

HISTORY & FOLKLORE



From Illustrated Press of Liberty County, Thursday, May 24, 1962 –

Barbara Reidland Flurry as she won the title of Miss Dayton Aqua Queen in 1955, the first to win that honor. She is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Reidland of Dayton and is married to Ford Flurry there. The 1962 Aqua Queen contest is set for June 9.

– Photo by Willis Watkins

From Dayton-Liberty Voice, Wednesday, October 29, 1980 –

Gordon Baxter,
Bill Brett and Me

by Kevin Ladd

This is a troublesome matter, and I do not know how to bring it up without sounding conceited or pompous. Here is the problem in a nutshell: Let's suppose that someday I become a famous writer. Okay, cut out that laughing out there. Give me some respect, readers.

Suppose I become a famous writer, and then all of these reporters come out here to Liberty to interview me? What in the world do I do for image? For "local color?" For "good copy?" Reporters want a few good quotes or at least for someone to be unusual enough to write about. I am just about as dull as dishwater.

Reporters can go out to Gordon Baxter's place on Village Creek, which he carved out and built from the wilderness and Gordon Baxter will just be Gordon Baxter. The reporters go back to wherever it was that they came from and write about what a wild and crazy guy he is.

Then we come full circle back to me. I need to change my image. Maybe I need to become eccentric.

Cap'n John Ferguson First To Dock Deep-Draft Ship At Orange



From Illustrated Press of Liberty County, December 14, 1961 –

Note: Captain John Ferguson was the father of Mrs. W.D. (Dwight) Johnston, Liberty. The sketch and text once appeared in the Beaumont Journal. Captain John was living when this was printed; he died October 11, 1961.

One of the best-known landmarks – or watermarks of Orange is "Cap'n" John Ferguson, harbor master. "Cap'n" John was born in Orange. His father was a sawmill man and he grew up in the bayou swamps and on the Sabine River.

He began his career as a deck hand in the old days of sternwheelers on the Sabine. These craft wafted freight and supplies to lumber camps along the river as far as Logansport.

After only three years, he took the examination for a first class pilot's license – and passed without a hitch. He has held this license for more than 40 years, an unlimited one covering Sabine Pass, Calcasieu Pass and tributaries.

During all his years as a river man "Cap'n" John has had only one minor accident.

EVACUATION

The captain has a wealth of colorful stories of doings in the early days along the waterways. Some of them are even true.

One of his most harrowing experiences was also the most satisfactory – the evacuation of 108 people from Johnson's Bayou during the 1915 storm without losing a single life. "Cap'n" John remembers that they were all pretty scared.

When the deep-water channel was opened to the Port of Orange in 1918 he was made harbor master, which makes him the only one the city has ever had.

"Cap'n" John Ferguson docked the first deepwater ship to reach the port, a two-masted schooner loaded with chicory and sisal from Tampico, Mexico.

FIVE CHILDREN

The captain is a widower. The late Mrs. Ferguson was before their marriage Miss Georgia Park of Westlake, LA. He has five living children, Mrs. Annie May Bates and Miss Georgia Ferguson of Texas City, Mrs. Lucille Johnston of Liberty, Mrs. Beulah Seymour and John Jr. of Orange. Another son, Green B. Ferguson of Orange, died in 1943.

I could start wearing blue jeans, denim shirts, and an old sweat-stained cowboy hat like Bill Brett. The only problem is that I am somewhat overweight and instead of looking like a famous author I would probably look more like Mr. Ziffel on the old Green Acres television series. Okay, scratch that idea.

I could do like Gordon Baxter and walk around barefoot every once in a while, but my feet sometimes smell like somebody killed a horse and nobody has found the body in a couple of days. Scratch that idea, too.

I could do like William Faulkner and a host of other writers and take me a mistress. No, scratch that idea;

my mother would kill me.

Let's see, I could memorize jokes and entertain reporters with those. Hey, let me tell you the one about the monkey, the donkey, and the porcupine that went to France... No, that's not a very good idea, either. I bet everybody knows that joke. Scratch the joke idea.

I could start dressing like an Urban Cowboy.

Yeah, I went down to Gilley's and rode that mechanical bull. I whopped that son of a biscuit eater. No, once again who wants to be known as a fat Urban Cowboy?

I guess I'll just have to stick to being me. I wonder what people would think if I started wearing nothing but white suits like Mark Twain used to do?

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