

THE SUN

CLARK THURMOND — LINDA SCARBROUGH
PublishersKathryn Manasco, General Manageraccounting@wilcosun.com
Matthew Brake, Production Managerproduction@wilcosun.com
Dawn Steele, Advertisingads@wilcosun.com
Rodney Schwartz, Lead Pressman512-930-4824Nicholas Cicale, Managing Editoreditor@wilcosun.com
Kate St. Clair, Reporterkate@wilcosun.com
Katherine Anthony, Reporterkatherine@wilcosun.com
Brigid Cooley, Reporterbrigid@wilcosun.com

Do what we can, suffer what we must

Early on in life, when I could still count all of my birthdays on two hands, I heard a man say something on TV that has shaped me to this day.

The program was Art Linkletter's afternoon talk show, "House Party," and his guest said this: "We begin to die from the moment we are born." That statement blew my second-grade mind. And so, at about age 8, I became vaguely aware of mortality.

Maybe I was a weird kid. But I am who I am, made that way by my Maker, and that's a reality over which I don't have total control. So it has always been like a shadow in my life. Shifting and shaping. Sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, but always there.

Two wildly different electronic communications — each crossing my path last October 13 — brought all this from shadow into substance.

The first was an email from one of my old high school friends, Lewis, who lives near San Francisco with his wife, Renee. With their permission, I'm relaying it here.

Their young-adult son had telephoned Lewis at night, while he was still at work, and I'm paraphrasing information that was passed on with escalating urgency: Mom wasn't feeling well ... she passed out ... I called 911 ... she's at the hospital ...

In his email, Lewis explained that Renee had recently undergone a seemingly routine foot surgery. And that, of all things, set the stage for disaster.

"While physicians were examining her at the hospital she went into cardiac arrest. They immediately started doing CPR and got her heart started after six minutes. A large blood clot had migrated from her surgically repaired foot to her lungs, and from there to her heart."

"When I made it to the hospital, I could sense something was wrong from the way the security guard stared into my eyes for about 30 seconds before saying, 'I can't give you any information. We'll show you to the family counseling center and you can talk to the physician.'"

"A physician came by and said Renee had basically died, but they managed to revive her after six minutes. They wouldn't know for awhile if she had injured her heart muscle, or suffered neurological damage."

"When I saw her, she looked like a corpse. But when I stroked her shoulder and told her I loved her, she opened her eyes. I waited around another hour, at which point an attending physician told me he wasn't going to sugarcoat things ... I told him he should do everything possible to keep her alive."

Renee not only lived, she recovered remarkably well and without lasting damage to her heart or brain.

As Lewis wrote — with dry humor and when his wife was out of the woods — "(Our son) saved her life by calling 911 when he



MELANCHOLY PARADISE

Brad Stutzman

did, but she was also very lucky. If you're going to experience cardiac arrest, it's best to do so while being examined by a team of physicians."

Yet contrast that with another report — coming on the same October 13 date and happening in the same part of California. A *Los Angeles Times* story appeared under the headline: "Bay Area tree trimmer dies after falling into wood chipper."

Were it not so tragically true it would seem the stuff of dark comedy; the sort of movie that seems to suggest the soul-numbing notion that life is pointlessly absurd. After all, no one — and I mean no one — has ever stood smiling on a stage or platform, high school diploma happily in hand, and ruefully thought: "Gosh, I wonder if some day I'll fall into a wood chipper and be chopped to bits."

But those sorts of things can and do happen. Thomas Jefferson — by way of Socrates — said the unexamined life is not worth living. And so, for those so inclined, that tree-trimmer story brings to mind the kind of questions Archibald MacLeish addressed in "J.B."

Wife Ellen and I saw the play several years ago at Crestview Baptist Church. It's a modern, free-verse take on the biblical story of Job. One observation in particular captured the paradox of a good man's suffering: "If God is God, he isn't good. If God is good, he isn't God."

I have no problem picturing that poor tree trimmer's loved ones wrestling with all that. Just as Lewis and Renee might — though full of gratitude — still wonder why they were spared the worst. It can be like one of those shadows. Sometimes long and sometimes short but always there.

Before Job — and long before Archibald MacLeish — there was the Psalmist who wrote: "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

But sometimes the watchman, no matter how watchful, waketh in vain anyway. One of life's most frightening realities smacks us square in the face when we realize there is ultimately little we can do to protect those we love.

A contemporary of Socrates — one of those ancient Greeks with a name both difficult to spell and pronounce — put it this way: "Men do what they can and suffer what they must."

As for my friend Lewis, I last heard from him at the start of the new year:

"They're removing Renee's IVC filter — a contraption designed to keep blood clots out of the pulmonary artery — tomorrow morning. It's about time. She's been walking up to a mile at a time, this past week, which is great progress."

As always — and in all ways — we find our good news and take our victories when and where we can.

Letters

Do we need a statue to remember history?

History in itself is not offensive. Does history repeat itself? Debatable.

But do we need a memorial honoring those who fought for the preservation of the institution of slavery in order to not repeat that dark, brutal, dehumanizing history?

PAUL STRONG
North Austin Avenue

A thanks to Georgetown volunteers and donors

I am writing to thank Georgetown-area residents for sharing the true meaning of Christmas with children in need this past holiday season.

Generosity throughout contributed to a successful shoebox gift collection season at drop-off locations for the Samaritan's Purse project Operation Christmas Child. Across the U.S., the project collected over 9.3 million shoebox gifts in 2022. Combined with those collected from partnering countries in 2022, the ministry is now sending nearly 10.6 million shoebox gifts to children worldwide.

Through shoeboxes — packed with fun toys, school supplies and hygiene items — Georgetown-area volunteers brought joy to children in need around the world. Each gift-filled shoebox is a tangible expression of God's love, and it is often the first gift these children have ever received.

Through the continued generosity of donors since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has collected and delivered more than 209 million gift-filled shoeboxes to children

in more than 170 countries and territories. This year, Samaritan's Purse delivered its milestone 200 millionth shoebox, which was packed on a country-wide tour and then hand-delivered to a young girl in Ukraine.

Across Texas, shoebox packers often shop for deals on shoebox items throughout the year, and many serve at a deeper level by becoming a year-round volunteer. Information about ways area participants can get involved year-round can also be found at samaritanspurse.org/occ or by calling 817-595-2230.

Although local drop-off locations for gifts are closed this year until November 13, anyone can still be a part of this life-changing project by conveniently packing a shoebox gift online in just a few simple clicks at samaritanspurse.org/buildonline. These simple gifts, packed with love, send a message to children worldwide that they are loved and not forgotten.

LIZETTE MILLER
Boone, North Carolina

Lizette Miller is the media relations manager for Operation Christmas Child with nonprofit Samaritan's Purse.

How to get your letter in

We and our readers value your letters. Letters should not exceed 250 words. **Please include the source of your information.** Letters are edited for length and clarity. Include your name, address and a daytime phone number. Submissions become property of *The Williamson County Sun*.

Email your letter to opinion@wilcosun.com and put your letter in the body of the email in plain email type. We do not open attachments or accept letters written in capital letters.

From the Archive



Ten-year-old Alley Luna, a member of Girl Scout Troop 455, juggles five boxes of cookies she just sold January 19, 2013, hitting the streets for her first weekend of Girl Scout cookie sales. During a three-hour period this morning, Alley sold 45 boxes of cookies as they canvassed homes in the Old Town area.

SUN ARCHIVE

Tatting, stuffed animal sleepover and Ted Lasso

You have heard of knitting, you have heard of crocheting and sewing, but have you ever heard of tatting? Tatting is the handcrafted art of making lace out of knots, rings and chains by using a shuttle. Shuttles are small oval objects that thread is wrapped around that fit easily in your hand. Tatters use these to make ornaments, bookmarks, rings, bracelets, earrings and more.

During the month of February, the Georgetown Public Library will offer an informal tatting group. Experienced tatters will be on hand to assist beginners and introduce them to the techniques via simple projects. The shuttle and thread will be provided with two different times offered; Wednesdays from 6–7 p.m. and Thursdays from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Both sessions will meet on the second-floor bridge.

Tatting is not the only fun thing happening at the library in February. The annual stuffed animal sleepover also returns on February 3. "Stuffies" are invited for an overnight stay, without their children, at the library. Every year the stuffies have different adventures roaming the building after hours. Photos are posted on the library's social media so children back home can see the shenanigans their stuffed animals get



Stuffed animals explore the statues around the library at a previous stuffed animal sleepover.

up to on their visit.

Stuffed animals can be dropped off at the Library on February 3 any time between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pick up your stuffed animal friend on February 4 at 10 a.m. and see a full slideshow of their overnight fun. Caregivers are reminded to please not bring a child's absolute favorite stuffed

animal friend, but another nice stuffed animal friend that the child can comfortably be without overnight.

While stuffed animals take over the building on the first Friday of the month, the Adultish crew will be at Lark and Owl celebrating all things Ted Lasso. Unfortunately, we do not have insider intel on when the next season will premier, but we will come with crafts and trivia to challenge the most dedicated AFC Richmond fans.

Join us outside the bookstore at 7 p.m., weather permitting. Please bring chairs or blankets to sit on. Costumes are also encouraged. While Adultish is for ages 18 and older, we do ask that any soccer chants be appropriate for a mixed audience.

The next day, Saturday, February 4, the library will host a joint presentation with Senior University at 2 p.m. Linda LeBlanc, a world traveler and mountain lover will speak about her time in Nepal. Linda helped design and implement the first lodge system in Nepal, which is a series of 18 Sherpa Guide Lodges in the Everest region. Registration is requested for this program.

All of these events are free and open to the public.

See you soon at the library!

Ann Evans is the Adult Services Librarian at the Georgetown Public Library.

What's going on in the library?

January 5- February 15: Brianna Timourian: Eclectic Synergy (first floor Café Gallery)

January 5- February 15: Capitol Art Society: The Spice of Life (second floor Bridge and Hall Gallery)

February 1, 8, 15, 22, 6 p.m.: Tatting on the Bridge

February 2, 9, 16, 23, 10:30 a.m.: Tatting on the Bridge

February 3, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.: Stuffed Animal Sleepover Dropoff

February 3, 7 p.m.: Adultish Ted Lasso Trivia at Lark and Owl

February 4, 10 a.m.: Stuffed Animal Sleepover Pickup

February 4, 2 p.m.: Travel to the Land of Sherpas and Mt. Everest presentation by Linda LeBlanc with Senior University

February 8, 6:30 p.m.: GPL World Cinema Summer of Soul

For more information about these and other library events, visit library.georgetown.org/events-calendar or call 512-930-3551.