By SAM HATCHER

Learning of the passing of Dixie Taylor-Huff early Wednesday morning left me and thousands of others with a particular void in their lives that will surely not be replenished in the near future.

She was truly a one-of-a-kind.

While an extraordinary business woman, she will be best remembered for her abundantly kind and compassionate heart.

On several occasions I had the opportunity to see Dixie from the inside out.

A few years ago a local nursing home was forced to close for its failure to comply with certain regulations. The nursing home was a competitor of Dixie's. Her company owns Quality Care Nursing Home in Lebanon and a number of other healthcare facilities in the region.

In the conversation I had with her about her competitor closing, she was deeply upset. She said they were being closed essentially for administrative errors and not for failing to take care of their residents.

And then she started to say, but had a difficult time finishing as she choked back tears, that the real people being penalized in all of this were the residents.

She explained that national statistics hold that when elderly residents are removed from a place in which they have been living for an extended length of time, many will die in a relatively short period following their relocation.

She concluded, as her voice cracked and she poised to regain her composure, that "some, I don't know how many, will die because of this. And that's the real shame."

This was Dixie.

The stories go on and on and on.

She provided financial aid to college students in need, made contributions to everything from the Girl Scouts to the Red Cross to every kind of community charity, and in the meantime managed to seemingly always find the time to provide a friendly shoulder on which a friend may cry.

She was indeed quite a woman.

Dixie was a civic and business leader. She was one of the most powerful voices in the healthcare industry on all fronts. She was as well known and as comfortable in congressional office suites in Washington as she was in her native Trousdale County courthouse.

She was not afraid to speak her mind albeit she could do so respectfully. She was a politician and a good one of sorts. She liked people, and, although a Democrat, she could mix easily with the other side, too. In almost a Dolly Parton down-home style, this woman, a nurse by trade who became a giant in the elderly care business, could be a real charmer.

Dixie will be sorely missed by thousands. A friend to rich and poor, to the powerful and not so powerful, she left her mark on many lives.

Thank you Lord for sharing Dixie with us.

Because of her we've all been blessed.