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The Party Animal News

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Six degrees of Separation

For a few years I serviced the home of Mario Leal. He was a restaurateur until retirement and he rotated between living in his home in the Kessler Springs area of Dallas and traveling in the summer to live in the mountains of Mexico. Our communication was not perfect, and many times he was resting in bed when I dropped by in the afternoon for pest control services. He was a nice individual. You may have visited his restaurant, Mario Leal's Chiquita. Talking to him, I found out about his previous business. If he was away in Mexico when it was time for a treatment, his housekeeper and yard man might be at the home to clean up before he returned.

Once the yard guy, John Kelly (who himself was 93 years old!), was sitting on the couch in the living room. We started to talk and I told him the first treatment I did at Mario's home was for raccoons. Many of you know that I have interviewed a lot of WWII soldiers over the years and his age, of course, got me to ask if he was in WWII. He told me he was in the battle of Okinawa. He was a private first class from 1944-46. At that point, I asked him if I could videotape him on my phone. He agreed. He seemed to focus on the good times. He really did not discuss the battle. He was 19 years old at the time and part of the First Division of the 5th Marines. He said that there was a lot of kamikaze bombers and other bad things that happened. I did not dig any further.

Last year I read the book "*The Mosquito Bowl*" by Buzz Bissinger. It's main theme goes into why many of the famous college football players were in a war, how they got there and how competitive officers were trying to get a football game going in the middle of a war. Even though the book only briefly discusses the First Division in the battle, it does mention the reasons John Kelly did not want to discuss the battle. It covers the horrible parts of war that we tend to forget and does cover some of the soldiers trying to help the natives and minimize the civilian casualties.

Originally our discussion was about the raccoons because Mr. Kelly wanted to share his experience with raccoons. He was telling me how years ago an apartment complex where he worked was having a problem with trap smart (trap shy) raccoons, and he could not get them to go into the hav-a-hart cages. So they hired a trapper. The trapper was able to catch the raccoon by tying a fish head to the back of the cage. At that point, I told Mr. Kelly that the trapper was me! That job was probably over 35 years ago. Ah, the six degrees of separation we find if we take the time to talk. We had this story in common. I tend to believe he has probably told that story to others over the years. (My Purdue pest control classes had a United States Fish and Wildlife employee teach a unit on trapping nuisance wildlife and that is where I picked up this technique. Our company never did trapping until I brought my knowledge back from college). Mr. Kelly still had a good memory, since he remembered the trapping story after all that time, so I am sure his experiences in the war were a burden to him over the years.

If I had to do it all over again, when I was younger I would have asked more about the soldiers experiences in WWII who I have had the honor of interviewing and I would have recorded them all. In later decades, I have recorded many individuals and some stories from my customers are lodged in my brain still looking for a time to be told. Mario Leal passed away a couple of years ago and when I talked to his sister before I wrote this newsletter, she said that John Kelly was still with us. While there are fewer of them, some of the greatest generation are still holding on and deserve our respect.
Happy 4th of July and God Bless America – David

Please note that we will be closed the last week of August for vacation. Enjoy your summer!

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Support Dog

After the Mavericks amazing run to make it into the NBA finals I was reminded of a story I heard about the teams' support dog. You don't realize what the right dog does to the people who encounter a friendly creature. Ann and I have adopted a dog from a customer who was fostering dogs for Dallas Animal Control. Her name is Amelia, she is a shepard/dobberman mix, 60 pounds and has filled our empty nest life with joy.

We are not new to dogs, in the 1990s A-All had termite detection dogs. Our last termite detection dog was a beagle. Amelia has a different role at A-All. She stays with Ann at our office every day and makes everyone's day better, from delivery people to employees. When I followed up on the Mavericks story about Bailey, the first support dog in the NBA, I was sad to learn she had passed away this April. That had to be heart breaking for the players and organization, and since we have lost pets we understand the emotional impact.

So if you don't reach Ann immediately at the office, wait 10 minutes and give her another try. She and Amelia are probably just out circling the building, taking a break and greeting passers by with their friendly smiles.



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