

Ybor chickens rule the roost

By Paul Guzzo
The Tampa Bay Times

TAMPA — Cephas Gilbert says he is visited daily by old buddies.

For years, the same flock of red chickens and roosters hung outside his Cephas Hot Shop restaurant at 1701 Fourth Avenue in Ybor City.

Then, in February, he said goodbye to his feathery friends when he opened a juice bar under the same name a few blocks over at 1613 Seventh Ave.

But he says some of those birds have been hanging around his business lately.

"They miss me," Gilbert said with a laugh.

Well, not really.

Chickens famously find all sorts of reasons to cross the road, but most of the Ybor fowl have historically stayed away from Seventh Avenue due to its high volume of cars and people.

Then came the shutdown of most Ybor businesses to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Seventh Avenue was suddenly chicken friendly and they made their way to the main thoroughfare.

"You see more here now than ever," said Gilbert, who has been in Ybor since 1981. "It's nice."

Photos of animals claiming spaces throughout the world during the pandemic have spread via social media — monkeys in New Delhi, mountain goats in Wales.

But the Ybor chickens did not initially follow suit.

The birds are animals of habit, said Dylan Breese, founder of the Ybor Chickens Society that cares for the wild fowl. Flocks stick to their certain areas.

Some live in Centennial Park, for instance, and others in the vacant lots that dot Fifth Avenue between 19th and 20th streets.

"They don't venture out because that is where they feel safe," Breese said. "If they venture into another chicken's territory, that is when fights happen."

But then people ventured back onto Seventh Avenue for takeout food that they would eat on walks.

"My wife and I would see those folks actively feeding the chickens or discarding food," said Chris Wojtowicz, chairman of the Ybor City Development Corporation and a resident of the community. "Then we began to see large flocks gather on

Seventh."

Parts of Seventh Avenue were closed to car traffic May 4 to be used for outdoor seating by the surrounding restaurants, helping them reopen while practicing social distancing.

Breese now fears outdoor diners will think it is cute to feed chickens.

"They lose their independence and they start to depend on people to eat or could think this is a place to get food and jump on a table," he said. "Also, a lot of food you think would be good for them like certain vegetables are actually toxic."

His society of volunteers has taken to the streets and social media to get their message across.

"Don't feed the chickens," he said.

The Ybor birds have caused the same issue for those few cars on Seventh Avenue lately as they normally do on the surrounding streets. They don't speed up their journey across the road, no matter how loud a car might honk.

Still, it hasn't been a concern because the Latin District has been so vacant, Wojtowicz said.

Plus, he added, the chickens mostly stick to the sidewalks where they can find discarded food.

"I notice a lot hanging in front of 7-11" at 1535 Seventh Ave., Wojtowicz said. He then added with a laugh, "Maybe they want Slurpees."

How the chickens made Ybor home is its own debate.

Some believe they are the descendants of the chickens owned by Ybor's founding immigrants. Others say chickens didn't reappear in the district until the 1970s.

Gilbert takes some credit. He says a storm in the 1980s destroyed his Ybor chicken coup, allowing 40 birds to roam free and birth future generations.

Drop offs remain an issue, Wojtowicz said. People purchase chickens for home coops, realize they take work to maintain, and leave the birds in Ybor, which is illegal and dangerous.

"Those poor domesticated birds don't stand a chance against the feral," Wojtowicz said.

Wojtowicz expects the chickens to again shun Seventh Avenue as pedestrian and vehicular traffic picks up.

Gilbert will miss them.

"I'll have to visit them," he said. "We're old friends."



With Seventh Avenue more empty than ever due to coronavirus precautions, the chickens that normally avoid the busy area are now frequenting Ybor's main thoroughfare. A family of chickens is seen in front of Acropolis Greek Taverna in Ybor City. [LUIS SANTANA/TAMPA BAY TIMES]



James "Ronnie" Bledsoe
July 22, 1949 - June 23, 2020

On Tuesday, June 23, 2020, James "Ronnie" Bledsoe, 70, of Ormond Beach, Florida, loving husband, father, brother-in-love, uncle, and grandfather, went home to be with his Lord and Savior. Predeceased by his parents, J.C. and Annie Mae Blume Bledsoe, Ronnie was born on July 22, 1949 in Columbia, South Carolina. Moving to Florida in the late 60's, he and his dad started Volusia Construction Co., a successful underground utilities company for over 30 years. Ronnie loved life, always on the go. He was an avid Offshore Tournament Big Game Fisherman, whose team won or placed in many tournaments, capped off by finishing 3rd in the World Championship Tournament in Cabo San Lucas, MX. He loved SCCA Spec Racing, driving in competition races. He and his life partner, Lore, loved Cruising, Traveling, Cards, Bicycling, NASCAR, racing, and just being with their family and friends. Ronnie is survived by the love of his life, his loving wife of 37 years, Lore Bledsoe of Ormond Beach, FL; his daughters, Deneah Bledsoe of Palm Coast, FL, Kelli Ann Nugent (Tom) of Palm Coast, FL and Rhonda Larabee (Scott) of Winter Park, FL; by his sisters, Diane Vaughn (Sammy) of Daytona Beach, FL and Kathy Ballew (Chuck) of Fountain Inn, SC. He was predeceased by his sister, Barbara Greene (Fred) of Ormond Beach, FL. Also surviving are his grandchildren, whom he loved dearly, Cody Moore of New Smyrna Beach, FL, Kelsie Saskill (Michael) of Palm Coast, FL, and Maddison & Bennett Larabee of Winter Park, FL. He also leaves behind too many friends to count. Ronnie's smile and spirit were infectious to all who had the privilege of meeting him. His quiet generosity and abundant love for those around him were inspirational and an undeniable testament to the person he was. Ronnie died as he lived, loving life to the fullest, filled with love, compassion and empathy. Above all else, his exemplary integrity would be difficult for most men to reach, but, for Ronnie, it was everyday life. There will never be another like him. Men like Ronnie only come into your lifetime once: we are all better because of him. Visitation will be held on Thursday, July 2nd between the hours of 4-7 PM at Lohman Funeral Home; 733 W. Granada Blvd., Ormond Beach. Entombment will be held privately. In lieu of flowers, please kindly consider making a donation in Ronnie's memory to Food Brings Hope, 555 W Granada Blvd., Ormond Beach, Florida 32174: FoodBringsHope.org and (386) 317-5767. Due to COVID, we are choosing to hold a celebration of life next year on the anniversary of his passing. Arrangements are under the care of Lohman Funeral Home Ormond Beach. Condolences for the family may be shared at www.lohmanfuneralhomes.com.

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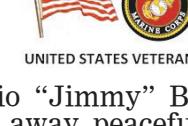
Funeral Services

Helen Ahern

Helen Ahern, of New Smyrna Beach, passed away on Thursday, June 25, 2020. Helen was preceded in death by her husband, William (Bill) Ahern. Her family and friends will miss her greatly. There will be no services. Helen ask that her friends gather in a way they see fit to celebrate the wonderful life she lived.



Virginia "Jimmy" Barbone
June 19, 2020



Virginia "Jimmy" Barbone 91 passed away peacefully at his home in Deland, Florida on June 19, 2020. His devoted wife Gloria Barbone of 37 years and the love of his life was at his side. Left to cherish his memory are his wife Gloria, son James Barbone, daughter Michele Coletti, granddaughter Adriana Barbone Papaleo, and great grandson Dominic Papaleo, and many nieces and nephews. Jimmy was born to Virginio Barbone and Rosina Pitriello May 8, 1929 in Belleville, New Jersey. Jimmy was the youngest of six children. Private First Class Virginio James Barbone served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1946 to 1948. After serving his country, Jimmy went on to become a Master Diesel Mechanic of heavy equipment, and owner of Terminal Transport Trucking Company in Port Newark, New Jersey. He relocated to Florida in 1978. Jimmy's passion was cooking Italian dishes that he learned from his mother. He will always be remembered for his delicious meatballs, and many other culinary delights. He enjoyed entertaining, and was happiest when he was whipping up something in the kitchen. His joy was evident, and he had the most beautiful smile. He was a loving man who always put his family first. He will rest in eternity at the Mt. Olivet Cemetery, Bloomfield, New Jersey in the Barbone family plot. A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.



Izetta Polite Scott

Sept. 23, 1919 - June 21, 2020

Funeral Services for Mrs. Izetta Polite Scott, 100, Daytona Beach, who passed on June 21, 2020, will be 11AM Monday, June 29, 2020 at R.J. Gainous Funeral Home, Inc., with Rev. Dr. Michael A. Chambers, pastor, Greater Friendship M. B. Church, officiating. Interment will follow in Daytona Memorial Park North. Calling hours will be from 5PM until 7PM today (Sun, June 28) and from 10AM until service time on Monday in the chapel. Mrs. Scott was born September 23, 1919 in Beaufort, S.C. to the late Edward and Victoria Polite. Mrs. Scott met the love of her life and married Brooks Scott on 09/03/1947, where they remained inseparable until his death in 1989. A love that was never broken. Mrs. Scott relocated to Daytona Beach with her husband following his retirement. She was a member of Greater Friendship M. B. Church. She is survived by, goddaughter: Minister Carol J. (Pastor Gene) Burnett; grand goddaughters: Angellia and Danielle Burnett; a host of nieces and nephews: Elizabeth Moore, Deborah Elmore, Danielle Watkins, Michael Greene, Nathaniel Duncan, Lillian Brooks, Pharn Greene, Eugene Green, Victoria Brown, Mariana Andersen, Vera Anderson, and Harold Anderson.

R.J. Gainous Funeral Home, Inc.



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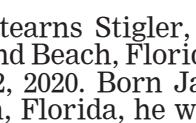
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Otis Stearns Stigler

January 18, 1934 - June 2, 2020



Otis Stearns Stigler, age 86, of Ormond Beach, Florida, died on June 2, 2020. Born January 18, 1934, in Daytona Beach, Florida, he was the son of the late Daytona Beach City Commissioner Barritt M. Stigler and Frances B. Stigler. Otis was a respected Lt. Col. Air Force pilot flying B-24s, B-47s, C-124s, C-130s and C-141s. The C-130 far and away being his favorite. He would often say, "You've got to be tough to fly the heavies." From - 0 to FL42.0 From - 100 to 300 baggage drills From - 2000 to 7000 flight hours From - VFR to IFR From - Small arms fire to artillery From - Good landings to bad ones From - Mildly pissed off to highly pissed off From - Engine Failure to Cockpit Fire From - Departure to Landing. After retiring from the Air Force following the Vietnam War, he worked for many years with the State of Florida Veterans Job Service helping veterans find employment. In his spare time, he enjoyed his cabin in the Smoky Mountains, being engaged in politics, and spending time with his family — especially his five grandchildren. Otis is survived by his two sons, Steven Douglas Stigler and Dwight Dean Stigler; along with five grandchildren; Kristen, Ashley, Jonathan, Caleb and Samuel Stigler. Otis was predeceased by his loving wife of 56 years, Lois Arlene Stigler in 2017, and his beloved son Scott Stearns Stigler in 2000.

Dignity

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DEATHS

Sanborn, II, Edward, 52, Holly Hill, Golf Course Spray Tech., 06/23/2020

Obituaries are published daily in the Local section and include the following information:

name of deceased, age, current city of residence, date of death and occupation.

For death notices call 386.681.2400 or fax 386.255.7840

For more detailed information, including funeral services and arrangements, a paid notice may be placed.

The deadline for a paid notice to appear in the next day's publication is 3:00 pm.

For more information on paid notices, please call 386.681.2400 or email paidnotices@news-jrn.com

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