

TRACKS OF TIME

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

Volume 16 – Number 5

May 2014

The next Zephyrhills Historical Association meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 3rd 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 program in May was a performance by the Zephyrhills High School Chorus, under the direction of Luan Gore. They did a terrific job as usual, and those in attendance received a great treat!

Our speaker for the June meeting will be Gene Whitfield, Mayor of the City of Zephyrhills. Many of us already know Gene, and he's a great guy. We are confident it will be a pleasant evening. We hope you'll join us.



Thursday, May 29th, is our next Ruby Tuesday Scholarship Fundraiser

We are meeting up at 4 p.m. on that day, but you can come anytime.

Contact Patty Thompson (813-780-8559 – pattycakeclown1@aol.com) for flyer.

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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.

 <p>Garage Doors, Inc. Kerry Ryman President</p> <p>36413 SR 54 • Zephyrhills, Florida 33541 Telephone: 813-782-5926 • Fax: 813-788-6773 E-mail: kerry@rymanconstruction.com License # GDI 09084</p> 	 <p>ABBOTT STATION RESTAURANT</p> <p>813 322 3686</p> <p>5327 Gall Blvd. Zephyrhills, FL 33542 www.AbbottStation.com</p>
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Member Profile

*Interview with Bob and Penny Porter
by Clereen Brunty*


Do you believe in FATE? Well, Bob Porter does . . . The son of Verl and Anna “Margaret” (Faulkner) Porter says life has been very good to him and he attributes it to “fate” including the love of his life for more than 62 years, Priscilla “Penny” Porter who is the daughter of Florence (Goodwin) McNeal Nash and George Nash. They have known each other all their lives, in fact, Bob said he used to push Penny in her stroller when she was about 9 months to a year old! They have 3 daughters, Nancy Watson, Sandra Geiger and Caroline Morris and one son, Richard, to keep the Porter name going. Their children all graduated from Zephyrhills High School.



The following is a biography Bob & Penny’s son, Richard, and great-granddaughters, Amber and Rachel, helped to compile of their life’s adventures and rewards. Every chapter of his life, Bob calls it fate. The saying goes “one door closes and another door opens” you just have to believe in yourself and take the chance. They enjoyed the company of many movie stars such as Cliff Robertson, Henry Cannon who was Minnie Pearl’s husband, Matt Dillon who would take their daughter, Nancy, and put her on his shoulder as well as Johnny and June Carter Cash, George Gillis, Jane Fonda & her husband to name a few. I know you will enjoy the reading...

Charles Robert “Bob” Porter was born in 1929 on a small farm in southeast Iowa. Both his father and grandfather lived on the same farm that has been in the family since 1893. Driving Model “T”’s you could say was naturally in the family as they used them to get around the farm. At the age of 8, Bob’s grandfather taught him to drive his 1919 Touring car. At the age of 14, right at the start of high school, Bob bought his first Model T, a 1927 Touring car to drive to and from school. This started a trend that led to many years of his buying, selling and horse trading. It is important to keep in mind the following, which will be explained in further detail; in addition to his love for Model “T”’s that he drove around as a young boy, he had three other interests: he loved trains, as there were two railroads right along his farm, he wanted to be a pilot (which was inspired by watching planes fly over him during WWII) and he wanted to be a boat captain, after watching the boats along the Mississippi River.

Having spent the war years as a teenager on the farm and being only 30 miles away from the Ottumwa, Iowa Naval Air Station, which based over 300 Stearman Biplanes that regularly trained and even “buzzed” him while he worked in the fields, he had a desire to become a Naval Aviator, but with the war’s end the need for pilots had diminished.

<p>Shirts & Caps, founded in Zephyrhills in 1982, is now an internet-based national supplier of custom screen printed t-shirts. Still family owned and operated; find us online at www.ClassB.com!</p> 	<p>Artistic Expressions Custom Picture Framing specializing in the framing of needlework 5906 7th Street Zephyrhills, Florida 33542</p> <p>(813) 783-7731 Beverly Koehler Barnett, Owner E-Mail: aeframer@aol.com</p>
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In February of 1949, he started dating Penny whom he had known all his life. Bob decided that after working many odd jobs, it was time to get a steady one and got hired at a Chevrolet garage in July of that year at just 20 years old. Around Christmas time of that year, he was let go in order to make room for a mechanic with more experience and from that moment on he was determined to never work for anyone else again. His thoughts were he could've worked for him for many more years and still be treated the same way. So with great support from Penny, they worked to establish their own business and never worked for anyone else again. That was when he embarked on his first steps to becoming self-reliant as a Ford Tractor and Dearborn Farm Equipment dealer and associate dealer for New Ford Automobiles. In 1951 after 2 very busy years of establishing the business, his love for flying emerged once again. With \$375.00 he had saved, he bought half interest in a Piper J-3 "Cub" and obtained his Private Pilot's License.



In November of 1952 Bob and Penny were married. Later in 1953, despite his family starting to grow with the birth of their first daughter, Penny has always been supportive and kept busy being the secretary treasurer for all of their businesses while being a full time housewife and mother. Bob never did get over his love for flying, which lead him into the direction of Aviation as a business. He decided to purchase one half interest in a small FBO (Fixed Base Operation) which he and his partner, whom he had known since childhood, bought, sold and repaired aircraft. However in the early fifty's the Aviation Industry was not all that profitable; it was a very hard way to make a living and raise a family, which later on had included their second daughter. It required a lot of hard work from both Bob and Penny, this even included the re-covering of fabric Airplanes in the front yard of their home, which was across the street from the Tractor Shop which he still owned and operated.



In early 1955 Bob was offered a half interest in FBO at the old naval air station. This was the former Ottumwa Naval Air Station and the same airport that had inspired his interest for Aviation in the first place, but he did not have any idea of what to do with the tractor business. The bank that financed the tractor company put Bob between a rock and a hard place. Since flying was deemed as dangerous, they made him make a choice: quit flying or else not have any credit line for his business. As fate would have it, in September of 1955 a rich farmer came and bought the tractor business and thus his first career ended with the sale of the tractor shop.

In 1956, they became a Cessna Aircraft Dealer selling the new line of Cessna Aircraft. The Aviation Industry was finally "Taking Off". At the same time Bob and Penny were still building their family with the arrival of a third daughter in 1956 and their only son in 1957. This business proved to be quite successful with the sales, servicing and re-building of many aircraft including WWII type aircraft. The only drawbacks were the long, harsh winters. The solution was to seek a warmer place in the south. After going to Florida for several winter vacations, Bob and Penny were hooked. While on vacation in February 1962, Bob negotiated a lease for acreage on the Zephyrhills, FL airport and proceeded to build a 10,000 square foot shop and apartment and embarked on yet another adventure in aviation.

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In 1965 Bob and his partner decided to divide their interest with Bob and Penny keeping the Florida business and the portion in Iowa was kept by the partner. With the end of the school year they moved their family from Iowa to the airport apartment. In keeping with the fashion of the Iowa Business, Bob continued the re-building and sales of used aircraft. The first new opportunity that evolved for Bob was establishing the now world famous Zephyrhills Parachute Center, which started as a weekend parachute operation.



In 1969 he took the largest plunge yet when he purchased his first large airplane, a 26 passenger Douglas DC-3 that was the first one used for sport parachuting in the area. The first DC-3 was so successful several more followed and before he knew it, he had them working not only in the skydiving business but also he operated them on non-scheduled island hopping, in which he owned an interest in a scuba diving business at a hotel operation in South Cacaos. By 1974 the fuel and operating cost were out of hand and thus another area of aviation had to be found.



He then reverted back to the old talents used occasionally since 1953, and along with the help of his then teenage son Richard, went full speed into transforming the Zephyrhills FBO operation into an FAA Certified Repair Station specializing in the Major Overhaul of Continental and Lycoming aircraft engines. By 1980 the engine shop had grown to be in the top 10 of the country; and had a full Continental Engine and Parts Distributorship.

Sadly, Bob's second career having spanned over 37 years and included everything from J-3's to DC-3's and over 19,000 plus hours came to an end on December 31, 1985. When he was forced to give up his interest in the family business he and Richard had built due to the inability to protect his life's savings from the strict legal liability laws the aviation industry was now facing and the total absence in the marketplace for Product Liability Insurance.

After trying 9 months of retirement he became so bored he decided to pursue yet another lifelong interest, this one having been boats. Having had several pleasure boats throughout the years, in 1986 he decided to build a charter boat. This was not really the average boat as it was to be 137' long with 4 deck levels and US Coast Guard approved for 149 passengers plus a crew of 11, full galley for onboard food preparation, dinner seating for 75 at a time, two full bars, dance floor, baby grand piano, etc.

<p style="text-align: center;">CHALET FLOWERS</p> <div style="text-align: center;">   </div> <p style="text-align: center;">5002 SEVENTH STREET ZEPHYRHILLS, FLORIDA 33542 813-788-2874</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MARY ANN · KIM · TIM SANDERS</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">LITTLE ANGEL CHRISTIAN STORE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5522 7th Street (behind Kentucky Fried Chicken) Zephyrhills, Florida 33542 Toll Free (800) 290-9650 (813) 782-7600</p> <p style="text-align: center;">labor of LOVE STAN & CHARLOTTE GRAMS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">BIG ENOUGH TO SERVE YOU - SMALL ENOUGH TO KNOW YOU</p>
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Bob located a vessel suitable for this conversion in Morgan City, LA., so off in his motorhome he went to spend the next year building his boat. After having dealt with the FAA for over 37 years, he felt dealing with the rules and regulations of the US Coast Guard would be no problem. That was really not to be as he soon found the oldest bureaucratic agency in the US and they still are in the 18th century with their ideas of what a boat should look like. After many battles he won out and got the boat built to resemble the looks of the Italian Yacht he desired. When the boat was completed, he sold it but having had financed its sale, the purchaser defaulted in 1993. He took it back and operated it for a year until another Charter Boat operator purchased it. The Vessel "SUNDRREAM" is still in active charter in Ft. Lauderdale.



Bob's hobby down through the years has been to return to the Midwest Old Settlers & Thrashers Reunion in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. He has been a locomotive engineer on the Midwest Central Railroad since 1964 operating Narrow Gauge Steam Locomotive's during the annual 5 day reunion. In 1988 Bob and the founder of the Midwest Central Railroad joined forces and decided to put the shop and equipment the railroad had acquired through the years to work full time. They formed a business that repaired, restored and built steam locomotives and trains. This came to an untimely end with the death of Bob's partner and longtime friend in 1993. They left quite a legacy in the train world by building and restoring everything from two complete amusement park trains, to rebuilding a locomotive and two cars from Michael Jackson's Never, Never Land in California, to building parts for the locomotives operated by Disney Land, Walt Disney World, Knot's Berry Farm and even the train used in the Dr. Quinn television series was restored and the list goes on.

After early 1994, he finally decided to retire after the railroad business. Bob always had a love for the model "T" from his youth, so while on a trip back to Iowa to his father's old farm, he found something he thought was lost forever. The 1919 touring car his grandfather taught him to drive at age 8 (the same car he had been riding in since his birth in 1929) was in the driveway of the 115 year old barn. With that and time on his hands, when he and Penny were not on the road traveling in their motorhome or raising their great-granddaughter Amber, he has been restoring it as well as the 1911 Tour About, a 1913 touring car, the 1917 Speedster, a 1919 one ton truck as well as two more rolling chassis. His "T" interest includes tours, club meetings and functions. Most of all, he enjoys restoring them in his shop at his home in Zephyrhills, where he spends his time doing what he first started loving as a young man, spending time with his Model "T"s. There are not a whole lot of people in life that can say they were able to do all of the things they set out to do quite like Bob Porter.

In closing this chapter in the exciting life of the Porters, I wanted to share a bit of personal info on each...while Bob attended Brighton High School in Brighton, Iowa, he says he didn't really care for sports and all he could think of doing is his passion - any type of engine mechanical work. He graduated in 1947 and wanted to become a pilot. He spent 6 years in the 34th division of the Iowa Army National Guard known as the "Red Bull" as an E4 Sergeant. He also spent 3 years in the Naval Reserves in Chicago, IL at the Glenview Naval Air Station.

<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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 <p>THE PARTY STORE 813-780-7000 36606 STATE RD 54 ZEPHYRHILLS, FL 33541 BALLOONCITY1@AOL.COM www.BalloonCityZephyrhills.com LOCATED IN THE SWEET BAY SHOPPING CENTER</p>	 <p>Zephyrhills Museum of Military History <i>A City of Zephyrhills Facility</i> Open Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. 39444 South Ave. (813) 780-0078</p>
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Penny was a quiet little girl attending the YMCA Kindergarten and Stewart Elementary and graduated from Washington High School in Washington, Iowa where she enjoyed being a cheerleader.



They are both members of the Westside Baptist Church in Wesley Chapel, FL. Penny was a nursery teacher for many years. When they aren't traveling, tinkering with the Model T's, buying and selling airplanes, Bob and Penny enjoy spending time with the family and their grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. I lost count of just how many!


I asked each one what their hobbies and collectibles are and no surprise, Bob said Model T's and airplanes (die cast ones as well), and Penny said she enjoys doing all kinds of puzzles especially crosswords. Enjoying the good life of retirement has suited them quite well. I've never met a couple who has dabbled in just about everything and finding each more intriguing than the other. Fate has supported them all of the way.

Bob's favorite color is red and blue while his favorite music is the old style country music and he enjoys reading, what else, his flying magazines and Model T magazines. He let me know he saw the first run of Gone With The Wind in the late 1930's. His favorite restaurant is Sonny's BBQ.

Penny's says her favorite color is blue and Alan Jackson is her favorite country music singer. She enjoys reading inspirational books from Joel Osteen and the Reader's Digest. I always think of the section in the Digest "Laughter is the best Medicine" which is so true. Try it when you are down and it will make your day a lot better. Penny enjoys watching the old Beverly Hillbillies and eating at Sonny's BBQ as well or having a nice, juicy steak.

Bob and Penny have been members of the Zephyrhills Historical Association for over 6 years and sit on the Board as they have done for many of those years.



<p>Gail Fisher <i>Special Events Coordinator</i> Cell (813) 997-2358</p>  <p>SILVERADO GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB</p> <p>Office (813) 788-1225 • Fax (813) 780-7869 36841 Clubhouse Drive • Zephyrhills, FL 33542 www.golfsilverado.com</p> <p>Brantley Smith <i>Owner and Operator</i></p>	<p>Dependable Service Satisfaction Guaranteed Reasonable Rates Licensed</p> <p>NATHAN C. GEIGER Lawn Service</p> <p>813-782-7577</p>
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Two ZHA Scholarships Awarded this Year

Zac Winters and Kaitlin Greenough



Two Members Celebrate 90th Birthdays

Two of our members celebrated birthdays last month, and other members joined in the fun. Betty Hall’s celebration was held in Georgia and was attended by Sandy Pricher, Steve Turner, and Terry Turner. Irene Dobson’s celebration took place here in Zephyrhills and was attended by Margie Partain, Clereen Brunty, and Jerry Pricher.



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