

TRACKS OF TIME

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

Volume 16 – Number 2

February 2014

The next Zephyrhills Historical Association meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 4th 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 include drinks, which are provided, and food brought in to share by members.

Speakers



Our speaker for February was Van McKenzie, a 1973 graduate of Zephyrhills High School and the first black student to be elected Student Body President at ZHS. On this visit Van talked mostly about his heroes, in recognition of Black History Month. The men he talked about were Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Nelson Mandela. We are going to ask him to come again later this year or early next year to talk more about himself. Find out more about Van on page 3. Those in attendance enjoyed his presentation.

Our speaker for the March meeting will be Willie Broner, retired teacher and coach, who spent his career at our archrival, Pasco in Dade City, but we'll try not to hold that against him. He recorded more than three hundred wins as a basketball coach and has been honored a number of times for his brilliant career. He's a man who was deeply respected, not only by his students and players, but also by his fellow coaches and officials of the game. One might gather that he is to Pasco what our own John Clements is to Zephyrhills. We are most pleased to have Willie with us. It should be an informative and entertaining evening. We hope you'll come join us.

Thursday, March 27th, is our next Ruby Tuesday Scholarship Fundraiser

We are meeting up at 5 p.m. on that day, but you can come anytime.
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Please consider contributing old photos for the website.

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.

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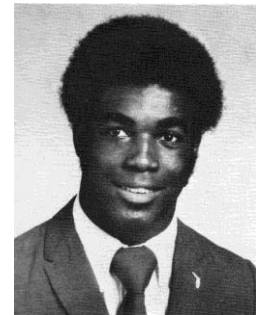
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From the Desk of the Editor
Personal Reflections

Having Van McKenzie as our featured speaker in February brought back a host of memories for me. It put me in mind of the early years of integration at Zephyrhills High School and to the many black students I taught and coached in my career at Raymond B. Stewart Middle School.

I can't claim to have known Van all that well in high school. He was an eighth grade student during my senior year, so we did not have much occasion to interact. His older brother, Alvin, was my classmate, so we knew each other far better. Still, I remember Van, and he impressed me greatly, which is really quite remarkable when you consider the difference in our ages. It reveals to me that even as a very young student he was already exhibiting his leadership skills.

Van had an impressive high school career. He was in FFA, Z Club, Chorus, and Student Council. As a junior he was Parliamentarian for the Council, and he was elected President as a senior. He also went to Boys' State his senior year. He played football, basketball, and baseball. In his junior year he was homecoming prince and class treasurer.



Student Council Officers


STUDENT COUNCIL OFFICERS ARE:
James Bailey, Sponsor, Van McKenzie, President, Walt Poplick, Veep, Phyl Jarrett, Corresponding Sec., Deb Nelson, Parl.



Cheri Wynne, Recording Sec., Charlie Back, Treas. Terry Turner, Sponsor.

The Student Council sponsors many school functions. Dances, assemblies, and a Scholarship Fund are only a few. S.C. also gets Homecoming off to a roaring start ...

Two of our members are in this picture with Van — Cheri Wynne White and Terry Turner.

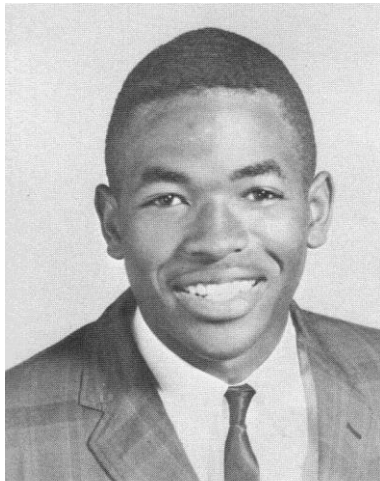
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Personal Reflections Continued

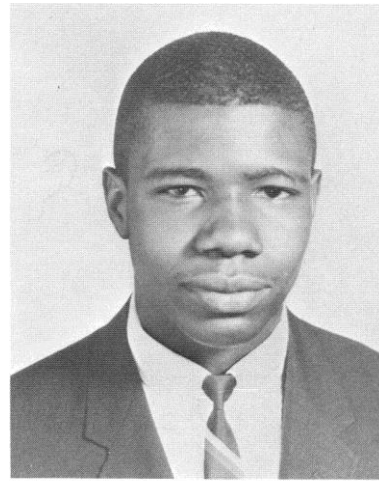
I was a freshman in high school when the Pasco County Schools were integrated. I don't remember much trouble resulting from this change or of being unhappy about it in any way. In one of the articles published in The Zephyrhills News during the 100-Year Celebration Celia Anderson, former ZHS Librarian and 1929 graduate is quoted: "Integration in Pasco Public Schools went comparatively smoothly. This was in great part due to the efforts of the parents and school personnel. Pasco County was still 'small town' in outlook in the sixties, with enough good will on both sides to effect a reasonable transition. Some private schools were opened at this time and a few are still in operation. Yet it can certainly be said that we faced a challenging crisis if not nobly at least creditably. Professor O.K. Mickens continued as principal of Mickens Middle School after integration and it is believed by many that his influence was one of the major reasons for the smooth transition. He worked tirelessly to help in the crisis, backed by experienced gained from 40 years in the local school system."

From my own perspective I can tell you that the reason for much of the "good will on both sides" is because we already KNEW each other. I remember that my mother considered Irene Dobson to be her friend, just as my father spoke of Mickey Perry as a friend. I never got the impression that their friendship was any different than my parents' friendships with white people. In addition, in my own case, I was practically raised by black women. My mother worked when I was younger than school age, and I was looked after by women who were hired to look after me and the house. I don't remember their names, but I certainly remember THEM. I felt safe in their company, and they were obviously trusted by my parents. One incident I remember most clearly from this time, and a story Billy McGavern just loves to tell on me, was when McGavern plumbing was hired to put in a new septic tank for us. I am pretty sure it was Louie Sellars who told me to stay away from the open septic tank, but I was too busy being a little dickens and throwing pebbles, and I walked right into it. I was immediately rescued from drowning, or course, but I was not rescued from the stink. The lady who was looking after me that day made me strip to my jockeys, rinsed me with the garden hose, and THEN would not let me back in the house until after she'd called my mother. I deserved it, and I deserved having the story told every time one of those guys was in Hodges Barber Shop when I walked in.

Seniors from that first class after integration, 1965-66 school year, were Charles Davis and Leroy Holt.



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Personal Reflections Continued

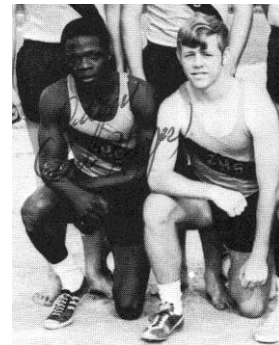




KNEELING, L. to R.: Jim Burns, Skip Stewart, Chuck Blessing, Keithel Chauncy, Oscar McKay, Johnny Harrelsod, Wayne Griffin, Richard Chenkin, Jerry Pricher, Carl Lippincott, Robert Reeves. SECOND ROW: Johnny Lanham, Cliff Cooper, Danny Blessing, Ben Holt, Greg Atkinson, Billy Coleman, Joe Vincent, Billy Dean, Mike Cleary, Ray Mullis, Mike Hembey, Benny Poe. THIRD ROW: Coach McKinney, James Tucker, Doug Kirk, Johnny Braxton, Rodney Price, Alvin Evo-noff, Doug Prowant, Robert Bolton, Walley Reeves, Bill Tucker.

One memorable incident from that first year of integration was in connection with football. Ben Poe and I were just discussing this at a football game last year. We both played JV for Coach Chuck McKinney that year, and the black players on that team were Ben Holt and Oscar McKay. I'm not sure whether it was at Turkey Creek or Pinecrest that this occurred, but Coach McKinney was concerned that there might be trouble. We were instructed to surround Ben and Oscar as we entered and exited the field, which we did. I think there may have been

some taunts from the stands, but I'm not sure. I do recall that Oscar told me later that it had been somewhat frightening for him. I guess not all places were ready to accept the inevitable at that particular time.

I did become close friends with one classmate, who happened to be black. We did not become close until track season of our junior year. Clarence "Champ" Odom ran the 330-leg of our Sprint Medley Relay team, which went to State that year, where we finished in seventh place. He returned to the state meet the following year in the 100-yard dash. In our junior year, when we both ran in the medley, Champ almost drowned when he dove into the deep end of the motel pool. He'd failed to mention to anyone that he did not know how to swim. I dove in after him, but we're lucky we both didn't drown, since I did not have a clue what I was doing. He did what any drowning person would do and grabbed onto me when I came close, but to his credit he released me. Somehow I had the good sense to push myself off the bottom and push him toward the edge of the pool, where Ryan Gray was waiting to pull poor Clarence to safety. He continues to credit me with having saved his life, but I think we were both very lucky. He went on to marry Celia Dobson, Irene's daughter, and even though they are no longer married, Irene keeps track of him. She helped me get in contact with him a few years ago, and we met up at a football game. It was like we'd never been apart.



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Personal Reflections Continued

I’ve taught and coached a number of very gifted black students in my career, including nieces and a nephew of Van McKenzie, but I’ll mention only one here as a lead-in to our next article. One of my favorite students of all time is David “Flip” Giles. I see him quite often, and it never fails to cheer me when in his company. He has that effect on a number of people. He’s just a very warm person.

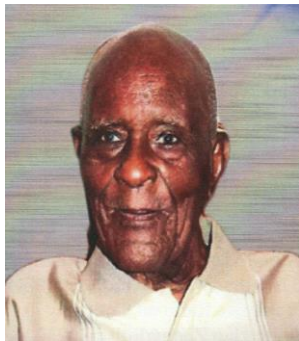
When David came to me as a seventh grade student he didn’t have a whole lot of confidence, a common malady for middle school students. To make a long story short Flip turned things around in eighth grade, and he was voted the “Turn-Around” Student for Stewart Middle School that year.

He is the great-grandson of Jake “Papa” Giles (1885-1990) and Bessie “BabBab” Giles (1898-1969), who were the first black family to live inside the Zephyrhills city limits. They came here in the early 1930s. Their life is well documented in Zephyrhills from A to Z, compiled by Vicki Elkins and Margaret Seppanen. One of their sons, Nathan, Flip’s grandfather, just celebrated his 100th birthday this past November.

**Nathan Giles, Sr., 100th Birthday Celebration
November 30th, 2013**

From material compiled by Evelyn Giles Church and Cynthia Jarrell

Nathan Giles was born December 1, 1913 in Coosawatchie, South Carolina. He is the son of Jake and Bessie Singleton Giles, and his siblings are Mae Bell, Annie Mae, Carrie Mae, and Benjamin. His first job, at the age of sixteen, was at Jack Booth Crate Mill Company, making strawberry crates for nine dollars a week. When he was twenty-one he worked for Dr. Osbrook. His job was chasing birds out of the strawberry fields with a shotgun. He was awarded three dollars a week for this enterprise. He later worked as a nursing assistant for the male patients at a local nursing home, where he earned eleven dollars a month. He never received his final paycheck because the company moved from the area overnight.



He married Lillian Nesmith in April of 1937 on a Saturday at the Pasco County Courthouse. Nathan and Lillian had six children – Bessie Mae, Nathan Jr., Evelyn, David, Carolyn, and Colaveto. Despite his lack of formal education (only third grade), he successfully provided for his family. During the depression he worked various jobs for free hoping to get paid, but he never received an actually paycheck. He worked for Krusen Sawmill from 1942 to 1946, and then for Hills Lumber Company, as a block setter, until the company was destroyed by fire. From 1964 to 1977 he worked for Futch Sawmill in Plant City. Then, in 1978, he worked for William Sawmill in Deland until an unfortunate accident caused him to lose three fingers. His family church was Macedonia Church in Zephyrhills, which also served as the first school for African-American students.



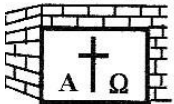
Grandchildren



Great-Grandchildren



Great-Great-Grandchildren

<p>CornerStone  Baptist Church 7th Street & 8th Avenue Come be our special guest Coffee & Donuts 10:30***** Worship 11:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. Dr. Neal Resue—Pastor * NealDoe1956@verizon.net</p>	<p>In Memory of Ryals Furniture Exchange And Great Parents Powell & Maude Ryals From son James God Bless America</p>
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Connections

Material from article by Clereen and Madonna for 100 Year Celebration



Captain Jeffries was the captain of a black infantry during the Civil War. He enlisted as a private in the 28th Pennsylvania Infantry, Company F (which was a white infantry). Later however, he served as a Captain in the 72nd United States Colored Infantry which was organized in Covington, Kentucky. The 72nd was organized sometime prior to July of 1864, but not earlier than the Emancipation Proclamation of September, 1862. (St. Cloud Tribune (FL), April 1, 1920; War of the Rebellion, Series III, Volume IV, published 1900.)


Nick Linville, professional historian with Zephyrhills roots, who works with the Southeastern Archaeological Research (SEARCH), doing consulting on archaeological and historic preservation policy for clients as varied as the United States Navy, the Florida Dept. of Transportation, Progress Energy, and the National Park Service. His professional research has taken him to archives in Philadelphia, Washington DC, Denver, and many places across the southeastern United States. Nick, a 1999 ZHS grad who also enjoys local history, unearthed this unforeseen civil war documentation of our founding father, just recently. Nick shared the following information:

The Civil War (1861-1865) was the first in which African Americans served in large numbers. Over 200,000 black men from both the North and the South served in the United States Army and Navy during the conflict. Issued in September of 1862, the Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in states that were in rebellion and opened the door to the enlistment of black troops in the United States forces. The first African American regiments were raised in places that the Union Army had occupied such as New Orleans and the sea islands of South Carolina. Often, runaway slaves filled the ranks of these early regiments. Several Northern states began forming their own regiments midway through the war as African American men stepped forward to serve. While their participation in the armed forces was a significant advancement of the time, black troops in the Civil War were not permitted to serve as officers. By 1864, the raising of these troops was federalized and African American regiments were officially known as the United States Colored Troops.

One such regiment, the 72nd United States Colored Troops, was raised in Covington, Kentucky about 1864. Serving as Captain was none other than the man who founded Zephyrhills many years later, Howard B. Jeffries. Little is known as to why Jeffries was chosen for this position. He did have prior experience in the military, however, having served in the 28th Pennsylvania Infantry during the opening years of the war.

The founding of our own Zephyrhills was completed by a leader of African Americans troops who we would like to think had an intuitive perspective on the contributions that are derived from diverse viewpoints, experiences and history. Imagine if you will, what it must have been like in 1864, to be charged with a group of recruits who enlisted for the union (yes, the north) and fought in a complicated war? Mr. Jeffries must have had many conversations with his men about their families, passions, hopes and futures. We are so appreciative to Nick for bringing this information to the forefront.

So here in Zephyrhills and surroundings, African Americans have contributed much to our growth and development. African-Americans have been in Pasco County since at least 1812 and have been documented in the state of Florida since the time of the Spanish explorers brought slaves with them. African-American workers were instrumental in the construction of the rail tracks which included the Seaboard Airline in 1896 and later the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad which featured four passenger train stops daily.

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George Green and Peggy

Many of us remember Mr. George Green (1894-1977). He was an enthusiastic participant in the annual Founder’s Day Parade with his white horse, Peggy. Possessing a strong work ethic, he toiled not only as the local junk trader but as an employee of Krusen Timber. With his wife, Daisy Haines, Irene Dobson related that George epitomized a sense of community that enriched the lives of children and families as he was always doing good deeds and taking care of people.

2014 Carter G. Woodson Award

Sponsored by the African Heritage Society of East Pasco County, Inc.

Jerry K. Farmer was recently given this award at a gathering in Dade City. Madonna Wise sent this along to us and encouraged us to use it in our newsletter. You’ll note that two former recipients are James “Mudcat” Grant and Robert W. Judson. These are names probably familiar to many of our members. Dr. Judson has spoken to us before and was in attendance at our last meeting.



About the Honoree

Jerry K. Farmer was born in Leesburg, Florida and graduated from Pasco High School in 1976. At an early age, his mother recognized his gift of drawing and supported and encouraged his interest in the arts. Others saw in Jerry’s artistic gifts and did all they could to create opportunities for him to showcase his talents. For example, the late high Principal, Dr. Wayne Malone commissioned him to paint the Pirate, the school’s mascot on the inner wall of the school’s gymnasium, the Dr. Donald McBath Activities Center. Attorney Bill Dayton and local historian commissioned him to recreate “The Voting Parade of 1889” that commemorated the African Americans’ contributions to the campaign to keep the county seat in Dade City, two years after Pasco became a county. Thus, Jerry painted the portraits of educators, Professor Odell Kingston and Christine Mickens that adorn the wall of the Mickens Education Center Administration Building. Jerry is a retired Master Corrections Court Officer and owns the studio, Masterpiece Designs. The event is a memorial to Carter G. Woodson, the founder of Negro History Week, known today as Black History Month. Farmer is the 8th recipient of the Award.

Past Recipients

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 2013 James “Mudcat” Grant | 2012 Robert W. Judson, Jr. |
| 2011 Moore Academy –Mickens High School Reunion Committee | |
| 2010 Marie C. Brown, | 2009 Imani D. Asukile |
| 2008 Theresa Pressley | 2007 Ruth Black |

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