

LIFESTYLE

LITTLE BALKANS CHRONICLES

Ice Cream Wagon Days, Part I

This is the first of a two-part story by Ben George. I'm guessing that, after reading it, you won't be surprised to learn that, after graduation from college, he went on to be a successful salesman and business owner. — J.T.K.



The summers of 1963 thru 1966 saw the George boys of Frontenac off to another financial adventure. Bill, Ben and Bob passed their yard mowing business onto younger brothers, Stan and Steve.

We still had The Pittsburg Sun and Kansas City Star paper routes during the early morning hours, but it was summertime and Dad felt there was plenty of daylight hours for us adolescents to capture some revenue that would contribute to the family's cause — including the upcoming tuitions at St. Mary's High School in Pittsburg.

Dad noticed there was not a reliable ice cream wagon running the streets of Pittsburg and Frontenac and had a wonderful idea. The

Eddie George family of Parsons was shutting down their ice cream business as their children had recently graduated from high school and were off to college or other opportunities.

Bingo! Dad headed over to Parsons, got the basics of the business, and purchased the used Cushman Truckster with the ice cream freezer in the bed. Like I did with my MoPed, I headed to Miners State Bank and co-signed with Dad for the \$500 loan. (I think it was understood that we probably wouldn't make payments during the winter months because that's the way business was back then.)

This Truckster was three-wheel, single cylinder, three-speed Cushman with a small

truck bed for the ice cream box. Dad proceeded to get it street ready by building a surrey top and Mom stitched fringe lace around the wooden frame.

With Dad's help we also installed hazard lights in front and back that we activated with a toggle switch at each stop we made. We found that our school bell used to alert the small fry customers was not pulling its weight by hand, so Dad headed to the local junk yard and came home with a windshield wiper motor. He installed it with a leather string attached to the bell, so it continuously rang during stops — thus drawing in more customers.

We three boys rotated days and shared tips on this morning, is being where the "kids" are. Business was pretty good with daily revenue of about \$35 - \$40.00. Our operating expenses were very small. Gas was about \$1.00 per day and dry ice from the ice plant off 6th and Joplin ran about \$2.00 per day.

We purchased all our product from Picco Ice Cream in Pittsburg. Ice



Ben George hands out ice cream treats to his younger siblings in this in this photo that ran in the May 14, 1966, Pittsburg Sun.

cream bars, fudgesicles and popsicles were three cents each, while drumsticks were six cents. We sold these for 10 and 15 cents each. Basically, we had 100% markup. (Minus the note payment.) Today, franchises like Kahuna and Kona Ice are selling snow cones and ice cream treats for \$5.00 and \$6.00 (usually with over a \$100K investment).

Our routes were basically trial and error. We

always had a debriefing each evening about where we went and how many we sold by street or area. We also soon realized that commercial customers could be sold to every day, whereas kids in residential areas were only good a couple times per week. It wasn't long before we had lunch and break times memorized for several businesses in Pittsburg. Dickey Clay workers were always good for 30 or 40 sales

every day. Atkinson Armature Works, Abshire's and the Laughlin Buick service center were just as good.

Our first year was uneventful and profitable for the three of us. Mom allocated us a few dollars a week and held the rest for the note payment and savings.

— Ben George (to be continued)

From our HISTORY Sponsored by



Clemens hopeful of closing pit merger

Compiled by Joshua Smith
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Excerpted stories in Crawford County newspaper archives

100 Years Ago June 20, 1925

“From present indications the strip mine merger is favored by a majority of the nineteen companies involved,” Ira Clemens moving spirit in the consolidation project, declared today upon his return from Chicago. At a meeting set for Tuesday morning at 10 o'clock, the question of whether the properties involved have been appraised equitably will be gone over by representatives from each of the nineteen companies and appraisers likely will be appointed to make a new appraisal with a view to formality closing the merger within a short time.

Tax collections for the last half of 1924, at the office of Theodore Mon-

tee, county treasurer, here, are expected to set a new high mark today When his office and those of the score or more of tax collecting agencies close tonight, the time limit for paying taxes without a penalty will have expired. At noon today, all coal companies had submitted their payments, Mr. Montee said. Several of the railroads, however, had not done so, a time extension having been granted. No estimate on the amount of taxes paid by the coal companies and other large corporations could be given by Mr. Montee, who said the work of assembling figures will not begin until Monday.

Two thousand employees of the Frisco shops in five cities laid down the heavy duties of their vocations today long enough to come to Pittsburg for the happiest undertaking of singing the annual picnic of the company employees at Lincoln Park. The picnic, which began with the arriv-

al of two special trains from Springfield, Mo., at shortly after 2 o'clock this morning, is being sponsored by the Frisco association, No. 1 of Springfield, with the local Chamber of Commerce assisting with the arrangements. The men who build and repair the Frisco rolling stock came with their families from Monett, Fort Scott and Joplin as well as from Pittsburg and Springfield, many of the visitors here today having traveled from their homes in motor cars.

50 years ago June 20, 1975

Spiced by a hole-in-one in a practice round and an early fill of entries, the second annual Four Oaks Golf Tournament bids to get off to a roaring start Saturday in its two-day run. Clyde Wacker, Fort Scott, aced the first hole during his practice round Wednesday after entering the tournament. He was just one of many tour-

ney title aspirants who toured the par 57, 2,915-yard layout this week in preparation for the run at the top prizes in four flights. Prizes go to the top five finishers in each flight. In addition, there will be a hole-in-one contest for which awards will be made.

Righthander Chris Rhuems pitched a seven-inning perfect game and Donnie Redd scored the game's only run on a passed ball as Pittsburg Legion-Bowlus edged Joplin Post 13 1-0 Thursday night in the opening round of the Joplin Invitational Legion baseball tournament. Rhuems, who chalked up his second no-hitter and his third win of the season, fanned 12 of the 21 batters he faced and didn't allow a ball out of the infield. Of the remaining nine outs, five were recorded on ground balls — two to Ken Grimaldi at second, two to Gary Dunn at third and one to Rhuems — and the rest on pop flies on the infield.

Members of the

League of Women Voters toured the Age Search Branch of the Census Bureau Tuesday. Guided by Ben Downey, the tour was preceded by a film showing Bureau of Census activities. Among services provided the bureau are: facts about economy and welfare; amount of revenue, number of employees and level of spending in the 80,000 areas of government; data on economy for manufacturing, construction, business and transportation; monthly reports on number of housing units started; changes in retail trades; wholesale trade; monthly reports on service trades such as hotels, motels; reports to show our relationship to other countries for export and import figures.

25 years ago June 20, 2000

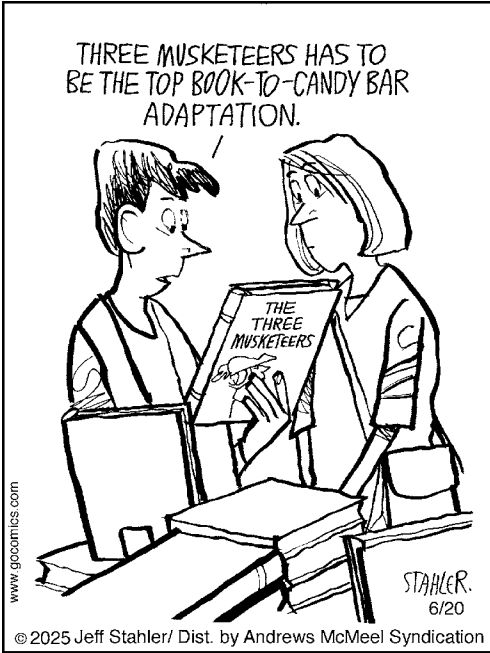
Area residents who have compliments, complaints or simply general comments about the state of wildlife in Kansas have a golden opportunity to express those views this week. On Thursday, the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks Commission will conduct its regular meeting in Pittsburg. The meeting will begin at 1:30 p.m. at the Pittsburg Holiday Inn Express. Commissioners will take a break at 5 p.m., reconvene at 7 p.m. and will likely wrap up their meeting by 10 or 11

p.m. The commission's agenda for the meeting is lengthy but includes time during both the afternoon and evening sessions for public comment on topics which are not on the agenda.

A question to add a half-cent sales tax to finance an addition to the Girard Public Library will be on the November general election ballot in the city of Girard. The Girard City Council decided Monday night to give residents the chance to vote in the November election on a proposal to use a sales tax increase to help fund construction of an 8,775-square-foot, \$1.2 million addition to the library. City Administrator Mike West estimated a half-cent sales tax would generate about \$132,000 a year.

The Frontenac City Council, during its regular meeting Monday, postponed action on a request by the USD 249 School District to purchase land from the city. The district is offering the city \$20,000 for approximately 1.7 acres of land on Carllton Street between Cherokee and Labette streets. The district plans to use the land to build a bus barn. Councilman Charls Quenoy, who said he lives in the neighborhood, said he opposes a bus barn on the property. “I'm 100 percent in favor of selling it to them if they want to use it for a building trades house,” Quenoy said.

MODERATELY CONFUSED



FAMILY CIRCUS



SUDOKU

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PREVIOUS ANSWER

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