

Man of mystery becomes an asset to the community

I met Mike as my neighbor and I were walking the neighborhood picking up trash six years ago.

He was working on a castle looking house at the corner of Sixth and Whites. He was a character, and I really did not trust him or anything he said.

After all, I am well to aware of property owners who live in other states and buy local properties during a tax sale, never to make any improvements to the properties.

However, it did not take long for me to realize not only did this Californian have Marion's best interests at heart, but he was also a real asset to our neighborhood.

At that time, I was working to improve our neighborhood park at 6th and E streets as part of a prevention project through my work. The City of Marion had agreed to give us a large playground piece located at the old racetrack on Ind. 18 East.



A SLICE OF LIFE

Linda Wilk



It was Mike who knew the makers of the playground equipment and was able to get us schematics and tools to try and take the sections apart. Eventually we found the project was much more comprehensive than we could manage, and the City of Marion graciously relocated the equipment for us.

Mike did not stop there though. He immersed himself in our Garfield Neighborhood Association

initiatives, even advocating at city council meetings for the implementation of the minimum standards for properties. At that time Mike owned four properties in our neighborhood that had become dilapidated and frankly ones we were targeting for improvement.

It seemed that shortly after the passage and implementation of the Neighborhood Preservation ordinance, Mike disappeared. I later learned he had decided to go back to California and Florida, after suffering a heart attack in Indiana and wanting to recuperate in warmer weather.

Then of course covid 19 happened and no one was doing much of anything as a group anywhere even the neighborhood.

Until our annual neighborhood clean-up June 5.

The first I knew Mike was back in town was when he replied to an email commenting, about the cleanup logistics.

As I waited that Saturday morning to see which street, I would be cleaning, Mike showed up in his black truck. As is his mantra, he immediately started talking, apologizing for his late arrival, commenting he had been delayed by his cat and her six kittens.

It seemed like karma that I would be picking up trash with Mike who I met as I picked up trash on the street, where I had first met him when he was working to revitalize one of his properties.

As we walked up Third Street, Mike began strategizing how to improve the neighborhood.

He did not understand why there were not more people out helping pick up the numerous soda cans, disposable face masks and the occasional Polar Pop Styrofoam cups.

Another sign of the times, as I picked up countless disposable masks which just a year ago, I would have never found a

left behind mask, instead it had always been those Styrofoam Polar Pops that littered the streets and bushes and yards.

It was not what we were picking up that had Mike talking though. It was how to get people motivated to keep their properties clean and tidy.

He went on to quote a statement from Muhammad Ali, "Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth." Mike thought we should use that quote on flyers when we tried to get neighbors engaged in projects such as the cleanup.

We walked by a large house on West Third Street that looked abandoned and neglected as its porch was sagging, there were pieces of overhang, drooping and blotchy spots of white intermixed with red coloring on what was probably once an elegant house.

That prompted Mike to talk about working with local paint stores to have them donate leftover paint.

He went on to talk about mixing various remnants of paint to have a large supply of paint to paint the well-worn houses.

He went on to say that he could not imagine any property owner not wanting to improve their houses by letting a volunteer assist with the work.

If only it was that easy, have often dreamed if I won the lottery that I would spend money buying paint and supplies for households where paint is peeling, or the paint has faded. I would also pay for people to do the painting, knowing that in many cases the individuals living in the homes cannot or will not do the painting themselves.

As I listened to Mike's dreams for the neighborhood, it was as if God had brought back an angel to the neighborhood, wanting me to get re-energized and recommitted to the work of improving the neighborhood, even if it is just picking up trash.

Local schedule

June 24-July 1

Thursday, June 24

10 a.m. – Quilters Hall of Fame Exhibit, Quilters Hall of Fame, 926 South Washington Street, Marion. Hollis Chatelain: A Retrospective Quilt Journey. Through her work that addresses challenging social and environmental themes, Hollis reflects 12 years' experience living in West Africa and working with humanitarian organizations, as well as 35 years' experience as a professional artist. Admission \$4, \$3 for seniors and students, \$1 for children ages 6-12, and free for children under 6 years of age. Exhibit open Tuesday – Saturday.

Friday, June 25

10 a.m. – Quilters Hall of Fame Exhibit, see June 24.

4 p.m. – Farmers Market, Upland Train Depot, Main Street and Railroad Street, Upland. You'll find amazingly fresh produce and delicious home baked goods at our farmers market, along with plenty of handcrafted items. Browse our mar-

ket and enjoy nature's bounty.

4 p.m. – Pride at the Park, Matter Park Bandshell, Marion. Celebrating the heritage and culture of the LGBTQ community with live music, entertainment, great food, and more. Meet us at the Matter Park Bandshell. Then head to Pride After Dark Drag Show starting at 9pm at the Sender Building in downtown Marion.

5 p.m. – Jonesboro Fourth Friday, Jonesboro Town Hall, 414 South Main Street, Jonesboro. Join us for an evening of fun in Jonesboro, in front of City Hall on Main Street. Lots of great booths to explore including bakers, farm produce, handmade artisans and artists. Interested vendors contact sarah-sweets21@gmail.com.

7 p.m. – The Martins with Westward Road in Concert, Epworth United Methodist Church, 105 West Eighth Street, Matthews. Presented by the Epworth United Methodist Church. Doors open at 6:00pm. \$15 in advance or at the door if

available. A love offering will be received. Limited seating due to covid-19 restrictions. To guarantee your seats, please purchase tickets in advance online or by call/text to 765-677-0842. The Martins are a multi-Dove Award winning and multi-Grammy nominated trio who have performed at The Grand Ole Opry and The White House. Westward Road, a dynamic family trio from Indianapolis, opens the concert.

7:30 p.m. – Gas City I-69 Speedway Jerry Gapens Sr. Memorial, Gas City I-69 Speedway, 5871 East 500 South, Gas City. Non-Wing Sprint Cars, USAC Speed2 Midwest Thunder Midgets, modifieds, street stocks, hornets. Adult General Admission \$15, Children 12 & Under Free, Pit Pass \$30. Special event night prices range from \$18-\$25 for adult general admission. Pit Gates open 3pm, GA Gates open 5pm, Hot Laps 6:30pm. Racing Starts 7:30pm. Tickets available at the speedway ticket office the day of the event.

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FAMILY DAY

JUNE 27, 10:30 AM

YOUR ENTIRE FAMILY IS INVITED!
COME JOIN US!

Lighthouse Baptist Church

2445 West Kem Road Marion, Indiana 46952

765-384-7572

www.lbc-marion.org

Jousting

Carousel Jump

Wrecking Ball

Obstacle Course & Rock Climbing Wall

Obstacle Combo

Hippo Chow Down

PREACHING GOD'S TRUTH

FOOD