

Mustang News

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Good friends are the best part of life

By PAULA SETTLE
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► Good News

Do you remember the sitcom “Friends?”

I never really watched it during its heyday, but I knew enough about it to realize the characters were close friends.

They confided in one another, found consolation in each others’ advice and stood by one another come what may.

I have been blessed to have friends such as that.

In particular, two friends — Sherry and Janie — have been with me for about 30 years.

Needless to say, they know enough to either sink me or sing my praises.

There is another college friend, Debi, who was my maid of honor.

So, we have 40 some years of a bond. She, too, knows the good, the bad and the ugly of

me. Then, there are more recent friends of only a couple of years — Phyllis and Nini.

Even though we have known each other a shorter time, they are none the less important in my life.

You see, I love these ladies and nothing can separate us and the bonds we have.

They could never take the place of what and who God is in my life, but I realize He placed them in my life to teach me many valuable lessons.

A good friend always leads, guides and encourages you in your walk with God.

Sherry teaches me about the deeper things of God and life, (she was a school teacher).

Janie shows me how to appreciate color and placement in decorating and healthy foods,



(she is a decorator and holistic gourmet cook).

Debi, on the other hand, has seen me grow up from my 20s and survived along with me to the 60s.

She has taught me to be confident, along with respecting and believing in who I have become, (Debi is a successful business entrepreneur).

Then, there is Nini.

She has mentored me to continue on my journey with God and keep a sure footing on a strong foundation of

God, family and my home, (Nini is a Realtor).

My newest friend, Phyllis, is perhaps the one who looks deep into my soul and pulls out the best in me.

She points out qualities I either didn’t know I possess or had forgotten I did.

She sees my “bottom line.” She knows my worth and she keeps pushing me with the “sky is the limit” mentality to get me to use my gifts and talents, that I try to hide, (Phyllis is a business/office manager).

I find it fascinating that God has blessed me with friends like these, to cover every area of life that I might need help with or to give me a little push toward the goal.

He is an awesome God and as my creator, of course He knows my every need.

Jehovah Jireh — my provider!

Hanging in can lead to success

► Chicken Fried Steak

With the arrival of football season, Bertha and I were recalling some pleasant memories from our son Matt’s high school days.

Matt was in the high school marching band and as a fundraiser the band parents ran the concession stand at football games.

As usually happens, a core group of faithful volunteers emerged.

One of the parents who always helped out was a fellow named Jerry who made the popcorn.

Turning out a lot of popcorn without burning it takes some diligence, but Jerry always did a great job. In fact, he was so good at it that we nick-named him “Popcorn Jerry.”

Jerry worked at Western Farmers Electric Cooperative in

Anadarko with one of Bertha’s friends.

At some point, we mentioned the “Popcorn Jerry” nickname to her, and soon he became known by that name at work.

Fortunately, Jerry is a really good-natured fellow, and he enjoyed the attention.

Bertha and I helped out at that concession stand all four years that Matt was in high school; our other kids — Kelli, Carrie and Jeremy — also helped and supported their brother, too.

All of us in that core group of band parent volunteers got to be friends while we sold pop, candy bars, hot dogs, and of course popcorn.

Great memories! Lincoln Riley has named Spencer Rattler as the Sooners’ starting quarterback, with Tanner Mordecai as the back-up.

Behind those guys is Tanner Schafer, who is



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my personal favorite.

In the 2013 Bedlam game, the Sooners starting quarterback, Trevor Knight, got hurt and his back-up Kendal Thompson was ineffective.

In came third-string quarterback Blake Bell, who took the Sooners down the field and threw a perfect game-winning touchdown pass near the end of the game.

You never know how things will turn out in

life, and, for all the notoriety that Trevor Knight and Kendal Thompson had, Blake Bell who later switched to tight end, and ended up playing for the Kansas City Chiefs, is the one with a Super Bowl ring.

So, hang in there, Tanner Schafer, you are only a sophomore, let’s see what happens!

Finally, this time of year the hot weather causes the bluestem grass to reveal the source of its name.

Last Saturday we gazed across several pastures of vivid blue hues. Truly one of God’s paintbrushes!

Life is a gift from God. Enjoy every day!

Chicken Fried Steak is a copyrighted column by G.W. Thomas; any opinions expressed are those of the author and are not endorsed by the management of this newspaper.

Notable support for school choice

By JONATHAN SMALL
President, Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs

In politics, as in retail, consumer demand drives product selection, only politicians offer policies rather than baked goods.

So it’s notable that multiple speakers strongly advocated for school choice policies every night of the recent Republican National Convention.

That type of strong, vocal support only happens when politicians are certain a policy is both popular and beneficial, as several speakers demonstrated.

Sarah Hughes, whose 8-year-old son is a beneficiary of a Wisconsin school choice program, told national viewers her son “would have slipped through the cracks in public schools” but now has been provided the educational opportunity that will allow him “to succeed.”

Tera Myers, whose son has Down syn-

drome and is a beneficiary of an Ohio school-choice program, likewise noted her son says school choice “helped my dreams come true” and allowed him to become the “best I can be.”

Such stories are not outliers, nor are they isolated to places far from Oklahoma.

Our state has seen dramatic success stories generated by school choice.

For example, in north Tulsa this year Crossover Preparatory Academy continued educating students through distance means when Tulsa Public Schools effectively threw in the towel, other than having online review of past content.

Many of the low-income, all-male and mostly minority students at Crossover Preparatory Academy in North Tulsa attend that private school because of a state tax credit for donations to scholarship-granting organizations.

The benefits of their

private-school education can be seen by comparing those students to their socio-economic counterparts still in Tulsa Public Schools.

A TPS official recently told the State Board of Education that district now expects that kids “who might otherwise have been predicted to be two years below grade level” are instead going to be “approximately three years below grade level.”

The kids at Crossover still have opportunity thanks to education, but many kids in TPS do not and will pay the price for years.

Former Rep. Jason Nelson, who created a state program that pays for children with special needs to attend private schools, has reported some parents “have told me that it saved their child’s life.”

That is not hyperbole. Oklahoma’s school-choice programs have served children with special needs, teens recovering from addic-

tion, survivors of horrendous childhood abuse, and more.

School-choice has not only changed lives but saved them.

As the nation grapples with issues of inequality, one of the best paths forward is to expand school choice in Oklahoma and elsewhere.

As Donald Trump Jr. bluntly noted, if officials really want to “help minorities in underserved communities,” the best option is to “let parents choose what school is best for their kids.”

Ja’Ron Smith, deputy assistant to the president, noted at the RNC that education “is the great equalizer.”

He’s right. It’s time we give all students of all races and economic backgrounds a greater chance at success through school choice.

Jonathan Small serves as president of the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (www.ocpathink.org).

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