

## MY D-DAY STORY

Joseph A. Tomberlin

Joseph E. Tomberlin enlisted in the United States Army at Fort McPherson, Georgia, on February 3, 1943. He was thirty-one years old, had been married seven years, and was the father of three children, of whom I was the oldest. In civilian life, he had been a carpenter; consequently, after boot camp, Dad went to the Corps of Engineers, specifically to Company B of the 147<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion (147<sup>th</sup> ECB), which assembled and went through specialized training at Camp Swift, Texas. He became a Technician Fourth Grade or T-4, a rank designated by sergeant's stripes with a T under the chevrons. At Camp Swift the men of the 147<sup>th</sup> learned that they would be part of the eventual Allied invasion of German-occupied Europe. Colonel Paul Thompson, later commander of the 6<sup>th</sup> Engineer Special Brigade (6<sup>th</sup> ESB), of which the 147<sup>th</sup> ECB was a key component, informed them that they would be among "the first to set foot in Europe."

Following his departure from Camp Swift and a nine-day furlough at home in Berrien County in late 1943, Dad rejoined the 147<sup>th</sup>, which sailed for England from New York aboard the *Mauretania* in early January, 1944. The Battalion arrived on



Joseph E. Tomberlin

January 17, 1944, and soon was billeted in and around Torquay and Paignton, in Devonshire, in the Southwest of England. On January 28, 1944, Dad wrote to his third sister, Cornelia McCormick, "I got across all right. I am well but not too happy. We are in England and in fog and rain and believe me there is plenty of both. The people are real nice here but I don't know what keeps them from souring in this climate." His complaint about the weather was reminiscent of the English nursery rhyme, "Ah, lovely Devon, where it rains eight days out of seven."

The 147<sup>th</sup>, 149<sup>th</sup>, 203<sup>rd</sup> Engineers formed the nucleus of the 6<sup>th</sup> ESB, which, on D-Day, was under the command of Colonel Paul Thompson until he suffered serious wounds. The Engineer battalions were reinforced by a variety of other units, including three Quartermaster battalions, two Port battalions, a Naval Beach battalion, a Medical battalion, an Ordnance battalion, and four independent companies. The Brigade's mission in general was to support the landings of the 116<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 29<sup>th</sup> Division at the western end of Omaha Beach. More specifically, the Brigade was to destroy beach obstacles, blow up mines on the beach, set up signs to guide landing craft through cleared channels to the beach, erect signal panels to bring in troops and equipment in the proper order, clear access roads from the beach, blow gaps in the anti-tank wall, create supply dumps, and control the traffic on the beach.

The three Engineer battalions and most of the support units had trained together or in close proximity in the states without being aware that they would come together as a brigade in England, where additional training was necessary. The schedule permitted precious little time for it. Taking part in invasion dress rehearsals and the period that had to be spent in embarkation camps left a maximum of six weeks for the needed training. During the pre-invasion interval, Brigade members received paratroop boots and two distinctive badges for their uniforms. The first, to be worn as a shoulder patch, featured the eagle, the Tommy gun, and the anchor of Combined Operations in gold on a blue background. The sea horse patch of the Amphibious Engineers was to go on the breast pockets of uniforms. The invasion rehearsals proved on one occasion to be deadly; during Operation Tiger on the night of April 27-28, 1944, at Slapton Sands, in which the 6<sup>th</sup> ESB was involved, German E-boats torpedoed eight LSTs. Two sank, six were damaged, and some 750 American soldiers died, with 300 others wounded. None, however, were from the 6<sup>th</sup>.

Originally scheduled for June 5, 1944, the invasion had to be postponed until June 6 because of terrible weather on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The troops that were to make the landings on the coast of Normandy boarded ships all over the South of England on June 2 and 3. The men of the 147<sup>th</sup> ECB loaded at Weymouth; some of them, Dad included, were assigned to LCI 91, which had a crew of Coast Guard officers and enlisted men. Properly speaking, an LCI was a "Landing Craft Infantry," which an officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division described as:

*D-Day Story cont. on Page 2*



D-Day Story cont. from Page 1

a metal box designed by a sadist to move soldiers across water while creating in them such a sense of physical discomfort, seasickness, . . . physical degradation and anger as to induce them to land in such an angry condition as to bring destruction, devastation, and death upon any person or thing in sight or hearing. It combined the movements of roller coaster, bucking bronco, and a camel.

LCI 91 had aboard 200 men of the landing force, seventeen of them from Company B of the 147<sup>th</sup> ECB, as well as highly volatile equipment such as bangalore torpedoes, satchel charges, and flame throwers. A Coast Guard photographer on LCI 92, which sailed in company with LCI 91, later wrote that the men he saw boarding the ships at Weymouth looked "extremely hardened and tough and in fine condition. They were rather quiet and serious, though not solemn."

LCI 91, LCI 92, and many other craft departed Weymouth on the evening of June 5, 1944, putting to sea in four columns that one observer later said seemed to be endless. At sea, a brisk, chilly wind blew across the ships under a heavy cover of clouds that gave the water "a dull gray hue." The vessels began to roll steadily in the chop and soldiers feeling the first pangs of seasickness crowded the rails. By the early hours of June 6, the huge invasion fleet was within striking distance of the Normandy coast. At 5:50 a.m. the flotilla of which LCI 91 was a part formed into two columns and aimed for Omaha Beach, which was still some sixteen miles away. As the ships neared the shore around 8:00 a.m. signs were very clear that the operation was not going according to plan; shattered Higgins boats were all around, bodies were floating in the water, and the volume of German fire was extremely heavy. About that time a crewman on LCI 92, which itself was about to suffer fatal damages and many deaths, looked toward LCI 91 and saw that it was "enveloped in flames and smoke."

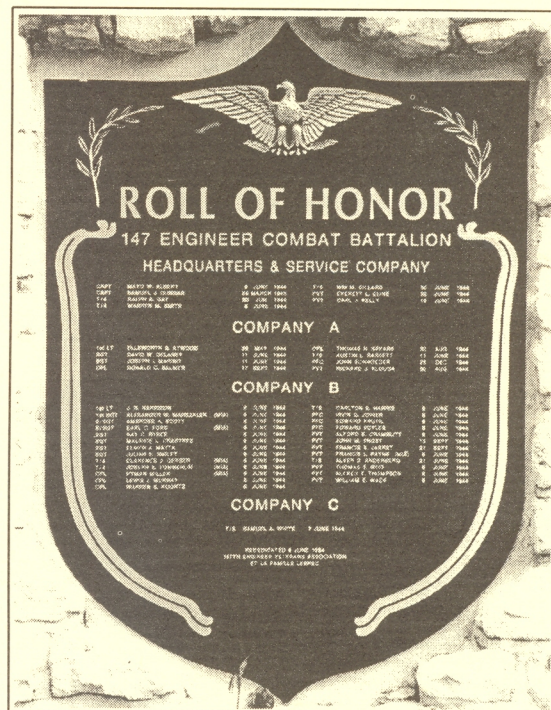
Some five hundred yards offshore, LCI 91 became a target of a storm of gunfire, ranging from rifle and machine gun bullets to shells from mortars and from 88s. The vessel also caught on a beach obstacle and set off a Teller mine that destroyed the starboard-landing ladder. Explosions on LCI 91 set off raging fires. Few of the men from the 147<sup>th</sup> reached the beach unwounded, and some never got away at all, Dad among them. His squad sergeant, Joseph Ajdinovich, of Chicago, somehow swam ashore unwounded but still refers to Omaha Beach as "a terrible place." Company B of the 147<sup>th</sup> had twenty-two fatalities on June 6: one officer, the company's first sergeant, the Second Platoon's platoon sergeant, five other sergeants, two T-4s, three corporals, one T-5, and eight privates. Obviously, the group hardest hit was the non-commissioned officers, the men who are vital in any military organization. The other three companies suffered only two deaths on D-Day, and the Battalion as a whole had only sixteen deaths after D-Day to the War's end.

Regardless of the shock and confusion caused by the ferocious German resistance, the survivors in the 147<sup>th</sup> ECB carried out their assignments so well that the Battalion won a Unit Citation from General Dwight D. Eisenhower. The written citation that accompanied the award tells much of the story:

During the landings, the Battalion encountered very heavy enemy resistance in the form of concrete pillboxes, gun emplacements and connecting trenches overlooking the beach, from which was maintained heavy artillery, mortar, machine gun and small arms fire, in addition to the numerous underwater obstacles

blocking the shallow water and the vehicle defense line on the beach itself. Despite the fierce enemy fire, the 147<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion set about clearing the beaches of minefields and other obstacles and succeeded in setting up the necessary roads in order that the stranded vehicles could be moved and the exit opened for inland traffic. Several times during the early hours of the landings, elements of the 147<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion joined with the infantry in combating the enemy, reducing his strong points and wiping snipers off the face of the cliff. Only through the combined heroism, courage and skills of the men of the 147<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion was this unit able successfully to perform its assigned missions which so materially contributed to the successful establishment of the Omaha Beachhead on D-Day.

After D-Day and the successful establishment of the beachhead the 147<sup>th</sup> ECB operated Omaha Beach in cooperation with the other units of the 6<sup>th</sup> ESB and continued to do so until October 30, 1944. At that point, the entire Brigade moved off Omaha to be replaced by the 5<sup>th</sup> ESB. The Brigade's three Engineer battalions assumed responsibility for road construction and maintenance, supervising prisoners of war who performed the manual labor. Finally, Omaha Beach closed on November 15, when it was no longer necessary to supply American troops over open beaches in the absence of an intact and useable harbor. In the remaining months of the war, the 147<sup>th</sup> operated not only in France but also in Belgium, Holland, and Germany, before returning to Belgium at the conflict's end. Prior to the departure from Omaha Beach, the 147<sup>th</sup> erected a memorial to its dead and missing men in the courtyard of Chateau Englesqueville, the home of the Robert LeBrec family at Englesqueville-Le-Percée. The LeBrec family, with the aid of the 147<sup>th</sup> Engineer Veterans Association, has cared for the memorial in the fifty-seven years since. The original plaque was supplanted by a bronze one on the fiftieth anniversary of D-Day and carries the legend: "Rededicated 6 June 1994. 147<sup>th</sup> Engineer Veterans Association et La Famille LeBrec."



D-Day Story cont. on Page 3



*D-Day Story cont. from Page 2*

The most personal part of my D-Day story has to do with the fate of my father. I cannot be certain, but I assume that my mother must have known that Dad was going to be in the invasion, whenever it came, even though he told her absolutely nothing about what he was doing in his letters that have survived. He had to maintain security, and I also am certain that he did not want to worry her. In any case, the dreaded War Department telegram arrived on June 29, 1944: "... your husband Technician Fourth Grade Joseph E. Tomberlin has been reported missing in action since 6 June in France." A letter of confirmation from Major General J. A. Ulio, Adjutant General of the Army, followed on July 6, 1944. Three weeks later, my mother wrote a letter of inquiry directly to the 147<sup>th</sup> ECB, to which First Lieutenant James J. Gallagher, Battalion Adjutant, responded on August 18, 1944. The single informative passage of Gallagher's letter stated, "The records of this headquarters indicate that your husband is still classified Missing in Action. The only additional information that we have is that your husband was on a landing craft scheduled to make a landing on the invasion coast of France. The only account, from [an] eyewitness, that we have in our records, was that he was last seen coming out of the hold of the craft. His identification tags were found a few days later." In short, the Adjutant did nothing to acquire any additional information; had he done so, he could easily have ascertained what had happened. Finally, on December 27, 1944, Mama received a second War Department telegram declaring that Dad had been killed on June 6, and Adjutant General Ulio's letter of confirmation reached her in early January 1945. Except for a letter from Dad's close friend, Sergeant Bernice L. Osman, of Dayton, Ohio, no further information about June 6 came to us. Sergeant Osman himself did not clearly know what occurred aboard LCI 91. He wrote, "... our ship was hit three times and all had to abandon ship under terrific shellfire. To my opinion that was when Joe was either hit by [a] shell or was drowned in trying to get to shore."

There the matter rested for decades, until 1999-2000, when I was in my final year as Head of the Valdosta State University Department of History and on the verge of retirement. By that point in my career, I had become accustomed to using the Internet regularly and felt comfortable with it as a source of information. I decided during that year to locate as much material as I could about D-Day and the roles of the 147<sup>th</sup> ECB and 6<sup>th</sup> ESB. Little turned up, but I did run across the web page of a Franco-American organization known as the Normandy Allies, which had an inquiry page for those seeking information about soldiers. I posted an inquiry, asking that anyone who had known T-4 Joseph E. Tomberlin of Company B, 147<sup>th</sup> ECB, please contact me. I had no response until the spring of 2001, when I received a Sunday afternoon telephone call from Joseph Ajdinovich of Munster, Indiana, son of Dad's squad sergeant. He reported that his father refused to discuss his experiences with anyone, even his own family, but he also put me in touch with the 147<sup>th</sup> Engineer Veterans Association, whose annual reunion my wife and I attended in Toledo, Ohio, in October 2001.

Prior to the Toledo reunion, I also was able to make the journey to Normandy that had long been on my retirement agenda. My wife, Norma, and I were members of a University of Georgia Alumni Association "Campus Abroad" tour of Normandy in August 2001. Our itinerary included a day trip that took us to Pegasus Bridge, across the Orne Canal, attacked and captured by English paratroopers flown in by gliders just after midnight on

June 6. From there, we made stops at British and German military cemeteries before going on to Pointe du Hoc, where American Rangers climbed the cliffs to assault and destroy German artillery pieces that were believed to threaten the landings on Omaha Beach. The landscape there, though green, is positively lunar in appearance because of the ever-present craters caused by shells fired by the U.S.S. *Texas*. After Pointe du Hoc, we went on to Omaha Beach at Vierville-sur-Mer, located near the western end of the beach at what the Americans designated as Exit D-1, of Dog Green Beach, very near where LCI 91 came to grief. We were there on the last Saturday in August, at the end of the traditional French vacation month, and the beach was crowded with families. The whole scene was entirely peaceful, and tide was in. In the circumstances, it was difficult to picture the hellish scene of June 6, 1944, when the landing craft brought men in at low tide, leaving them to cross four hundred yards of sand under intense fire from the cliffs that stretch the entire length of the beach. On the other hand, a brief look at the cliffs and the single exit from the beach made clear just how necessary it was for the troops to gain control of the exits and for the engineers to clear them. Otherwise, the troops had no way to get off the beach, unless they could climb the cliffs. Departing Vierville, we drove to the American Cemetery at St. Laurent-sur-Mer, located above Omaha Beach. The cemetery, with its chapel at one end, its memorial at the other, and the hundreds of graves in row after row, is exceptionally beautiful and serene. In the memorial, on the "Wall of the Missing," I found my father's name, and that was, for me, the most emotional moment of the entire trip.

Back home, in October of this year, we drove to Toledo for the reunion of the 147<sup>th</sup> Engineer Veterans Association. There I met Joe Ajdinovich, Dad's squad sergeant, and other men who had served in Company B. One of those was former T-5 William R. Hall, of Berlin Heights, Ohio. On the first afternoon, during a trip down the Maumee River on a vessel known as the *Sandpiper*, Mr. Hall sat next to me and asked if I knew what happened to my father. I responded that I was aware only that he had been on LCI 91, that he did not survive, and that his "dog tags" had been found several days after June 6. Mr. Hall said to me that he had gone back to LCI 91 some days after the invasion to salvage equipment and had found Dad's burned body. He had taken Dad's dog tags to the platoon commander and had reported what he had seen. What followed is unclear. A grave registration team may have removed his body and buried him as an unknown, soon after Mr. Hall's discovery. Or he may have been buried later as an unknown when the LCI 91 was dismantled and the pieces moved to Pointe du Hoc. As difficult as Mr. Hall's story was to hear, at last I knew something concrete. The thought of Dad's having burned to death is one that haunts. Yet, I am comforted by knowing generally what happened and by the hope that he died quickly in one of the explosions rather than in the fires.

As for the 147<sup>th</sup> veterans and their wives, we found them to be wonderfully warm people who accepted us as if they had always known us. We felt that we had been adopted into a large and lively family of older people. The men struck me as being another "Band of Brothers" bound together by the shared and perhaps incommunicable experience of war.

*Joseph A. Tomberlin, a Berrien County native, is a graduate of Valdosta State University. He received his Ph.D. in History from Florida State University. He is Professor and Department Head Emeritus of History at VSU.*



## World War II Remembered

On December 8, 2001, the day following the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and 60 years to the day of America's declaration of war, veterans of World War II and their friends and families joined together at the Historical Society for a day of fellowship and remembrance. As a consequence of America's entering World War II, Moody Field was activated to train pilots for the Army Air Corps. The reception featured an exhibit detailing these historic events and a slide presentation honoring local individuals who served in World War II. The American Legion Post 13 sponsored food and drink.

The exhibit will remain on display through the month of January and the slide presentation will be available to view upon request.



Veterans Ralph L. Brantley and Edgar D. Roberson share a moment at the World War II reception.



Veteran Donald S. Bryan of Adel, was with the Army Air Forces 352<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group-328<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron.



Guests enjoyed food, drink, fellowship, and remembrances.



Three veterans recall the Old Gray Bonnet Regiment.

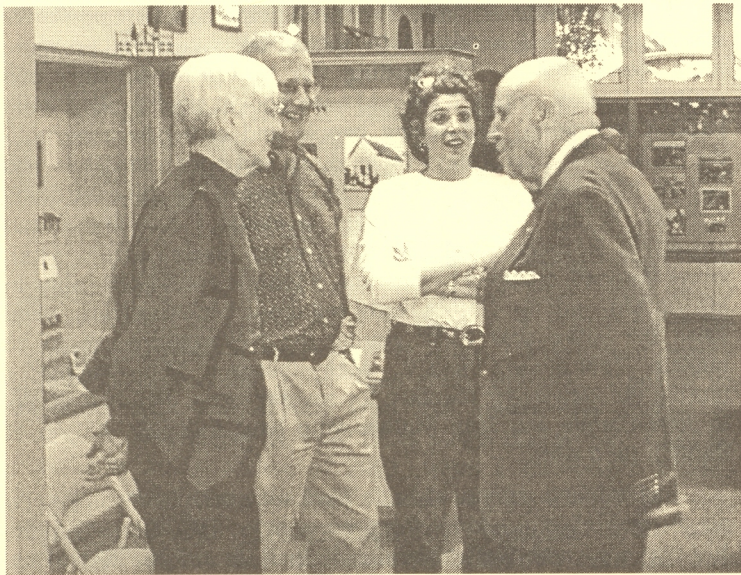


## Christmas Open House and Reception honoring Albert's 30 years as Newsletter Editor

The Lowndes County Historical Museum decked the halls for a day of celebration and festivity on December 1, 2001. The Museum was part of Downtown Valdosta's annual Christmas Open House and we had many visitors. But, at 2:00 people arrived in droves to chat and reminisce with Albert Pendleton, who, with the November issue of our newsletter, celebrated 30 years as editor. This was a milestone event for Albert and he enjoyed talking with friends and family about his years as editor. He has no plans to retire and will continue as our newsletter editor. There was a cake honoring Albert and copies of the newsletter were available for perusal. People were able to see how the newsletter changed over the years. Yet with all the changes in look, the newsletter still has Albert's touch. Thanks Albert for the history and the memories!



Albert Pendleton chats with LCHS Past President Louie Peebles White and friend Joanne Griner during the reception in his honor.



Harley Langdale recounts something obviously amusing to Catherine Redles and Andy and Janine Pendleton at Albert's reception.



Gloria Dalton Sorenson, just arrived from a Victorian luncheon at the Roberts' House, shares a few minutes with Ed and Jane Willis.

### HONORING

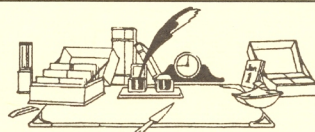
Albert S. Pendleton, Jr.

by

Brinkley L McNeal, W. Paul McNeal, and Paul E. McNeal



## Albert's Desk



by Albert S. Pendleton, Jr.

(I'm not a preacher, but I have a message for)  
**ALL MY HISTORICAL CHILDREN**

Reprinted from the January 1987 Newsletter, Volume XVI, No. 3.

You only go around once in this life, so grab all the history you can get. Make all the history you can—for someone else to dig up. Enjoy history. It can be fun.

I don't agree with Abby Hoffman (whoever that is) at all. I read recently (a quote in a calendar) that she (or he) said nostalgia was a drag and those who dwelt in it were despondent.

Nostalgia is a form of history, and Abby Hoffman is dead wrong. History is informative, entertaining and interesting. I learn something new of long ago all the time. One of the stories on which I had the most compliments was "Summer Music—Still Dreaming of a Song," probably one of the most nostalgic pieces I've written here. I enjoy recalling the past (most of it, anyway) but I certainly don't live there. It is said we try to determine what could have been done to make the past different, wars, etc., but more realistically, we learn of the past to make sure we don't make the same mistakes in the future. Whatever.

When I think of our Society and Museum, I think of all the people who have spent and are spending many hours to keep it going. I think of the late Joe Stevens who found, charted and recorded every cemetery in Lowndes County, was our president, and was present when the doors opened. I think of the late Vera Hagen, who was a founder and President of our Society and so concerned with its welfare. I think of the late Sara Dunaway Deloach who wrote a story for us about her life on West Hill Avenue in Valdosta. I think of concerned members such as the late Mr. and Mrs. J. D. McKey. All these and others have supported us through the years. I think of all the people who have given items to the Museum. I think of all the hours spent maintaining the Museum, collecting items, researching and writing the Newsletter, getting programs, arranging displays, and hundreds of other activities. I think of Tom and Jane Shelton and all the activities they are involved in, Jane's book Pines and Pioneers, and Tom's helping with the slide program and school programs (both of whom said fifteen years ago, we need a newsletter and Albert you should start it), and of Mary Young Boatenreiter, energetic former president and one who has put the Newsletter together for the past years, a chore I'll tell you about in a moment. I hate to mention names. One is sure to leave someone out. Always helping are Mary Ann Blanton, Edith Roberts, Jean Malone, Jane Caudle, Nan Allen, Jewell Barnum, Bootsie Smotherman, Fainsy and Mac McClure and so many more.

It takes four hours or more just to put the Newsletter together. We buy it printed with stacks of each separate page, and we sort it, then the two stamps have to be put on after stapling and folding each one, then the address label. I offered to put together the December 1986 Newsletter, and it took a week because I work. A recent small item—we wanted the grounds to look nice for the December Open House. It took two of us four trips to make sure the grass was cut.

We are not complaining, just letting everyone know what goes on behind the scenes. Reading microfilm takes many hours, an

interview two or three hours, and maybe more than one visit. We learn something new all the time. We should have had the Blackburn Display for two days or more instead of just one. We're planning more picture displays and will keep that in mind.

No one spends more time working at the Museum and its planning than President Lilla Kate Hart, Museum Chairman Natalie Williams and Co-chairman Susie Thomas. Susie clips articles and files them, not an activity of a few minutes—it takes many hours. Susie and Natalie look after the cleaning, accepting gifts and arranging displays—more hours. Lilla Kate said she didn't know being president would involve so much time—she's found out that there is always something to do.

Recently Veran Blackburn, Jr., asked me, "Who is going to do all this when you older members are gone?" I'm glad he said it. We must get more young members, more interested people to join and help with the work and preservation of our county's history. We need more articles and pictures in our local newspaper concerning our activities. We need to advertise, advertise, advertise, in an effort to get people to come forward. We need to educate. A few people are doing most of the work. The president's job is a busy one. She (or he) is continually called on. When committees fall down, the president has to take charge.

We enjoy what we do, but we need help—more young people who care and will work. Jobs should be passed around more often—jobs, that is, like putting the Newsletter together and mailed. I enjoy writing it (should have bought stock in the Liquid Paper Corporation) and seeing people and communicating with them. As you know, I have fallen down and been a month or two behind, but I catch up. I do have 1987 planned but still have much research to do. On a December weekend I just almost put December Newsletter together (the second time in many years), swept the yard, attended two parties, a funeral and helped Lonie in the kitchen—got my clothes ready and drove back to Albany. And spent the entire next week getting the Newsletter ready to be mailed. Tom always mails it. Many thanks to Mary Young for putting the Newsletter together for several years, and now thanks to Jane Caudle and Jean Malone who have accepted the job of doing it for a while.

I have found out you shouldn't ask someone, "How do you do all you do?" We can do anything we want to. It's just that simple. It's that way with Susie, Natalie, Lilla Kate and the rest of us. They have homes to keep by themselves and they do it beautifully—and then they look after their second home—the LCHS Museum and Society. If I can't find Susie at home, I can find her at the Museum—or her garden—or the Spa!

Are we despondent? Do we seem to you that we live in the past? I hope not, because we don't. Newspapers are full of historical articles and (I say) are recording history daily. A publisher once told me that newspapering was not writing history. I wonder...

*Historical Children cont. on Page 7*



*Historical Children cont. from Page 6*

In this story I was going to tell you about some of the many historical articles I have clipped: A History of Butter, The Man Who Saved Football, the confusion of the names of Georgia counties and towns, the War Correspondent Memorial Opens at Arlington Cemetery, How Maxwell House Coffee Got Its Name, and tons more. All my articles (two dozen more) will be good for two newsletters and I will write about them for you this year. Send me some articles you find. Some of you do. In Arizona, the former Ferrell Dalton sent Gloria Dalton Sorenson in California an article about a woman who lived to be 122 years old and had lived in Valdosta in her younger years. Gloria sent the article to Frances Vinson Fisher in Valdosta who gave it to me, then Gloria later sent me a copy. Thanks to all. And I get other articles. We have many out-of-town members, and I'm so glad they enjoy the Newsletter. One recent note from Vera Simpson Asbury said she was joining "to stay in touch with Valdosta." She lives in Tennessee. We love Valdosta and its history. Maybe it's because we have pleasant memories.

Oh, well, there's no need to try to prove my point any more. We win!

But just when I thought I was spared any more about this Abby Hoffman, here comes an article about him. She's a he! And turning fifty years old, poor thing, who "dreams of a radio show to combat mid-life crisis..." Now he doesn't trust anyone under thirty, puts down his old, now affluent friends and "wants to be 22 again, to get busted for a cause again, or, better yet, to drive an ambulance for the Sandinistas in Nicaragua." Go ahead. I've already decided why he dislikes nostalgia. He doesn't have anything pleasant to remember, nothing to be nostalgic about. What he has is not worth the trouble.

So, we'll make our own history, encourage people to help us with the Museum and Society, and we'll continue to work for it, our cause. We do all these things for our town and county—let's do it for America! Listen, I still get teary-eyed when Old Glory passes by and "The Star Spangled Banner" is sung before ball games. Let me run—I have more stories to write.

I'm certainly not a preacher, but this has been my message to you, all my historical children.

Albert S. Pendleton, Editor

## Lowndes County Historical Society Quarterly Meeting

Sunday, January 13, 2002  
3:00 p.m.

## The American Red Cross World War II & Beyond

Lowndes County Historical Museum  
305 W. Central Avenue  
(229) 247-4780

## Combined Efforts Put Our Library Holdings Online

Last spring, South Georgia Regional Library director Liza Newsom learned of a grant offer from the Georgia Public Library Service; they were particularly looking for cooperative projects between several institutions. She asked Sharon McKenzie to find a way to realize such a project. As an avid genealogist, Sharon immediately thought about combining the genealogical resources at Valdosta State University's Odom Library with the Heritage room resources at South Georgia Regional Library. She called Deborah Davis in the archives at Odom Library and together they decided to include the Lowndes County Historical Society's holdings as well as those of the Lake Park and Hahira libraries.

Their idea was obviously a grand one, because they were approved to receive a \$20,000 grant from the Georgia Public Library Service. Some of the money was used to buy paper, supplies, and a laptop computer. Sharon also ordered the complete collection of Georgia census records on CD Rom.

Deborah designed a database in Microsoft Access. David Peebles, one of the computer technicians, gave her technical advice. Deborah and Sue Hudson, who entered data, went to the different locations armed with sticky notes and the laptop. They categorized the books, and when that was finished, Sue spent

approximately 700 hours entering each institution's holdings into the database.

The result is an extensive and comprehensive compilation of special collections in South Georgia. This is an invaluable tool for all researchers who, without this finding aid, would have to travel to each different location and possibly miss important resources that are available. When I asked Sue Hudson what impressed her most about this project she replied "the sheer volume of material that the different places had to offer that were unknown to each other, the city directories and the old phonebooks that the museum has available, and how complementary the collections are." Another thing that impressed all of them was the great number of valuable collections available.

The project was finished two months ago, and 55 catalogs were printed and sent out to area libraries and historical societies south of Macon. Deborah Davis, with some staff help, managed to put the compiled catalog on the VSU Archives WebPages for people to search.

We thank everybody who was involved for including the Lowndes County Historical Society in this project.

Renate Milner, Museum Director



**MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

- January** World War II Exhibit on display  
**January 13** LCHS Quarterly Meeting  
American Red Cross in WWII  
Sunday—3:00 p.m.  
**January 20** Italian-American Club  
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.  
**March 16-17** Georgia Southern & Florida Railroad Historical Society

**JANUARY MEETING NOTICE!**

We have a new day and time for our Quarterly meeting.  
We hope that our members and friends will find this to be a  
more convenient day and hour. See you there!

**Lowndes County Historical Society & Museum**

305 West Central Avenue  
P.O. Box 434, Valdosta, GA 31603  
(229) 247-4780

Fax: (229) 247-2840  
E-mail: [history@valdostamuseum.org](mailto:history@valdostamuseum.org)

Web page:  
<http://www.valdostamuseum.org>

**YESTERDAY & TODAY**

Newsletter of

**Lowndes County Historical Society**

**President**

J. Edward Willis

**Newsletter Editor**

Albert S. Pendleton, Jr.

**Museum Staff**

Julie Barnes Smith

Museum Curator

Albert S. Pendleton, Jr.

Archivist Historian

Renate Milner

Museum Director

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Lowndes County Historical Society.