

Green, Scott

From: Paul and Linda Stevens <stevenspl@live.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 02, 2013 8:28 AM
To: Paul H. Stevens
Subject: CONNECTING: John Denver and Grandma Mary; Photo around world in 1926; Soledad O'Brien; ZIP code is 50; Tribune to buy 19 TV stations; Never was golden age of journalism; The 4 a.m. army

Colleagues,

Here are some items of interest.

Of all the wire stories (and, OK, the hundreds of logs, memos and staff notes) I wrote in my 36 years with the AP, the one that got the widest play involved a pop singer and my wife's grandmother. I shared on Facebook and Connecting/Facebook colleague Bob Daugherty suggested I share with the Connecting group. Now, the rest of the story:

When Mary Saul was asked to cook for singer John Denver in summer of 1978, while he was in the city to learn to fly his new Learjet, she was sworn to secrecy because Denver wanted his stay in Wichita to be kept private. She called Linda and me to let us know privately, and I asked her to see if Denver would agree to an AP interview if we did not publish the story until the day he left Wichita. He agreed, and we met at Grandmother Saul's place for the interview. The story and photo above moved on the worldwide AP wires and we got clippings from all over the world. (The attached photo was signed by Denver, "Grandmother Mary, thanks for taking such good care of me in Wichita. I love you, John Denver.") When Denver returned to Wichita a year later for a concert, he sent "Grandma Mary" front-row tickets and pointed her out during the concert. John Denver died in October 1997 when the experimental aircraft he was piloting crashed into the Pacific Ocean. Grandmother Mary also passed, and today, I have no doubts she's knocking Denver's socks off, as he put it, with her chocolate pies - up in the Great Beyond.

Good cook keeps singer's secret

By PAUL STEVENS
Associated Press Writer

WICHITA — Mary Saul, meet John Denver — famous singer and television star who aspires to be a jet pilot. John Denver, meet Mary Saul — a great-grandmother and seasoned cook who can keep a secret.

So began a week-long association between the boyish-looking, personality known to millions and the 78-year-old Wichita woman he hired to keep house and fix him home-cooked evening meals.

"She spoiled me rotten," Denver said. "She makes a chocolate pie that would knock your socks off."

The admiration was mutual. Said Mrs. Saul: "I think he's just a lovely, down-to-earth person. I love to cook and I love for people to enjoy the things I cook."

The 34-year-old Denver, who recently completed a concert tour of 51 cities that drew nearly a million fans, was in Wichita to learn to fly the business jet he owns to hopscotch across the country.

He was among about 15 students in a ground school class for jet aircraft that ended Friday after eight days of concentrated book work and flight simulator training.

Because of the workload and study involved, he wanted as few persons as possible to know he was staying in the city.

"People are very interested in me. I'm very recognizable, so it's difficult to maintain privacy," Denver said in an exclusive interview at the private residence where he stayed.

"As opposed to going to a motel where I thought things really would get crazy, working in this way let me keep a low profile. This is a real blessing — in a home and getting home-cooked food."

Gates-Learjet Corp. officials, who said Denver a jet three years ago, located the home where he and his father, Dutch Deanehendorf, stayed. And when they went searching for a cook, the name of Mary Saul popped up.

Mrs. Saul, a widow who works part-time cooking at a local motel, was asked by her boss, Mavor Stroman, wife of a Learjet employee, whether she would like the job.

"She was surprised," Mrs. Stroman said. "I think she was absolutely scared to death. But they love her. She told Dutch when she met him, 'I'll be your grand-



Singer John Denver wanted two things when he stayed in Wichita eight days to learn to fly his jet: privacy and good home-cooked meals. Mary Saul, a 78-year-old great-grandmother, handled the cooking and kept quiet about it, too. Said Denver, "She spoiled me rotten. She makes a chocolate pie that would knock your socks off." (AP Laserphoto)

mother."

In 15 years of operating Mexican food restaurants in the city, Mrs. Saul said she never encountered "somebody like that." But she kept mum as to her employer's identity, except to tell several relatives whom Denver invited to the house one evening.

Was she apprehensive? "I thought I might be but after their first meal (breaded veal cutlet), I changed my mind," she replied. "They like to eat and they appreciate good food. They insisted I sit down and join them for meals."

Her dinners, the only meals she cooked for Denver, were strictly "down home" — laced with her own special hot sauce, baked chicken, fried fish and pork chops.

Denver employs private pilots to help fly the Learjet with his father, the chief pilot, who is a retired Air Force officer who holds a world speed record for a flight in a B-58

bomber 17 years ago.

"I would like to learn how to fly the airplane and I would like to have my dad teach me," Denver said.

His father, who taught him to fly a single-engine plane three years ago, helped interpret the engineering and electrical information he must digest to fly the jet, Denver said, moaning, "In high school, the thing I was least interested in was electricity."

"I just love to fly," he said. "When I was a kid, I wanted to do just what my dad did. I wanted to go to the Air Force Academy and be a pilot, but my vision wasn't good enough for the Air Force."

He earned a private pilot's license with a single-engine rating about a year ago. After successful completion of jet ground school training, Denver must complete flight training and pass an inspector's flight exam before he can take control of his 500 mph jet.

Denver's singing career — one of

his first hits was "Leaving on a Jet Plane" — has resulted in a number of gold records and numerous television appearances. He stars with comedian George Burns in the movie, "Oh, God."

Flying is a way to keep his life from becoming too narrow, he believes.

"All my life I wanted to be a singer," he said. "People who achieve success in one area sometimes tend to get narrow in their lives. Flying is one thing that has totally expanded my life."

Despite slightly handball sessions while staying in Wichita, Denver says he will return to his family in Aspen, Colo., carrying five extra pounds.

"She's spoiled me here," said Denver, who returned the courtesy Thursday night by taking Mrs. Saul out to a local restaurant for a champagne and steak dinner. "We wine and dined her."

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Paul

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How to send a photo around the world, in 1926 (Shared by Ron Edmonds)

<http://paleofuture.gizmodo.com/how-to-send-a-photo-around-the-world-in-1926-533206646>

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Soledad O'Brien joins Al Jazeera America (Shared by Bob Daugherty)

<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/07/soledad-obrien-al-jazeera-america-93608.html>

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The ZIP Code Turns 50

<http://nation.time.com/2013/07/01/the-zip-code-turns-50/?xid=newsletter-daily>

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Tribune to Buy 19 TV Stations for \$2.7 Billion

http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2013/07/01/tribune-to-buy-19-tv-stations-for-2-7-billion/?smid=tw-share&_r=0

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Former Newsweek Editor: There Never Was a 'Golden Age' of Journalism

http://www.mediabistro.com/fishbowlny/cuny-newsweek-business-week-stephen-shepard-lynn-povich-digital-journalism_b86412

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Whom do journalists trust more: politicians or PR pros? (Shared by Latrice Davis)

<http://www.prdaily.com/Main/Articles/14768.aspx#>

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The 4 a.m. army

(ProPublica investigative reporting group project)

<http://nation.time.com/2013/06/27/the-4-am-army/>