaper compared to a daily newspaper or TV news station. We can choose to wait until the next day to get the information we need.

The reason why I wait to get the information is because I don't want to bother any of the police or other emergency personnel while they are still working at the scene. After all, they have the three Lexington news stations to deal with and I am certain that they all get their feel of the news media without having me try to talk to them while they are working at the scene.

When I returned home from the wreck, I received numerous text messages from different people wanting to know if it was Rick Barnett who was killed in the accident. I also noticed

my Facebook news feed was extremely busy as one person after another was constantly updating their status in honor of Rick Barnett and sending their condolences out to his family.

The concern shown through Facebook statuses and Twitter updates alone was enough to prove to all of us that Rick Barnett was a prominent figure and respected man in Rockcastle County who was loved by many of those who knew him.

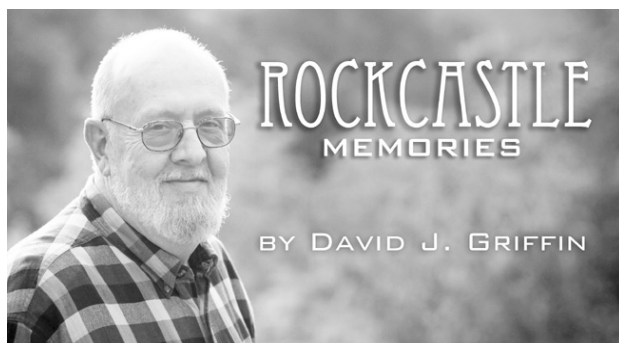
The majority of the Facebook statuses in his honor were from his former students who ranged from ages 18 to 30. A lot of them considered him a role model in their lives as they were sharing their memories and life lessons they learned from him when they had him as a teacher at RCHS.

Truth is, I was not close to Rick Barnett mainly because I never had him as a teacher in high school and I rarely walked through the hallway where his classroom was located. Even though we were not close friends, I still believe we were close acquaintances as he would always take the time to speak and talk to me when we would run into each other.

However, I still believe that I knew him well enough to know what he considered most important to him in his life and that was God! Anyone who knew Rick Barnett well knew that he was a devout Christian who always tried to put God first in his life. My memories of Mr. Barnett are of him helping his fellow RCHS math teacher, Mrs. Dawn Stallsworth, lead FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes) during club day while I was a student at RCHS. FCA was one of the largest clubs at RCHS during that time and I personally believe the club's success was largely contributed to Mrs. Stallsworth and Mr. Barnett.

I believe that if he was still with us today, he would tell us that he would want to be remembered first as a man of God and a devout Christian above everything else.

So as the county continues to remember and honor the life of Rick Barnett throughout the week, I will always remember and honor him as a devout Christian and a man of God, first and foremost.



"Brother Al"

It seems most appropriate for me to tell you about my big brother, Al. From the time I can remember, and particularly as a child, I have been extremely proud of him. Because he was ten years my senior, Al was my baby sitter when my mother had to work. I looked up to him. I am most certain that he wished he could be with his friends rather than keeping an eye on me, but I came through that time with flying colors. (Translation: I never really suffered for it and neither did he.)

I will never forget the time when I was first introduced to Big Fill Cave in Rockcastle County. Al and one of his best friends, Bobby Barnes, had planned to go to the cave when our mother (Bee) told him he had to watch me. So Al and Bobby decided that they would take me with them on their adventure. As we hiked through the woods to the cave, I rode on the shoulders of "my big friends."

At one point, it was necessary to scale down a very high cliff in order to reach the cave, and I distinctly remember Al holding me by the arms and dropping me over the edge of the rock face into the arms of Bobby. I thought to myself, "This is going to be a fun day!" Another part of that day that I specifically recall is walking up to the mouth of the cave for the first time. It was nothing short of huge to a four-year-old boy. I felt connected to that cave for the rest of my time living in Rockcastle County and, in some ways, I still do.

Another adventure that is etched into my mind was an evening when Al and a large group of young people from the First Baptist Church hiked to Big Fill Cave to sit by a fire, roast hot dogs, and listen to the older teenagers tell ghost stories. Those of us who were young sat in a circle around the fire as Al and a couple of the others told us "eerie" tales — tales designed to scare the pants off of the youngsters in the group.

When it came time for Al to speak, he began his story in a dramatic fashion with a hushed voice. We drew closer to him, to each other, and to the fire in order to steady ourselves to hear his tale. Everyone in the circle listened very carefully as the story unfolded in that

hushed voice. Then, near the end of the story and at the top of his voice, Al yelled and we all almost fainted. For the rest of the evening, I found myself sitting as close as I could to my big brother and keeping a close watch over my shoulder.

My sister-in-law, Eva, reminded me of an afternoon in which Al was furious with his little brother. Another friend of Al's, Bob Fields, had decided that he would drive his car down to Livingston in order to wash his vehicle in the Rockcastle River. Fields came to our house to pick up Al. While they were discussing their plans with Bee, the girls (including Eva, Berna Mae Fields, Shirley Owens, and Clara Ann Fields) hid me in the floor of the backseat of the car. Upon reaching the banks of Rockcastle River, the girls exclaimed, "Look who is with us!"

I am telling you that the look on my brother's face was akin to utter madness, and I was temporarily terrified of what he was going to do. He was not, as they say, a happy camper. But for the rest of the afternoon, the girls played with me, Al spared my life, and the day had a happy ending. I particularly recall that we ate a huge watermelon on the banks of the river that day.

While Al was in high school, he worked at the Mt. Vernon Greyhound Bus Station, where our mother also was employed as the ticket agent. Al worked there from the time he was fifteen until he graduated at the age of eighteen. The owner of the station was Tommy Gay

(Cont. to A4)

Points East

By Ike Adams



At this writing, it is just past 4:00 PM on Groundhog Day, 2013 and already nearly dark. Unless he was sitting under the booger light at the end of my driveway, the celebrated whistle pig will not see his shadow in central Kentucky today.

The sky, in fact, became so overcast and filled with restless, wandering snow that our security light came on for nearly an hour in the early afternoon. I'm told that weather conditions were about the same in Puxatony and that Phil had declared his shadow a no-show and retreated to his hole sometime around mid-morning.

So, if the lore holds true, winter should be all but over for those of us residing east of "The Muddy Mississipp". We should commence sharpening up our gardening tools while global warming paranoia gets set to have a field day. Since 1887, it says here, Puxatony Phil has only failed to see his shadow 16 times, including 2013. He's seen it 101 times and during that time, 9 years of Philocrastination are unrecorded.

I'm reading this straight off the internet so you know it has to be true! And the math does seem to work.

In the meantime, I'm sitting here remembering the snowy February Saturdays of my youth when I turned such days into profitable enterprise by selling garden seeds, door-to-door, along Highway 7 and the L&N railroad that ran between the Jeremiah and Isom, Kentucky post offices.

Over the course of some dozen years, from the springs of 1956 through 1967, individually or work-

ing together, my three younger brothers and I were the garden seed barons of that 5 mile section of Letcher County's Rock House Creek. We also served the gardeners of its tributaries, including Spring Branch, Doty Creek, Adams Branch and Stamper's Branch along the way.

American Seed Company (ASC) in Lancaster, Pennsylvania was our wholesaler. We placed our orders, by mail, early in January. In 1956, the year, with Mom's help and counsel, that I started the business, ASC would front its sales crew 60 packets of seed, risk free. If you sold all those and paid for them, they'd front you another 120. Promptly pay for those and the company would front you whatever you thought you could sell and even let you send back what you were unable to sell.

Just one year after start-up, I could have ordered 2,000 packets and ASC would have shipped them out, no questions asked.

Retail price was 15 cents a packet. We sales-people could take a nickel per packet cash profit or a merchandise prize. And believe it or not, we were usually way better off taking merchandise if they had something we really needed or wanted. I once took a Schwinn English Racing Bicycle that retailed for over \$100 instead of the \$30.00 cash money I could have pocketed. The bike had almost no utility on unpaved and coal-truck-rutted Blair Branch, but it sure was a pretty thing to look at.

(Cont. to A4)

Strange... But True?

by: Tonya J. Cook



"Strange But True?"
An Old-Time Witch Tale:
The Historic Bell Witch
Part II

Last week's column of "Strange But True?" featured what has been called "America's greatest ghost story". The Bell Witch has sparked interest for over a hundred years. M. V. Ingram published "An Authentic History of the Famous Bell Witch" in 1894 and Charles Bailey Bell published "A Mysterious Spirit: The Bell

Witch of Tennessee".

As noted last week the Bell family came from North Carolina and settled in Robertson County, Tennessee, in 1804. Soon afterward, mysterious phenomena began to occur. The witch disliked the Bell children and their father. The only one the witch liked was Mrs. Bell. The witch even hated the family's slaves; tormenting and beating them, and refusing to allow them into the house. One slave, Dean, encountered the witch several times. It usually appeared as a large black dog or wolf, sometimes having two heads or no head at all. He claimed that the witch had turned him into a mule once.

The witch tortured visitors to the Bell home and the neighbors. It caused the Bell's dogs to attack some traveling Shakers. The Bells tried to rid themselves of this curse by sending for a Dr. Mize from Simpson, KY, to exorcise it away. However, the witch pre-

(Cont. to A4)

6th annual

Love your Heart

Thursday,
February 28, 2013
5:30 p.m.

Rockcastle Regional
Wellness Center

Presented by

ROCKCASTLE REGIONAL
HOSPITAL ■ RESPIRATORY CARE CENTER

Women's Heart Health and Fitness Expo

A night for mothers and daughters, grandmothers and granddaughters and ALL women in the community to come out for a fun night of fitness to raise awareness about heart health. We want to share the importance of heart health...at any age!

Join us for this FREE event...

- Fitness classes (schedule coming soon) (wear red workout clothes if you wish)
- Heart health education
- Giveaways and door prizes
- Heart healthy food samples

Please sign up by February 22. Contact Arielle Estes at (606) 256-7880 or a.estes@rhrc.org

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