

THE HISTORIAN

BULLETIN NUMBER ONE HUNDRED TWENTY TWO

OCTOBER 2005

THE SEBRING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**BARBARA REED LANIER, ORAL HISTORY WRITER, WILL SPEAK
AT QUARTERLY LUNCHEON MEETING
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2005, AT SEBRING CIVIC CENTER – 12:00 NOON**

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

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Barbara Ann Reed Lanier is currently working on compiling the oral histories of citizens of our community. A member of the Albritton family, she was born in Sebring, the daughter of Sophie Albritton Reed Osteen and the granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. R.G. Albritton. The Albritton family moved to Sebring in 1923.

After graduating from Sebring High School in 1960, Barbara married her high school sweetheart, Errol Lanier, also a Sebring graduate, on June 30, 1960. They celebrated their 45th anniversary this year.

Errol Lanier was a firefighter with the Sebring Fire Department for six years. In 1966, he and Barbara moved their family to Fort Lauderdale, where Errol joined the Fort Lauderdale Fire Department. Errol retired from the fire service after 26 years to pursue his Offshore Powerboat Racing career. He won the APBA World and National Offshore Powerboat Championships in 1986 and 1987. He is now building bass fishing boats. "Fat Cat" is a 20 foot catamaran that will run 100 mph.

Barbara and Errol have three sons, R.E., Troy and Sean. R.E. and his wife, Randi, have a daughter, Jamie and a son, Jake. Troy is married

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to Christy. Sean and his wife, Stephanie, have a daughter, Karissa. The families all live in Fort Lauderdale.

Barbara is the Director of Library Services at Sheridan Hills Baptist Church in Hollywood, Florida. She is also on the Florida Baptist Library State Committee and taught computer classes at the Florida Baptist Library Convention in July.

Barbara will be interviewing people for the Oral History Project for the Sebring Historical Society and putting their stories on DVD. In 2003, Barbara wrote the story of the R.G. Albritton family for a family reunion. She will be sharing their story at the October luncheon meeting.



Barbara & Errol Lanier

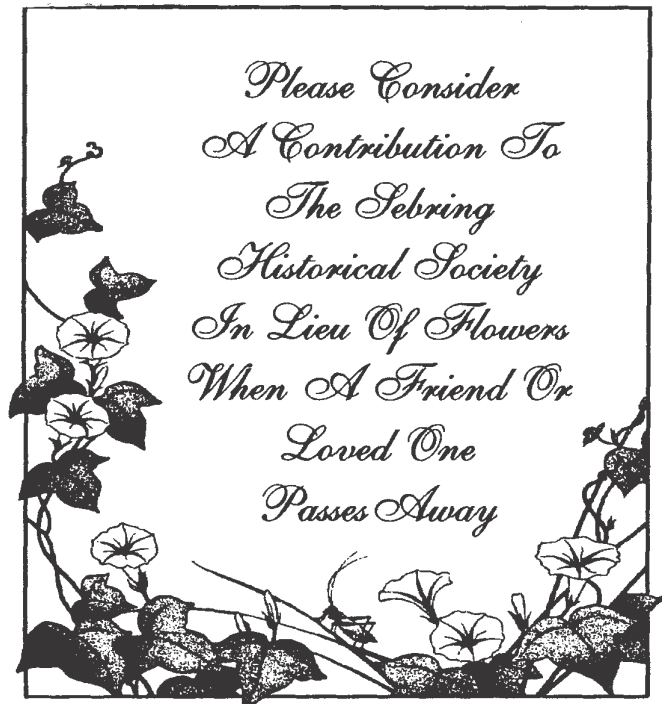
Rev. Van De Venter, George Sebring Friend, Wrote Famous Hymn, “I Surrender All”

Recently, Betty Atkinson and Lavelle Mellor brought to our attention the fact that a very famous hymn was written by a person with close Sebring ties. The hymn is found in the current Methodist Hymnal and probably other church hymnals also. The following story is taken from an account that appears in a book entitled “History on Hymns” (author unknown) and tells the story of Rev. Judson Wheeler Van De Venter, the author of this beautiful song.

Born in 1855 on a farm in Monroe County, Michigan, Judson Van De Venter grew up interested in art and music. He became a Christian at age 17. After graduating from college in Hillsdale, Michigan, Judson became an art teacher and then supervisor of art for the high school in Sharon, Pennsylvania. In 1885, he toured Europe, visiting art galleries and museums and studying painting. He was also a musician, having studied in numerous singing schools.

Judson was heavily involved in his local Methodist Episcopal Church, where he sang in the choir. He found himself especially fulfilled when participating in evangelistic rallies and revivals. Friends encouraged him to resign from the school system to enter fulltime music evangelism, but for five years, he struggled with the decision.

Finally, while in prayer, he said, “Lord, if you want me to give my full time to Thy work, I’ll do it; I surrender all to Thee.” For the next several years, he traveled extensively through the United States, England and Scotland, assisting in evangelistic work, leading the singing for



Wilber Chapman and other evangelists.

While engaged in meetings in East Palestine, Ohio, Judson stayed in the home of George Sebring (whose family founded Sebring, Ohio, and who himself later founded Sebring, Florida.) It was in Sebring, Florida where Judson wrote the hymn, “I Surrender All”.

Moving to Tampa in 1923, Judson began teaching hymnology at Florida Bible Institute. He retired after several years, but still occasionally showed up on campus to lecture or to speak in chapel.

In the 1930s, a student at Florida Bible Institute heard Judson Van De Venter speak. That student was Billy Graham, who later wrote: “One of the evangelists who influenced my early preaching was also a hymnist who wrote ‘I Surrender All’, the Rev. J.W. Van De Venter. He was a regular visitor at the Florida Bible Institute (now Trinity Bible College) in the late 1930s. We students loved this kind, deeply spiritual gentleman and often gathered in his winter home at Tampa, Florida, for an evening of fellowship and singing.”

Growing Up in Sebring, 1921-1939 (Part 2)

By Jack Ingle

(Note: The first portion of this story was published in the July 2005 Issue of The Historian.)

The Great Depression came along when I was about 9 years old. No one had any money. Everyone did what they could just to get by. All of my early life until World War II, I assumed that was how it was and would be. As I look back on that period of time, I can appreciate what my parents and all parents went through.

Our house on South Lakeview was on a very long, so-called deep lot. We had citrus trees, mango, avocado and other trees on the upper level. The back half of the lot was sandy muck land. It was good for growing almost any crop. As a teenager, I always had something growing there. I usually planted the entire area in a single crop. Crops included string beans, onions, watermelons, and corn. One year, I fenced the area and planted buckwheat to feed the chickens I was raising.

While in grade and high school, I tried several enterprises. I sold "Grit" newspapers, delivered Liberty magazines, delivered the Sebring Daily American newspaper to Harder Hall and later had a Tampa Tribune newspaper route which was eleven miles long. All of these routes were traveled on bicycle. The Tampa Tribune was delivered at 4:30 AM to the Arcade (now the site of Sadie's Garden). There were four Sebring delivery routes. Mr. Gatchel Burton was the area supervisor and also delivered on to Desoto City and Lake Placid. My route was the most undesirable since it was long and scattered. It had about 100 customers (in winter time). I got eleven cents per week per paper if I collected all of it. Some customers paid by the week, some by the month and a few didn't pay at all. A delivery boy had to keep quite complicated books. We had to settle our bill with the supervisor each week and at the end of the month was the only time we might realize any cash in hand.

At the end of the first month, I made about

\$40. For a high school student during the Depression, this was quite a sum of money. I remember sending off a Sears and Roebuck order for a 22 rifle and a pair of boots. With the rest of the money, I opened a savings account in the United States Post Office. I just wasn't going to trust banks, although the Tropical State Bank had moved from Lake Placid to Sebring after the two Sebring banks closed. The Tropical State Bank served all through the Depression, later to become part of the Barnett chain and finally absorbed into Bank of America.

When the Depression hit, Sebring was jolted. Harder Hall Hotel was under construction and bankrupt. There were many houses in that area under construction and standing "as is". The Harder Hall extended subdivision was inside the City limits, so as grass fires approached vacant buildings, the Sebring Fire Department would put out the fires. Later, as buildings were too far gone, they just let the buildings go. Sebring finally reduced the incorporated limits, keeping Harder Hall and the golf course.

Hard times were affecting everyone. What had been a young, bustling economy was suddenly curtailed. Sebring had no industry. Many of the planted citrus groves were young and not in production. As time went on and they came into production, demand and prices for citrus were adverse. Winter tourists were few and jobs scarce. It was tough for everyone. The consoling feeling was that everybody was in the same situation. We kids thought times were normal for us.

Sebring had one movie, the Circle Theater. Tickets for kids were 10 cents. My brother and sisters and I rarely went and I can't remember my mother and father ever going.

This sounds tacky, but a winter resident family from New York lived close to us. Their son and I were friends, so when their family was planning to go to the movies, I'd suggest he invite me to go.

When I was very young, I remember going to a silent western movie with a piano player who filled in with a wide range of tempo from galloping horses to romantic rescue scenes.

Also, when a teenager, my brother, sister and

(continued on pg. 4)

(continued from pg. 3)

I had gone to an early night movie. The 9:00 PM curfew sounded as we were walking home. We were so frightened that we ran the rest of the way.

During the low times of the Depression and when citrus was in the doldrums, Dad built a semi trailer and bought a new Ford truck to pull it. We would pick 150-200 boxes of citrus, haul it home to the back yard, wash the fruit in a large boat full of water, getting it ready to be hauled to Atlanta, Georgia. We usually washed the fruit at night and had a drop cord light bulb over the boat. One time while standing barefoot in the boat and trying to turn off the light, I almost got electrocuted.

Dad had a truck driver, but always went with the load. Several times when school was out, I made the trip also. Three people were in the cab, so our suitcase had to ride in the trailer. One time in an unloading stop, our truck ran over our suitcase. I was heartbroken since my new flashlight was smashed. I was in the fifth grade and had won the flashlight in a year ending prize of "having shown the most improvement for the year". (When you start low, it doesn't take much to improve.) Also on that trip to Atlanta, I remember how embarrassed Dad was in paying for truck gasoline. After filling up, he didn't quite have enough cash to pay the bill. After some discussion, the person took the remainder in fruit. On the way back from Atlanta, we would haul cotton seed meal and buy pecans and cantalopes to sell at home.

During the lows of the Depression, Dad grew vegetables on the Jackson Creek farm. Mrs. Rex Beach had donated money to build a farmers market on the Circle where the City Drug Store is presently located. It was open Saturday mornings. There were seven or eight regular vegetable growers. Some were my family, Uncle Lon Ingle, the Schlossers (Schlosser Road off Sparta Road), Jesse Vaughn (Vaughn Road just south of Highlands Hammock), and the Bert Bassages (Bassage Road on Lake Charlotte).

One market morning, brother Robert had a dime stuck in his throat. Someone rushed to get Dr. Martin. In the meanwhile, Mother picked up Robert by the heels and shook the dime out as Dr. Martin was arriving. Dr. Martin's comment was,

"I'll bet if it had been a penny, no one would have bothered to call me"

The Bassages had homesteaded 160 acres on the west side of Lake Charlotte. They had a rather substantial log and frame home on the lake, which had originally been named Buck Lake. The Bassages later had it renamed to Lake Charlotte in honor of their daughter.

Our family, along with several others, would gather for an occasional Sunday dinner at the Bassage home. The road to their house left Lakeview Drive on what is now Sparta Road. At that time, it had no name. It was semi-paved to the wooden Jackson Creek bridge and several blocks beyond. After that, you had a choice of several sand ruts that were a driver's choice from wet to dry weather. On the one high sand hill, you were expected to cut palmetto to line the ruts and also to help push the car. The road was gradually improved and came to be named Sparta Road in recognition of the Camp Sparta Youth Camp.

At the Bassage home, I would sit on the large open porch and listen to the men talk. Mr. Bassage was a Spanish American War Veteran. A Mr. Hammer was in the Alaska and Yukon Gold Rush and had a nearby homestead. Another man had worked on the Panama Canal. They surely had some wild tales.

In the summer time when I was six or so, my parents would let me stay with the Bassages several days at a time. If Charlotte was home, she would take me bottle fishing in their boat. Bottle fishing was a short hook and line attached to a gallon jug and baited with a live minnow. After I was grown and Charlotte then married to Dr. Bert Tomlinson and living in Lake Wales, she said I was full of questions for her while fishing. She said one of my questions was "How many rabbits could this boat hold?" I don't remember her answer.

The only other house on Lake Charlotte was the Waters. It had a large pecan tree in the yard. Mr. Waters represented Watkins Products and traveled over the area door to door.

There were cousins on both sides of my family. Dad's brother, Alonzo, lived on little Lake Jackson. His house and Harder Hall were the only two buildings on the lake. *(continued on pg. 5)*

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Their three children were Mary Ellen, Robert and Tad. My father's farm adjoined theirs. All of us kids had to work on the farms, but also got time off to play. We played water tag and chased the two big alligators all over the lake. The gators had been shot at so often that they were afraid of us. One gator had only one eye.

Every year, the gators had a nest in the old run of Jackson Creek. The little baby gators would be in the same pool year after year and we would catch them. Kooglers store on North Ridgewood readily bought these for fifty cents and resold them to tourists for a dollar.

Cousin Mary Ellen was bitten on the ankle by a cottonmouth mocassin and was hospitalized for a week. One time when my father was disking down grass at the farm, cousin Robert and I were chasing rats, rabbits and anything else left in the remaining grass. Cousin Robert came running up to me saying "There's a rattle snake in there as big as my leg." I figured it was an indigo snake, which also gets quite large but is harmless, so I ran into the grass. Sure enough there was a seven foot rattle snake there which had eaten a rabbit and at one spot was leg-sized. We had my father run over it with the tractor.

Cousin Robert, in his junior year, got the job of driving the school bus. Florida had many student school bus drivers back then.

Our cousins on the Butler side of the family had three children: Alfred, Bess and Robert. We did a lot of things together. I think back on my high school years with great fondness. There was never a dull or slow moment.

I was in the school band. I played football two years. I had saved up enough money to buy a ten-year-old Model T Ford. It had a set of steer horns on the radiator with an alligator skull between the horns. On the back was attached a cow's tail.

One afternoon while parked on North Ridgewood, a group of old men were gathered around my car. I couldn't figure out what was going on until they all started laughing. Someone had wired the cow's tail up in the air and placed a can of water to dribble out water.

As I was graduating from high school, Pasco

Cooper asked if I would sell him my Model T. He had just gotten a job as a deer hunter in the Everglades. There was a state-federal program going on to eradicate Texas cattle fever, a disease spread by a tick from cattle and deer. Since deer could not be rounded up, they simply had to be hunted down and repopulated by tick-free deer after the program was completed.

The Model T had very high wheels and a wet clutch which made it desirable to get around in the wetlands. The last day before turning the car over to Pasco, I was coming around the Circle when the right front wheel crumpled. A Mr. Stevens ran a shoe repair shop on the Circle. He dug up a king pin bolt to replace the broken one. We hand-lifted the front end of the T and got it repaired within a few minutes.

As I look back on those growing up years, I am sure that all of us had similar experiences. On the other hand, I feel that doing so in Sebring was rather unique. I was either a country kid living in town or a town kid experiencing country life. In the late 1930s, the economy was picking up. A few new people were arriving and some new homes were being built. There were thirty-six in my graduating class. We had the senior day party at Lido Beach. We graduated and went out to face the big wide world.

April 2004



Kitty & Jack Ingle

Tent City in Sebring

By Elizabeth Walker

“Where was the Tent City in Sebring?” is a question asked many times in the Sebring Historical Society Archives. There may have been tents erected in other areas in Sebring during the population explosion of the 1920s. However, the March 8, 1925, Sebring American newspaper stated that seventy tents were to be erected to relieve the housing shortage and that “tents will arrive tomorrow”.

The tents were to be located at the intersection of Rose Avenue and Eucalyptus Street and running parallel to the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad tracks.

The “painted and furnished tents” were to be used “only for cover” and would sit on wood frames. Each tent was fourteen by sixteen feet and would have electric lights and running water furnished. Every ten tents would have two

showers and two toilets for women as well as two showers and two toilets for men. The tents were to be “rented out to the workmen at low weekly rates.”

The September 11, 1925, Sebring American newspaper mentioned that Mr. C.H. Small and Mr. I.E. Willis announced that the “first ten tents had arrived and would be ready for occupancy next Monday, September 14, 1925.” Ground was being prepared for the next thirty tents.

For a very short time, a few black families lived in tents in the area north and west of the Park Street Power Plant. John Newcomb’s diary mentioned that all residents washed clothes and bathed in Lake Jackson and carried water for home use. This, of course, was in the first days of Sebring before wells were dug and shacks were built.

Later, tents were erected in the area of the present City Hall for tourists, but there seems to have been only one “Tent City” in Sebring.

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. In addition, please note that the post office now requires that the 4-digit suffix appear after the zip code on all of our mail. Complete address as follows: **Sebring Historical Society, Inc.**
321 West Center Avenue
Sebring, FL 33870-3109
- Please notify us at 863-471-2522 of any address change that you have. The post office will not forward “The Historian”. Thank you.

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The following memorials have recently been received from
July 2005 through September 2005

By Wanda Whitehouse, Memorial Chairman

*Melvin Shelley, Dorothy Lee, Maria Adams, Daniel O’Keefe, Ruth Daughtry, Janet Pipon,
Shirley Sherwood, Harold Marsh, Jane Webster, Dr. Fred Fields, Ronald Sachsenmaier*

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

ANOTHER HURRICANE SEASON And VIPIR to the rescue!

By Elizabeth Walker

Having lived through many hurricanes and seasons of hurricanes, I have acquired enough experience to harbor mucho respect for them. The hurricane blitz of 2004 topped by 83 years of the “shakes” until Channel 8 acquired VIPIR!

What is VIPIR? Storm Team 2 Chief Meteorologist Rob Fowler said, “In all my years as a meteorologist, this is the most important piece of technology ever purchased to forecast and track severe weather here in the Lowcountry!”

The VIPIR (Volumetric Imaging and Processing of Integrated Radar) system is a 3-D severe weather tool that uses patented mathematical analysis, continuous Live scanning, and unmatched display capability.

WCBD News Director, Gene Kirkconnell, says, “The old Doppler Radar is like a piece of black and white x-ray film. Years ago, when it was first installed, it was the best technology available...VIPIR is the cutting edge of Live DOPPLER technology. It’s like a full body CAT SCAN compared to the old x-ray Doppler.”

Meteorologist John Ahrens’ description: “This isn’t just looking at rain already hitting the ground. Live VIPIR is looking into the future... at what’s going to happen.”

The advantage of Live VIPIR is its accuracy and power – more than 2 million watts of DOPPLER radar energy. VIPIR focuses 2,250,000 watts of power on the most severe storms. The old Doppler radar in Charleston had only 250 watts of energy. That means Storm Team 2 Live VIPIR is 9000 times more powerful than the old DOPPLER radar in Charleston.

“We are able to look at the upper levels of a storm system, where the strong winds and hail

form...where tornadoes begin! And, we will get the information to viewers with no delay,” added Meteorologist Ben Pogue.

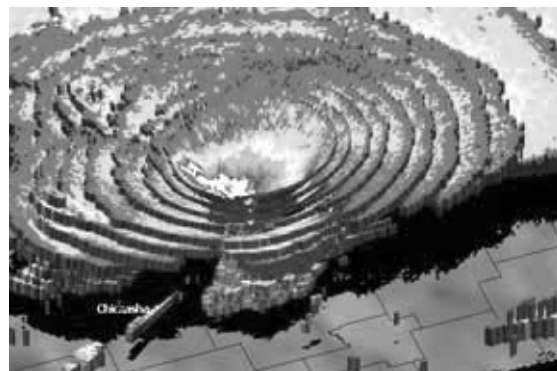
Now that’s what shrunk my shakes...along with more aspirins in three months than I have taken in my entire life!

When the warnings of the 1926 and 1929 hurricanes arrived in Lee County via the Miami Herald, the hurricane winds were already blasting us. The fear of not knowing what is happening certainly added to our stress.

In 2004, after listening to Chief Steve Jerve on Tampa’s Channel 8 as he manipulated VIPIR, we were confident enough to go outside during the height of the hurricane to watch a tornado pass within less than a mile of us! We could see in 3D on television exactly where the tornado was and the direction it was taking away from us.

Jerve’s sincere, dedicated and calming voice just walked us through the storms. He told us when to get in a closet and when it was safe to come out. What a relief it was, compared to sitting in the dark and wondering what was happening.

Modern technology makes me ashamed of myself for the mean attitude, that I have had to control, toward the unwieldy computers in my life.





S O C I E T Y

321 WEST CENTER AVENUE

SEBRING, FL 33870-3109

(863) 471-2522

www.sebringhistoricalsociety.org

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