

If bad breath doesn't kill you, something else will



America's Heartland
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A woman reading a magazine on the plane was so astonished by an article on life expectancy that she turned to the stranger beside her and said:

"Did you realize that every time I breathe, somebody dies?"

"Fascinating," the stranger said. "Ever try mouthwash?"

Perhaps a morbid discussion, but death is certain to visit every one of us at some point. As I read an Associated Press article the other day about notable figures who died in 2017, I was reminded of that. People who we remember fondly have left this side of eternity.

We lost comedians Jerry Lewis and Don Rickles, both of whom gave generations of Americans something to laugh about. We lost country music stars Glen Campbell, Don Williams, Mel Tillis, and Troy Gentry.

The AP story included

a long list of famous people from all walks of life, who went out into eternity during the past year, including:

Edith Windsor, a gay rights pioneer whose landmark Supreme Court case struck down parts of a federal anti-gay-marriage law and paved a path toward legalizing same-sex nuptials nationwide.

Hugh M. Hefner, the Playboy magazine founder who revved up the sexual revolution in the 1950s and built a multimedia empire of clubs, mansions, movies and television.

Fats Domino, the amiable rock 'n' roll pioneer whose steady, pounding piano and easy baritone helped change popular music while honoring the traditions of New Orleans.

Richard "Dick" F. Gordon Jr., the Apollo 12 astronaut who was one of a dozen men who flew around the moon but didn't land there.

Charles Manson, the hippie cult leader who became the hypnotic-eyed face of evil across America after orchestrating the gruesome murders of pregnant actress Sharon Tate and six others in Los Angeles during the summer of 1969.

Della Reese, the actress and singer who in middle age found her greatest fame as Tess, the wise angel in the long-running television drama "Touched by an Angel."

David Cassidy, the teen and pre-teen idol who starred in the 1970s

sitcom "The Partridge Family" and sold millions of records as the musical group's lead singer.

Jim Nabors, the Alabama-born comic actor who starred as TV's dim but good-hearted Southern rube Gomer Pyle.

Bruce McCandless, another NASA astronaut who was the first person to fly freely and un tethered in space and was famously photographed in 1984 flying with a hefty spacewalker's jet-pack.

The entire list of notable people who died in 2017 was far, far longer, and serves to remind us that death will come for us all, unless Jesus comes first. It also should remind us that we need to be prepared for when death comes calling, ushering us into one of two destinations, heaven or hell.

The Bible is clear that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father except through Him. The good news is that Jesus has extended an open invitation to everyone to join Him. In fact, He seeks you out for a personal invitation.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him and he me" (Revelation 3:20).

Roger Alford offers words of encouragement to residents of America's heartland. Reach him at rogeralford1@gmail.com.



Times Remembered
Betty A. Young
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One nice thing about growing up in the 1950s and '60s was that you could have all the pets your heart desired. Of course we had several barn cats, a dog, chickens, ducks and two horses. They were work horses and pulled the plows, wagons and sled to haul hay and plow the tobacco and gardens. This was before Dad bought a tractor.

One mare, named "Maude," was white and gentle, but the black one, the gelding, was wild. His name was "Blackie." He was wilder than a deer. Every time Dad needed to use the wagon or the sled, a fight ensued. He was determined Dad was not going to put a bridle and harness on him. I was terrified when

Work Horses

Dad would try to hold him to put the bit in his mouth. He would rare-up, and I just knew Dad was going to get hurt; kicked, pawed or stepped on, but he would not quit. He was stubborn and a very persistent man and didn't fear anything. He was the bravest man I ever knew.

One Monday morning, in the winter, Dad needed the team to haul a load of hay to the other barn for the cattle. Blackie hadn't been out of the stall in a few days, and I figured he would need a good run and would probably act up.

This particular time, I thought Dad would immediately try to harness him, but he didn't. Dad warned, "Now stand back," as he opened Blackie's stall door.

I didn't have a clue what was going to happen. But Blackie seemed to know. His hooves danced on the dirt drive way as he gathered himself up and sprang past me. He ran out the back barn gate, through the pasture and sprang over the creek bucking like a rodeo mustang. Then he ran so fast that dirt and snow flew in all directions.

Blackie knew that going to left in the pasture would take him up the hill and into the far hollow into the woods. A blur of black horseflesh disappeared

from sight; I was sure we'd be hunting that horse all afternoon.

"Just wait," Dad said, "He will be back," as he slipped some feed in the trough just inside the stall door. I wasn't so sure. It seemed like we stood in the bitter cold for hours, though, probably it was only about 15 minutes. Eventually, Dad put his fingers up to his lips and whistled for him. Several minutes later, I was surprised to hear horse hooves thundering through the field toward the barn.

As Blackie drew closer, he started bucking and raring up, once again dirt and snow flew in all directions. The gentle giant whirled past me like a tornado, leaped over the ditch and huffed his way to his stall. The big horse shook his head and snorted. Steam rose from his back and disappeared in the frigid air as he found his treat.

I was amazed that he came back to the barn after his romp. It was like, "Let me release some hormones and have my run and I'll work for you."

I still wonder how Dad was so sure that Blackie would return that morning..... It seems like Dads know everything, I guess all is well that ends well.....

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