

H.G. MCGAUGHY FAREWELL

by Nancy Wilstach, writer and retired journalist of Montevallo, AL

Montevallo lost one of its brightest city lights on March 28 with the death of H.G. McGaughy. No, he wasn't an elected official or the head of an important municipal department. Yet, he touched the lives of many of us with his engaging smile, his quick wit and, sometimes, with his frank and clear outspokenness.

About 18 months before his death, Mr. McGaughy began stopping at the city's main fire station for a blood pressure check, and it became one of his regular stops on his almost-daily travels around town. Another regular stop on his rounds was Czeskleba TV Service on Main Street. He and the shop's owner, Walt Czeskleba, were friends since "sometime in the 1970's," Czeskleba said. "I



H.G. MCGAUGHY

was doing some TV work for his mother and daddy," Czeskleba said. Mr. McGaughy's mother was very hard of hearing and put the television on high volume when her favorite daytime soap operas were broadcast, "and H.G.'s daddy used to sit out on the porch because of how loud it was. I fixed his mother up with a speaker right by her chair, so she could hear (the TV) without running him out of the room. "H.G. would come by three or four times a week and stay about an hour. It was part of his rounds--the drug store, the post office, the fire department," said Czeskleba. "He loved gossip! He'd always ask me: 'What you got today?'" Mr. McGaughy was in no way a typical octogenarian, Czeskleba said. His interests were wide-ranging--from livestock to the stock market. He introduced Czeskleba to the latter "over 20-some years ago. Nothing out of the ordinary, just AT&T, the power company, stocks like that." "He was a character," said Czeskleba.

Sharing Mr. McGaughy's interest in livestock were Don and Nancy Simmer. The Simmers leased part of the McGaughy farm's 120 acres as pasture for 45 head of cattle. Don Simmer said he paid the lease annually on Jan. 2. "I'd go up to his house and pound on the door and hand him a check. He had his conditions: I had to keep the grass cut (cows will eat the grass, but they know to avoid thistle) and keep the cows out of the pond."

The McGaughy farm has been designated a "century farm" by the state of Alabama because it has been in the same family for more than 100 years.

Most people are familiar with the McGaughy Farm because of the bright red caboose that sits in the front yard beside Salem Road.

Kay Goke, the fire department's public information officer recalled Mr. McGaughy's visits to the station: "He would bring us goodies often and we'd share coffee. He'd tell us stories about the town, give relationship advice, tell us about his time in the Army traveling to Germany, and the McGaughy Family history."

She quoted Firefighter Matt Rush when describing Mr.

McGaughy's attitude toward aging: "He never knew his age and kept us smiling. He always said never get old and he didn't."

"He was like a one-stop shop for everything people needed--storyteller, living history book, advice giver, traveller, jokester, and expert on local spots. My personal favorite memories of him are his grin that would light up the room, and he'd always call me 'Babydoll,' and have a hug for me when I'd see him," Goke said.

Mr. McGaughy served for a time on the city's Design Review Committee and on the Historical Preservation Committee. He was a frequent attendee at Montevallo City Council meetings; usually he would sit near Bill Glosson who recalled a few heated meetings: "He could be pretty outspoken."

Mr. McGaughy died March 28 after a bad fall that sent him to the hospital in mid-March. Czeskleba said that Mr. McGaughy was in and out of consciousness and mostly kept in the ICU until he died. His wife, Doris, had died in 2020. They had no children.

Although nearly everyone called him "H.G.," Mr. McGaughy's given name was Herbert Galloway McGaughy. His mother's maiden name was Galloway, but she preferred to call him "Buddy," Czeskleba said.



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