

Obituary notices got a personal touch back in 1905

Modern obituaries are pretty straightforward. But there was a time when journalists took some liberties with the usual format of "who, what, when, where, why and how."

I have an ancestor's obituary that begins, "The Angel of Death call on Saturday at the home of ..." Readers of the *Bloomington Telephone* probably weren't startled at the newspaper's editorializing about the life of the late A.D. Stoute.

The easiest way to explain the writer's approach to the man's life is to quote from the obituary which appeared in the Dec. 26, 1905, issue. "While his life may not have measured up to the ethical standpoint of most people hereabouts, yet there was much of good in it."



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

It took the *Telephone* several paragraphs to get around to the point. The truth of the matter was that Stoute was a saloon keeper.

The writer pointed out that "The boys always said that 'Bud's' heart was in the right place, and when he had money in his pockets, it would not stay there when appeals of need and requests of charity faced him. He gave away all he made."

The *Telephone* explained that in his youth Stoute had tried to be a Monon (railroad)

engineer, but it wasn't the right profession for him. Continued the newspaper, "He told the *Telephone* not long ago that he was born and raised in the saloon business and knew nothing else and could follow no other trade."

Did he have any qualms about selling alcoholic beverages? The *Telephone* obituary covered that, too. "He spoke of the fact that all could not look at the same thing in the same way, and what one believed to be entirely wrong another thought it right, and 'as whiskey will be sold, I had as well sell it as any one else.'"

The obituary also contained a rather puzzling sentence. "Bud Stoute always knew where to find the writer when it came time to discourage his business, and yet the *Telephone* had no better friend."

It was obvious that there was some friendship between the reporter and Stoute. What else could have prompted the reporter to write, "Those who knew the old man best could see the good of his heart within, and many had tested his peculiar loyalty."

The unorthodox obituary concluded with some vital information. Stoute was 66 when he died and left a wife and son. The funeral was conducted in the Stoute home by the Rev. J.H. Washburn of the Eight Street Methodist Church and the Rev. M.G. Allison of the First Presbyterian Church.

The pallbearers were Isaac Mitchell, E.C. Gilstrap, John Gilmore, H.J. Brannock, David Hughes and Sherman Mercer. Stoute was buried in Rose Hill Cemetery.

H-T 2/10/97 -