

A new day in county

Times a-changin'

Whoever "they" are once said the sun doesn't shine on the same dog's tail every day. Another wag observed, even more to the point, that if we will hang around long enough, everything changes.

Well, it's definitely a sign of the changing times (even statewide since Republicans took control of the House for the first time since Reconstruction) that the Washington County Quorum Court—for the first time in 34 years—also will begin 2013 with the sun shining on more Republicans than Democrats.

Considerably more, in fact.

The GOP justices will occupy 10 of the 15 justice of the peace seats. That matters a lot because that constitutes a two-thirds majority. And that translates to enough clout to refer issues before the court to the electorate for a vote, and to override any veto by County Judge Marilyn Edwards, a Democrat.

Not that vetoes are an issue, since Edwards hasn't issued even one during her two terms in office. And a news account said neither did her predecessors in that office, Jerry Hunton and Charles Johnson. Of course, now she has a whole new herd of elephants to try to corral.

Since the fog of election has cleared, Democrats in Washington County hold the offices of county judge, sheriff, treasurer and coroner. Republicans occupy the seats of assessor, county clerk, collector and circuit clerk. That same news story said this is the first time in as long as anyone can remember that both parties equally hold executive positions in Washington county government. Sounds pretty balanced to me.

Nuclear prodigy

Did you see the story not long ago about that teenager named Taylor Wilson who at 14 created nuclear fusion in his garage? The young fella (he's now 18), originally from Texarkana and now living in Reno, Nev., spoke recently at an education conference in Hot Springs.

Wilson addressed the gathering on "Next Generation Learning," and showed why he has been the focus of news stories that describe his remarkable abilities in nuclear science. He's received nine Intel science awards, including one for creating a low-cost means of detecting nuclear material by using the fusion reactor he made, a news account said. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is now using that detector. He's already met with the president at the White House. And this year he joined 43 other Thiel Fellows in receiving \$100,000 grants to bypass college for now to focus on their own research and work that might well one day benefit the entire world.

I remember struggling at age 18 to somehow maneuver my way through chemistry with a low C. Way to go, Taylor.

Hip's no longer new

Could it really have been nine



Mike Masterson

years this week? It seems like only last month in Little Rock that Dr. William F. Hefley Jr. was spending a few hours surgically replacing my badly arthritic right hip with a version made of plastic and chrome.

If I close my eyes, I can still relive that morning, the rolling gurney, the chill of the operating room and two surgical assistants (both named Mike) looking down on me as the plastic anesthesia mask was placed over my nose. I do recall telling them before all went blank that with three of us by the same name in one place, "things could quickly get downright confusing."

The operation turned out to be one of the best choices I've made in my life. Thanks to this physician and his staff, I was soon back on both feet and walking as well at age 54 as I had been at 30.

Since then, thousands of other Arkansans have had the same operation, many by Dr. Hefley, who actually teaches other surgeons how to do the minimally invasive technique. Seems it's common for we of the baby boomer generation to be wearing out our hips well before we take our final breaths.

And thanks to the technology and methods that allow this surgery to be performed with only two 2-inch incisions that cut through no muscle and require no "rehabilitation recovery" as such, the operation can be completed during an overnight stay in the hospital, which it was for me in 2003.

I've lost track of how many people have contacted me since then to ask about what to expect from such an operation. But it's pleasing to me to see that Dr. Hefley still distributes the little book I decided to write about this surgery to his patients. He feels the story of my experience in *One Hip Book* can be reassuring for them. They know just what to expect from the beginning to past the end, purely from a patient's perspective. And that's exactly why I wrote such a niche book—to hopefully provide some confidence from the voice of one who had been there and done that.

As a result, I hope my simple *One Hip Book* has helped bring peace of mind to thousands of those who've undergone the surgery since mine.

So if you are facing the prospect of having a hip replaced, you can contact me at the email address listed below. Sometimes a measure of understanding and having questions resolved by one who's been there can make a lot of difference.

Mike Masterson's column appears regularly in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. Email him at mikemasterson10@hotmail.com.



