

END OF AN ERA

by Vicki Bishop-Finger

There are some people you just assume will live forever, who will always be there, because they have always been there. These people are more of a staple of life in a small town than that corner store or that old house down the way that never changes.

Today (June 15, 2017) the iconic Bill Veasman passed away. With his passing there seemed to be a shift in the air. The end of an era, the passing of the baton from the old Dixon to a new but different Dixon.

Bill was "old Dixon." His parents owned the drugstore before it was Clark's drugstore. Most young people now don't even know what a drugstore was. Bill was from a time when children were taught manners, ladies wore dresses, and everyone left their homes unlocked because there was no such thing as crime.

It is hard to believe that things have changed so much. There is no more drugstore, children are more often in charge of the situation, dresses are for weddings or special occasions and our town is featured on the regional news for a crime story too often.

Bill was a teacher of several generations of high school students. It is probably safe to say that his method of teaching was different than all of the others, but it was very effective methodology. All of his students who later attended advanced studies commented that his methods were the best college preparatory, and that without having the experience of his classes that college would have been much more difficult.

A few years ago I ran into Bill on the courthouse square in Waynesville. On court day in Waynesville parking is very difficult to find and Bill had come over to pay his taxes. I noticed from my office window that he had circled many times looking for a spot, so I went out to talk to him. I found him trying to flag down a policeman who was paying no attention to him. I told him to drive around the courthouse once or twice more and I would go stand in the first parking place that came open and save it for him. This worked perfectly and he soon had a premium parking space near the front door. He was so overjoyed that he was able to park and not have to circle that he got out of the car and gave me the biggest hug and wettest kiss on my check.

I always loved seeing him in the store and would have to chuckle sometimes at him. Since he didn't get out much and was a bit of a shut in, his store visits were one of the few times he had to interact with people and find out what was going on.



William
Veasman

Once in the store he was next to me in line with several other people who were talking about a scandal in a nearby town. He leaned over to me and wanted me to remind him what year I graduated, then who were these people talking about and when I told him it was a different town's issues, he wanted me to tell him anyway. He still wanted to be in the loop. That just kind of made me smile. When the news broke yesterday that he was not doing well, I was able to get a message to him. I only had a minute to think of what to say because I was working but I am glad I got to tell him how thankful I was for him being such a great teacher. I only wish I had said it sooner.

I really did think Bill Veasman would live forever. I don't know why I always thought growing up that my children would have the same teachers that I did. I thought that the town would be the same place with the same drugstore. Today made me realize all of the changes that have taken place, and made me suddenly miss "old Dixon." Tonight his house stand alone at the end of the street. A house that seems to never age, but well remembers the days when steam engines traversed the rear of the lot. It's inhabitants gone, and most of the long time neighbors gone also.

Bill cherished his days at the University (Missouri at Columbia) but he also loved his home and his family. He loved his students and was always proud of their accomplishments. We will miss you Bill Veasman, you are a Dixon Icon.



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