

Creator Of 'Just Be Nice' Stickers Dies At 62

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TAMPA - Drive anywhere in the Tampa Bay area and there's a chance you'll see a bumper sticker appeal to "Just Be Nice."

Tampa native **George Mason** claimed credit for creating the slogan. It came to him in a dream, he explained in a 2003 Tribune interview, and he felt it was a message he needed to spread. He even got tossed in jail once for slapping stickers on a couple of St. Petersburg police cruisers.

Mason, grandson of the owner of the legendary Tampa Terrace Hotel, died Monday. He was 62.

"He was very outgoing and very friendly. He traumatized my sister and I with the 'Just Be Nice' stuff," said daughter Kat Mason, speaking by telephone from her home in Chicago.

As teenagers, she and her sister, Finley, were often embarrassed, she said, because their dad was always handing out bumper stickers to strangers.

"It's an energetic vibration that the world really needs," George Mason told the Tribune.

He said he was shocked when he checked and found no one had trademarked the slogan. He sold the bumper stickers and T-shirts on his Web site, www.justbenice.com.

Andrea Mason, his former wife and the mother of Kat and Finley, said she was in Maine when she got the call about his death. "I was driving back to my cottage, and there was a car in front of me with a 'Just Be Nice' sticker."

George Mason was known for his kindness and generosity, she said. He donated to a number of local charities and performed good deeds of his own, such as picking up litter on Davis Islands beach.

In 2003, he was arrested on a criminal mischief charge after police accused him of plastering "Just Be Nice" stickers on speed limit and yield signs; he acknowledged putting stickers on two St. Petersburg police cruisers.

"The little boy in me came out," he explained in a Tribune story.

Prosecutors dropped the charges.

"They decided to just be nice," said his lawyer, John Hamel.