



Brian DeNeal photo

Dixie Terry kept a few of her favorite teapots, but let hundreds go in her estate sale last year.

Dixie Departs Teapot Cottage

Brian DeNeal

Dixie Terry has left her Teapot Cottage behind and moved into a Marion apartment. On Sept. 5, 2019, she and family were preparing for shoppers at her moving sale. Each of the dozens of teapots adorning shelving of one wall bore a price tag.

“I collected teapots for years. When we moved here I decided to call it Teapot Cottage and started catering tea luncheons,” Terry said.

That was a 12-year business sandwiched between a career of freelance writing.

“It was a lot of fun until it got to be work,” Terry said.

The gatherings involved a three- or four-course lunch with games in between courses. Red Hats clubs, Sunday

school classes and a bridge club shared Teapot Cottage and Terry’s culinary creations.

“There was a lot of conversation and lots of fun,” Terry said.

She and her husband, Jim, enjoyed those 12 years of hosting.

Terry was born near Cypress in Johnson County and attended school in Vienna. She dreamed of becoming an interior decorator. Her first experience writing for the public came through the *Cairo Evening Citizen*.

“I asked if I could write a column on decorating. They said I could, with no pay, but could have a byline every day,” Terry said.

She wrote six days a week. That newspaper is now a weekly owned by Reppert Publications. Terry kept up the column for a couple of years until she met and married Jim and moved to Goreville.

For 40 years Jim sold auto parts and Terry had the financial stability to pursue her own career path.

“I took a correspondence course in interior decorating from the Chicago School of Interior Design and got a

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diploma. It was similar to now, going online, but I had to mail in everything,” Terry said.

From the knowledge she gained in that course and reading decorating magazines, she had enough confidence to open a decorating studio in Goreville. The studio lasted about a year.

“Then I started having babies. I had five kids in seven years,” Terry said.

A few years later *The Southern Illinoisan* newspaper advertised for freelance writers.

“I got the job for 27 years,” Terry said.

She also wrote for the *Marion Daily Republican*, *Vienna Times*, *Goreville Gazette*, *Senior Views Monthly* and her “From My Kitchen Window” recipe column for *Springhouse* starting with the second issue in 1984. She learned about *Springhouse* through a story on the WSIL Channel 3 news about a new magazine in Illinois and called co-founder Gary DeNeal.

“I didn’t even have to convince him I was a writer. They just took me on,” Terry said.

She remembers an early story for the Marion paper about the quilting group Quilts of Honor that presented quilts to veterans. She started a feature for the *Marion Daily Republican* called “Cook of the Week” in which she set out to learn what notable people in the community liked to fix for their families. One of the more memorable was Jean Simon of Makanda, wife of U.S. Senator Paul Simon.

“All the time I was interviewing her for that I could hear him on a manual typewriter. It was hunt and peck,” Terry said.

She wrote stories on authors, artists, musicians, John A. Logan College play productions, one on the closing

of Marion’s Maytag factory.

“Lots of people stories,” Terry said.

She and Jim enjoyed travel, especially to their home away from home at Greers Ferry Lake in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas.

“I always tried to get acquainted with the chef when we went to a new restaurant,” Terry said.

Along with teapots, Terry collected recipes in filing cabinets.

“I collected 25,000 recipes in files. This week I got rid of all of them. I just threw them away. My apartment has no room for 25,000 recipes,” Terry said.

She would look for old recipes at yard sales. Cooks would sometimes store hand-written recipes in books at those sales.

“I got some back to George Washington’s time. Some of Martha’s recipes,” Terry said. “They are quite different. Different ingredients, some that aren’t even available now.”

Terry said ingredients over the years reflect technology and trends. As crockpots, pressure cookers and other appliances became popular, recipes changed to reflect it. Terry’s kitchen was practically a museum of those changing trends during her moving sale. A wooden potato masher had a price tag on it among an armada of mixing bowls.

Jim died in 2011 and Terry knew downsizing was on her horizon.

“I’ve been thinking about it for two years, giving things to the kids. It’s been about a two-year project and in the last few months they’ve helped pack and move things to Marion,” Terry said.

“I just do everything slower and rest in between. Lots of naps. I have osteoarthritis in my knees and don’t walk so well, heart problems and take lots of pills.”

Three of her children live in Marion and so she has plenty of help available. She also has no plans of abandoning her “From My Kitchen Window” column. Even without her filing cabinets of 25,000 recipes, she has plenty to share.

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