

TRACKS OF TIME

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

Volume 16 – Number 11

November 2014

The next Zephyrhills Historical Association meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 6th 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. There will be ***no scheduled meeting in December***. Our Christmas get-together is set for Monday, December 8th, 5 p.m., at the Wedgewood Manor Community Clubhouse, 37420 Wedgewood Drive (off Geiger Road).

Speakers

Louie Holt was our presenter at the November meeting. He displayed over eighty pictures from our collection revolving around Zephyrhills schools. It was obvious that he had put a great deal of time and effort into having as much information as possible as we discussed the pictures, and there was plenty of discussion. We always enjoy ourselves when Louie shows his pictures!

From the Desk of the Editor *Membership and Advertising*

It's time again to ask for your monetary support in regard to our organization and this newsletter. Dues are \$15 per year, advertising for members is \$15 (non-members is \$25), Boardwalk Booster is \$5, and contributions to the scholarship fund are welcome in any amount. If you are renewing and nothing has changed you can simply mail your check to me or bring it to a meeting. If something is different you are welcome to send me an email to keep the records straight. Thanks in advance.

The Rosemary Trottman Scholarship Fundraiser Day will be held on January 27th at the **Abbott Station Restaurant** on Hwy. 301. ZHA members will be meeting at 5:00 p.m., but you can go anytime that day during regular hours. Just show a flyer to your server or say you are supporting the Zephyrhills Historical Association for us to receive 20% of sales.

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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.

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A Legendary Couple

by Jerry Pricher


In February of 2013 Coach John Clements and Beanie Clements were given honorary membership in our association. This coincided with my brother Norm's attendance as our featured speaker. He had not seen Coach and Beanie for several years, so this was very much part of the plan on my part. My brother and I both had Clements as a coach. I only had him in



that capacity for one year in one sport, 1966 in football. Norm had him as a coach in football and baseball all through his high school career during the early fifties. To say that the man had an impact on both of us is something of an understatement. His influence, however, extended far beyond the sport he coached us in for the years mentioned. He and Beanie became our lifelong friends, our encouragers, and our hometown touchstones. They were a fixture at the Alumni and Friends annual luncheon, and as time went on the line of folks wishing to see them grew longer and longer. It was obvious to everyone at this past year's luncheon that it might be their last appearance. Although it has been sad to watch this couple as their health deteriorated over time, it was also gratifying to witness the great affection the entire community had for these two fine people. We had ample opportunity to tell them how much they meant to us, and I think we did.

Most of us grew up with this couple, and we love them dearly. My childhood simply would not have been the same, and I think others will attest to this, had it not been for Coach and Beanie managing the Zephyrhills Pool. Our summer afternoons were most often spent there.

We gave our final farewell to Beanie just three weeks ago, and we do the same for Coach on Saturday, the 22nd, but we will remember them forever. Our hearts are fuller because we knew them.

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First Things First — Only the Good Die Young

By Greg First

Zephyrhills Free Press

Wow, was Billy Joel ever wrong when he wrote the song, "Only The Good Die Young." At least many of the good ones didn't die young. As a matter of fact, many lived into their 80s and 90s. One of those, a legend, coach Johnny Clements did. He recently passed away at 94 years of age. I have heard it said that after being married for many years that if one partner leaves the world that the other can shortly follow. It has happened before. I believe that is the case with our beloved coach Clements who I think died of a broken heart after losing the love of his life, Beanie. They were married for 71 years. She died almost two weeks earlier. Sports and Beanie were pretty much what he loved to talk about. Speaking of sports, they were both lifeguards and that is how they met. This is the type of story that you would see on the Hallmark Channel. It is a true love story. That is the case for us here in East Pasco County.



Johnny Clements. During his term of more than 30 years at Zephyrhills High School he was the physical education (P.E.) coach, the football coach, the baseball coach, the track coach, etc, etc. I guess you are getting the idea. The thing about coach Clements is that he never forgot a name and he had a bunch to remember. I saw him at Publix quite some time ago. He was cruising around in his wheelchair and when he spotted me he had the biggest smile you ever saw. He stared for a minute and said, "First, how have you been?" He could light up the room with his smile. Coach did so much for Zephyrhills and ZHS that it would take a book to write about all the things that he accomplished. One thing is for sure, he loved this community and he loved Zephyrhills High School. He racked up over 400 wins while coaching baseball at ZHS.

Coach Clements enlisted in the United States Marine Corps during World War II. Even during that time baseball played a big part of his life, which was even recognized in the military. He married Beanie and they had two children, Johnny Jr. and Diane. Coach Clements, along with Beanie, were in the 2009 Zephyrhills Founders Day Parade. He was the Grand Marshal. Also John F. Clements Field on County Road 54 East was named after him.

I was talking to my friend Donnie Nelson at the Sugar Shack Restaurant and he was telling me about when the Bulldogs played football at Wildwood High School. I think it was 1956. It was during the time that his brother Bobby Nelson, Nathan Geiger, Richard Mattingly, Joe Thorn, James Kearse and others played for ZHS. The Bulldogs beat the heck out of Wildwood. After the game some soldier boys were so mad that they wouldn't let the team get back on the bus. Now here comes coach Clements and he was told what was going on. He told those guys from Wildwood that he was going to walk away for a little while and was not responsible for what was about to happen. When he got back the team was on the bus.

Many wonderful people have left their mark on this area. They made a major impact on our schools, city government and our wonderful community. For our town, Zephyrhills, we now add Coach Johnny Clements. He made an impact, he will be remembered, he has been reunited with the love of his life for eternity and maybe, just maybe, when we all show up in Heaven we will see him, whistle in hand, doing what he always loved best. Rest in peace, Coach Johnny Clements.

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Johnny Clements — On and Off the Field

By Dave Walters
 Zephyrhills Free Press

Johnny Clements, one of Zephyrhills’ most iconic and respected coaches and educators, passed away Saturday. He was 94. Known as “Coach” to all, Clements was part of Zephyrhills High School for 35 years before retiring. And he was part of the Zephyrhills community since he and his wife, Beanie, moved here in 1948.


When coach walked into a room, the murmuring would start and before you knew it, a line had formed from his seat to the far side of the room with people wanting to greet him. They wanted – no, they needed – to tell him how much he meant to them and how he much he had influenced their lives. He remembered them all. Coach remained humble and thanked them for the well-wishes. He posed for photos, and he sported his trademark genuine smile for each one. Coach passed away just 13 days after his beloved wife of 71 years, Marvene “Beanie” Clements. There has never been an educator and coach who had such an incredible lasting impact on a community. He was a leader and role model to the students and his fellow teachers. That is what he brought to this community. It wasn’t anything he went out of his way to do. It was the way he lived his life and did his job.

“He was loved by this community,” said former student and friend George Neukom. “He was so respected and honorable. He taught me civics. He was my wife’s homeroom teacher, and he taught my daughter, Tamara, how to drive. He touched so many lives in this community.”

At a recent reunion, Clements said his actions were how educators were supposed to act. It came with the job. It was more than the job that made him a legend. Clements built a legacy of sports in Zephyrhills and that legacy continues with each athlete who plays a sport in an orange and black uniform. He epitomized what a coach should be -- worrying about the person playing the sport more than winning. In his 35 years of teaching American History and Drivers Ed and coaching at ZHS, Clements left a lasting impression on everyone he met. More importantly, he left a lasting impression on Zephyrhills. Ironically, the Zephyrhills history teacher became a part of Zephyrhills history.

Of the many things Clements gave to Zephyrhills was school pride. That is still intact today. There is pride in the players, the coaches and the schools. The Zephyrhills High School baseball field was named John Clements Field in his honor in 1984. Appropriately, Bulldog pitcher Dave Eiland was on the mound that day. Eiland, the son of another Zephyrhills legend, former Police Chief Bill Eiland, went on to become a major league player and coach in the big league.

“I’ve had the opportunity to meet a lot of legendary people in sports,” Eiland said. “When it came to Johnny Clements, you wished he coached you. You knew the history of the man.”

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"You had a lot of respect for him. He was the coach. To have him around was education and to know him was an honor."

Dave Eiland, who knew Clements his entire life thanks to his relationship with his father, was a senior that spring day knowing he was about to pitch the first game on the newly named John Clements Field. No pressure? "It was huge," Eiland said of taking the mound that historic day. "It was opening day and we were playing Jesuit. You always want to beat them. The stands were packed. For a high school game, there was a lot of electricity."

As an athlete, Clements signed to pitch for St. Louis in the Florida State League, but he returned to high school when it was determined that the Cardinals had too many players and forced them to cut 200. Clements earned a football scholarship to the University of Georgia but transferred to the University of Tampa where he played football and baseball. Before graduation, World War II was declared and Clements became the property of the U.S. Marines. He attended officer's training school at Duke University. In 1942 he married his wife, Beanie Durham, whom he had met while both of them were working as lifeguards. As a Marine, Clements coordinated a war bond program and played baseball. When he got out, he returned to school, and then signed with the Philadelphia Phillies. He suffered an injury in 1946 ending his baseball career.

That injury could have been one of the best things to happen to Zephyrhills High School. If Clements' baseball career had flourished, thousands of people would not have had the pleasure of having their lives influenced by one of the greatest men in the history of this community.

Coach Clements is survived by a son, Johnny Jr. (Dee) of Zephyrhills; a daughter, Diane Capsas (Keith Sullivan, Sr.) of Baton Rouge, La.; a grandson, Johnny III (Maya) of Zephyrhills; a granddaughter, Lt. Col. Kim McGavern (Lt. Col. Aaron Roth) of Colorado Springs, Colo. and Lawton, Okla., respectively, a great-grandson, Brandon Clements of Zephyrhills; and a special sister-in-law, Louise Jackson of Panama City; as well as many loving and beloved nieces and nephews.

A private graveside service will be held. A Celebration of Life service will be held at a later date. Whitfield Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements. Thanks, Coach, for all you did for Zephyrhills and for the hundreds – perhaps thousands – of lives you influenced in such a positive way. R.I.P. and Godspeed.

Remembering Coach John Franklin "Johnny" Clements

By Joey Knight

Tampa Bay Times

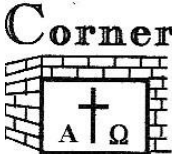
ZEPHYRHILLS — For most of my boyhood, one of those old-fashioned silver water towers — the kind you'd see on a Norman Rockwell easel — presided over my hometown.


Cache reflected off its metal exterior like the sunlight. After all, it was *the* water tower in the "City of Pure Water." Like a rusting sentinel, it loomed several stories above the municipal building, Neukom's Drugs, First United Methodist Church, and Peoples Clothing and Shoe Store. It withstood gusts and graffiti, cast its shadow over parades and population boons.

Then at some point in the mid-1980s, they took it down. Bolt by bolt, brace by brace, history was dislodged, leaving only one venerable Zephyrhills institution still standing: Coach John Franklin "Johnny" Clements.

Now, Coach is gone, too. The diverse maladies of age took him away early Saturday morning at age 94.

He outlived Beanie, his bride of 71 years, by 13 days. They held Beanie's funeral at the Methodist Church a week before.

 <p>CornerStone <i>Baptist Church</i> 7th Street & 8th Avenue</p> <p>Come be our special guest Coffee & 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>Ryals Furniture Exchange And Great Parents Powell & Maude Ryals</p> <p>From son James</p> <p>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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To nearly his last breath, his residence remained the modest house on Hill Drive — with the sprawling camphor tree in the front yard — in which he and Beanie had lived the last 61 of their 71 wedded years.

"I believe I would've done anything he asked me to do," said lifelong Zephyrhills resident Ernie Peeples, who first encountered Coach Clements as an eighth-grade football player in 1950. "I respected him so much."

Tampa Bay Times style mandates obituaries refer to the deceased as "Mr." or "Mrs." or "Miss," whatever the case calls for. That just won't work — can't work — in the instance of John Clements. To generations, he was simply "Coach."

In my case, he was the grandpa of a friend, Johnny Clements III. I was there the spring day in 1984 when they named the Zephyrhills High baseball field in Coach's honor. David Eiland, who bounced around the big leagues a few years and now is the Kansas City Royals pitching coach, started on the mound that day for the Bulldogs.



By then, Coach, a longtime American history and driver's ed teacher at the high school, already had whizzed past elder statesman and was bearing down on icon. Of the few afforded such status, even fewer are still breathing when granted it.


Coach enjoyed it for 30 years. Based on the sweat equity alone, he deserved to.

He and Beanie arrived with their two small children in Zephyrhills in 1948, a couple of years after an injury ended his pro baseball aspirations.

Before that, he had served a hitch in the Marines and lettered in three sports at the University of Tampa, which later put him in its Hall of Fame.

His earliest pupils recall a strapping, tanned figure bereft of body fat and vice. Some folks swear he could drop-kick a football to Dade City. No one can remember a profanity or puff of cigarette smoke emanating from his lips.

"Listen, he could punt a ball better than (Pro Football Hall of Famer) Ray Guy," said 1956 ZHS graduate and former Zephyrhills police chief Bob Howell, who moved to the city from Georgia for his last two years of high school and played three sports for Coach.

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"We kind of ended the practice every day, if I remember right, with punt coverage. And of course, he'd be the punter. But he could punt a football. He could hang that thing, it just seemed like it would never come down."

At Zephyrhills, the echo of his whistle resonated through autumn, winter and spring. Generations before kids specialized in one athletic pursuit, in an era when parents were allies instead of adversaries, Coach was the coach for all seasons. For a stretch of several years, he was the Bulldogs' football, basketball, baseball *and* track coach. From 1949-72, he amassed a 419-127 record with the baseball team.

By his second fall, he might have won a mayoral run-off. The Bulldogs football team finished 4-6-1 in 1949, doubling their victory total from the previous five seasons *combined*. He didn't promise wins, but he vowed competitiveness. His players towed a taut line, one that society has slackened through the decades.

Peeples still can extract details of a 60-year-old incident on the old high school campus, current site of Stewart Middle School. On an overcast day, he and Johnny Partridge had sneaked behind a building to swap drags from a cigarette. They figured their crime had gone unnoticed until Coach forced them to run 50 laps after that day's practice. Peeples recalls a woman in a neighboring house watching them wheeze and wince their way through their punishment, and confronting Coach Clements about it. He explained his reasoning to her. The woman went back inside her house. "That was the best thing that ever happened to me in my life in terms of learning to stick to the rules," Peeples said.

Yet for all of Coach's rigidity, any bombast he possessed remained confined to the competitive arena. My image is of a genteel senior citizen with a soft, monotonous voice and needle-pointed memory. I personally never heard him raise his voice.

"John Clements was a gentle man," said Caroline Marlette, a former longtime teacher and administrator at Zephyrhills High. "Courteous in every situation."

His loyalty to Zephyrhills transcended the high school. In '52, he organized the town's first Little League program. Additionally, he and Beanie oversaw the summer swim program at the old city pool in Zephyr Park. Decades later, you can't do a cannonball into Zephyr Lake without a water droplet hitting someone influenced by Coach.

"He never got too excited, but he was as competitive an individual as I've ever known," Howell said.

"I've heard stories about Steve Spurrier, how competitive he is. And that always kind of reminded me about Coach Clements. It didn't matter what you wanted to do, he could probably beat you at it."

Contrary to widespread perception, small towns hardly remain cryogenically frozen. They evolve or regress, depending on one's perspective. Towers come down. A Target goes up. Picket fences become padlocked. So it goes with my hometown.

The change will be especially glaring over the next several days, when legions will gather to celebrate Coach Clements' sprawling, benevolent life, and to reflect with amazement how one guy could coach everything. As the mourners roll in from the north on U.S. 301, maybe they'll spot the modern water tower: a round, concrete model sturdier than its predecessor.

It resides on a hill near Pretty Pond Road, overseeing the Wal-Mart, Lowe's and Chili's.

They just don't make 'em the way they used to.

"It's a dying breed, isn't it?" Howell said.

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