

Telling the *Tales of Old Valdosta*

By Donald O. Davis

The museum Holiday Open House on Saturday, December 4, featured a program from Frank Christian with readings from his recent publication *Tales of Old Valdosta*. It is a booklet with 36 short stories on various subjects.

We first became aware of the booklet at "local information center" Daugharty's Service Station. Robert Daugharty showed me a copy that Frank Christian had dropped by and we immediately sought a copy for the museum. The book had great stories, some that people had told before, but here they were written down, preserved. In planning our Open House we hoped Frank Christian would share his stories and he consented to do so.

He selected about 15 to possibly read and had time to read ten. Some of these included *The Famous Dynamite Explosion*, *Valdosta's First Motorcycle Cop*, *The Charleston Almost Caused a Catastrophe*, *Blue Springs*, *Miss Sammy Raile and her Austin* and *Dr. David "Fargo" Bell*.

One that he had selected but did not have time to read was *Our Twin Lakes*. You will find it on pages 2 and 3 in this newsletter. It is interesting how he points out that although located in Georgia, the development of Twin Lakes at that time was because of the Florida Land Boom. Without this short-lived land boom there would have been no Twin Lakes Pavilion. People enjoyed the Pavilion for many years until it was destroyed by fire in 1961.

Top right: Tim Carroll and Frank Christian. They are cousins via the Stanaland family. Tim currently serves as a Valdosta City Councilman.

Middle right: Kate Culpepper Swiderski visits with Carolyn Christian, Frank Christian's wife. Kate brought Merry Christmas greetings from her mother Virginia Culpepper who recently celebrated her 97th birthday.

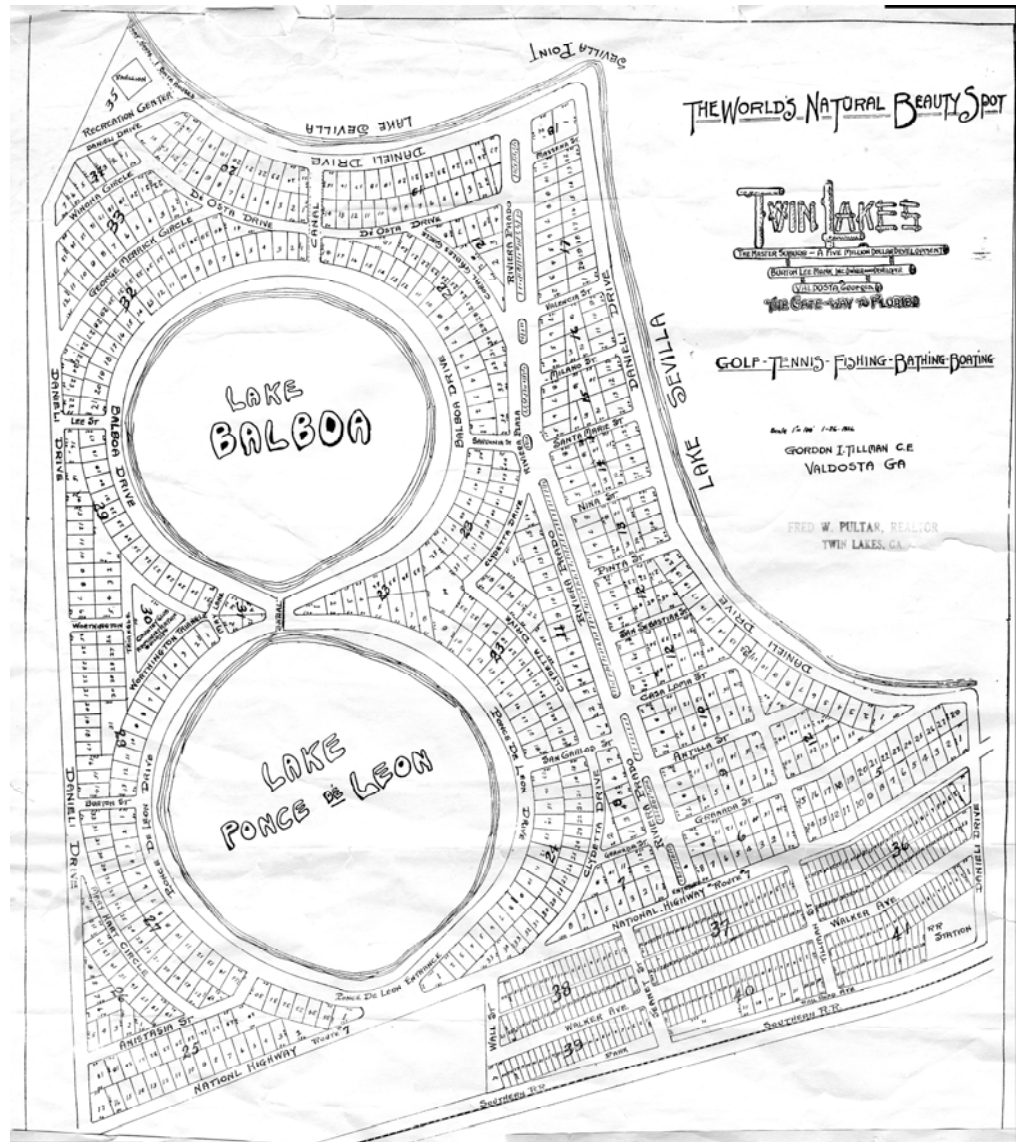
Bottom right: Catherine Redles, Lilla Kate Hart and Linda Lastinger Grondahl. Catherine, a society trustee, took a turn keeping the money box. City of Valdosta Sesquicentennial items were available for sale at the Open House. Available were the Sesquicentennial commemorative coin; the Christmas ball ornament featuring the Sesquicentennial and the Centennial of the Valdosta City Hall building; and the cookbook *Still Cookin' After 150 Years*. All items are ten dollars. Lilla Kate and Linda are shown making purchases.



“Our Twin Lakes” from *Tales of Old Valdosta*

“I have already written about the other two of our three place of entertainment, but now it is time for the best of the three. It has always been unusual to call Long Pond Twin Lakes, as the name came from the two smaller lakes that looked almost identical from the air. Their names were and still are Ponce de Leon and Balboa. During the Florida Land Boom of 1924 and 1925, these lakes were developed with lots and houses by a man name Burton Lee Mank and Paul Lilly, Sr. A number of the houses were built just like the Florida boom houses with a flat roof, front parapet wall, and a carport which was called a porte cashe. These houses were masonry constructed with stucco outside finish. All the streets in this area were given Spanish names. Just as the boom ended abruptly in Florida in '25, the boom also ended at Twin Lakes. Fortunately, the wonderful pavilion had been built before the crash. Oh that pavilion, what would we have done without it. Gas was reasonable in that time, so we spent just about all dates down there. Occasionally, a big band would make a one-night stand for us on their bus trip to Miami. What a big night that would be! Having the top drummer in the nation, Gene Krupa, play for us to dance was something very special. Of course, after paying admission we usually could not afford more than a Coke for our date. I remember when my mother and I bought a new 1941 Super Deluxe Ford while I was working at the old First National Bank.

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Above: Development Map of Twin Lakes during the Florida Land Boom era



Swimmers at Lake Park Pavilion

MEMORIALS

Martha Hatcher Grudzein
by
Morris Smith

Dr. Thomas H. Smith, Jr.
by
Harriette Ashley Churchwell

I was supposedly working to save up enough money to subsidize what my widowed mother could afford for me to go to the University of Georgia. We agreed to split the payments of 25 dollars a month after trading in her '36 Ford. When my car arrived at the Ford Place, I called my buddy Jon Hall and told him that I had it. The first thing he said was, "When are we going to whip down to the Lakes?" That was very natural; where else?

When the Boy Scout Camp was on the far end of Long Pond, there were no houses from the Pavilion Boat House all the way around the lake. Mr. Sam Lazarus did have a shack directly across from the Pavilion. There were only 2 speed boats on Long Pond. Bert Glisson, the Chevrolet dealer, had one of the Chris-Crafts, and a family named Kennedy from Homerville had the other. The Kennedy boat was the finest and was named "Miss Waycross." Boy, what a sight that was to see "Miss Waycross" come cruising across Long Pond. To say that I did not covet would have been a bold face lie. Here I go again, the greatest generation."

Christmas Open House Snapshots

Frank Christian's stories produced good cheer and many smiles.



Above: Roberts family relatives, Catherine Redles, Lonie Pendleton and Bootsie Smotherman, of Valdosta, and Bootsie's daughter Kathryn Smotherman Williamson of Milledgeville. Catherine and Lonie came to the museum and helped decorate for Christmas. **Below:** Marjorie and Rev. Bob Dickerson after the program. Longtime historical society members they are now back fulltime in Valdosta.



Above: Frank Christian and Ron Irwin. Ron had program duty at last year's Holiday Open House and spoke on his book, *Our Noble Quest*, a history of the Lowndes County school system. **Below:** Patsy Giles, society president, with Wilby and Gloria Mederer Coleman. Gloria has donated many of the Hyta Mederer daylilies for the museum grounds.





Stan Christian in conversation with Ed Willis



Eleanor Howard, Sallie Kurrie and Lou Gabard



Brenda Thrasher and Jane Stanaland



Ben Stanaland with his cousin Frank Christian



Dr. Rosalie Allison and family enjoy viewing the military patch blanket which she assembled many years ago and recently donated to the museum. Museum staff Amy Brown, Drew Johnson and Adam Doughty prepared items and Arts Center curator Bill Shenton completed assemblage.

Museum WWII Display Continues at the Arts Center

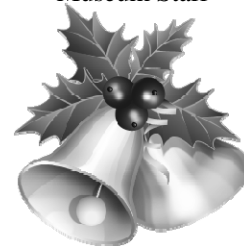
The Turner Center of the Arts asked the museum if we could display WWII uniforms and artifacts as a complement to there military art display. The items on display, with their related stories, through the end of the year include:

- Dr. Lloyd Burns Flight Jacket and model airplanes
- John Langdale uniform
- Jerry Tillman uniform
- Billy Bird uniform
- Art White, Stars and Stripes
- Louie P. White, Red Cross
- Flying Tiger items, Ed Kelly
- Carroll Woods, Tuskegee Airman

The museum WWII PowerPoint was also shown during this period.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays

*From the
Board of Trustees
and
Museum Staff*



*We appreciate all
donations and
kindnesses shown the
museum during this
very busy year*

Recognizing 100 Years of Boy Scouts



Boy Scouts were founded in 1910. We have a good bit of information on Valdosta Boy Scouts in our archives and did not want the year to pass without some form of recognition. The first local mention we find is from Susie McKey Thomas's newspaper abstracts of the Valdosta Daily Times, issue dated February 10, 1913, stating, "A meeting of the Boy Scouts will be held at the court house Wednesday afternoon at 3 o'clock. All of the boys in Valdosta who expect to become members of the scouts ought to be on hand. The older people ought to encourage this move ment for it is about the best movement that has been started among the boys. The Scouts ought to be equipped with uniforms and the money for this ought to be contributed by the people here. It ought to be an easy matter to raise money for this purpose." **Left:** Boy Scouts in 1927 on Patterson Street with signs announcing the opening of the Ritz Theater with the movie *Tell It to the Marines* starring Lon Chaney, photo from John McCall Ritz Theater collection. **Below:** Scout photo from the Tom Shelton collection on a New Mexico trip. Valdosta scouts are identified below.



Back row:

Duane Dodson
Mike Chapman
X
Lane Giddens
Dick Shelton
X

2nd row from rear:

Steve Bonner
5 Coffee Co. scouts
Rollin Mathis

3rd row from rear:

Phil Metzger
Rod Holland
Malcolm Liles
Mr. Holland
the Philmont Guide
Mr. Tom Shelton
Ronnie Ridley
David Fender
Ed Baker

Front:

Butch Gaskins, a
Berrien Co. scout
Berrien Co. scout

Cat Tracks Past

A Valdosta Wildcats History

Three and four years ago Melissa Geier spent many hours at the museum researching for her master's degree thesis on elements of Valdosta Wildcat football history. I happened to see her recently and asked about her research and she told me that she had printed a book. She offered a free copy to the museum and a friend brought it by to us. She now teaches history for Park University and Embry Riddle University at Moody AFB. Even though only three days before our Open House, things came together for an impromptu book signing with notice passed through email. At left, Jenny Beck Howard purchased a copy from Melissa. The bibliography and end notes are an education unto themselves. A few paragraphs are excerpted below. They are from Chapter 5,



“The Legend, the Hero, the Man,”

“For Wildcats playing during the time of Bobby Hooks, hardly anything would have been as exhilarating as winning the first state championship title for Valdosta. Wright Bazemore's return from the war ensured that and much more. Bazemore would begin a new era in Wildcats football. He is credited with teaching his players more than athletics. He also taught them how to be good people and how to be successful throughout their lives.

The dictionary defines a legend as a story coming down from the past that is historical, although not verifiable.⁹⁸ It is also something or someone that is unforgettable because of their actions or words. A hero is defined as an illustrious warrior or a man admired for his achievements and noble qualities.⁹⁹ Valdosta High's eighth coach is frequently described using both of these words, although it is unlikely the modest Bazemore would have referred to himself by either.

Bazemore was a local Georgia boy. He was born on a small farm in Fitzgerald, Georgia, on August 1, 1916. He attended Fitzgerald High School where he lettered in four different sports. Athletic ability came easily for him -- so much so that he was awarded several scholarships. He finally chose Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, in order to follow his high school coach.¹⁰⁰ After college, his career led him to Waycross, Georgia, where he was then enticed to come to Valdosta, Georgia. His high school career was so renowned he was listed in Ripley's Believe it or Not for scoring ten touchdowns in two different games.¹⁰²

After Hooks accepted a head coach position at Mercer, Bazemore took over and remained for a total of twenty-six years. Bazemore was a deeply religious man with strong Christian values which served as the foundation for all his expectations. His desire was to instill good values in those around him, to aid them in becoming better people. He was a man who led by example.

The 1941 season began with brand new orange and black uniforms. Freshmen were eager to have their time on the field, but Bazemore did not pay attention to their enthusiasm. The Bogarts (Bazemore's nickname for incoming freshmen), consisting of Buddy Culbreth, Dicky Stewart, Melvin Williams, Robert Dowling, Arthur Hutchinson, Fred Deloach, and Richard Hemmingway were given the job of being the holders of the tackling dummy for the varsity team. While this may have been a vital job, it was not a glorious one. Any Bogart who thought this would help earn them a spot on the field were quickly shut down by the coach.

Buddy Culbreth was proof of this. During a home game against Moultrie, Bazemore called his name. Excited and full of dreams of glory, Culbreth fumbled to find a helmet that would fit properly. Bazemore knelt on the sidelines with his usual piece of grass hanging out of his mouth, not taking notice of the young player about to rush out and take his spot on the field. Culbreth reported to Bazemore announcing he was ready to go.

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Bazemore flipped him a nickel and told Culbreth to fetch him a bag of peanuts. Ego-deflated and disappointed, Culbreth did as the coach asked.

For Valdosta and the Wildcats, the only gain of World War II that counted was Bazemore's time inventing new plays. Watching for enemy ships and submarines in Iceland allowed him a great deal of free time to let his mind wander. What better for a coach to do than to think about football? In the course of all this daydreaming, he thought up the ideas for tackle eligible play, center keep play, and the spread offense which became some of the Wildcat's most successful plays. Bazemore would have to wait to utilize any new plays concocted during his time in the Navy. Discharged as a full Lieutenant in 1946, Bazemore returned to Valdosta High and began implementing his newly created plays. "Who knows, if he hadn't had all of that time to think about football, it might have been a few more years before he thought up all those plays that were so successful at VHS."¹⁰⁴

Valdosta, like most of the United States, was war weary. The town was desperate to return to normalcy and the best way to do that was to embrace football, the sport that defined the city. One of the first games played after the war was not against the typical rivals. Instead, on December 16, 1946, Valdosta entered the Lard Bowl.¹⁰⁵ After most of the military members returned from World War II, old Valdosta High Wildcats teamed up against the current Valdosta High Wildcats at Cleveland Field. The Rockets faced off against the Tom Cats. Twenty-five hundred fans filled the stadium to watch the game that served as a fundraiser for a new municipal stadium. In anticipation of serious injuries (no doubt from the old timers' side), eight doctors and six nurses were armed with stretchers on the sidelines. To their relief, only two injuries occurred. Both of them were minor....."

Book information and request:

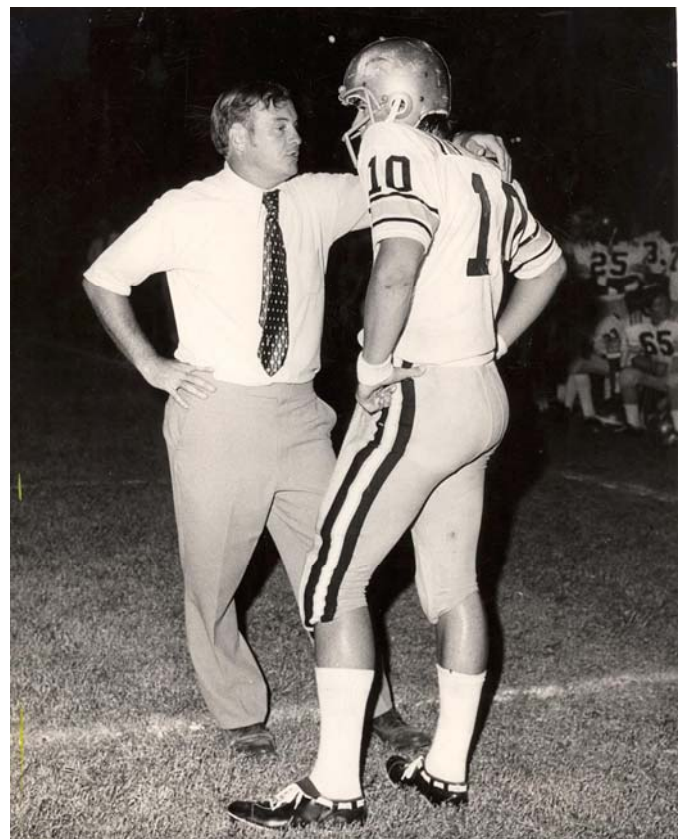
The Lowndes County Historical Society appreciates the many credits that Melissa gives us in her book. You may order the book via the email address: cattrackspast@gmail.com

Note that the email is also the book title.

On pages 65 and 66 of the book the author states, "I am still collecting stories, Share Yours!" She provides a short form. It is especially for player responses or for a family member or friend to respond for those deceased.



Above on the right, Mrs. Clyde Doig, a visitor during the Open House, enjoyed Melissa Geier's book as her daughter Linda is married to Charlie Green, a former coach and head coach of the Valdosta Wildcats. Her son Michael is on the left. She especially enjoyed photographs in the book that included Charlie Green. The photograph below is in the book and is of Coach Green and Don Golden in 1968 or 1969. Golden was a versatile athlete and his father once drove him between a simultaneous baseball game and track meet so he could participate in both. He played football on the 1968 13-0 state championship team that was named 2nd in the nation and the 1969 12-0-1 team that was state champion and named national champion. He and his wife Debbie were killed, the innocent victims of an automobile collision, in October 2005. They had resided in Gainesville, Georgia



MUSEUM CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 25 through January 2 – Museum Closed
February 12 – Georgia Day Program with James Jackson Chapter, NSDAR

Officers and Executive Committee

President, Patsy T. Giles; 1st Vice President, H. Lamar Cole; 2nd Vice President, Martha N. Gibson; Secretary, Joseph Tomberlin; Treasurer, Reden Hart; Past President, Julie Smith; Mary McRee, Anita Shelton, and Susie Thomas

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YESTERDAY & TODAY

Newsletter of
Lowndes County Historical Society

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