

THE GREATER NORTH MIAMI HISTORIAN

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FORMER NORTH MIAMI MAYORS SPEAKS AT HISTORY SOCIETY MEETING

At what he acknowledged was his first speaking engagement in 13 years, former North Miami Mayor Elton Gissendanner thrilled the Greater North Miami Historical Society on April 7, 2000, with his recollections. The meeting, a regular gathering of the Society, was held at the North Miami Police Department community room. Over 40 were in attendance.

Gissendanner made sure during his speech to set the record straight regarding the Interama project, that which is more infamously known as Munisport. Although Gissendanner and his counterparts from the late 1960s often bear the historical blame for "creating" Munisport, Gissendanner noted that the City did not sign a contract with Munisport until after he left office. Though it had long been operated as a legitimate garbage dump before and during his tenure, the myriad of problems that eventually befell the Interama site were not of his origination.



**DR. ELTON GISSENDANNER
AT GNMHS MEETING**

The former candidate for State Representative and Congress declared that his original motivation for seeking the mayorship of North Miami was to push the idea of the City buying the Interama site. He worried that neither the State or County had been able to save this large remaining area of green space, so he wanted North Miami to step forward. He was able to convince voters to agree with him, and in 1969, a bond issue was passed to purchase the property.

Gissendanner had the foresight to see that Interama was worth saving for many reasons. He knew that it was the only way to save the Oleta River area and create what is now the State Park. Most importantly, he envisioned that the State University system could build a preeminent college at the site. Florida International University's North Campus ended up there as a direct result of his efforts.

According to Gissendanner, the Watergate scandal of 1974 had a more direct impact on North Miami than most realize. During the Nixon presidency, North Miami officials had become close with Vice President Spiro Agnew. With Agnew's help, the plan was to build the "Bicentennial Project" at Interama. Scheduled to open in 1976, the project would have been a draw for thousands around South Florida who wished to celebrate America's 200th birthday. Unfortunately, Agnew resigned from office, with Nixon following not long after. Without the influence of the two



THE CROWD RESPONDS TO GISSENDANNER'S HUMOR

most powerful men in the country, the Bicentennial Project never saw the light of day. Gissendanner's talk also included many other interesting and related antidotal stories of the Munisport time. He spoke about other political campaigns of the era that raised a little laughter from the crowd. All in the audience at the Historical Society's meeting thoroughly enjoyed Gissendanner's recollections. Gissendanner donated to us two Interama "hard hats" used at the groundbreaking of the golf course that was never finished. He will also forward to us some of the original Interama documents he took with him in 1975 when he left office. We will certainly remember fondly the stories of Elton Gissendanner!

FOURTH OF JULY PAST

Fireworks, picnics, political speakers, stirring marching bands, jugglers, and Uncle Sam on stilts was the order of the day in the small town of North Miami of the 1950's and 1960's. Times change and a city grows. Fireworks, marching bands and jugglers are now on a regional level that happens in stadiums, waterfronts and parks. Today for the most part Fourth of July has become an individual or family affair as opposed to the giant community celebrations of the "Good old Days." Others can debate the merits or faults of this change at another time and place. So let us look into the files of "Fourth of July Past", as that is our mission.

NORTH DADE
JOURNAL
MIAMI, FLORIDA
THURSDAY, JULY 12, 1956

Fourth of July Celebrated With Gusto By Residents at North Miami Center

Independence Day, July the Fourth, was celebrated with gusto at the North Miami Recreation Center as approximately 5,000 cheering North Miami residents and visitors witnessed the biggest display of activities and fireworks ever offered. Sponsored by the city of North Miami under the guidance of recreation director Ed Lawrence, the day's activities were spearheaded by games and races program for boys and girls of all ages.

Winners of the events were feted with ribbon awards, hot dogs and soft drinks.

Highlight of the afternoon games and races was a pogostick race for the adults. Not to be outdone by the youngsters, they stole the show.

Two unscheduled events stole the show. A group of about 40 toddlers, all under six years old, had their shoes put in a pile. They had to run bare-footed to the pile 50 feet away, find their shoes, lace them and then race back to the finish line. Diane Smith, Bobby Thomas and Randall Darling finished one, two, three in that order.

The evening program began at 8:30 with a Boy Scout Troop assisting in the flag-raising ceremonies, which was followed by a short address by Mayor Joseph Ludick.

A search of the GNMHS archives revealed that previous "Fourth Of July" Parades have marched along N.E. 125th Street many times. The street has been ribboned up from light pole to light pole with red, white and blues bunting and marching bands and patriotic revelers have marched along the concourse and eventually to the Park. In the fifties it was the North Dade Youth Foundation Center and today it is Cagni Park. Time changes many things.

The accompanying July 4th article tells of a past celebration where 5000 citizens crowded the streets and later the park to participate in the gala celebration recognizing the birth of the United States of America. Other newspapers and articles in the archives of the GNMHS reveal the past celebrations where parades with bands marched in our locality and flag waving citizens cheered the marchers on. Antique cars rolled along the parade concourse with decorated bicycles adding the garnish to the marching revelers. That was the 1950's and 1960's. Almost all of the Fourth of July celebrations had the Boy Scout flag raising team standing by some place with the American Legion team ready to go. Some years the Scouts got the call but the American Legion was for the most part in charge of this part of the programs over the years.

In later issues of the local newspapers of the 1970's and 1980's there are photos of patriotic costume contest where children were awarded prizes for portraying American heroes like Betsy Ross, George Washington, or Paul Revere. Contest for decorating the bicycles in red, white and blue was a favorite for the younger set. According to the newspapers, the seventies and eighties were also famous for the community sponsored picnics. Bar B-Q was the favorite with watermelon eating contest for the kiddies following. Entertainment was not neglected as Barbershop Quartettes and other various musical talent ie Country western and jazz groups performed. Fourth of July was a community program in the "Old Day."



PRESENTING THE COLORS, CITY OF NORTH MIAMI ON THE EARLY 1960'S

WHAT'CHA GOT IN THE CLOSET

Every time we send out a reminder that the memorabilia, photographs and historical items are being sought by the GNMHS there is good response. Sometimes the donations can fill a big box and sometimes they are not so many, but they are always good. Look around and see if you have some photographs of downtown North Miami in the past. A great find would be some from the 20's or 30's or 40's but we don't turn anything down.

This past quarter Joan and Paul Blazej turned in an old photo of their home, which is considered to be the oldest home in town. It was built 1909. The interesting thing about the photo other than it was a picture of the home was that Asa Wilcox and his wife are standing in front of the home. The Wilcox family was one of the pioneer families in the North Miami area. Joan Quinn found a picture of the four Henshaw Brothers (Ernie, Howard, Lynn and Don) who date back to 1920's and maybe a little before. It was Don Henshaw who was the Editor of the Miami Shore's Bulletin in 1927 and 1928. That's a collection of newspapers donated by the Library last quarter and are the papers that he edited for the Chamber of Commerce. Mitch Green was in again, this time he had a 1921 map of The North Miami area.

Macy Sezzin donated a deck of playing cards with the Keystone Point logo on the back. They were brand new and in the never been used stage. Joyce Mumphord was in again, this time donating several copies of the Gold Coast Orchid Society publications. The Society was an active part of the North Miami scene in the 1970's and still remains so. The North Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce (Jane Bertani Executive Director) donated a 1991 Poster Map of the Business's around the North Dade area and a six page history of the North Miami Beach area that was written by Jeanette Campbell a City librarian and Historian. Another similar map was offered to us to copy but we have one our own now. The other map can be found on the walls on of the Coin Laundry on West Dixie and 140th Street. Jackie Biggane a member of the GNMHS Board of Directors acquired and donated a collection (photo reproductions) of 80 picture post cards of the area that date between the 1930's and 1950's. Jackie has also made a present day photographic collection (with her own little camera) down the banks of "Little Arch Creek" once known as "Wheeler Creek." If you have not seen the new landscaping and beautification of the Creek adjacent to the Johnson & Wales College then you should go by and take a look at it. They are to be commended on this improvement to Creek and the community. Other owners along the creek should try this program. President Scott Galvin, Jackie Biggane and Glenn O'Hearn spoke at Natives of Dade meeting last month and the GNMHS was the recipient a \$50.00 honorarium. Money in the closet is always appreciated.

American Legion Post #67

THE MIAMI SHORES BULLETIN

July 1, 1927

* *
The American Legion Post of Miami Shores is conducting a sale of firecrackers in Mr. Winnebrenners building located on the Dixie directly across from the Post Office. A good assortment of firecrackers can be had there at reasonable prices and it is hoped that anyone that wants to buy some of the crackers for the kiddies will not forget that they are to be had in town, and that the purchase of them here will help the local American Legion Post financially. Fireworks cannot be purchased in Miami we are informed and hence the Miami folks will purchase out of town. The Legionnaires will consider it a very real favor if the Miami Shores folks will inform their friends down town that these can be purchased in Miami Shores, and at the same time help out a mighty fine organization of men.

FIREWORKS!



For Fourth of July Celebration are now on sale in Mr. Winnebrenner's Building located directly across the street from the Post Office.

The sale is being conducted by the Miami Shores Post No. 67 of the American Legion for the purpose of raising funds.

A good clean assortment of firecrackers is on hand at reasonable prices.


BUY AT HOME! LET THE KIDDIES MAKE SOME NOISE! HELP THE LEGION!

Miami Shores Post



The Bulletin always had several social and personal notes page and a lot can be learned if you kept up with the news. Having read the all the available Bulletins I can tell you that playing Bridge was "Big time" in North Miami or Miami Shores as it was named in 1927. There were at least three groups of ladies who played bridge mid week every week. The results were reported every Friday in the Bulletin and I would believe it was an important part of the paper. According to the reporting it appeared that there were probably about 12 women to the group. There appeared to be some overlapping, that is, some of the girls belonged to two groups. That's a lot of bridge playing for a town of a hundred or two people. That was probably a lot of gossip as well. The afternoon soaps of the radio age were not around as yet. The community had only one radio station and it would be a guess as to what was on the radio. The Bulletin took little notice of the Station. What ever the radio had, it was no competition to the Bridge players. The Bulletin, however, reported on the Radio Parties on Friday and Saturday nights. Many of the parties were at Howard Henshaws home. Henshaw was the Atwater-Kent Radio Representative in the Miami area. Radio Parties were not only held at homes but there were several occasions where Henshaw took a radio on board a Moon Light cruise and provided music for the group. So it appears that music was the Friday and Saturday night program for the radio buffs. In the good old summertime lots of folks went north to visit family and friends and the area was almost like a ghost town. The vacation thing however was not always true. The Kalch family (mentioned in the below article) was into the agriculture world of farming and went north every summer. It may have been a vacation for the kids but for Mr. Kalch it was for work. In the summertime he was a carpenter in Pennsylvania and in the wintertime he was a farmer in Miami Shores. That was true for a lot of other folks. Several of the restaurants as well as one of the Repair Shops and the Dry Cleaner closed for the summer. The owners were not up north spending money on vacation but were working at other jobs. 73 years ago in the depression it was different. Southeast Florida was a depression year ahead of the nation.

7-8-27



Social and Personal Notes

The Bridge Club met at Mrs. Branch Carden's home on Wednesday afternoon. Mrs. Hundley won the prize for the afternoon's playing. Refreshments were served.

Mrs. Ned Davies announces that the Sweet Shoppe has reopened and is serving a regular noon day lunch in addition to the usual complete line of sandwiches, cold drinks and ice cream.

Mrs. J.D.Cook and daughter Lyra, and Miss Margurite Cook, who have been visiting Mrs. Cook's father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. W.F. Hamilton, have returned to Charlotte, N.C.

Mr. and Mrs. George D. Newton and son Phil have gone on an extended visit to Atlanta, Georgia, and to the Carolinas. Their many friends will be happy to welcome them home in the Fall.


Miss Edna Smith of Homestead has been the guest of Miss Marie Hamilton during the past week.

Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Kalch, and children, Lester and Lea, left on the morning of the Fourth of July by auto for Mansfield, Penna. to spend the summer months. They were accompanied by Mrs. Lord who will go on to Marcellus, New York, her old home, where she anticipates a delightful summer with her multitude of friends. Mr. and Mrs. Kalch expect to return to their home on Dixieanna Avenue about the first of November

Mr. and Mrs. H.G.Forth of St. Clair, Georgia, are visiting Mrs. Forth's sister, Mrs. W.F.Hamilton.

Mrs. Bessie A. Puffer has been visiting her daughter in the Tennessee mountains and is now with her sister in Illinois.

Mrs. H.E.McCrillus entertained a group of friends on the afternoon of the Fourth of July at a picnic held in Hollywood. A delightful time for all was the report upon their return.



Are You Attractive, Too?

We have made many aware of charm that was hidden, by permanently waving hair that had suggested no charm before.

MISS LOCKWOOD
Rosetta Building Little River

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Scott Galvin

Who says work can't be any fun?! The By Laws committee gathered On June 23, 2000, at the home of Macy and Mij Sezzin, assigned the tedious task of updating the rules that govern our historical society. Adopted upon our inception in 1998, the by-laws were a hodge-podge of rules used by various other organizations. Unfortunately, some of the rules needed clarification as they applied to us.

Serving on the committee is Mij and Macy, Jacki Biggane, Glenn O'Hearn and myself. We gathered around the Sezzin dining room table, pads in hand ready to dissect the by-laws. No doctor could have performed a better operation as we sliced and diced. We eliminated sections, which had no pertinence to us and rewrote others for clarity. We tightened up language as it pertained to our Board of Directors and our Executive Board.

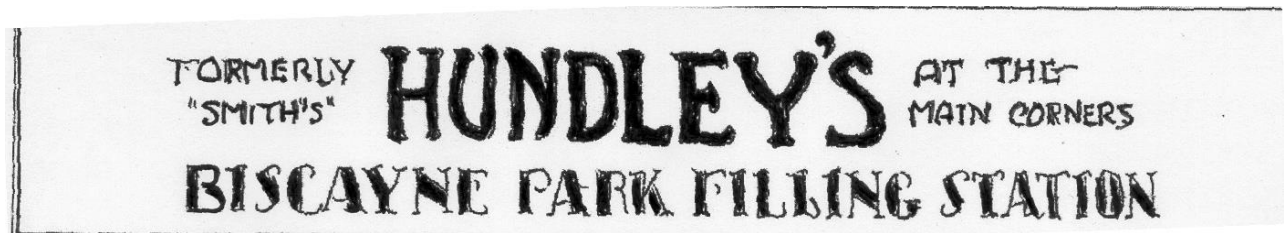
I am very appreciative of the members listed above that took the time to work on the by-laws. It was a tough job but a vital one. The changes we made will be submitted for approval at an upcoming Board meeting. The new by-laws will close loopholes that could have been dangerous to our Society. The clarifications we made will also help future Society members see how the group should operate. I again thank Glenn, Jacki, Macy and Mij for taking time out on a Friday night to do this work. I truly had a great time bonding with each of them!

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO THE BERTHA MARIE CLUB?

The Bertha Marie Club was a ladies Social Club founded in January of 1927 in the Town of Miami Shores. Social may not be entirely correct after you read a little more. The name comes from Bertha Marie Snow the founder of the Club. Mrs. Snow was the wife of Councilman Freeman D. Snow. Not very much more is known about the club except what little was written in the 1927 "Miami Shores Bulletins." It would seem that Mrs. Snow and other ladies of the community formed a Club so they could sell the wares of their culinary talents. Other ladies is a guess, as it may have been totally Mrs. Snows concept and the other ladies were needed to make it work, so I say other ladies.

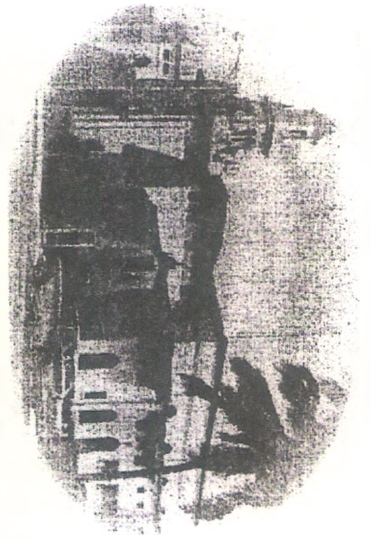
This is a strange concept for a club. Consider, however, this area of the country had just previously (1926) experienced a devastating hurricane. Then following the hurricane there was a financial bust resulting from negative attitudes of lenders relative to investing on the hurricane coast. The Miami area economy took a hit and a great many people were without work or had their incomes severely impacted. It seems that the Bertha Marie Club was the focal point of the ladies of the community. Of course there were the midweek bridge games but there was also a need in many cases for additional income in some of the families. People did not look to welfare agencies, or others for help unless the need was extreme. If you were a member of the Bertha Marie Club you could open a concession in the Club/Store. A mother with culinary talents could supplement the family income with her baking. Clothing was also sold in the store. The Store was on the north side of the street at the junctions of the two highways (125th street & 6th Ave.) Mention and recommendation is made in "The Bulletin" of a Mrs. Cross who sold her Bread and Cakes there and Mrs. Estey of Biscayne Park who sold her pies there.

The Club was large enough for a small dance floor and Mrs. Snow would bring in local bands to play for dances that the Club sponsored. Birthday parties, going away parties, and other special events were encouraged at the Club for a small fee. The Club on some occasions catered parties out side of the Club. The Club also sponsored activities like a moonlight boat ride to Cape Florida with food. No mention is ever made in the Bulletin as to where the monies go from the profits of Club. My own opinion is that Mrs. Snow was an entrepreneur who was sharing some the wealth with the good ladies of the Town but she also was supplementing Mr. Freemans Snow's income as well. I am sure it was all well and good as the citizens apparently participated in the day's economy and fun. The Editor of the Bulletin who was a well-respected Minister recommended the food as well as the good time of the Club activities. What ever happened to The Bertha Marie Club? I would guess that the local economy as well the national economy improved and the need to supplements incomes just faded away. According to the "The Bulletin" Mrs. Freeman Snow or the Bertha Marie Club was the first member to her dues in the newly formed Miami Shores Chamber of Commerce in 1927.



ADVERTISEMENT JULY 1927

The Greater North Miami Historical Society



The Greater North Miami Historical Society is an organization established to preserve historical artifact, written, and oral history, ephemera, and memorabilia relating to the current City of North Miami and the areas surrounding the city.

The Society came into being when a group of interested citizens decided that the history around the Arch Creek Basin was as important to county history as is the Miami River Basin. Collections or data gathering, along with archiving are its basic tasks. The Society needs the papers, the photos, the stories, and any other documentation that is important to the historical archives of the community. The Society needs the help of the community and the friends of the community. So if you have a document, a photo or a story that you can donate or let us copy please contact us at the below address

13100 WEST DIXIE HWY
NORTH MIAMI, FL 33161
(305) 891-7811 FAX (305) 893-8522

**GREATER NORTH MIAMI HISTORICAL SOCIETY
13100 WEST DIXIE HIGHWAY
NORTH MIAMI, FLORIDA 33161**

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP
GREATER NORTH MIAMI HISTORICAL SOCIETY
13100 WEST DIXIE HIGHWAY NORTH MIAMI, FL. 33161**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE _____ FAX _____

MEMBERSHIP DUES \$10.00 ANNUAL