

Newspaper

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There was a trailer home on Cherie's 2 1/2 acre tract of family land on a street named after her brother in the green woods and pastures that make up East Texas.

Soon Betty had Ken enrolled at Bullard Middle School and she was manning the desk at her new business, At Your Service, which they located in the building where Bubba's Barbeque is now. Similar to Kinko's, At Your Service was an idea, which was ahead of its time.

Betty offered copying, secretarial and accounting services, Amway, Avon, and anything else she could think of.

After awhile, she realized they needed to advertise.

When she checked with the Tyler newspaper, she found the price was beyond her budget.

Next, she checked with the Post Office to see how much postage it would take to mail out a flyer.

There were about 1,020 homes in the Bullard area at the time. The postage was still too much for her small business.

It was Cherie who suggested that they sell ad space and share the cost of the postage.

In no time at all, they had an 11 x 17 advertising flyer covered with enough ads to pay for printing and postage.

They did this a total of four times, but "by the third issue, people were already dropping by the store to say give us a newspaper," Betty said.

The two friends decided to try with the help of Betty's children and Cherie's parents. It was a team effort from the beginning.

Always a self-starter and an entrepreneur, Betty's background included secretarial skills and bookkeeping.

Cherie had a background in keypunching and computer entry.

Cherie's experience in print media and graphics, including the design of yellow page ads, proved invaluable. When Betty asked Cherie who would write their articles, Cherie answered, "You, of course."

Betty laughs, "It really surprised me. I wasn't scared. The writing came easily."

They decided to aim for an upcoming festival, the Bullard Re-Blast, which included a parade and a carnival.

The crowds in downtown Bullard would be the perfect opportunity to try out their idea. Unfortunately, it was only a few weeks away.

Ken came to the store after school on Friday and they worked all night. It was Cherie that thought of the name, The Bullard Banner.

They ruined a copier getting that first advertiser together.

With the last page still not printed, Cherie and Ken drove to Tyler to finish the print job early Saturday morning and Betty stayed to fold, man the store, and worry.

As the parade turned onto the street in front of the store, Cherie and Ken came in through the back door with the final pages.

Their little team threw the first edition together and began to offer it to the crowd outside for free.

Cherie's mother, Pansy Boyd Bean, who was in her seventies at the time, took one corner in front of the store and Ken took the other. Soon all their copies were gone. Betty noticed that people were folding the paper in half and carrying it around in their hip pockets.

**"If you know what is happening around you, you can protect yourself and your loved ones. You can enjoy yourself. You have less fear because you know,"**

-- Betty Kerruish, founder, Bullard Banner

Later in the day, when the excitement had died down and folks had gone on home, Betty went down the street, checking in all the trash bins for copies of the paper. She never found even one copy of their newspaper in the trash bins or on the street.

"That's when I knew we had a paper," she says with satisfaction.

Each Thursday, Betty would hire a person to mind the store for her and she would go around the area selling their ad space. From Friday night through Sunday, they spent the whole weekend producing the paper.

They drove to Dallas to buy an inexpensive typewriter from Albertson's grocery store because they had a friend there who had gotten a typewriter with special typefaces.

Soon, they were able to buy a real press, a model 1250. They light-proofed the bathroom to make a dark room where they could develop the metal plates that went into the new press.

They bought a "humongous" paper cutter and a paper folder that "produced gray hairs" according to Betty. If you did not load the folder exactly right, it crunched up the paper, ruining all that work in the last and final stage. They bought a gigantic portable computer for Betty to do her reporting on.

It was an ancestor of today's laptops, the size of a CPU.

Cherie used graphics to spice up their paper in the days long before personal computers made publishing easier.

Betty is convinced that the reason she was so successful at selling the advertising was because of Cherie's talent with the graphics. "We had people who would but an ad just so they could get Cherie's graphics to use for other projects. She always did the graphics right."

Along the way, they had their share of interesting experiences.

For instance, there was the time the Banner was first to publish the news about the proposed Rails to Trails through Bullard.

It turned out that even

some of the folks along the proposed trail did not know the route included their property.

In fact, a philanthropist from Tyler had contracted with the railroad to purchase the whole stretch needed for the trail with the understanding that the deal included the deeds to all the parcels. However, some of the parcels were right-of-ways that reverted back to the original property owners and did not belong to the railroad company at all.

In the skirmish that followed, Betty became the spokesperson for the underdogs.

Even though she was impressed with the lady philanthropist and hated to be on the opposing side, Betty said "they (the small property owners) were being steamrolled." Betty, small town newspaper editor, faced off with TxDOT, the rail road company, and "some high-faluting Washington lawyers."

Eventually, the underdogs were heard. On the last and deciding trip to Austin, a team of Bullard landowners listed all of the reasons the trail should not be allowed. That was the final end of Rails to Trails in the Bullard area.

There was the controversy with the Cherokee Electric company and another one with Southern Utilities.

Sometimes, during those kinds of flaps, coming home could seem scary on the dark country roads around East Texas, especially when head lights seemed to be following her.

On the other hand, many times, when they were working all night at the store on the weekends, folks would honk their horns as they passed the store, a friendly reminder that their neighbors knew and appreciated their hard work.

One controversy began with an anonymous note delivered to the Banner office, which by then had moved into a small building in front of their home.

It suggested that the Banner's editor should go over with a measuring tape and check the size of the class-

rooms of the new building being constructed in front of the elementary school. It included the specifications required by the State of Texas.

When Betty measured the slab between the spaces where the walls would soon be, she discovered that the rooms were not in compliance with state specs which meant that the new rooms could not be used for classrooms.

So, at the next BISD meeting, she called attention to the problem for the public record.

The situation soon escalated with the Texas Rangers called in and charges brought against the superintendent.

The worst moment of her career as editor of the Bullard Banner was on the day she had to testify before the grand jury about the situation.

By then, Betty knew who had written the anonymous note and she feared the jury would ask for her source. She knew the consequences of refusing to reveal her source could be jail time.

When the question came up, she answered this way, "I am a Yankee who has managed to win the people's trust. I will not violate the trust of the people of this community."

As she left the courtroom, the person who had written the note, greeted her with these words, "It's all right, Betty. I already gave them my name."

There was never a trial. The Banner has changed hands again since Betty and Cherie sold it and retired.

While Betty does not miss the daily grind of putting out a newspaper, she still feels strongly that covering the local news is crucial.

"If you know what is happening around you, you can protect yourself and your loved ones. You can enjoy yourself. You have less fear because you know," she said.

Enjoying her retirement and the life she has carved out for herself here in East Texas with her loved ones, Betty adds this thought, "East Texans are a wonderful bunch of people; they work hard; they stick by you through thick and thin."

Not bad sentiment for a woman who started writing accidentally.

Goodbye

Continued from Page 1

The two had never planned on being in the video store business anyway, but they bought the store much the same as the Gilberts purchased it from them.

"There was a sign on the door advertising the business for sale," Jim said. "I asked the owner how much and made a counteroffer."

The one thing he didn't do was tell Mardee until after he had done it.

"I was surprised to say the least," she said. "But really retirement was boring."

The two moved here in 1994 to retire. Mardee said after shoveling snow from the driveway one too many times in Illinois, they agreed.

"It was time to move south," Jim said.

So they began driving. Mardee grew up in Wichita Falls, and Jim and she both lived in big cities and across the country - but they knew they wanted to retire to Texas.

"We wanted a rural setting," Jim said. "But we decided on East Texas because of the hills."

After two years, though, they decided retirement could wait, and the two agree that Bullard is much more home now, after owning the store all these years.

"It's helped us meet people," Mardee said. "And that's the one thing we'll miss."

Jim agreed. "This is many times the

first place a kid gets to sign his name," he said. "And we've watched many children grow up coming in and out of our doors."

But now the two will get to spend more time with their own families.

"Owning a business ties you down," Jim said. "And we're at the point where we don't want to be tied down anymore."

They will spend a couple of weeks helping the Gilberts get acclimated.

But they feel good about the ones who will be keeping the business alive.

"We're happy we've sold it to local people," Mardee said. "That was what we hoped for."

Last month they put a sign in the window, advertising it was for sale.

"We put the sign up Thursday," Jim said. "The Gilberts' daughter Katie saw the sign and went home and told her parents they needed to buy it."

Katie must have been convincing, because they came in the following Tuesday and came to an agreement with the Wades.

Jim and Mardee want the transition to go as smoothly as possible so they're having an open house on their last day, June 30, to welcome Pat and Sandy and introduce them to the community.

The open house will be at the Move Place, from 3-6 p.m. Saturday, June 30.

The Wades said light refreshments would be available.

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