

In memory of our good friend, Don Knotts

I love a good rainy day cry, especially when the lump in my throat swells with fond memories of a wonderful friend who warmed my hearth and heart.

Don Knotts, a one bullet, pistol-packing shining light of laughter, recently passed. I bet he's patrolling the heavens, or mythical Mt. Pilot, and singing solos in the town choir.

Barney Fife's not manly? I don't think so. More than one Thelma Lou pined for Knotts' character on *The Andy Griffith Show* — an irrepressible but hard-working, loyal and hysterically adorable dreamer. Barney was a gentleman, a gut-wrenching romantic and a sentimentalist.

Barney Fife, a dysrhythmic, over-eager, musical klutz who should stay in the back of the band bus? Nope. The Barney Fifes in our lives add music to our smiles, write stanzas of laughter in our eyes, and pulse rhyme to the rhythm of often hum-drum lives.

The rubber-faced, bug-eyed side-kick to his best pal, Andy, sheriff of Mayberry, was an impeccably gifted craftsman of comedy and pathos. Knotts won Emmy Awards as best supporting actor in 1961 through



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1963, and 1966 and 1967. The last two were for guest appearances.

Barney, while posturing as a nervous, pencil-necked, bumbler, was also a window to the mind, heart and souls of us all.

Some condescendingly mock the hapless deputy as a one-bullet wonder that shot himself in the foot. Yes, but he shot himself once — only once, and kept his powder dry from then on having learned his lesson. Can all of us say as much? It seems to me that I hear the artillery of asinities firing off at pretty regular intervals these days.

Barney did indeed have a sharp-shooter's aim. In eight years on the air, the show never dropped below seventh in the Nielsen's. Knotts' portrayal of Barney's merriment and humanity that always hit the mark by zipping past our mental defenses, sliding by the cynicism we cultivate in our soul and landing smack dab in the funny bone.

Barney Fife, a stupid dolt? Nope, not by a long shot. It is a wonderful gift to live each moment to the fullest, savoring the highs and lows even though sometimes life can make you

agitated, nervous and lost. But in the end, Barney was always loyal, contrite, endearing and sincere. He dreamed with the best, but always savored today, his town, his townsfolk and his time with them. If only there were more Barney's in Solano County.

Barney never aged, and never will. How could he. He was perpetually pop-eyed with wonder, as the very eager child in all of us should be. The rhythms of his comedy resonated with us because they were real. It was us — silly, stupid, sad, sanctimonious at times and perpetually engaged in life.

Some folks are finely tuned comedic compost for enduring friendships and humbling self reflections that remind us all that in the final analysis, we all could stand to take a cue from Deputy Fife and nip our stupidity right in the bud.

The day of Don Knott's passing is a day I hope to remember when my heart was tied in knots. The kind of knots no one should tamper with. Thanks, Barney.

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