



ARTESIA DAILY PRESS

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SUNDAY

Local musician, artist still having fun at age 89

By STACI GUY

Daily Press Staff Writer

With no more than \$5 and a ham, Curtis Haskins and his wife, Clovis, made their way from east Texas to New Mexico in 1941 to start their new life together.

"They moved here in 1941," daughter Debra Bennett said as Haskins interrupted, "We didn't move here in 41', we came here in 41' — we didn't have anything to move!"

Haskins said his dad had given the newly married couple \$5 and a ham and with that, he said, they headed west to New Mexico. But Haskins will be the first to tell you — albeit likely as a joke of some sort — that things weren't easy back then.

"I got fired from my first job on my first day of work," he said, as Bennett burst into laughter, prompting him to explain the reason for being let go from his job.

As it turns out, Haskins — in his early 20s at the time — "didn't know much about anything" back then, including where on a vehicle the gas tank was located. While working at a gas station might seem simple enough, if it is unclear where the gas tank is located, therein lies a problem.

"I got fired because I didn't even know where the gas tank was," he said with a laugh.

Haskins proceeded to talk about another job he took, this time in the oilfield, from which he was also fired, which led to a list of jobs he held over the years, doing everything from refinery work to glass etching.

"I have done a little bit of everything," he said.

There are two professions, however that Haskins has seemed to excel in over the years — songwriting and engraving.

Born in Henderson, Texas, in

1919, Haskins began playing music professionally in his teens in the late 1930s. He and Clovis shared in their love of music, often writing, singing and harmonizing together on their own songs.

"Daddy even tracked his own harmony" on a song he wrote titled 'You're Making Believe,'" Bennett boasted.

"I've really had a lot of fun," Haskins recalls.

Bennett, ever the proud daughter, is quick to mention her "daddy's hit single" 'She's Really Gone' that he wrote for Hoyle Nix of the West Texas Cowboys in the 1950s.

Haskins said Nix — who was four-times married and often chose his music career over his marriages — asked him to write him a song and said he wanted it to be titled 'She's Gone.' Nix didn't however, tell Haskins what exactly he wanted the song to be about, he just gave him a working title.

"I came back from Big Spring (Texas) and started thinking about what to write this song about," Haskins said. And finally, he decided to add the word "Really" to Nix's proposed title and formulate it around a past relationship. "She's Really Gone" is about seeing an ex-lover with a new man and realizing that she is, in fact, really gone.

Nix, he said, loved the song and decided to record it.

"Hoyle recorded it and gave daddy back half of the songwriting rights," Bennett said.

After recording Haskins' song on his record, Nix then sang the song on country singer Bob Wills' hit album titled "For the Last Time," which went double-platinum.

"My daddy's name is hanging in the Hall of Fame," Bennett boasted, referring to Wills' record being inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame with Haskins' name as the songwriter of one of the songs.



Curtis Haskins

In 1965, Haskins started the Midas record label with Jimmy Blakely, who was a singing steel guitarist from Roswell.

Tragically, 1965 was also a devastating year for Haskins. Clovis Haskins' life was cut short when, as Curtis Haskins says, she was "killed" in a car accident, certain not to say she "died in an accident."

After her death, Haskins and Blakely parted ways, with Haskins taking the Midas label and Blakely starting a new label, Darsa.

After the untimely death of his wife in 1965, Haskins eventually remarried and moved back to Texas with his second wife, where he began his second suc-

cessful career — working for a monument company.

Some years later, they moved back to New Mexico and Haskins opened Great Western Monument Company, first in Roswell and then in Artesia.

"I have tombstones all over the state," he said. "And I did many of them in the cemetery here."

Haskins' engraving endeavors, however, did not end when he left the tombstone business. In fact, his etching work on glass and mirror can still be found in businesses in town, including the Wellhead Restaurant & Brew Pub and Bennie's Western Store. Other local businesses that have received and displayed his work include Navajo Refining Company and Mack Energy Corporation.

"Daddy put the Wellhead's



Staci Guy photos

Curtis Haskins, age 88, etches a design on a vase that will be placed on a tombstone at Woodbine Cemetery. After his design is complete, he will sandblast the image onto the vase and will then paint the design black to make it more visible.

logo on the glass on the cabinet doors," Bennett said, as Haskins chimed in, "I had to put the design on tempered glass, for one thing, and I had to do it backwards," he said, explaining that the design was placed on the inside of the cabinets facing outward.

"I only broke one piece of glass," he said.

Impressive, since Haskins was in his 80s when he took on the job for the Wellhead.

Still today, Haskins sits in his living room, etching a vase with the initials "CH." Next, he will etch an identical vase, again with the initials "CH," and both will be placed on a tombstone at

Woodbine Cemetery — one vase to hold his flowers (Curtis Haskins) and one to hold his first wife's flowers (Clovis Haskins).

"I just wanted the people of Artesia to know what a jewel they have right here in Artesia," Bennett said proudly of her father. "Here he is, almost 89 years old, and he is still doing this kind of work!"

Haskins, who will turn 89 on April 20, said he has many cherished memories of times past and said he has had "lots of fun."

"My daddy always told me, 'If you can't have fun, stay home,'" he said. "And oh boy have I had lots of fun!"

Democratic senator says troop buildup a failure

WASHINGTON (AP) — A leading Democrat on Saturday declared last year's troop buildup in Iraq a failure.

Sen. Joe Biden, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the military push didn't succeed because U.S. troops remain committed there in large numbers and political reconciliation has not been achieved.

"The purpose of the surge was to bring violence in Iraq down so that its leaders could come together politically," said Biden, D-Del., in this week's Democratic radio address. "Violence has come down, but the Iraqis have not come together."

He later added, "There is little evidence the Iraqis will settle their differences peacefully any time soon."

Biden offered an early rebuttal to next week's testimony by Gen. David Petraeus, the top military commander in Iraq, and Ryan Crocker, the U.S. ambassador there. Petraeus and Crocker

are expected to say the recent buildup in troops has succeeded in improving security. But they also likely will say that a period of assessment is needed this summer before officials can decide whether troop withdrawals can continue.

Democrats have called this approach unacceptable and said they would pursue an alternative policy through legislation. They said their focus will be on restoring the strength of the Army and Marines and refocusing the nation's resources on fighting terrorists in Afghanistan.

"I believe the president has no strategy for success in Iraq," Biden said. "His plan is to muddle through, and hand the problem off to his successor."

Republicans say they are satisfied with the recent drop in violence and that more time is needed to improve the situation there.



Riding around

Artesians enjoyed food, rides and fun at the carnival held at the Eddy County Fairgrounds this weekend.

Jessica Lee photo

If anyone has completed the Weigh Down workshop in the last 2 years please contact JoAnn Elliott at Faith Baptist Church 746-4484 or 746-3488

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GOOD SAMARITAN SOCIETY of ARTESIA
In an effort to provide the safest environment for our residents in the event of an emergency, the Good Samaritan Society will be connecting a new emergency generator on Tuesday, April 15th, which will cause our center to be on very limited electrical service for the entire day. Our Emergency Preparedness Team, and all of our staff, are well-trained and fully able to handle the unusual circumstances; and we have planned in detail for the day. Although the situation is serious and we will provide the best of care for our residents, we also plan to make the day fun with plenty of activities and a bar-b-que. This event will make it necessary to provide items and services beyond the scope of our ordinary day-to-day operations. The Good Samaritan Society, as non-profit organization, would welcome your charitable donations to help during this power outage event. Feel free to contact the center at 746-9865 for a list of needed items.

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GO BULLDOGS!

FROM THE FAMILY OF JOHNNY FANNING:
Your kind outpouring of love and sympathy in the passing of our dear Husband, Dad, Father-In-Law, Grandy (Dooba), Brother, Brother-In-Law, Uncle, Son-In-Law and Friend are greatly appreciated by all of us. Your generosity of food, supplies, visits, flowers, cards and prayers have been a blessing to all our lives. Johnny's love lives forever in our hearts and memories!
God Bless You, Sincerely, Gerene, Jed, Joe Dee, Jill and their families. Also Jerry and Gary and families and our many extended family members.

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