

THE HISTORIAN

BULLETIN NUMBER ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN

JANUARY, 2004

THE SEBRING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The “Sounds of Sebring”

To Perform at Quarterly Luncheon Meeting January 24, 2004.

The award-winning Sounds of Sebring Barbershop Quartet will perform at the Sebring Historical Society Quarterly Luncheon Meeting on January 24, 2004, at the Sebring Civic Center at 12:00 noon. Please bring a dish to pass and \$1.50 for service and rent of the building.

The Sounds of Sebring singing group was formed in January of 1999. Since that time, they have performed locally and throughout the State, entertaining many groups with a varied and entertaining program.

The Sounds of Sebring had the honor of winning the Florida Senior Barbershop Contest in 2001 in Jacksonville, and competed in the International Senior Barbershop Contest in Los Angeles in 2002. Quartet members are:

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The Sounds Of Sebring

Bill Minck (Tenor) is the "Snowbird" of the group, living in Southwest Ohio, where he sings with the Middletown Razor's Edge Chorus, and the Village Limits Quartet. As a member of a regional barbershop chorus, the Johnny Appleseed Singers, he and his wife, Betty, had the opportunity to tour Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland and Russia, singing to anyone who would listen. Bill is a founding member of the local Heartland Harmonizer Chorus. Since retiring from two previous careers, Bill and Betty now spend the winter months at the Bluffs of Sebring.

Jim Thompson (Lead Singer) is a 26 year veteran of barbershop singing. He has sung in several quartets including Spring Break, in the Delaware area and as a member of the famous Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania championship chorus. He is a founding member of the local Heartland Harmonizer Chorus. Jim is a retired chemical researcher. He and his wife, Sue, live in Highlands Ridge and enjoy their new home and golfing.

Jim Ladd (Baritone) is a 48 year veteran of barbershop singing, having sung in several quartets in Ohio prior to moving to Florida 16 years ago. He is a founding member and director of the local Heartland Harmonizer Chorus and sang several years with the Funliners quartet of Winter Haven. Jim is a retired school administrator. He and his wife, Pat, live in Golf Hammock.

Don Davis (Bass) began his barbershop singing in Akron, Ohio. After moving to Miami, Florida, he sang with the international champion chorus, The Miamians. Don was a member of the Sunshine Four quartet, which placed 35th and 25th in international quartet competition. After a hiatus of 20 years, Don has resumed singing and is also a member of the Heartland Harmonizers Chorus. Don is interim pastor of the Spring Lake Presbyterian Church and lives with wife, Nancy, in Highlands Ridge.

The Heartland Harmonizers is a group which originated on March 18, 2002, when eight members of the Polk County Barbershop Chapter, Winter Haven, Florida, met to discuss the feasibility of forming a new chapter in Highlands County. Previous conversations with known barbershop singers in the Avon

Park, Sebring and Lake Placid area indicated that many were interested in singing, but were unwilling to drive the 45 to 60 miles to Winter Haven to participate. The meeting was spearheaded by members of the quartet, Sounds of Sebring, District Senior Quartet Champions, who volunteered to take the leadership role in establishing a new chapter.

The first open meeting was held on April 2, with 25 men attending. It was quickly determined that there was enough interest to seriously pursue chartering, and the process was set into motion. The name "Heartland Harmonizers" was chosen for the new chorus. Jim Ladd was elected President, and expressed the focus for the new group would be:

1. Have fun, enjoy music.
2. Constantly strive for improvement in singing.
3. Acquire a community identity and participate in community functions.
4. Develop a spirit of camaraderie.
5. Uphold the Barbershop Society Code of Ethics.
6. Introduce barbershop singing to young people and encourage their participation.

By the Fall of 2002, the membership had grown to 45. Work began immediately on presenting a show to introduce the new chorus to the community, and to raise money for operating expenses. A circus theme, "Big Top Barbershop", was selected, and after many hours of practice, the First Annual Show was presented on March 2, 2003, to a sellout crowd at South Florida Community College. After paying all expenses, including purchasing risers and uniforms for the chorus, a scholarship was donated to the Music Department of Sebring High School.

The Chorus is presently in its second year of operation. In addition to numerous singouts, the Chapter hosted a day-long Youth Music Festival, in which nearly 120 high school boys and girls from the local area were taught barbershop songs by district champion quartets, followed by a performance. At the present time, the group is hard at work for the Second Annual Show to be held in March of 2004. Practice is held every Tuesday evening at 7:00 PM at the Kenilworth Hotel in Sebring. Barbershop singing is alive and well in Highlands County!

JANNIE BELL (McKINZIE) GIMSE

By: Donna J. (Scheuermann) Crawford
(Sebring High School Classmate -Class of 1954)

Jannie's "debut" was on May 5, 1935, when she made the little Sebring family "complete" after joining a brother, "Jimmy" McKinzie. She was born to James W. and Jannie E. (nee Grady) McKinzie. After growing up in Sebring and graduating from Sebring High School in 1954, Jannie moved to Chicago where she was employed in the office of the Western Electric Company. While in the area, she met and married Ronald C. Gimse on December 3, 1966 (her husband of over 36 years). It was later they moved to Las Vegas, Nevada.

Twenty four years passed after high school graduation before our class held its first reunion during the summer of 1978. Jannie and Ron drove the long distance from Las Vegas to attend both the banquet and family picnic. Because they so much enjoyed their visit here, they talked many times about moving to Sebring in order to be with more family and friends. In 1980, this became a reality, and Ron was able to transfer his employment from the Las Vegas "K-Mart" to our local store.

While living on Weigle Ave, the couple purchased Cypress Street property. Then, as time would permit with Ron and Jannie doing most of the work themselves, they began the long, arduous task of constructing their lovely 3- Bedroom/2-Bath, split-level (Log cabin style) dream home. They moved into the house long before they ever considered it to be "complete". All in all, they said it took about 10 years to build.

Jannie was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star and both she and Ron were dedicated workers and members of The Church of Latter Day Saints. In addition to this, they both found the time to volunteer their services for many years at Highlands Regional Medical Center here in Sebring. Over the years, Jannie became associated with "Mary Kay Cosmetics" as a consultant. Her career lasted until about a week prior to her passing when she decided to "give it up" and let someone else take over her customers.

When Jannie was about twenty-one years of age, she began fighting an up-hill battle with malignant

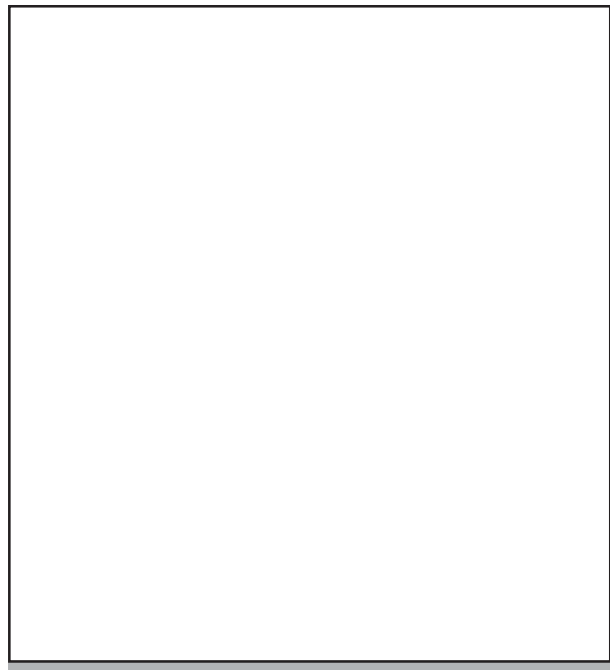


Photo By: Donna Crawford

*Jannie McKinzie Gimse
and her husband, Ronald Gimse
This picture was taken Dec. 3, 1996
on their 30th Wedding Anniversary*

melanoma which lasted about 47 years. She was a "real trooper" by undergoing an untold number of major surgeries, as well as countless "exploratory" chemotherapy and radiation treatments. She was asked if she ever attended any Melanoma Support Groups, and her reply was. .."No, because most people don't live long enough to go to the meetings". ...Also, when asked how she felt, she would most always reply, "I'm doing fine", (when she really wasn't). There was an occasion when she told us, .."If a person complains too much, then no one will come for a visit" ...

Jannie passed away at home on Tuesday, August 19, 2003 at the age of 68. Funeral services were held in the Chapel at Stephenson-Nelson Funeral Home in Sebring on August 23, 2003.

At the time of her passing, Jannie was survived by her husband, Ronald C. Gimse of Sebring; mother, Jannie E. McKinzie from Avon Park, and brother, James H. McKinzie, Sr. of Kaukana, Wisconsin.

THE AMMON GETTEL FAMILY

By Alice Ruth (Gettel) Gingrich

When the family of Ammon and Leah Gettel moved into the three story house at 319 South Pine Street in the fall of 1943, the building was known as Gettel's Apartments. Most of the tenants at that time were wives of the troops stationed at Hendricks Air Force Base. The rental units were actually efficiency rooms with a shared bathroom down the hall. The larger corner rooms had their own bathrooms and housed Air Force couples. After the war, the apartments were filled with frugal Pennsylvania Dutch folk and members of the Church of the Brethren from other states. Many times my parents and other Pennsylvania Dutch people spoke to each other in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect.

Mr. Weaver, the previous owner, built a room enclosed on all four sides with windows on the top of the two-story building. This hide-away gave him a lookout where he could view Lake Jackson and see all over Sebring. This large room was eventually changed into another room to rent.

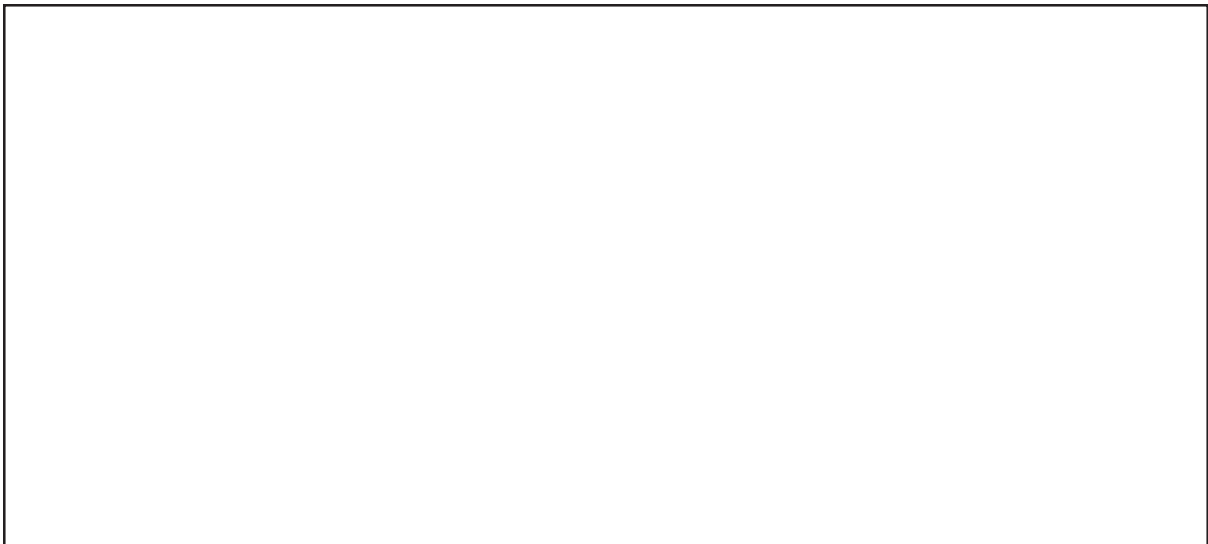
Each year my mother organized their back yard Christmas Dinner for the tenants and friends who didn't have family here with whom to eat, and members of the Gettel family who were in town for the holiday. She roasted a huge turkey and all the guests brought

a covered dish. The tables and chairs were brought outside from the apartments and set up in the back yard. Almost every year snapshots were taken and placed in her photograph album. The door to our family residence in the Gettel Apartments was always open for friends and tenants to drop-in.

My dad loved to fish, and at that time it was legal to catch fish by setting a line in Lake Jackson in the evening and pulling them in the next morning. After he cleaned the fish at his fish-cleaning station in the back yard, he shared them with tenants and other friends.

The Gettel family returned to Pennsylvania each summer to sell fruit and produce, both retail and wholesale, until 1971 when my mother died. My mother served as Business Manager and Secretary, homemaker, Sunday School Teacher, Volunteer migrant teacher, Church worker, friend to many and loving Mother and Grandmother until she passed away in September, 1971.

My Dad sold 636 Pine St., (the street number was changed during the time they were the owners) to a Mrs. Walker, who sold it to Paul Claypool, who sold it to Ken Rosser, who sold it to a Mr. Guy, who sold it to a Mr. Rodriquez, who sold it to the Sebring Church of the Brethren. At the end of its existence it had become a crack house and was in deplorable condition. The Church of the Brethren had it torn down and is planning to use the area for a parking lot.



*Ammon Gettel Family & Friends
at Christmas Dinner - 1947*

AT THE ARCHIVES

By Carole Goad

Mr. Ken Grubb, retired contractor and long-time resident of Sebring has designed, built and installed new standards on the display boards for the Archives. What a wonderful difference this has made in our ability to effectively display our history. A huge thank you to Mr. Grubb for his kindness. In addition, Mr. Grubb has loaned us a large encased display of a model he built of the Miller's Farm Bridge, which is a covered bridge extending over Beaver Creek in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the area where Mr. Grubb was born and raised.

We have another new display in the Archives, which was completed before Christmas. The theme is "Music in Sebring", and features the Sounds of Sebring, the group who will be singing at our quarterly luncheon on January 24; the award-winning Sebring High School Choir, under the direction of Sandra White; the Delta Chorale, directed by David Rinald, and other bands and musical groups in this community. Come see this display and you will see that this community is just full of great musical talent!

Elizabeth Walker and her daughter, Ann Walker, have loaned us their "Heirloom Bears", which we now have on display. Elizabeth and Ann have made these bears from old fur coats that have belonged to family members; and one is even made of neckties that belonged to a family member. These are not toys, rather they are truly heirlooms to be kept in memory of those who owned the items from which they were made. Come to the Archives and see this display.

Our Hill-Gustat Middle School project has been a big success. On November 11, I went to the school and

spoke with approximately 40 students on the history of Sebring. These students were from the gifted class and from the Student Technology Club. I had made five display boards and a curriculum containing the highlights of Sebring history, all of which I took with me. The students were wonderful; they were very attentive and interested, and asked very good questions. This same group came to the Archives on November 18 to view our displays and do further research on individual topics. Again, they were very interested and just a joy to work with.

On December 9, Mr. Ron Johnson, our volunteer, arranged a bus trip to the Sebring Airport and racetrack for these students. He traveled on the bus with them and took them on a tour of the facility, which included an examination of a B-17 airplane, and a tour of the Skip Barber Driving School. They got to sit in a race car and have their picture taken. A reporter from the News Sun was there and wrote a beautiful article of this event, complete with photographs, which was published in the newspaper. We will also be working with this group during the remainder of this school year. The purpose of their project is to develop a web site containing the history of Sebring.

On December 18, the Archives hosted another group of students from Sebring Middle School. Accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Joy Eastman, these students were also very interested in learning about the history of their community.

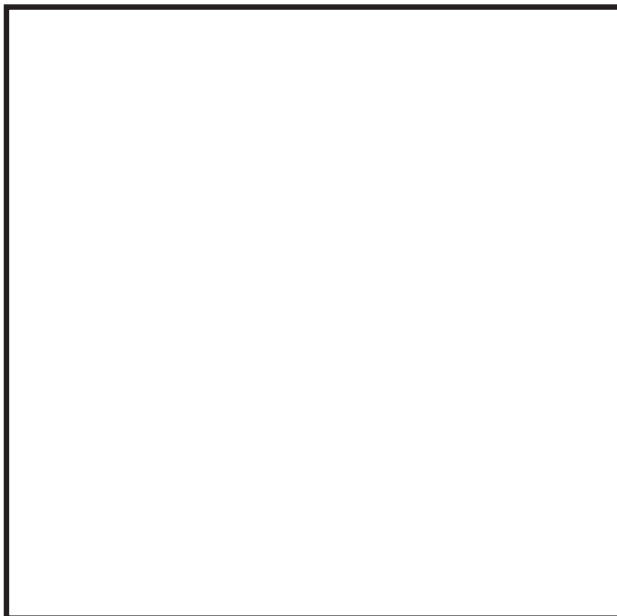
On December 19, a Christmas party was held in the Archives to honor and thank our wonderful volunteers, who have generously given of their time and talents to assist in the work of the Archives. So, another big thank you to Ron Johnson, Betty Hall, Myrtle Card, Joyce Bovard and Carolyn Collier for all of their efforts.

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Audrey Vickers has kindly donated many issues of the magazine, "Heartland Today", which she had published, to the Archives to use as reference material to give to interested patrons, and for the Archivist to use in making displays. Thank you very much for these beautiful magazines Audrey -they will be wisely and beneficially utilized.

Several of our published paperback books have been repriced. The Newcomb & Baker Collections, Hall of Fame, Twice Told Tales and Heartland Heritage, are now on sale for \$2.00 each, and are available at the Archives.



Words To Live By

*A good name is more to be desired than great riches;
esteem is better than silver or gold*

*Rich and poor have this in common:
the Lord Made them both*

*A shrewd man sees trouble coming and lies low;
the simple walk into it and pay the penalty.*

*The fruit of humility is the fear of God
with riches and honour and life.*

*The crooked man's path is set with snares and
pitfalls;
the cautious man will steer clear of them.*

*Start a boy on the right road,
and even in old age he will not leave it.*

*The rich lord it over the poor;
the borrower becomes the lender's slave.*

*The man who sows injustice reaps trouble,
and the end of his work will be the rod.*

*The kindly man will be blessed,
for he shares his food with the poor.*

*Drive out the insolvent man, and strife goes
with him.
if he sits on the bench, he makes a mockery of
justice.*

*The Lord loves a sincere man;
but you will make a king your friend with your
fine phrases.*

*The Lord keeps watch over claim at law,
and overturns the scoundrel's case.*

Proverbs 22: Verses 1 - 12

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The following memorials have recently been received from
September 2003 through December 2003
By Wanda Whitehouse, Memorial Chairman

*Neil Potter • Tony Tejada • Theodore R. Georgia • Bill Paedae
Peggy Andrews • William Page*

*In Honor Of The 50th Wedding Anniversary Of
Ernie and Charlotte Breed*

Anyone who would like to make a donation may do so by submitting to
Wanda Whitehouse, Memorial Chairman
9230 Spring Valley Lane • Sebring, Florida 33875-5977

The Staff and Book Club

By Verdelle Sebring Medlin

The Staff and Book Club met December 4, 1931, as the result of a vision Mrs. Mary Francis Percy had. The idea was to share cultural opportunities in art, music and literature with Sebring women. The five charter members were Mrs. Vail Weems, Mrs. Martee Heacock, Mrs. Maxine Martin, Mrs. Sarah Taylor and Mrs. Mary Frances Percy.

The Club was limited to twenty members and met twice a month in the afternoons. As women began to join the work force during World War II, the meetings were changed to one night a month.

The Club performed several times at Harder Hall and Kenilworth Lodge, entertaining guests who were staying in the hotels. Staff and Book Club members were talented in voice, piano and violin and performed solos, duets and trios to entertain each other.

Their most ambitious undertaking was the Nancesowee Day Pageant. The pageant was written by members, Eleanor Barker and Mary Frances Percy, who adhered to Seminole Indian history in writing it. The whole town of Sebring was involved in Nancesowee Day, from little children to adults. The Day began with a Parade around "The Circle", which ended up at the shoreline of the George E. Sebring property on Lake Jackson. Here, "Princess Nancesowee" met her "loving prince", who had arrived by canoe from across Lake Jackson.

Nancesowee Day was held on the birthday of George E. Sebring (February 15, 1859) and celebrated the founding of Sebring, Florida. The first celebration was held on February 15, 1930, and was discontinued in 1937. In 1935, school was dismissed and the Governor of Florida attended. Mrs. Faith Catogni Parker was Princess and Fred Wild was the Prince. The Princess Nancesowee and the Prince were elected by Sebring High School students.

Mrs. Mary Frances Percy narrated the story of Nancesowee, as dances, athletic events and the Pageant of Nancesowee were performed. The celebration included the enactment of the meeting of George Sebring and the Indians.

All of the activities for Nancesowee Day took place in the back yard of the George E. Sebring home. There

was an authentic Seminole Indian hut built on the property. The home of George E. Sebring and the Indian hut were demolished "in the name of progress" in the 1970s, and the Sebring Public Library is now located where the George E. Sebring home once stood.



Words To Live By

*My son, do not forget my teaching,
but guard my commands in your heart:
for long life and years in plenty
will they bring you, and prosperity as well.*

*Let your good faith and loyalty never fail,
but bind them about your neck.*

*Thus will you win favour and success
in the sight of God and man.*

*Put all your trust in the Lord
and do not rely on your own understanding.*

*Think of him in all your ways,
and he will smooth your path.*

*Do not think how wise you are,
but fear the Lord and turn from evil.*

*Let that be the medicine to keep you in health,
the liniment for your limbs.*

*Honour the Lord with your wealth
as the first charge on all your earnings;
then your granaries will be filled with corn
and your vats bursting with new wine.*

*My son, do not spurn the Lord's correction
or take offence at his reproof;
for those whom he loves the Lord reproves,
and he punishes a favourite son.*

*Happy he who has found wisdom,
and the man who has acquired understanding;
for wisdom is more profitable than silver,
and the gain she brings is better than gold.*

Proverbs 3: Verses 1 - 14

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