

Monthly Publication from the Zephyrhills Historical Association

Volume 17 – Number 12

December 2015

The next Zephyrhills Historical Association meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup> in the meeting room of the *Zephyrhills Public Library*, 5347 8<sup>th</sup> Street. 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 the January meeting will be Louie Sellars. I'm pretty sure most members of our association already know him. When I was a kid he was working for McGavern Plumbing as I remember it. He eventually took on a job with the City of Zephyrhills, where I ran into him again during the two summers I worked on the city crew while I was in college. He was a Utilities Superintendent when he retired from the City. Carolyn Dean spent many years with Louie, and she is the one who secured his appearance with us. Thanks, Carolyn. I'm not sure I've ever met anyone who doesn't like Louie, and whatever he chooses to talk about I have every reason to believe those folks who come to hear him will enjoy it.

### *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.

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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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**Wrapping Up the Holidays!**

by *Madonna Jervis Wise and Clereen Morrill Brunty*  
 Excerpt from Countdown to Centennial News Article  
 Posted in The Zephyrhills News  
 January 7, 2010

Wrapping up the festive season with some accounts from our ZHS alumni with memories of their holidays. And what is your favorite memory of Christmas?

The elementary school classrooms were festively decorated. Music teacher, Artiste Parsons produced an annual Christmas concert. I remember the soloists; Taryn Travis Chauncey had such a lovely voice! We brought gifts to exchange according to our gender. There was plenty of festive food at the class parties supplied by the homeroom moms; our mom's made first-rate homemade cookies. In fourth grade at East Elementary School, Ms. Jones and Ms. Riegler convinced the students to perform a Christmas play. We rotated throughout classrooms down the hallways to act out our presentation throughout East Zephyrhills Elementary. I was the narrator. Later in high school, gifts were exchanged among friends. In our Junior and Senior year of high school, the 'promise rings' were all the rage. ~**Cyndee Thomas, class of 1979.**

Speaking of choruses, Artiste Parsons, music teacher who served West Zephyrhills Elementary School as well as Zephyrhills High School/Junior High over the years is shown in the 1970's photo in front of ZHS and the Wickstrom Memorial. Artiste retired recently and was known for her concerts at the school that showed her student's fine musical skills.

In 1954, our parents (Gilbert, class of 1942 and Audrey Chenkin) photographed us lighting Hanukkah candles in our living room window on 11<sup>th</sup> Street in Zephyrhills. ~**Helen Chenkin Hill, class of 1966 and Richard Chenkin, class of 1969**

The first Christmas after we moved from PA in 1950, my dad still didn't have a job and we were surviving on his VA pension (I realized later). In the German tradition, we, like others in our former PA community, did not put up a tree before Christmas. On Christmas Eve, Santa brought the tree after we were asleep, and it was decorated when we awoke on Christmas Day. In Zephyrhills, all the neighbors were bringing home trees and setting them up. As I was playing with Sandra Farnell who lived down the street, her dad brought home their tree and began cutting off the bottom branches. I had never seen this done before and the cut-off branches were pretty, so I asked to take them home. Just before Christmas, Dad tied the branches together and put them in our Christmas stand. It actually looked like a small Christmas tree. However it had no ornaments until we woke up on Christmas morning. And there it was all decorated with every ornament our other trees had ever held! That beautiful tree changed our meager Christmas into a grand celebration! Years later, when I was teaching, without telling the identity of the little girl, I would tell the children in my classes this story and ask if they thought it was fact or fiction...They had a difficult time believing it was a real story about me. ~**Lynn Nichols Timmons, class of 1960**



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I remember the wonderful folks at the various elementary schools during the holidays who were a part of the welcoming. A photo included features Anne Wentworth and Delores Moore in the late 1980's at Woodland Elementary School with the Christmas tree. I also marvel at the dedicated teachers who produced Christmas pageants and taught lessons about culture around the world. Lynn Timmons and her team at Woodland which included Sharyl Robison, Marion Post, B.J. D'Antonio and John Abernathy come to mind. They taught the students about people around the world through holiday traditions. Wow, we were really lucky to have folks like this teach our children! ~**Madonna Jervis Wise, teacher/principal 73-2003**

As a child, warm memories of Christmas always meant a trip to Holsum Bakery (in Tampa on East Hillsborough Avenue; across from the old Sears Building). The bakery hosted a December open-house tour with a waiting line WAY down the street. All the sweet smells and aromas were everywhere and you could breathe in and enjoy. At the end of the line was a little bag with some fruit and nuts and candy and a tiny loaf of bread! This was always part of my birthday as well on December 11th and my grandparents and Aunt (almost like my sister), who lived close to the Bakery, joined us. Even now as I drive by, I still can smell get a whiff of that wonderful scent and memories flood back. Things which seem so simple now were what made those precious memories of childhood. ~**Lenora Pollock Stokes, class of 1964**

About 30 years ago, I was in Virginia at the Williamsburg Pottery Factory. I came across a set of 12 plates depicting the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" with a picture of one of the Days on each of the plates, and on the back of each, the song verse that corresponds. They were selling them for \$1.00 per plate, so I bought a set and that Christmas was the beginning of what is now an annual luncheon event here at my house. Sometimes the event happens on Christmas Day, but sometimes on another day during the season...this year it was held on Dec. 26th. I set the table with the plates, and when it's time for the meal, guests pick up their plate, turn it over, and must solo their Day when it gets around to them. No food is served until the song is finished with a rousing ending! Some love it, and others protest they hate it, but all manage to do their solo in anticipation of the meal awaiting the ending of the song! There's never been a Christmas when this tradition did not set the guests to howling in laughter over those "lovely" solos....because, as you can imagine, some just cannot carry a tune or stay on key! Some try their best to get by with "reading" their Day, but are stopped and made to sing! Because of this growing tradition, I've collected and been given many 12 Day decorations over the years, and they're on prominent display during the holiday season and especially at the luncheon. ~**Louise Thomson Lashley, class of 1955**

Christmas is my favorite holiday of the year. I have lots of fond memories of sharing Christmas with my family & friends. Seems to last all December and sometimes runs into New Years Day. From our Breakfast Girls get-together to our gift exchange and dinner with co-workers at SunTrust Bank to a couple of family gatherings. A tradition our family has done for a very long time is when it is time for everyone to open their gifts, we always start with the youngest first and graduate up to the oldest so everyone can see what they receive.



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Now I understand why my parents would almost fall asleep after waiting patiently for their turn but find it worthwhile as they/we (parents) receive the most gifts of all, not just monetary items but having the whole family together at one time enjoying the laughter and fellowship.  
~**Clereen Morrill Brunty, class of 1973**

Each year at Christmas time, I make Italian "S" cookies with my two sisters-in-law from an old recipe passed down from a beloved family member. We stay up many late evenings and make over 1,000 of these cookies to share. It has become my family's tradition to leave a plate of "S" cookies for Santa. My son and daughter (ages 9 and 5) look forward to each Christmas Eve when we get out a special plate and fill it with cookies for Santa -- to them, the "S" is for Santa!  
~**Darla Suk Sarhaddi, class of 1982**

One of my favorite memories was tied to a Christmas time edition of *the Zephyrhills News*. The title was "*Zephyrhills Girl Gets Wings for Christmas*". The story was about the fact that I soloed one of my father's airplanes on my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday which was on December 18, 1975. It was indeed a great birthday/Christmas present. Dad, David Sullivan, ZHS class of 1952, was on the ground watching and talking to me on the radio. I radioed down and asked him how to get the plane down. His answer was simple, "In one piece!" It was a very special time as my father had also soloed on that very same airport, possibly the same runway, when he was 14 years old. Dad had taught me to fly but the official training hours came with 2 instructor pilots, Bill Jackson and I can't remember the main instructor's name. I made my first commercial flight a few days later! Also, we used to go to the Bahamas for New Years Eve. One year Dad, Kathy, my stepmother, and I went and I got to take a friend, Nancy Dockery, also from class of '78. We were 16 and had a blast. ~**Trish Sullivan Farmer, class of 1978**

We had a loving, stable, comforting, country life, with wonderful holidays spent on Gore's Dairy during my early childhood. It was idyllic, really. Traveling into town two miles away was a big deal, and we always looked forward to visiting Zephyrhills every Thursday to do our shopping—especially as the holidays approached. The roads took us through seemingly endless orange groves, then across the magical overpass! The first sign of 'civilization' was the Thriftway Supermarket! But due to divorce, we were forced to face a new life in town, and moving day was the day after Thanksgiving in 1972. It had been a horrendous year—my parents divorced in July. One week later, Karl Wickstrom who was like a big brother to me, was killed in a tragic accident, and then six weeks later, my Grandmother Mary Gore, died. I missed my beloved farm and the family there that now no longer exists. The holidays were not much to look forward to, but a special lady, Libby Peel changed all that. Libby, and her husband, Vincent, had a New Year's tradition. They hosted a party every year for a lot of 'the old and the bold' in town. In 1972, they opened their circle a little wider, and drew us in. New Year's Eve parties at the Peel's never deviated, and went like clock-work, according to a plan. Libby roasted turkey or a ham, and all the other ladies brought a covered dish. We enjoyed this amazing feast at about 6:00 p.m., and then the men would retire to the TV room to watch football, while the women washed dishes, then visited in the living room. The Peels rounded up the usual suspects for this tradition, although some had to scoot out early. I remember our wonderful ZHS band director, John T.V. Clark, usually had to eat and run, as he inevitably was playing a New Year's gig in Tampa or St. Pete that night. In later years, his older sons would sometimes join him.

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The rest of us ‘young folk’ would go outside to play games like freeze tag or ‘Stuck In The Mud.’ Sometimes, Thor Wickstrom, Ronnie Peel, and Bruce Clark would sneak some fire crackers out to the front drive for a little excitement. When one minute to midnight arrived, the scene was like a well-rehearsed dance. The men grudgingly flipped the TV channel to Guy Lombardo, the ladies put their coffee cups down, and met the men between the French doors that connected the TV and living rooms. At precisely midnight, the couples kissed briefly to the strains of *Auld Lang Syne*, then the women returned to the living room for more gossip, and the men got rid of Guy Lombardo for more football. Every year, it was the same. Even when Libby lost her beloved husband, Vincent, she kept the tradition alive. Even when, years later, she remarried Alan Winslow, she continued to hold her annual New Year's Eve party. As I became an older teenager, I used to think, "Is this all there is? Where is the exciting, romantic New Year's Eve party, like they show in the movies?" I longed for more, and was determined to have more, if I could ever get out of Zephyrhills. But now, looking back, I realize we had it all! I am so grateful to Libby Peel for her kindness and generosity. And for being the secure woman she was. Many times, when there is a divorce, people rush to offer dinner invitations to the new ‘bachelor.’ They rationalize that he must need a good home-cooked meal. Even now, most folks do not rush, or even amble, to invite a single woman and her children over for a home-cooked meal. I guess they assume she does not need a break! Libby gave us more than a break. She gave the gift of friendship and hospitality. She included us, and made us feel wanted at a time in our lives when we had never felt more unwanted. We were broken, and she began to mend us. She gave us love, which, after all, is what the holidays are truly all about. And Libby Peel forced us to celebrate the New Year whether we felt like celebrating it or not! Conservatively, yes; Not with reckless abandon, no, but with great generosity and love. Libby Peel is no longer throwing her great party. And many of her dear guests have also exited stage left -- folks like Chief Bill Eiland, Bernie Wickstrom, Dr. Harry Brownlee, Eleanor Chadwell, and John T.V. Clark. But she -- they -- live on in my heart. She symbolized the town I remember growing up in. Not a town without pity, but a place of kindness and inclusion. I feel thankful and blessed for Libby Peel's loving example. God Bless you, Libby, and Happy New Year, Dearest! ~Luan Gore, class of 1977

**Christmas Tree Decoration — December 6<sup>th</sup> at Florida Hospital**



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*Tree Decoration — Members decorated the Military tree in red, white, and blue.*



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*Christmas Dinner — December 7<sup>th</sup> at Wedgewood Manor*



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