

THE HISTORIAN

BULLETIN NUMBER ONE HUNDRED TWENTY

APRIL 2005

THE SEBRING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Rev. Eugene Bengtson, Bible Fellowship Church,
Presenting Program at Quarterly Luncheon Meeting
Saturday, April 30, 2005
At Sebring Civic Center, 12:00 noon**

Please bring a dish to pass and \$1.50 for service and rent of the building.

Rev. Eugene Bengtson's family moved to Sebring in 1945, but his great grandfather, Henry Martin, homesteaded here in 1918 from Minnesota. He and his wife, Cora, helped to lay the groundwork for Brethren churches in Sebring, Lorida, Basinger and Okeechobee, all of which Rev. Bengtson has preached in as a young minister.

Although not born in Sebring, Rev. Bengtson has lived 59 of his 61 years in Highlands County, except for a time spent in college and seminary. He attended grades one through twelve at the original Sebring school and graduated in 1961. He was active in sports, drama, music, student government and was president of the 160 member Sebring High School chorus his senior year.

After graduation, he entered Bryan College, in Dayton, Tennessee, where he graduated with the college's Loyalty Award, Tennis Award and Who's Who Award among outstanding students in Christian colleges. He earned a B.A. degree with a major in Greek and a minor in English and education.

During the summer of 1965, Rev. Bengtson married his high school sweetheart, Yetta Ruth Weyant, and began his first pastoral ministry. While teaching third grade at the old Desoto City Elementary School, he would preach on the weekends. After two years, he felt a strong internal leading to advance his Biblical education and go into

the ministry full time.

Four years at Dallas Theological Seminary was a growing experience for Rev. Bengtson and his wife. She worked part time as a nurse while raising three daughters, and he taught at a local college while taking a full academic load. He earned

a Masters of Theology degree and Yetta earned a Ph.T., "Putting Hubby Through" degree. Graduation day, May 7, 1971, was a welcomed event followed by a move back to Highlands County.

Rev. Bengtson became pastor of the Lorida Church of the Brethren and served there for two and one half years. During that time, he began to have a passion to start a non-denominational church in his hometown of Sebring. After his resignation from the Lorida church, he began meeting with a small home group. The original group of nine in that home has now grown to over 700 known as Bible Fellowship Church located on Hammock Road. Rev. Bengtson has been the pastor for 31 years.

During the start up days of Bible Fellowship, Rev. Bengtson felt the need of more education in the area of counseling.



Rev. Eugene Bengtson & Wife, Yetta

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Rev. Bengtson continued from page 1

After applying to Luther Rice Seminary, now located in the Atlanta area, he graduated with a Doctor of Ministry degree in 1980. Since then, he has had the privilege of caring for and counseling hundreds of folks who have needed personal help for body and soul.

To his great delight, Rev. Bengtson has had the privilege of traveling to such countries as China, Ecuador, Mexico, Bolivia, Haiti, Jamaica and South Africa to do mission work.

Rev. and Mrs. Bengtson have four daughters and seven grandchildren. Their children and spouses are all active in ministry. Their youngest daughter and family are missionaries in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Rev. Bengtson counts it a privilege to have been raised in Sebring and to have known the joy of a small town atmosphere. He honors George Sebring for starting a town that would have many churches. He credits those who have influenced his life and praises his Heavenly Father for His abundant care and provision over these many years. Psalm 71:5-8, 14-18.

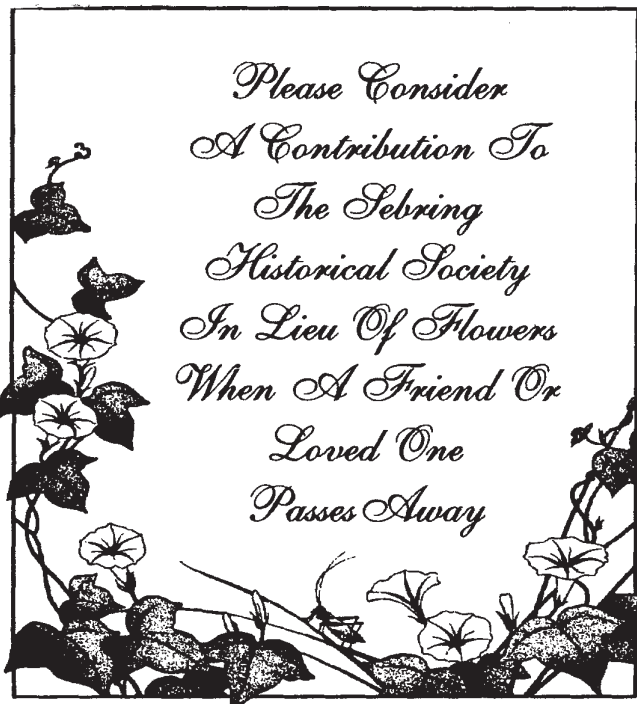
AT THE ARCHIVES....

By Carole Goad

We recently received a large number of items, including photographs, articles, certificates, placques, etc., from Dan Johnson, the nephew of Edna Pearce Lockett. These items have been accessioned into the archives and all are on display. Mrs. Lockett was the first woman to be elected to the Florida legislature. Items are displayed in two large lighted cabinets and two large display notebooks. Stop in to see it.

The History of the Sebring Schools notebook project has been completed and will henceforth be kept up to date with materials that come in or are found in newspapers. This project is included in three large display notebooks and contains photographs, articles and special documents.

Our volunteer, Jackie Koza, has returned to Florida from her home in South St. Paul, Minnesota. She is selling her home there and is looking to buy a home and settle here in Sebring. People who know Jackie are very happy with her decision to move here



permanently. Jackie volunteered in the archives for about five months last year, and also worked in the Friends of the Library Bookstore. We are looking forward to working with her again. Welcome back, Jackie!

We are presently working on a fund-raising project that consists of having wooden blocks cut into the shape of historic Sebring buildings with an historic photograph of that respective building superimposed on it. Our first building is the old Sebring High School. We expect to have these items in hand prior to the class reunion that is to be held this June. We will also have these items on sale in the archives.

**It is possible to fail in many
ways...while to succeed is
possible only in one way.**

-Aristotle

Robert Saffold, Man of Many Talents

By Elizabeth Walker

Robert Saffold, a man of many talents, who was honored by the Black Community with a Robert Saffold Appreciation Day March 13, 1994, is still eagerly using those talents. The year 2005 finds him still attending meetings and pursuing avenues to improve his community.

Saffold attended E.O. Douglas Elementary Schools and graduated from E.O. Douglas High School in 1948. After attending Bethune Cookman College in Daytona Beach, he began teaching at E.O. Douglas High in Sebring in 1958.

Saffold served as football and basketball coach, taught art and English. He organized a golf class for students, many of whom would never have had such an opportunity and are now avid golfers. He continued to teach at E.O. Douglas High until it closed with the last graduation in 1967. The 1968 class joined students in Sebring High School on Pine Street.

Mr. Saffold organized a committee to celebrate a semi-annual E.O. Douglas Class Reunion, which has grown from a one day event, to a three and four day event, and is attended by former students from all across the country.



Photo by Elizabeth Walker

Robert Saffold

Mr. Saffold was the editor of the community's first black newspaper, which was a fold-over with a very positive philosophy. He organized the Annual Minority Student Achievement Awards Dinner, which is usually held in the Agri-Civic Center and is filled to capacity. He also initiated a committee to

distribute turkeys to needy seniors at Thanksgiving time, and another committee that accepts donations to buy Christmas gifts for needy children. He also helped plan, organize and present the first Countywide Black History Competition in art, literature and music in written or oral detail.

Mr. Saffold also organized the South Florida Sportsman Association, providing opportunities for young and old to enter golf tournaments and to play on courses formerly forbidden to black golfers. The organization sponsored the first 36-hole tournament for sickle cell anemia victims in 1970. Some of the major league baseball players attending were: Willie Mays, Willie Stargell, Hank Aaron, Hal McRae, Bobby Bonds, Gary Maddox, Jim Wynn and Doc Ellis. Saffold has served as treasurer, executive secretary and many years as president of the Florida Sportsman Association.

Robert Saffold has received awards from Fred Beneby, representing Bethune Cookman College; Henry J. Hart, former E.O. Douglas teacher and co-editor of the "History of Education in Highlands County"; Thelma Fayson, community representative; and Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Dexter, representing Eatonville, Florida. He has been declared the most outstanding leader in Sebring's Black Community.

Saffold's focus is to provide opportunities for young and old alike, to help make his community safer and to continue to improve the overall physical conditions in the area.

Ability is a poor man's wealth.

-Wren

**We must learn to live together
as brothers or perish together
as fools.**

-Martin Luther King

Sebring Lions Club Sends Gift Boxes to U.S. Military Teams Serving in Iraq

By Elizabeth Walker

Inspired by a visit from young Amanda Carnahan, a graduate of Lake Placid High School and a dental hygienist on leave from Iraq, the Sebring Lions Club decided to begin filling gift boxes immediately for our service men and women in Iraq.

Ms. Carnahan mentioned that many of our soldiers in Iraq do not receive packages from home. When a package arrives for a member of her team, the team gathers for the opening and its contents are shared. A list of the items needed or desired will be available soon for mailing to individuals. A few items that she mentioned were body lotion, baby wipes, AT& T phone cards, beef jerky and other snacks. It takes from ten days to two weeks for delivery from the United States to Iraq. Even crisp cookies usually remain intact if properly packed.

When asked how reality in Iraq compares with the news aired in the United States, Carnahan replied with much vigor that the people are becoming friendlier as they learn about our purpose there and see the improvements in the schools and other facilities. "The stores are now functioning with merchandise and food available. At first, when Iraqi prisoners were brought to the dental clinic, they were very agitated. When they were treated professionally with the same care our soldiers were given, they calmed down. Some would become emotional and would even hug us to show their appreciation. They had not expected such good treatment. This is happening in the same building that received so much bad publicity about the reported abuse of prisoners."

Responding to questions about supplies and equipment, Ms. Carnahan said that at first, supplies and equipment were slow in arriving, but it is much better now. Carnahan's six-member team is part of the sixty-member Unit #257 Medical Company of the 44th Medical Brigade. This is the only Airborne Dental Company in the United States. Her team serves approximately seven sites located in the prisons.

Amanda Carnahan graduated from Lake Placid High School and entered military service

August 22, 2001. She trained in Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and arrived in Iraq on January 18, 2004. She was stationed in Abu Ghraib with living quarters in an old warehouse in the prison compound. She has flown in several types of helicopters, driven huge trucks in convoys, lived in the over-heated, dusty desert, and to her surprise, saw palm trees in Iraq. While in military service, she has been in seven European countries.

Carnahan received a Commendation Medal for her service and was on leave in Florida since January 15, 2005. She reported to Fort Bragg February 23, then transferred to Fort Dee in Virginia, where she will receive special supply training. She enjoys military service and has just signed on for five more years. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing letters and hanging out with friends. Reading material is limited in Iraq, but exchange books can be found in the MWR (morale, welfare and recreation) room.

Ms. Carnahan experienced a pleasant surprise recently when a superior officer told her he had just met a man from Lake Placid. He turned out to be an old classmate from Lake Placid and they enjoyed exchanging memories of home. Tearfully, young Carnahan expressed her surprise at the outpouring of appreciation for her visit and her service as well as that for the sacrifices of our military personnel. She did not expect such an overwhelming welcome.

Amanda Carnahan is the daughter of Deborah Carnahan, Highlands County Utilities Coordinator and Inspector. "Debbie" issues permits, verifies that utility installations meet standard codes and that work projects in progress are well identified for safety regulations.



Photo by Elizabeth Walker

Amanda Carnahan

MAY DAYS IN SEBRING

By Jack Ingle

In the mid 1920s, the City of Sebring constructed the municipal "City" Pier. The overall pier and filled-in area was much the same as it exists today.

There were locker rooms for changing for swimming. A bandshell facing toward town was constructed. Benches were provided for spectator seating. The benches could be moved to suit the occasion.

The first May Day pageants that I remember were sponsored by the Sebring Woman's Club. As I remember, the event drew quite a crowd and was an elaborate community affair. A senior girl was selected as queen of May, and a senior boy as king of May. After both were duly crowned, the Maypole dance proceeded with the usual winding in and out to tightly wrap the colorful ribbons around a tall decorated pole set firmly in the ground.

This tradition went on for many years. As I recall, the junior women took over for awhile. There was a short time that no program was held. I think high school senior boys and girls became too sophisticated and it faded out.

Then Woodlawn Elementary School began having a similar pageant, using sixth graders for king and queen, with PTA parents' support. Now, many elementary schools in the County do a May Day celebration.

NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS

The Sebring Historical Society no longer has a post office box mailing address – due to hurricane damage at our post office. Please send all dues and correspondence to our new permanent address:

**Sebring Historical Society, Inc.
321 West Center Avenue
Sebring, FL 33870**

I have never met or heard of anyone who could out-smart honesty.

-Abraham Lincoln

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The following memorials have recently been received from
January 2005 through March 2005
By Wanda Whitehouse, Memorial Chairman

Ralph Clements, Pauline Bailey, Dorothy Duran, Robert Ingle, Wayne E. Fowler, Johnny Carson, Grant Simmons, Doyle Pepper, Raymond Coyle, Bill Rarden, Rev. Joe Benson, Arthur McIntyre, Glen Odham, Lois Thiele, Norval Neel

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

BETTY HALL'S QUILTS ON DISPLAY IN ARCHIVES

By Carole Goad

We are privileged to have a collection of beautiful and colorful quilts presently on display in the Archives. These beautiful quilts, and many others, were made by Betty Marsh Hall, of Sebring.

Betty is the daughter of the late Harold C. and Margaret E. Marsh. The Marsh family moved to Florida when Betty was two years old, settling in Sebring in 1934. Betty's brothers and sisters are: Alberta Ingle, of Bonifay, Florida; Harold C. Marsh, of Sebring; and twins: Robert A. Marsh, of West Point, Indiana, and Judith Marsh Johnson, of Boyce, Virginia.

While growing up in Sebring, Betty's friends remember her as a vivacious and talented girl. While at Sebring High School, she was a cheerleader, member of the Band, the National Band Honor Society, the "S" Club, and the Apprentice Players.



Photo by Elizabeth Walker

Betty Hall

Jackie Sebring Trevelyan states that "Betty and I have been friends since Elementary School. She has always had a super personality, is friendly and very talented. I always envied her talent and organizational skills. She is one of those people who has always done everything and done it all so well. She was always known for her excellent sewing skills and wearing beautiful clothes that she had made. I remember when Betty returned to Sebring

from her honeymoon, there had been a fire in her home and she had lost all of her clothes. Her mother gave her the option of either two new dresses, or the fabric to make three new outfits. Betty chose the fabric and soon had three lovely new outfits!"

Betty married Donald Hall, of Sebring, in 1948. At that time, Don was in the United States Navy. After she graduated from Sebring High School in 1949, Betty moved to Tennessee where Don was stationed.

After his tenure with the service was completed, Don and Betty lived in Texas briefly, then moved to St. Marys, West Virginia, where their two children were born. Their children are: Donald Hall, Jr., of Mathews, Virginia; and Barbara Hall Watson, of Jacksonville, Florida.

Don and Betty ultimately moved to Richmond, Virginia, where they lived for several years prior to retiring in 1986 and moving back to Sebring. For most of their working lives, Don and Betty both worked for the telephone company in the respective areas where they lived.

Since moving to Sebring, Betty has cared for several relatives who were either elderly or ill. She has also made several of her beautiful quilts for children at the Children's Home Society. She continues to do volunteer work at the Sebring Historical Society Archives.

**It matters not how a man dies,
but how he lives.**

-Gene Kilbourne

**A man cannot leave a better
legacy to the world than an
educated family.**

-Harry S. Truman

Sebring to LaBelle Terrain

Interesting History

By Alden Franklin Young

Historians tell us that at one time, the Atlantic Ocean covered all the land south of Columbia, South Carolina. This ocean area would also have penetrated the Mississippi River Valley to the vicinity of Iowa, and completely covered Louisiana and most of Arkansas. This can also explain the alkali flats found in some of the high plains areas. As the polar ice cap built up, the water was taken from the ocean and stacked up as ice at the polar regions. This accounts for the different soil layers encountered at this excavation and the slow changes from one type of soil to another in the different layers.

I entered into a partnership in 1960 intent on finding and developing commercially profitable deposits of dolomite in the LaBelle to Fort Myers basin. Some of our partners had discovered small deposits of this material in the cow pastures in this vicinity, and calculated that sizable quantities should be lying underground. Dolomite is a popular liming material for growing vegetables and watermelons and is necessary for healthy growth of veggies and fruit. There was a ready market for thousands of tons yearly if we could only locate a cheap supply. This material also is used for road base in highway construction.

In our studies of the area, several small test holes were dug in the pastures. We arranged with the ranch owners to leave these holes uncovered after we tested the underlying soil, so the cattle could use them for watering holes. We discovered that every pond that had palm trees growing around the perimeter also contained dolomite testing 80 percent to 85 percent of the desired carbonates.

In an available test area just west of LaBelle, we dug a test hole 20 feet below the ground level. At minus FOUR feet, we encountered the first surprise. The dirty sugar sand suddenly became a reddish brown layer several inches thick. Under this layer was an orange-brown layer mixed with sand and shells extending to minus NINE feet. We encountered another layer of separation about six inches thick with the color the same as the red clay just north of this area. Beginning at this minus NINE foot level, we encountered brain coral and twisted shells up to six inches in length. Some oyster shells were present, along with miniature conch shells. This entire layer was a light reddish brown in color. At minus FIFTEEN feet, the color of the soil changed again, to a more red shade. Again, we had sizable amounts of brain

coral plus many miscellaneous shells of all types. We ceased our investigation at minus TWENTY feet, because of costs in mining at that depth.

The land elevation between LaBelle and Sebring, on the west side, is much the same. The pine forests, the palm trees, palmetto plants and hickory trees are mostly constant through the Lykes Brothers Ranch in that area. The ranch owners in this area all own thousands of acres per each ranch. To my knowledge, none of these ranchers has made any attempt to explore the underground contents. Perhaps they would find another area containing phosphates, such as the Mulberry deposits. Or they may find nothing. The Mulberry deposits have been a great source of prehistoric animal bones from thousands of years ago.

Possibly the woods between Lake Jackson and the Gulf Coast, including this excavation at LaBelle, if explored, could be very interesting. I would not even attempt to predict what would be found at depths of minus twenty to minus fifty feet. We may have a completely new set of facts to be uncovered.

During our meetings, we considered the fact that Florida could have been an area that sunk to a lower level at each of these changes. Or, possibly the contents of the world had been pushed upward as if it were volcanic, and the new material pushed up could have been scattered over the South Florida landscape for hundreds or thousands of years before a repeat action took place.

With this testing just west of LaBelle, our lease ran out, and we ceased to operate. Land adjoining this area to the south was afterward sold to Lehigh Acres. Lehigh filled in our test holes and followed developing by building streets and utilities. Today, houses sit on some of our test holes which were dug as deep as twenty feet. The large artesian well, which was in the middle of the ranch, has been capped.

At one of the Sebring High School reunions, I was talking to Jack Skipper about our underground testing. He advised that he and his son had been checking cattle on the Skipper Ranch and had built a small campfire to heat their lunch. His son was kicking sand on the remains of the fire when he began finding oyster shells just under the surface. This indicated to us that the Skipper Ranch had at one time been seashore instead of its present state. The Indians residing in the area would have had to walk and carry oysters in shell from a shoreline oyster producing area to this ranch location. The Indians did not have horses until after the Spanish discovery and conquest of Florida.



S O C I E T Y

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