

# Mercer's Magazine

## The At HOME 40330 with Tony Dunbar

By Lois Mateus

Tony Dunbar is kept very busy in his position as the director of surplus properties in the state finance cabinet, but these days this 20-year U.S. Air Force veteran has found himself embedded in an important new volunteer role in our community. Mayor Art Freeman has appointed Tony chairman of coordinating the planning and organization for Harrodsburg's 250th birthday celebration in 2024.

A native of Russell County, and husband of Harrodsburg's Amy Long for 33 years, Tony is totally aware of the historical significance of Harrodsburg to our nation's westward expansion.

Enthusiastic, positive, with abundant people skills, the never-met-a-stranger, fearless and often outspoken new chairman is on a mission to engage our entire community in planning this once in a lifetime opportunity to promote Harrodsburg. Here, we learn a bit more about Tony and what propels this Air Force veteran to make such an important five year commitment to his adopted community.

**So you met and married Amy, but with a career in the Air Force, how many stops along the way did you two have to make to come settle here in Harrodsburg?**

We met in Lexington, married in August 1985 in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, and then lived all over the world in such places as California,

Montana, New York, Japan (three times) and Germany; had three children Austin, Logan and Maggie, and finally came back to live in Harrodsburg.

**What was your childhood like?**

Very unique. My father was a 20-year Navy man. Therefore, I got to live in some cool places and do some very interesting things. One of my best memories was living in the Philippines for a couple of years. Although we were many miles from Kentucky, we made it back often. And having lived on both sides of the globe, I always wanted to return home to Kentucky.

**When you were 10 years old, what did you dream of being?**

Hard to remember what was going through my head when I was 10 years old other than growing my hair long. But I can tell you when I was 6 years old, my dream was to be a pig farmer. That's right, a pig farmer. This is what my grandfather did, and I thought it was about the coolest thing in the world to do. I used to "miss" school just to go to the Russell County stockyards with my him.

**Earliest influence on your life?**

Obviously, my father molded my military mind set at a young age. He was sharp in a uniform and disciplined. I used to help him prepare his fatigues, as all old vets know well, for inspection. You

could comb your hair looking into the mirror reflection on his boots. He taught me how to spit polish leather; again, all the old vets know what I am talking about. The other big influence was my grandfather, the pig farmer who was also a part time country preacher. To this day, he is the most decent man I have ever met. I still choke up sometimes



TONY DUNBAR

remembering him.

**What was your first real job?**

Outside of college this and that, it was becoming a 2nd lieutenant in the US Air Force with a four word vocabulary: "yes sir, no sir." Pretty simple.

**What drew you to the mili-**

**tary?**

My father certainly influenced my direction in life although he never pushed me to the military; but from my childhood, I always enjoyed the travel and getting to have fun everywhere we lived. While at UK, until I considered a military career I really didn't have a clear vision of what I wanted to do for a living. After talking career choices over with my dad there was no looking back.

Reflecting now on the career path we both chose, I realize we shared a lot of things, such as the enjoyment of going to new places, the pain of having to leave our families behind, the anticipation of being reunited after long deployments and the happiness of having families who enjoyed every bit of it as much as we did.

**Working with the state's surplus property seems like a great opportunity to be sustainable in re-purposing resources and materials. What's a typical day like?**

Everyday I have to determine how to increase revenue and reduce expenses in order to keep our organization in the black. I get to work with a lot of interesting people in this position as we figure out how to support their agencies at a greatly reduced cost.

Nothing is wasted. For example, we donated 18 pallets of food given to us by FEMA to a food bank orga-

nization here in Central Kentucky. We also have assisted numerous counties and cities to save significant amounts of money, including right here in Mercer County.

**What's the best advice you have ever received?**

It's advice I will never forget. It was "given" to me during a bit of a "motivational speech" I was on the receiving end when I questioned a general about my ability to take over the command of one of the largest Air Force squadrons in the world in Okinawa, Japan. When I questioned the good general if he was sure about his selection of me to take over this new operation, he gave me this advice with a very loud delivery: "We put pilots in charge all the time over organizations they know nothing about but we ask them to do just one thing. LEAD!!! NOW GO LEAD." I am leaving out his colorful language!

**What do you like most about Harrodsburg?**

This is home. This is where my family and my friends are. This is a special place. As I have told our kids, there is not a lot to do here and I kind of like it that way. It allows us to focus more on spending time with the ones we love. We enjoy our local eateries, our church, our town. You can feel the sense of community all over the place.

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Susan Barrington  
Contributing Writer

(Editor's Note: This is the completion of Susan Barrington's story on the Old Bus Station started in the April 2019 edition of the Mercer Magazine.)

Shirley Greenburg went to Transylvania in 1946 and rode the bus from Harrodsburg to Lexington. She said the bus station was a center of activity. She remembers having the best hamburgers, pies, sundaes and milk shakes at the bus station. They also had lots of different magazines there, too.

Greenburg's son, Doug, remembers taking the bus to Richmond one time. There was a big snow and he could not make the drive back to Eastern Kentucky University. She also shared that Martha Davis rode the bus to Lexington frequently to Leestown Road to visit her ill husband who was a patient at the VA Hospital for a long time.

Andora Trower taught Sunday School for decades at the Harrodsburg Christian Church. Often, she would take her second grade students to the bus station for a snack after Sunday School and before church started.

Jimmy Sexton and a group of local men would meet for breakfast Monday-Friday from 1990 to 2015 at the bus station. They were there when the restaurant opened at 6 a.m. and they would stay until 7 a.m. They sat around a big table and took turns brag-

ging about how much work they used to do. Some of the men were already retired. This group included Roy Devine, Jack Woods, Doc Estridge, Rags Gritton, John Markel, Carl Young and Andy Williams. Sexton said they were one big happy family.

There were men who gathered at more than one table for breakfast. One of these tables was affectionately called the Liars Club. Jimmy was part of this group too.

According to research conducted by the late Jack Bailey, the first Greyhound bus station in Harrodsburg was located just south, and near the corner of Main and Broadway, on the east side of the street.

I had a wonderful conversation with Jane Hoppin Bennett, daughter of the late Frank and Jane Hoppin. Frank Hoppin owned, operated, and founded the Hop-Inn bus station on South Greenville Street in 1946. He became a ticket agent for Greyhound bus company after his separation from the armed forces in 1946 and operated the Hop-Inn in connection with the bus station.

Hoppin later owned and operated the Swirly Top drive-in on East Office Street, the Sweet Shop on Main Street, the Good Boy in Burgin at the crossroads, and Hop's on the South College Street hill, on the right going south. I grew up calling it Hop's Hill.

Hoppin's son Jim remembers hearing from his father that he made box lunches for people riding the bus. He also remembers as a youth going



Bill Lester in the Hop-Inn Bus Station circa late 1950s or early 1960s.

to the bus station between Sunday School and church at Harrodsburg Christian Church. Mike Matherly, Larry Royalty, Jim Hoppin and others would go to get gum, look at comic books or just hang around for a few minutes.

On September 29, 1951, the Hop-Inn Bus Station was sold at public auction. According to a newspaper advertisement, it was billed as one of the best businesses in Harrodsburg.

Lisa Lester and Lana Lester Yates, daughters of the late Bill Lester and Eileen (Shorty) Lester, shared that their parents bought the bus

station from Frank Hoppin on September 29, 1951. He changed the name to Bill's Place after the buses stopped running in 1991. After 41 years, their father sold the restaurant in 1992.

I have been given the following information. Kitty and Charlotte Guthrie owned the bus station following Bill Lester. Bruce and Sandy Harper bought it from Guthrie and owned the restaurant until 2000. He named the restaurant the Olde Bus Station. Gary and Pat Keller ran the restaurant before purchasing the Stone Manor Restaurant.

Lora Carmichael White

## Remember when.... The Olde Bus Station



The Olde Bus Station is currently owned by Laura White and still serves the tried and true dishes everyone loves.

has owned and operated the Olde Bus Station since 2000. The outdoor patio was opened in 2009. She has wonderful memories of many loyal customers, including the Liars Club, a group of men who socialized over breakfast for many years. Today, there is a new breakfast club of men and women, who gather Monday-Saturday and often for Sunday brunch. Hooray for small towns and the love of community.

Putting together this story

has been quite enjoyable and very gratifying. I only touched on the tip of the iceberg, but I truly hope that from this story, memories of many folks will be stirred, heartstrings will be tugged and a deeper appreciation of our local history will be renewed, even if just a tidbit.

It is small town places like the Hop-Inn Bus Station, Bill's Place and the Olde Bus Station that are the very fabric of our America. Seventy-three years and counting...

(Susan Thompson Barrington is a 1977 graduate of UK. After 20 years of service, she retired as Park Superintendent of Old Fort Harrod State Park. She is also a retired Crime Victim Advocate and has been involved in many community and civic organizations over the years, including being the first female president of the Rotary Club of Harrodsburg, a Paul Harris Fellow, and the youngest President of the Woman's Club of Harrodsburg. She currently serves on the Farmers National Bank Community Board of Mercer County.)



BARRINGTON

## Where will you be for the party?

Get involved with planning the 250th Harrodsburg Birthday Celebration  
Watch The Harrodsburg Herald for upcoming meeting announcements  
or email harrodsburg250th@gmail.com for more information