

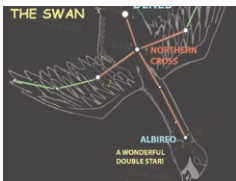
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THE NEWS-ITEM SUNDAY LIFESTYLE

SECTION C

LOCAL
FEATURES

HOME AND
GARDEN

RETROSPECT,
REWIND

PUZZLE AND
ADVICE

SCIENCE AND
THE STARS

SUNDAY
COMICS

October 6, 2019

FIVE QUESTIONS

WALLY'S SWEET ROSE

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION
ONLINE VIRTUAL ARCHIVES/ERIC
YOCUM

Former Mount Carmel resident Walter Yocum Jr. stands with the F-86 Saber that he served as crew chief in Korea and personalized for his sweetheart, Rose Ann Portaro, who once lived in Marion Heights.



A lifelong love travels the world for once-local couple and their family

BY BECKY LOCK
THE NEWS-ITEM
becky_l@newsitem.com

A 6,820-mile separation couldn't dim the feelings one Mount Carmel man had for his girl back home. Now, the love story that began in the 1950s could soon be memorialized in full-color at the Korean War Memorial, which is under construction at the Planes of Fame Air Museum in Chino, California.

Walter "Wally" Yocum Jr. lived on Beaverdale Street, not even 3 1/2 miles from Rose Ann Portaro, who lived in Marion Heights. The pair began dating after Yocum graduated from the township's high school.

"Mom spotted her future husband as a young man going to the movies in Mount Carmel with his friends. As the story goes, mom stated she fell in love with his blue eyes and ended up following him home," says Tom Yocum, the third of Rose and Wally's four sons.

Sweet Rose, Page C2



Wally and Rose enjoy their honeymoon at Niagara Falls in 1955.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

5Qs

Every week your neighbors share a little bit about themselves.



BECKY LOCK

Age: 47

Occupation: Lifestyle Editor at The News-Item

Hometown: Mifflintown

Family: Lots, and I love 'em

1. What is your little-known claim to fame?
I'm a storyteller and photographer extraordinaire. Oh, and I'm humble. And, I have a good sense of humor.

2. What do you want to be remembered for?
Making people laugh or feel some emotion, encouraging them to think or decide to help someone.

3. What do you like best about the summer?
I like that autumn comes directly after it.

4. What profession do you think is the most overpaid?
Professional athlete.

5. What do you most wish you could do in your job?
I want to give my readers a Lifestyle section they love to read. I want to hear from YOU. To be featured in 5Qs, please fill out and return the questionnaire on Page C2.

PET OF THE WEEK



SANDY

This 6-year-old female terrier mix is looking for a forever home where she can be treated like the tiny princess she is.

DANVILLE SPCA
570-275-0340
psspc.org/adoptions/
pets-for-adoption-danville
1467 Bloom Road
Danville
danville@psspc.org
HOURS
12:30 to 6 p.m.
Monday through Sunday

Don't horse (chestnut) around with collecting

Thinking back, my record of collecting items that have little to no value and of failing to accumulate any financially worthwhile collection dates back to the falls of my youth.

No tree was hardy enough to grow on our side of the street where my two brothers and I, as well as a gaggle of other guys, were growing up.

This is probably why I didn't start my first collection until I was allowed to cross the street on my own and travel a few blocks to the nearest horse chestnut tree.

Unlike the regular chestnuts that can be roasted on an open fire and then eaten, horse chestnuts really had no worthwhile use except for collecting.

There weren't many horse chestnut trees in town, so there was fierce competition for the horse chestnuts that fell to the ground. Sometimes the green pods were already



WALT KOZLOWSKI

WALT'S WAY

cracked open, but often we would have to work to get at the prize inside.

Then, we would all do the same thing. We would put them in an old cigar box and keep them in our bedrooms until our moms threw them out.

Some guys would use a pen knife to carve a hole through the middle of the horse chestnuts and then run a piece of string through them to make a necklace. Since I never wanted to wear a horse-chestnut necklace, I never was tempted to make one.

Occasionally, soda companies would have promotions where you could win prizes if you got a lucky bottle cap with a transistor

radio or (gasps!) even a bicycle printed on it. All I was able to get was gas from drinking all that carbonated stuff and a shoebox full of bottle caps — that my mother threw out.

Like most guys, I had an old 5-pound pretzel box filled with baseball and football cards, as well as specialty cards such as presidents of the United States, Zorro and even countries of the world because what kid doesn't like geography.

Since I had five older cousins, I sometimes inherited cards that would be a major part of any collection. Unfortunately, I was lousy at "shooting cards" in which cards were leaned against a wall and players took turns flicking shooters at them to knock them down.

The winner would take all my good cards and I would wind up with a

collection that included multiple cards of Major Leaguers who had lifetime batting averages of .220 or lower and NFL players who only crossed the goal line going to the locker room at halftime or the end of the game.

I did have a collection of comic books. My rather limited income as a kid usually resulted in me buying them used at a greatly reduced price from someone who had read them so many times they had memorized them.

I had a closetful of comic books, but comic books without their covers and with the Charles Atlas bodybuilding ads cut out don't have a high resale value as collectibles.

However, the comic books were responsible for me starting two other collections and coins. I answered an ad from one to buy a bag of stamps from

the world, which were worth less than the price of postage I paid on the bag.

I had one of those blue penny collection albums, but it had more empty spaces than the parking lot at a closed mall.

My most valuable collection turned out to be the coupons I got when I bought Mallo Cups, those chocolate-covered delicacies of creamy marshmallow with a sprinkle of coconut. Five hundred "cents" in coupons earned me a box.

Now, the only collection I have is the 100 pens (only three work) in our junk drawer: However, when eliminating the ink-depleted pens the other day, I made an exciting discovery — a long-forgotten stack of Mallo Cup coupons.

Sweet Rose

FROM PAGE C1

The pair dated even after Wally decided to join the military. He signed up with the Air Force in 1952. It was unfortunate timing, Tom said, as the Korean War was raging.

First, Wally learned his trade — maintaining aircraft — at several Air Force bases, including Sampson AFB in New York and Amarillo AFB in Texas. While training at Shaw AFB in South Carolina, he would travel back to Rose in Pennsylvania to spend the weekends there.

At Shaw, he completed his aircraft and engine training and joined the 336th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. As a member of the squadron, he learned how to maintain B-26 bombers and their jet engines.

Then, in 1954, he was sent to Korea aboard the USS Gen. J.C. Breckenridge. He was assigned to the 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing (Far East Air Force), 336th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, known as the famous “Rocketeers.”

He also was assigned to a plane, an F-86 Sabre, and it was his job to maintain the aircraft as its crew chief.

Each fighter jet had a pilot and a crew chief. Only one person flew in the jet, but both men were given the ability to personalize one side of the plane. Wally’s cohort, pilot Kenneth C. Ewing, kept the name that had been painted there previously, but Wally chose to memorialize his in the name of his “Sweet Rose.”

“He painted her name on his airplane as a constant reminder and even had a painting commissioned of



Walter and Rose celebrate their anniversary, sitting next to a photo of them from their 1955 wedding.

her from a photograph that he brought home,” Tom said. “(Dad) carried a photo of Rose with him in his wallet his entire life.”

Even though Wally’s military duties centered around his jet, he still needed to participate in patrols and protect the base from enemies.

“Dad said that the Army sergeant told him to put the bayonet on his gun for guard duty because you only have 90 rounds (and) when the Chinese come, they come 10,000 at a time,” recalled Eric Yocum, the couple’s youngest son.

Once, Eric said, Wally accompanied the Army soldiers into nearby Seoul, the capital of South Korea.

“The city was destroyed and he rode in the back of an Army truck,” Eric said. “He said they stopped in the road by a blown-up building. Dad said there

was only a foundation wall left. He noticed huddled in a corner was a woman and children, and they were freezing. He said he grabbed some blankets and threw them to the woman.”

Wally’s service in the Air Force lasted about a year: He received four medals — the National Defense Service Medal, the United Nations Service Medal, the Korean Service Medal and the Good Conduct Medal — and a fifth one, the Republic of Korea Service Medal, posthumously.

Routed from Korea to Japan, Wally returned home to the United States in 1955. He wasted no time getting on with his civilian life. Rose and Wally married on Nov. 5, 1955, in Marion Heights.

“(Dad) received a \$300 war bonus from the Air Force and this is what they started their life on,”

Tom wrote in an email. “(He) decided to leave the military because of his devotion to Rose and the new family they decided to start.”

Wally wanted to provide a stable environment, Tom said, and this could best be achieved by not staying in the military, which likely would require relocating often. Instead, Wally’s “love for aircraft engine maintenance kept him at Dover, working a Civil Service role for the Air Force,” Tom said.

“My parents raised four boys, so they encountered the stresses of any family. But it was amazing how they never wavered from the constant solid love for us and themselves,” he added.

The family’s bond was tested in the early 1990s, when one of the brothers, Steven, developed cancer. “(It) was a tough time,”

Eric said. “My parents were with him for every appointment. They stood by him until he passed away.”

Eric has established a website for his family that commemorates his parents’ lives as well as that of, Steve, who died at age 32. On the site, which is accessible at www.yocumusa.com, is a page that relates a story of Wally’s life and military service that was written for “Info Eduard,” a publication by Eduard-Model Accessories Ltd., a company out of the Czech Republic that creates plastic models of aircraft and accessories.

In September 2015, Eric received an email from Richard Plos, of Eduard. Plos wrote that his company was in the midst of creating a 1/48th scale model of the Sabre F-86/F-30.

“I am looking for some new, not-so-celebrity-like

marking planes. I like (the) FU-539, so we might include your father’s plane in (the) decal sheet, making the FU-539 more famous,” Plos wrote.

He did create a model of “Sweet Rose,” and Eric has a photo of his dad with the little model aircraft.

Rose passed away April 7, 2014, and Wally on Feb. 29, 2016.

Next year, Eric said, Wally and “Rose” will be a part of history: The Planes of Fame museum in Chino, California, is building a new Korean War Memorial.

“At this memorial, they will have a F-86, MiG, walkway and educational panels. The F-86 on display will be painted as ‘Sweet Rose’ and an educational panel will be below it,” he said. “A hometown hero who grew up on Beaverdale will have his paint scheme on a Korean War memorial. It’s very neat and exciting for our family.”

The Yocums are raising money to help facilitate the paint scheme work. For information on how to donate, go to www.poftasteofflight.org/sweet-rose.

“I remember the patience of the love between my parents and recognized this as something very uncommon,” Tom wrote in the email. “Even as a young man, I looked to their example and found something unbelievable.

“I can remember telling my friends while I was in school, ‘If I could be half the man my father is, I would be something,’” Tom said. “We had one of the most memorable childhoods that you could ever experience.”

READERS, WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Our “5Qs” feature is in danger of being omitted if no new submissions are received! Please fill out the survey below for a chance to participate in your local, hometown newspaper: There is no age limit, or minimum, and a photo is needed of each participant. You can email one to becky_l@newsitem.com or stop in at the North Rock Street office to have one taken.

FIVE QUESTIONS

5Qs

Every week your neighbors share a little bit about themselves.

Share a little bit about yourself in the Five Questions feature, to be published Sundays in The News-Item.

To be considered for this lighthearted feature, please answer the questions below and mail it to: 5Qs The News-Item 707 N. Rock St. Shamokin, PA 17872

People participating in this feature must come into The News-Item office in Shamokin to have their photo taken. Please include a daytime phone number. Attach a sheet if you need more space.

This Is Your Chance To Be Featured On One of Our Front Pages!

Name _____

Age _____

Occupation _____

Town/City, where you live now _____

Family _____

Hobbies _____

Daytime phone number _____

Contact name if under 18 yrs. of age _____

If you could go back in time, where would you go and why? _____

What is your favorite dessert? _____

What is your favorite Disney Channel show? _____

What are your favorite pizza toppings? _____

Which sports team(s) do you root for? _____

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