

Marietta Monitor

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2013 ♦ VOL. CXVII NO. 24 ♦ 12 PAGES ♦ 50 CENTS

Only In Love County

By HWC

The sudden, tragic death of Dr. Vergil Smith Monday night sent a shock wave through the community. Over the years he had literally touched thousands of lives.

I met Dr. Smith on his first visit to Marietta before he decided to make Love County his home. For me he had an instant likeability factor. It never waned in the 50 years I knew him.

Through the years, I knew him both as a patient and outside the office as a golfer, pilot and friend. As a doctor he understood that the practice of medicine is both an art and a science. All doctors are schooled in the science of medicine, but some never master the art.

Dr. Smith was good at the art of medicine because he never looked at a patient as just another chart to be analyzed while rushing to the next patient. He took the time to get to know his patients and learn how to relate his knowledge of the science of medicine to that patient's unique personality and need. He didn't take a cookie-cutter approach where everyone is just viewed as the same.

As a golfer he wasn't the biggest hitter on the course. While the big hitters in his foursome were off in the tall grass, sometimes woods hunting their golf ball, he would stand patiently in the middle of the fairway awaiting his turn to hit again. To their chagrin he consistently beat the long ball hitters.

As a pilot he was highly competent. He had a realistic view of his own ability and a healthy respect for the weather. Those traits allowed him to become an old pilot of which he was very proud.

I also knew Vergil as a fellow with a great sense of humor. Seeking treatment in the hall of the hospital after nicking myself just above the knee with a chain saw, he did a quick check saying "you are going to live."

He then told me to sit in a chair in the hallway until my blood pressure went down. Being mad at myself for making a careless mistake was the problem.

After a few minutes of cooling off, we went into an examining room where he cleaned the wound and stitched it closed. As he walked out the door he turned and with a smile said, "Willis, my advice is don't do that again." He didn't wait for me to reply.

On a follow-up visit three or four days later, after admiring his handiwork with a needle and thread, he offered some additional advice, again from the doorway, "I suggest you start buying your firewood, it will be less painful and cheaper in the long run."

A couple of months ago in the lobby of the hospital, he recalled that series of events that occurred years ago and we both laughed. I choose to remember my friend by his sly grin and great sense of humor.

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Old friend Jim said, "Life is short. Enjoy it and live with purpose to the end."