**NEWS FEATURES**

**Two couples mark their big days in different ways**

**Culpeper Star-Exponent (VA)** - Sunday, December 20, 2009

***Author:*** *Rob Humphreys*

Snow was on the ground and love was in the air Saturday for two couples fearlessly venturing into the teeth of a monster blizzard.

And while one young couple celebrated a new beginning — actually going through with a marriage at Precious Blood Catholic Church! — across town another couple marked their 25th anniversary by shoveling snow to help make ends meet.

» BRENDA AND DEAN: "In this tough economy, you've got to do what you've got to do," said Brenda, whose husband, Dean, helped her keep a driveway on West Asher Street (relatively) free of snow Saturday morning. "We've got two teenagers at home."

Brenda and Dean (that's them in the big photo above) weren't keen on giving out their last name, and Dean wasn't keen on his face being plastered all over the front page. As he eloquently put it: One time, a friend of his was pictured in the paper; the next thing you know, a young lady saw it and vowed to marry the guy. "Turns out, that was the biggest mistake of his life," Dean said.

Ironically, Dean and Brenda were marking a quarter of a century together when he told that story. The two were married in McLean Dec. 19, 1984, and have raised four children.

And, even more ironic, their wedding day "was a lot like today," Brenda said. "It was cold and snowing."

Now, the couple lives near Yowell Meadow Park and finds it beneficial to lend their services when snow hits. Working up a good lather, Brenda and Dean didn't seem bothered that, on the occasion of their 25th wedding, they were shoveling snow.

When asked if she had any big anniversary plans once the work ended, Brenda's quick wit kicked into high gear.

"Yeah," she said, "a hot bath and cocoa!"

» PATTY AND TRAVIS: Norfolk residents Patty Lann and Travis Talley have ties to the area — Patty is from Culpeper and Travis is a Louisa guy — so getting married at Precious Blood Catholic Church seemed to make a lot of sense.

Until the blizzard hit.

Then, the question became: Should we postpone the big day?

Heck, no!

With Father Leo Zonneveld presiding, Patty and Travis officially became Mr. and Mrs. Talley Saturday at 2 p.m.

Then, it was off to the Depot for the reception, where things didn't go exactly as planned but turned out OK anyway.

As family relative Cheryl Walker put it, "Unfortunately, the wedding cake got stuck in Louisa and didn't make it. Thankfully a cream-puff pastry tower was obtained (Friday) from a pastry shop in northern Virginia just in case and was substituted for the wedding cake. The groom's cake was provided by a friend of the bride who was unable to make it, but she managed to send it by another friend."

The wedding party, which included people from as far away as Colorado, Florida, Georgia and New Hampshire, received lots of help from "community folks with four-wheel drive" to "make this wedding possible," Walker said.

Pepper's Restaurant helped provide food, and the photographer had the right idea by coming a day early from northern Virginia to beat the snow.

Barring another act of God, the couple will leave Tuesday for a honeymoon in Jamaica. Wonder if there will be any snow there?

**A man of true compassion**

**Culpeper Star-Exponent (VA)** - Wednesday, April 8, 2009

***Author:*** *Rob Humphreys*

Winfred "Bo" Treece came to Brandy Station needing help from others.

By the time he left, the roles had been reversed.

Treece, a full-time volunteer at the Compassion House for homeless war veterans, died March 20 from a stroke at his sister's home in Upper Marlboro, Md. He was 61.

Inspired by the movie "Pay it Forward," Treece dedicated his final days to helping vets who, like him, had fallen on tough times.

"He did not come back (from Vietnam) the same man," said Yolanda Deane, who manages Compassion House with her husband, Mark. "And that's what caused his stumbling in life. There weren't adequate counseling services.

"His marriage, his life, began to crumble because he couldn't regain normalcy."

Deane said she met Treece in June 2007 when the veteran of an Air Force radar squad — highly medicated from back surgeries and "searching to make changes" — became one of five residents at the Compassion House.

As Treece regained control of his life in the rural back country of eastern Culpeper County, he became the Deanes' right-hand man, driving friends to VA hospitals, shopping for groceries, cooking and performing all sorts of duties around the house.

"As time went on," Deane said, "he started growing so much that his family wanted him to go back with them, and he'd say, ‘No, I've got a home.'"

Treece's sister, Barbara Treece Pervall, said her brother was a former professor of journalism whose patriotism mixed with a strong love of poetry, jazz and the Lord.

"Everybody loved him," Pervall said. "He would give you anything he had, would help you in any way he could. Always."

Nine months ago, Treece, who was married three times and has three grown sons, fell in love again — this time with the newfound art of woodworking.

"He would draw the picture freehand on a piece of wood," Deane said, "and he had a hot iron that would burn the image. He definitely had an artistic talent."

Treece sold his art at street festivals and on the Internet, never making a lot of money but donating 50 percent of proceeds to the Compassion House. Much of his work depicted scenes from two tours of war.

"He was using his woodburning art as his way of giving back to the community," said his pastor, the Rev. Eugene Logan of the nondenominational church New Life Anointed Ministries West. "He was a man on a mission for the Lord."

Remembering how Treece included different Scripture verses on each work of art, Logan spoke of their deep spiritual conversations that led to Treece's reconciliation with God.

"There were some things that had taken place in the military he thought God wouldn't forgive him for," Logan said. "But we brought him to the point where we told him, you were only doing your reasonable service. God has forgiven you."

Treece was buried April 1 in Cheltenham Veterans Cemetery in Upper Marlboro, Md. Logan called the funeral "a celebration, brother, an exciting time."

"When you're doing things for the Lord," Logan said of his friend, "God will use you to touch a lot of people."

Interested in Bo's artwork?

To learn more about Compassion House, visit OurAmericanSoldiers.org. Bo Treece's artwork can be viewed and purchased under the "products" section of the Web site. For more information, e-mail Compassion House's Yolanda Deane at y7deane@wildblue.net.

**They've worked 42 years for this**

**Culpeper Star-Exponent (VA)** - Sunday, April 10, 2011

***Author:*** *Rob Humphreys*

Owning the title of longest-serving employee at the Culpeper Post Office is no small feat — “twenty-something” is a common refrain when folks at the downtown branch are asked how many years they have under their belt.

Soon, someone else will inherit the longevity honor, as custodian Thomas Gibson and general clerk Ronald Burke are retiring after 42 years each in the postal service.

Gibson, 81, logged his last day April 1. Burke, 63, plans to leave in a few weeks.

Both will miss the friendly faces they’ve seen for decades, and both anticipate a lot of fishing in their future.

During a retirement party for Gibson in the spacious back room of the post office, coworkers shared why the workplace won’t be the same without these two veterans.

Thomas Gibson

To a person, people describe Gibson as a sweet man whose loyalty and consistency made him a well-liked fixture. His steady work behind the scenes has kept the post office clean and in good running order since 1968.

“He’s the kind of man that, whatever he can do for you, he will,” said Melissa Marsh, a rural route carrier for 10 years.“He’s just a very good people person, and he cares a lot.”

Twenty-seven years ago, Gibson — affectionately known as “Uncle Jude” — gave his niece Yvonne Lewis a tip: Route 1 was looking for a sub. That’s how Lewis got her foot in the door. Today she is a full-time mail carrier who beams when talking about her uncle.

“The Lord only made one of him,” she said. “He is one of a kind.”

What has kept Gibson going all these years? He points to the heavens.

“I put the Lord in front of all of my work,” he said. “I’m a Christian, and the Lord goes in front of me.”

At 39, Gibson got a late start in the postal service. But he was no stranger to other downtown businesses, working at Lewis Pharmacy and the ABC store after a military career in the early 1950s.

Gibson, a Culpeper native who attended the Reva School and lives near U.S. 29 and South Merrimac Road, is married to Violet Gibson. They have two sons, Thomas and Michael, and a daughter, Patricia Hearns, all of whom reside in Culpeper.

“It’ll be a little different, but I’ll get used to it,” Gibson said when asked about not coming in to work every day.“I got a lot of friends, and the post office has been good to me.”

Ronald Burke

As a guy who handles customer service, balances the books, purchases supplies, orders stamps and performs a wealth of other administrative duties, Burke wears a lot of hats.

He came to Culpeper in 1985 from Annandale, and he’s done just about every type of job since his postal career began in 1968.

Co-worker Kim Jenkins, a sales associate who works the front desk, chuckles when describing Burke’s outgoing style and wry sense of humor.

“I will definitely miss my 10-minute break in my office chatting with Mr. Burke and him fussing at me over whatever he can come up with,” said Jenkins, a veteran of 30 years. “But I know he always did it in a good way. … He’s my stress relief.”

Burke said he takes with him good memories of everyone, especially Jenkins, day supervisor Carol German and Postmaster Donna Culbertson.

“The people … some good people,” Burke said. “There’s none of ’em here I don’t consider good friends.”

Burke, who lives in Brightwood, is married to Eleanor Burke. They have two daughters, Lynn Frye and Pamela Burke.