

GUTS

What does it mean to you?

I've just written this beautiful book entitled GUTS.

Yes, GUTS! It is the biography of Carlton Spence, a good man of integrity, character and determination. You may have heard of Carlton Spence in relation to his past ownership of the Jacksonville Shipyards. This is the story of Carlton's life as well as of what really happened at the Shipyards.

When the book was finally in print, I asked Carlton to inscribe one especially for me, and he wrote: *What does GUTS mean to you?*

On the surface, the definition of GUTS includes words like intestinal fortitude, courage, audacity, spunk ... you get the picture ... but as I've thought more deeply about Carlton's question as it applies to my life, I've decided that GUTS stands for **God's Ultimate Training School!**

I once heard that if you want to give God a good laugh, tell Him your plans.

It's true. When you choose to go the way of **God's Ultimate Training School**, you can always expect the unexpected and, sometimes, when it's taken GUTS to get you there, the unexpected can be delightful!

In fact, there are three basic Rules at **God's Ultimate Training School**:

1. Understand that nowhere is it written that life is fair. Life is never fair, but it can be oh so beautiful.
2. It's God's money. If you do the right thing with it, He'll give you more.
3. It's God's world. If you count Him as the boss, He'll lead you, especially when you are using GUTS to take a giant leap of faith.

Some of you know that I started out as a secretary at Blue Cross by day and a freelance writer and columnist by night and on weekends. By 2005, my portfolio had grown to the point where I was forced to choose between my passion and my paycheck. "DON'T DO IT!" warned my good friend, 92-year old Stetson Kennedy. "DON'T LEAVE YOUR SECURE JOB! I'VE

BEEN A FREELANCER FOR 70 YEARS! THE POSTMAN WILL BE YOUR PAYMASTER!”

Boy, was Stetson right. During the past four years, there have been many sad days at the Brandenburg mailbox, but, miraculously, God has given me the GUTS to persist. He has also given me the words, the work and the wherewithal to survive. And, a huge bonus ... He has allowed me to write about some of His favorite people like Roy Deese and Tom Boyd and Carlton Spence.

In fact, it was five years ago that I wrote about Tom Boyd's 70th Birthday Ball Game on June 5th – this very day! Happy Birthday, Tom! Here's the article:

SOUTHSIDE NOTES: Former players pay tribute to their coach

By SUSAN D. BRANDENBURG

Southside Notes

Summer vacation has come to an end, but for several Southsiders, the events of Summer 2004 will linger in their hearts for a lifetime.

On June 5, for instance, more than 100 guests surprised Tom Boyd with a 70th-birthday bash at Windy Hill Elementary School's baseball park. Boyd, who coached the Windy Hill Dolphins for more than a decade, was reunited with about 40 of his former players and their families as they paid tribute to the man who coached them in life as well as in baseball.



Tom Boyd plays second base again -- even though

"I started playing for Mr. Boyd when I was 13 and ended up playing for him for six years," recalled Joe Johnigan of Deerwood. "Today, I'm the father of five, and I credit him with teaching me how to be a good parent and husband. He did more than teach us strong values. He lived them. He was like a father to all of us and still is. My younger brothers, James and Jerry, played for him, too, and Mr. Boyd was at the hospital the day before my brother, Jerry, died of cancer at 20. He taught us to put God and family first."

he's 70 now.
Special

The surprise party, engineered by Tom and Martha Boyd's four children, Tim, Joni, Bo and Vicki, their spouses and their children, included a picnic of old-fashioned ballpark fare -- hot dogs and hamburgers -- followed by a lively game of softball.

"Dad played second base, and at 70, he played just like he used to!" said Joni Boyd-Abner Magnusson. "The party wrapped up with several players giving speeches about how Dad changed their lives. Some talked about being raised by single mothers and looking to him as a father figure. Then there were the two brothers whose father was killed in an automobile accident in the middle of the night and Dad was on their doorstep at 7 a.m. to be there for their family. They talked on and on about how Dad and Mom were always there for them -- now a bunch of grown men standing in the ballpark and crying through every word!"

Responding with his legendary tongue-in-cheek sense of humor to the outpouring of love and respect from his large circle of family and friends, Tom Boyd commented with a grin, "This is the most fun I've ever had ... outside!"

That was a \$50 Florida Times-Union article, folks, and even though it's precious beyond price in heaven to pay tribute to one of God's finest, \$50 a mortgage does not pay.

A couple of years ago, I decided I had to make a business decision and stop writing \$50 articles. I began doing marketing writing, website text, PR for

some non-profits. I was determined to resist those important human interest stories, despite my GUT instincts.

So, when my friend, Suzanne Yack, called with those fateful words: “Have I got a story for you!” I turned her down flat.

Suzanne’s friend Danny Berenberg had been the victim of a hit and run accident on April 4, 2008 in the pouring down rain of the Springin’ the Blues Festival at Jax Beach. He had been badly injured, spent a few days at the hospital and was now in a wheelchair – and there had been no press!

“That’s too bad,” I said, “but somebody else will have to write about it. I can’t afford to.”

Suzanne emailed me about it. I deleted the email.

It was when she originated the website “Whohitdanny.org.” that I finally knew it was a God call. Sometimes he sends messengers, you know?

I met and interviewed Danny, in his wheelchair, that night. I did some pretty extensive research on the incidence of hit & run accidents at the beaches – and I wrote a front page story in the St. Augustine Record for which I was paid \$25.00, BUT ... and here’s where GUTS comes in ... Danny (who has recovered from his injuries, thank God) liked my style and hired me to work with his fundraising company, GiftCounsel.com.

You may have heard of GiftCounsel.com – they raised the money for Jacoby Symphony Hall, the Equestrian Center, the Jaguar Exhibit for the Zoo – and when Danny hired me as the Director of Field Research, I helped conduct and write a feasibility study into a possible multi-million dollar capital campaign for Rodeheaver Boys Ranch. The Rodeheaver Foundation has since hired our firm for a Major Gifts Campaign.

One of my initial assignments with GiftCounsel.com was to interview the Rodeheaver Foundation’s Trustees and one of those Trustees is Carlton H. Spence. Carlton liked my style and asked me to write his book.

So, thanks to GUTS, I’ve gone from a mailbox haunting freelancer to a fundraiser and a biographer!

It's been an exciting journey so far, and in the end, GUTS has led right me back to writing good stories about good people – on a much larger scale!

So, what does GUTS mean to me? Everything.