

# Death notices not always leaving some to rest in peace

Used to be the old adage that you were assured of having your name in the newspaper only twice in life. First, when you were born. And second, when you die. In between was pretty much up to you and what talent God gave you. Athletics? Maybe the time you scored the winning run with a walk-off hit in Little League, and somebody put it in the paper. I gotta believe that the late Ken Hill, he of happy memory, put the names of hundreds of youngsters into his Sport Hotline, boys and girls who excelled on that one day in their youth and went on to live lives just as ordinary as the rest of us right up until the end. Until the obituary.

Used to be that when you got married and then 50 years later when your kids bought dinner for your 50th anniversary, your name got in

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A MOMENT

Ed Breen



the paper, too, but that changed when newspapers, hard pressed for cash, started charging big bucks for that little recognition of accomplishment.

Used to be when you were born there was a guaranteed two lines in a newspaper column called "hospital notes." Mr. and Mrs. John and Betty Whoozits, boy, 3:15 a.m., on whatever day you arrived in this world. That ended when

"Mr." and "Mrs." ceased to be the proper starting point for making babies and the lawyers for hospitals and newspapers said, "no, no; we don't say nothing 'bout nobody and their babies."

But it's the departure notices – the obituaries – that got weird.

Used to be when you died, the family would gather up the information and give it to the undertaker, who would call the newspaper and the information got put in. Name, age, address, school, marriage, job, kids, what you did that was special and when and where you died. And there'll be no charge for that because the newspaper editor thought that was part of his job, to report on comings and goings, ending with the Big Going.

And that all changed when newspapers started charging cash for printing obituaries. A

few cents per word, a few dollars per line and pretty soon folks realized that since they were buying the space – that four or five or 10 or 12 inches on the obituary page — they could say whatever they wanted about the dearly departed. And so they do.

First thing is, nobody dies any more. They return to the Lord, or depart their earthly travail, or rest in the arms of God, or some such metaphor. Passed from the garden of earthly delights. No one dies. And among the survivors are dogs and cats and special friends and Lord knows what else.

This all got a little attention a week or so ago when an obituary in the Indianapolis Star sort of went where no obituary has gone before.

Fellow named Terry Kent had a heart attack and died. He was 74. But then it got interesting.

"In 1966 he married Lori Crandall (who looked like Sophia Loren)," we are told in his death notice. "Despite his opposition to the war in Vietnam, he went into the army at the behest of Lori and her father. When Lori filed for divorce, Terry attempted suicide, refused to continue to serve in the army, and was court-martialed. He spent 2 years in Fort Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary and received a Bad Conduct Discharge," which may be more than we need to know.

But the sordid details just keep coming: "He married Mary Jane Lapointe, one of his former students, in 1976 after living in sin with her for several years. Due to Mary Jane's constant nagging, he returned to school and obtained his PhD. At his 20th high school reunion, Dr. Kent learned that he had a son with Lori Crandall

named Daren, whom he was happy to get to know and love."

And so it goes for another couple of hundred words.

But much shorter and to the point and infinitely meaner is this one, clipped from a Florida newspaper and posted on the internet.

Kathleen Dehmloff Schunk died a couple of years ago. She was almost 80. But the obituary rolls back the years: "In 1962 she became pregnant by her husband's brother, Lyle, and moved to California," we are told. "She abandoned her children, Gina and Jay, and they were raised by her parents."

"She passed away on May 31 in Springfield and will now face judgment. She will not be missed by Gina and Jay and they understand that this world is a better place without her."

Rest in peace, folks. Rest in peace.

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