



Front Porch Music

A shorter man that I had to look up to

I've personally known only one man I could truthfully characterize as a Renaissance man. He died a week ago in a motorcycle accident on a bridge spanning the Ohio River in Louisville, KY.

We were neighbors. Richard and Mary lived less than a quarter mile from me, across a holler filled with blackberry briars and the corner of a bean field. In the winter I could see their house from mine when the oaks and hickory trees that surrounded their home lost their leaves to the first wind of the season.

We're about the same age, so Richard Gard's lived some three score years on this earth, and very nearly every day of them spent within a mile or two or three of the very rural Illinois home he was born in. Yet he climbed to the top of his profession and made a name for himself nationwide.

Better than that, his humanitarian efforts touched lives all over the globe. Even though I stood half a head taller than Richard, I had to look up to him every time we met.

He was a "body man" by trade and loved every minute he spent actually repairing damaged vehicles. As the industry moved more and more toward "swapping parts" rather than fixing broken ones his feelings about his craft changed. He could accept the financial necessity of new ways of doing business but the artist and craftsman in him would never accept it. To him a car had a soul, and it deserved the care and pride and craftsmanship he could put into healing its metal shell or steel skeleton.

That talent and a vivid imagination that could turn a few pieces of steel or aluminum or some fiberglass into magnificent works of art that you could actually drive earned him his fame. He designed and built motorcycles and cars and trucks that won awards at top shows. His creations graced the covers repeatedly of nationally-distributed magazines like "Custom Rod" and "Cycle".

He was the Orange County Cycles of his day and place, except that he was probably better than they are and no one ever heard Richard cuss.

He forged friendships that reached the very top of his field. "Big Daddy" Ed Roth, the creator of Rat Fink, was one of those. He respected Richard's work so much he traveled half way across the country to judge a rod, custom and antique car show for a little festival that Richard was a part of.

I had plastic models of Roth's creations that I had pieced together with model glue in my youth.

To have Richard introduce me to "Big Daddy" was a real rush.

He was a totally unselfish person. He loved to teach what he knew to others as long as they were willing to work hard and stay committed to doing it right. He didn't tolerate short cuts in his own life and he wasn't about to allow it in others under his charge. He was always quick to credit his mentor, Ed Bolin. Without teachers, life will stop, he'd say.

He loved literature, something you don't see often in "car guys". His favorite was J.R.R. Tolkien. He was frequently finding ways to apply Hobbit and Lord of the Rings to nearly any discussion from the value of friendships to piston technology.

Few people on the parts of this earth I've inhabited have brought me more pleasure than Richard could just by spending 15 minutes probing the meaning behind the simplest ideas. I had philosophy professors with "doctor" in front of their names when I was in college that lacked Richard's ability to understand and interpret life.

He found his greatest pleasure in two extensions of the same activity. He created incredibly wonderful music boxes entirely from pieces of wood... intricate details that I could not even imagine. Then he gave them away.

He made dozens, perhaps hundreds. I certainly don't know, and I doubt Richard did either. He wouldn't have kept track.

He made the first one for a friend whose husband was dying of cancer. He told her he hoped it could bring her a smile and some degree of comfort. All he asked was that she pass it along to someone else who needed it when she felt her burden had been lightened enough to let it go.

Then he created another. And another. And another. Although I haven't seen Richard in a few years I'd bet he still has one started in his shop right now.

He also began creating music boxes as fundraisers during local events. He raised thousands of dollars to help people he never knew. These were the only music boxes he made that he ever allowed to be sold. His talent was God-given, he'd said, and he was using it to help others, not himself. It was no small sacrifice either. They were worth hundreds, and some thousands, of dollars each.

The funeral home probably will not hold all the people who will attend his service. The Mormon Tabernacle would certainly not hold all the people whose lives he touched.

Postscript:

Richard was laid to rest last Friday. I know he was smiling one of his "gotcha" grins as his casket was carried to his grave in a stately horse-drawn carriage type hearse, but this one was pulled by a Harley Wide Glide instead of a pair of dapple grays.

There were few flowers because he had requested teddy bears instead, which were to be given to kids in area hospitals.

And the size of that crowd? The Chrysler dealer next door moved the cars off his lot to accommodate Richard's friends.

Letter to the Editor: Parking is challenge downtown for our senior citizens

It is a shame that our great city has lost its respect for our old and disabled citizens. They must park and walk some distance and then climb stairs to go into the drug store to get their medicine.

They have to do this because the best places to park on West Mountain Street only has one handicapped parking space and the rest is for pool players and wine bibbers and for a loading zone.

Most of these people are in a lot better condition than people that are in their 80s and some have to use canes to get around.

I guess people who are in charge of this will be happy when one or more of our senior citizens fall and break a leg or worse. What a pity.

Gerald Williams
206 Mary Grove Church Rd.
Kings Mountain

AIC Taylor Brewer completes basic training

Airman First Class Jon Taylor Brewer, son of Jacki and Jon Brewer of Kings Mountain, a 2007 graduate of Hope Christian Academy, recently completed Air Force basic military training at Lackland AFB, Texas.

AIC Brewer endured the 8-1/2 week new Air Force Basic Training program which included hand-to-hand combat training and basic war fighting skills. He also qualified for the Marksmanship ribbon firing 46 out of 50 with the M16A1. Presently, he is at Sheppard AFB in Texas where he will gain experience in the career field of Aerospace Ground Equipment.

The AGE field of training teaches airmen how to diagnose, maintain and repair the equipment used to service aircraft to include gasoline and diesel engines, HVAC, electronic components, and hydraulics. After completing the four month course, he will return to North Carolina as a member of the 145th Maintenance Squadron of the NC Air National Guard located at Charlotte Douglas International Airport.



Health, fitness workshop

A Healthy Living workshop will begin Sept. 13 and continue each Monday from 1:30-4 p.m. through October 18 at the Gaston County Senior Center.

If you are an adult 55 years or older with an ongoing health condition sign up by calling the Senior Center at 704-922-2170.

Senior dance Friday

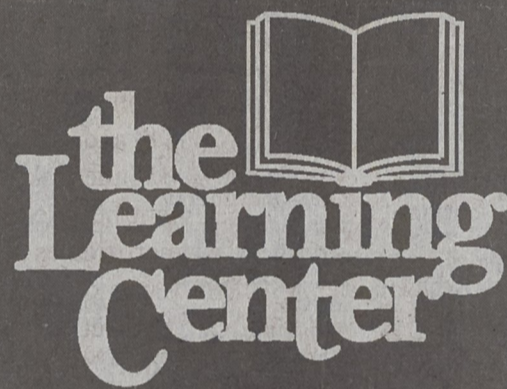
The Gaston County Senior Center will hold its monthly dance on Friday at 7 p.m. at the Gaston Senior Center, 1303 Dallas-Cherryville Highway. The Country Bucks will perform. Tickets are \$3 per person or \$5 couple. Doors open at 6 p.m.

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located on the campus of Cleveland Community College

WHO ARE WE?

The Learning Center on the campus of Cleveland Community College offers free classes in Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED, and English as a Second Language (ESL).

If you know someone who struggles with reading, math, or English, direct them to us. Our classes are free of charge and are scheduled in various locations around the county.

We also offer courses anywhere there is a need. If you want to start a program in your neighborhood, call Dr. Chris Nanney, Dean of Basic Skills, at 704-484-4062. If there are at least ten students, we can be there.

For more information, call 704-484-4050 or visit us on the web. Remember—these classes are free!

CLASSES ON THE CLEVELAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE CAMPUS							
CLASS	SITE	DAYS					TIME
		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	
Adult Basic Education (ABE)	Paksoy 3112	•	•	•	•	•	8:00 AM – 1:00 PM
	Paksoy 3112	•	•	•	•		5:00 PM – 9:00 PM
	Paksoy 3116	•	•	•	•	•	8:00 AM – 1:00 PM
	Paksoy 3116	•	•	•	•		1:15 PM – 4:15 PM
	Paksoy 3116	•	•	•	•		5:00 PM – 9:00 PM
ABE/GED	Online						Online
Adult High School/GED Lab	Paksoy 3105	•	•	•	•		8:00 AM – 9:00 PM
	Paksoy 3105					•	8:00 AM – 2:00 PM
English as a Second Language	Hunt 2054	•	•	•	•	•	9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
	Hunt 2054			•	•		6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

CLASSES AT OTHER CLEVELAND COUNTY LOCATIONS							
CLASS	SITE	DAYS					TIME
		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	
ABE	Job Link (ESC) 404 E. Marion St., Shelby	•	•	•	•	•	8:30 AM – 12:30 PM
	Friendship United Methodist Church 111 Friendship Dr., Fallston	•	•		•		5:00 PM – 9:00 PM
	New Bynum Chapel AME Zion 313 N. Cansler St., Kings Mountain	•	•	•	•		8:30 AM – 12:30 PM
	East Elementary 600 Cleveland Ave., Kings Mountain	•			•		5:00 PM – 9:00 PM
	Washington Missionary Baptist Ch. 1920 Stony Point Road, Waco	•	•	•			8:15 AM – 12:15 PM
ABE/GED	CJPP Resource Center 308 Gardner St., Shelby	•	•	•	•		8:00 AM – 12:00 PM
ABE/Teach Me to Read	Job Link (ESC) 404 E. Marion St., Shelby	•	•	•	•	•	1:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Compensatory Education	Durham United Methodist Church 320 E. Ross Grove Rd., Shelby		•	•	•		9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Do it for YOU! Call 704-484-4050 • clevelandcommunitycollege.edu