

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

Volume 14 – Number 8

August 2012

The next Zephyrhills Historical Association meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 4<sup>th</sup> at the Zephyrhills Depot Museum, 39110 South Avenue. The business meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. and the program is at 7 p.m. Refreshments are always served.

## Speakers



Our guest speaker for the August meeting was Shae Davis, recently named as the new principal at Raymond B. Stewart Middle School in Zephyrhills. She talked about the fifteen years she spent as a teacher at Stewart and of the “community feel” she found there. Even though she had wonderful experiences at both Pineview and Weightman, she remarked that she never found quite the sense of community that she had known in Zephyrhills. It only took a couple of hours of being back at her home school to get the feeling she had never left. Folks at the middle school are happy to have Shae Davis back, and she talked about how she hoped to lead the staff in making it a great place for students. She also invited folks who are interested to sign up as volunteers. It’s an easy process on the District of Pasco’s web site, and the schools can certainly use the help. It was great to have Shae with us. Those in attendance were impressed by her professionalism and enjoyed her presentation very much.

Our speaker for September will be Alan Knight, long-time resident, former teacher, coach, and administrator in Zephyrhills and at other Pasco County Schools. We look forward to hearing from him. Come and join us.

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My email address is on the opening page

#### ZHA Mission Statement

The mission of the Zephyrhills Historical Association is to research, gather, and share local historical information with all generations, through our literature, programs, and scholarships, and to volunteer assistance to the Zephyrhills Depot Museum and WWII Barracks Museum.



## Member Spotlight

**Irene Davis Dobson**

By Clereen Brunty

Our next member of the Zephyrhills Historical Association is Irene Dobson who has been a member for many years. She has been our Program Planner coming up with some great guest speakers.

Born Irene Davis on April 30, 1924 in Patterson, Georgia (Pierce County) to Alex and Bessie (Green) Davis and is the 6th sibling from a family of 8 brothers and sisters...Alphonso, Johnny Mack, James Thomas, Arnor, Ernest, Melvin and Patsy Ruth. They were members of the St. James Baptist Church, "On The Ridge" as it was called.

In 1930 Irene moved to Florida to stay with her grandmother and attended grade school at West Palm Beach Elementary for the first 4 years then moved back to Patterson, Georgia to complete grades 5-12 at the Patterson School. All grades were housed in the same building. In school she enjoyed sports and was a player on the basketball team.

It was Irene's mother who emphasized education and instilled self-pride in all of her children and encouraged them to 'give back' to their communities. That is undoubtedly the foundation that helped to grow Irene along with the ideals of Martin Luther King, Jr., who is one of Irene's life inspirations.



Irene attended Savannah State College, Savannah Georgia and completed courses in Early Childhood Education from the University of Florida. Irene taught school in Mershon Georgia for 4 years before marrying Robert Dobson.

Irene came to Zephyrhills in 1952 with her husband, Robert, who worked for the Hercules Powder Company and had been transferred to Camp #39 in Zephyrhills. Hercules Powder Company was the largest employer in Zephyrhills from 1946 until its closing in 1962. She lived in the segregated housing on the Hercules land and recalls shopping at the company commissary and the many families and events that were held there. Irene shared similar reactions to the City of Zephyrhills in the decade of the 1950's where the streets were not paved and life was rural and sometimes rustic in those days. A 1960's picture of Irene sitting in her front yard shows the simpler days. Remember the time when you would leave your windows open and house unlocked? Your neighbors were true friends and watched out for each other? Those days have pretty much faded away.

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Robert and Irene raised 4 wonderful children, Charles who lives in New Carrollton, MD; Celia who lives in Austell, GA; Robert who lives in Little Rock, AK and Betsy who lives in Odessa, FL. All her children are graduates of Zephyrhills High School. As Irene was acclimating to life in Zephyrhills as a young wife and mother, she needed to get involved in the community. She was initially enticed to watch a soap opera with a few of the 1950's homemakers and recalled with a chuckle that 'The Edge of Night' seemed a little bogus. She decided on-the spot to see what she could do as an active participant--vocationally and otherwise to 'make a difference.'



Irene taught kindergarten at Moore Academy in Dade City. She later worked for the Walter & Lola Gall Family and then transitioned into the school system. She was one of the founding members, along with Mr. Harrison, Willie May Hall and Naomi Jones, of the Head Start Early Childhood Program in Pasco County. A fond memory she recalled was teaching her own daughter, Betsy, in kindergarten. Backing for those early



childhood programs with then School Superintendent, Chester Taylor, brought about one of the first opportunities for advocacy and Irene persevered through Mr. Taylor's opposition to the concept of education for pre-school to promote Head Start, showing him the difference that these programs could make to the growth and development of children in giving them a 'head start'.

Irene was soon recruited as active participant in her children's schools as well. As a regular member of the Zephyrhills School Advisory Councils and PTA, she voiced concerns and identified needs and helped problem solve. Not only in a leadership capacity, she was also on the front lines in offering her talents as well. She recalled sewing the first bulldog banner for the high school marching band.

Friend, Vera Chenkin, who is a local artist, would draw the bulldog head and she would appliqué the lettering and bulldog insignias and sewed the large banner for the marching group. A few years later, Irene even made a banner with the letter "V" for Victory that was carried at the beginning of all the football games.

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She regularly addresses school groups today in the Great American Teach-In when called upon to share her perspectives and knowledge. After a talk to a fourth grade class about life during segregation, she noted the poignant effect upon the ten-year-olds. Irene regularly participates in the annual MLK event in Dade City each year in January as an opportunity for teaching and acknowledgement of civil rights; and which provide funding for local scholarships for young people.

In the early 60's, Irene partnered with a couple of local mothers, Frances Spoto and June Travis, to lead the first integrated Girl Scout Troop in Zephyrhills. These



informal relationships in groups such as the Scouts, opened the doors to understanding and communication during the turbulent times of integration in the schools and the community. Throughout her times in Zephyrhills, Irene has made friends and made converts to her own unique brand of change and hope! We marveled at the folks throughout the chapters of her life who remain her faithful cohorts. When collecting artifacts for the Zephyrhills Depot Museum, Lola Gall, gave her photos of the first African American school in Zephyrhills and Irene chronicled

the names. School Principals such as James E. Davis readily praise her for the behind-the-scenes work she did to assist them with peaceful school integration.

In 2004 Irene received the Women of the Year award at the annual African-American Heritage Society of East Pasco County which was held in the Charles A. McIntosh, Jr. Municipal Building in Dade City. She is pictured with her lovely granddaughters, Carla & Jonetta and daughters, Celia & Betsy. Selected as one of the Grand Marshals in the 2010 Founders Day Parade celebrating the towns 100th birthday, folks waved to her and smiled at this long-awaited tribute as well. She is pictured at the ZHS Alumni Social and Dance event held after Homecoming of same year along with her daughter, Betsy and son, Charles. She showed everyone how to 'cut a rug'!



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Irene mentioned that economic times were stressful when she arrived in Zephyrhills in 1952 and ironically, still remains challenging for people in 2012. We need more jobs and opportunities to keep young people in our community, but I am glad to see so many go off and make successful futures. Irene clearly with optimism, admits that she encourages everyone to get involved in their community and be a contributing part of generating solutions.

Her sewing abilities have benefitted the community through dance costumes for Blackwood Studio, and others as well as alteration work and design creations. Inquiring as to where she obtained her seamstress abilities, Irene said she was from a



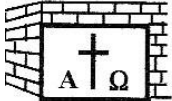
long-line of women who sewed but credited her outstanding home economics teacher, Miss Stone. (A sidebar conversation on the importance of home economics teachers in the early twentieth century brought some reflections on local home economics teachers, Lillian Johnson and Emma Lou Harvey, who enriched many a lives.)

Irene enjoys spending time with her six grandchildren. Her favorite color is light blue, her favorite song is "Oh How I Love Jesus" and her favorite book is the Bible. One of her favorite movies is "The Help", #1 New York Times bestseller by Kathryn Stockett. Led by Emma Stone, Viola Davis, Octavia Spencer and Bryce Dallas Howard, The Help is an inspirational, courageous and empowering story about very different, extraordinary women in the 1960s South who build an unlikely friendship around a secret writing

project — one that breaks society’s rules and puts them all at risk. Filled with poignancy, humor and hope — The Help is a timeless, universal and triumphant story about the ability to create change. Irene’s favorite restaurant is Red Lobster.

Not only is Irene an accomplished seamstress, but she is a marvelous gardener and baker. She loves to visit friends and ask for cuttings to add to her garden and the evidence of her knowledge of propagating plants and having a green thumb is shown.

Irene is known for her scrumptious baking. She doesn't miss a birthday of one of her children even though they are scattered from Maryland, Arkansas, Georgia and nearby Odessa; as they come to anticipate the home-baked birthday cake that they will either receive in the mail or at her home; and she has produced many a wedding cake innovation and delicacy as well.

<p><b>CornerStone</b>    <b>Baptist Church</b>                  7th Street &amp; 8th Avenue</p> <p>Come be our special guest                  Coffee &amp; Donuts 10:30***** Worship 11:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M.</p> <p>Dr. Neal Resue—Pastor                  * NealDoe1956@verizon.net</p>	<p>In Memory of</p> <p><b>Ryals Furniture Exchange</b>                  And Great Parents  <b>Powell &amp; Maude Ryals</b></p> <p>From son James</p> <p><b>God Bless America</b></p>
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A special confectionary is her Japanese Fruit Cake and with her permission the recipe is included here for your enjoyment. Irene said the recipe had been passed down from her mother, Bessie via a family friend. Perhaps a rich cake recipe is a metaphor of a multifaceted woman who is quick to challenge inequities, speak up for needs and one of the very first to be on the scene when work needs to be completed for the good of the community. We applaud our own Irene!

#### JAPANESE FRUIT CAKE

Ingredients:

1 cup butter

2 cups sugar

3 ¼ cups flour

1 can cup water or milk

4 eggs

1 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. vanilla

Make as any cake. Divide batter into two parts. Into each part put 1 tsp. each of cinnamon and all spice, ½ tsp. clove, ¼ lb. of raisins (chopped fine). Bake into two layers.

Filling:

Juice of two lemons

Grated rind of 1 lemon

1 good size coconut, grated

2 cups of sugar

1 cup boiling water

2 tbs. of corn starch

Put all together into saucepan except cornstarch. When the mixture begins to boil, add cornstarch. Add ½ cup of cold water. Continue to cook, stirring constantly until mixture drops from spoon. Cool & spread between layers.

Cover top & sides with white icing.

#### From the Desk of the Editor

We are embarking on a new adventure at the Zephyrhills Historical Association. We were so impressed with Jeff Miller's presentation at our July meeting, and we wondered if this was not a direction we wished to go as an association, collecting and presenting a slide-show for ourselves. At our August Board Meeting we voted to purchase a projector for such purposes. Since that time, at the suggestion of Board Member Bill Kustes, we consulted Rick McGinnis, with Xerox Audio Visual Solutions, who was an athletic standout from the ZHS class of 1968. He recommended a projector which would meet our needs, but he also recommend we get a light-weight screen to go with it in order to be prepared for all occasions. Since this is an additional expense to what was decided at our August meeting I am recommending we buy this screen only if we can collect enough donations to cover it. The cost is just under \$440. I presented the idea at our get-together for dinner, pledging \$50 myself. We didn't quite cover it on first request, so I am increasing my own pledge to \$100, and I intend to ask again at our September meeting. Please consider making a contribution. In addition I will bring some large envelopes to distribute, so that folks can contribute photos for scanning in our project. This will make it easier to return the photos to folks who bring them in. I'm really excited to be working on this project, and I think it will be a real contribution our association can make to the community of Zephyrhills.

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### Origins of Place Names in Pasco County, Florida

<http://fivay.org/pasco3.html>

**BUDDY'S LAKE SETTLEMENT.** According to a 1996 Tampa Tribune article, a 1923 newspaper article recounted several tales by Rev. H. D. Ryals, including this one:

It's funny how some of the places around here got their names. Lake Buddy . . . was named for an old bull. There was a family named Barber moving to Hillsborough driving a herd of cattle with them. When they reached the lake . . . Buddy went way out till the water covered his back and . . . refused to come out. After awhile, they gave up and went on without him. When Buddy got ready, he came out of the water, took up the trail and joined the herd after it had camped for the night. The lake was known as 'Buddy's lake' after that.

*The History of Zephyrhills 1821-1921 has:*

It was during this period of settlement following the Fort Dade Treaty that a covered wagon came south along the Fort King Road. The owner drove a considerable herd of cattle led by a pet bull named Buddy. They stopped at the lake for water. The settlers gathered, as was the custom, to exchange news and become acquainted. The cattle drank their fill of water and then stood in the welcome shade of nearby trees chewing their cud and switching flies. Buddy, being thoroughly heated up and dried out, went out into the lake drinking as he went until his back was covered with the cool water. He was so comfortable that when his owner was ready to move on Buddy refused to come out. No amount or kind of coaxing availed and the procession went on without him. Buddy came out when he was quite ready and took up the trail following after his herd. The residents who had observed the bull's behavior began referring to the big lake as Buddy's Lake, then Buddy Lake and finally Lake Buddy. It so appeared on early charts and maps. The origin of the name went unquestioned by the busy later settlers but remained among the settlers of early 1837.

*An article in the spring 1984 Florida Genealogist says:*

A family named Barber was moving to Hillsborough County and they came through that area driving a herd of cattle. They had an old pet bull named Buddy. When they reached the lake, all the cattle ran out in the water to drink. Buddy went way out till the water covered his back. When they tried to drive him out, he refused to come and offered to fight. They decided to go on without him. Later, when Buddy got ready, he came out, took up the trail of the cattle and joined the herd when it was camped for the night. The lake was known as Buddy's Lake after that. Today it is Pasadena Lake.

The lake is called Lake Buddy in a survey dated April 4, 1846. Buddy Lake is a place name in the 1850 census. In the 1880s, the name was changed to Lake Pasadena, although some maps show a small Lake Buddy next to a large Lake Pasadena.

On Dec. 18, 1897, The Louisiana Planter and Sugar Manufacturer has a report titled "Syrup Making at the Skinner's Bend Central Factory, Pasco County, Florida." The article carries the dateline Lake Buddy.

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