



The Historian

The Newsletter of The Boynton Beach Historical Society

Serving Boynton Beach, Ocean Ridge, Manalapan, Gulf Stream, Briny Breezes, Lantana, Hypoluxo, the Village of Golf and all areas of West Boynton
In addition to supporting the preservation of the history of Palm Beach County and the State of Florida as a whole

2009 Number 5, May 2009

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, PALM BEACH COUNTY! 1909 to 2009 = 100 YEARS!

Our May meeting is devoted to celebrating the Anniversary of the creation of Palm Beach County in 1909 from what was then part of Dade County. This will be our end of season covered-dish dinner at the Boynton Woman's Club. It is scheduled for Sunday, May 17, at 5:00 p.m.

We will honor especially members of the families who were here in 1909, but stories and contributions relative to other early families are also welcome.

Harvey E. Oyer, Jr. will begin the program by naming a number of families and recalling stories of their pasts. Boynton has been the setting for a number of very interesting events, and Harvey remembers most of them. He has promised to be selective in what he reveals, so most family skeletons are probably safe unless some family member who attends chooses to reveal them.



Harvey E. Oyer, Jr.

So bring your memories and plan to contribute as we hold a member participation discussion of what we know of old Boynton families and events.

The Society has an historic remembrance for everyone, so plan to come and celebrate with us and pick up your gift..

Each person is asked to bring a covered dish—either a vegetable dish or a salad sufficient to serve six. The Society will furnish the beverages, meat items, dessert, paper plates, flatware, cups and napkins. For some of you who may not wish to bring a dish, you may contribute \$5.00 for each person in your party.

So if you have them, dust off your old pictures, refresh your family recollections, but most importantly bring yourself to help us mark this historic period of Florida's past.



WHAT: A COVERED-DISH DINNER
Celebrating Palm Beach
County's 100th Birthday.

WHEN: SUNDAY, MAY 17, 2009
5:00 p.m.

WHERE: BOYNTON WOMAN'S CLUB
1010 South Federal Hwy.

**BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS—2009-10**

OFFICERS

President	Voncile Smith
1 st Vice President, Programs	Janet DeVries
2 nd Vice President, Membership	Bev Cormany
Recording Secretary	Virginia Farace
Corresponding Secretary	Carol Mahoney
Treasurer	Fran McKeral
Editor <i>The Historian</i>	Voncile Smith
Archivist and Webmaster	Janet DeVries

DIRECTORS

2010	Gloria Turner
2010	Tim Bednarz
2011	Steve Anton
2011	Sally Dye
2012	Sheila Rousseau Taylor
2012	Delma Swilley

TRUSTEES

2010	Wendy Franklin
2010	Marion Weems
2011	Randall Gill
2011	Harvey Oyer, Jr
2012	Victor Norfus
2012	Dan Rousseau

The Boynton Beach Historical Society's website is boyntonbeachhistoricalsociety.org You can contact us at our e-mail address boyntonhistory06@yahoo.com or mail inquiries or information to our mailbox at P.O. Box 12, Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012.

The Historian is mailed eight times a year—September, October, November, January, February, March, April and May—to all members. No copies are produced in December, June, July and August.

NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Some new faces were added to the Boynton Beach Historical Society Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting in April, and some former members have assumed new roles. Welcome to Del Swilley and Victor Norfus as newcomers. All of our activities, including service on the Board of Directors, are performed by volunteers; so it is gratifying when we find new people who are willing to give of their time to help maintain the organization. [Please note the names of the new Board listed above.]

We are especially grateful for the past services of our retiring Board members. Helen Adams Bonomini had served as a Director for many years and asked to be excused from further duty so she could spend more hours with her family. Richard Philpott, our former 1st Vice President for Programs, has been busy establishing himself in a new job situation and feels he must devote all available time to his new position. Thank you, Helen and Dick, for your loyalty and assistance to the Society.

LAST HISTORIAN UNTIL SEPTEMBER

Just a reminder—we do not mail out copies of *The Historian* during the months of June, July, and August. Members should receive their next copy after the current issue approximately the second week of September.

IN MEMORIAM

PAUL D. PRICE—We recently received word from Frances R. Price that her husband, Major Paul D. Price, is deceased. We do not know the date of death. The Prices had been members of the Boynton Beach Historical Society for many years. We are sorry for the loss and send our belated condolences to his family.

CLAIRE R. WEEMS—Claire and her beloved husband, Fain, have been members of the Society for many years. Both served on the Board of Directors, Claire as 2nd Vice President for Membership, and later as Treasurer, and Fain as a Director. We certainly miss their presences on the Board. In losing Claire, many of us have also lost a special friend. Claire liked everyone and was always sweet and considerate. We share the sorrow of the Weems and Rossi families with the passing of this wonderful woman.

2009 PAID MEMBERSHIPS

Received between April 1 and May 1 2009

[For list of members paid before April 1, see March and April issues of *The Historian*]

PATRON:

Fred W. Love
Cheryl Muster
Marie Shepard

FAMILY:

Robert and Christian Oyer Macoviak
Roy A. and Beth Simon

INDIVIDUAL:

May Foy Burke
Lorraine Keatts Gouge
Mary Miner Haggard
Frank E. Melograno
Jim Price
Linda Stabile



A MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE



On Memorial Day we commemorate all the men and women of the United States who have died while in the military service. Formerly called Decoration Day, it was designated as the time to decorate the graves of American soldiers who had died in combat. Memorial Day honors on the last Monday in May all American casualties of any war or military action. This issue of *The Historian* looks at the lives of two men from Boynton Beach who died in service—one just after the conclusion of the Korean conflict and one in the War in Viet Nam. The following information was sent to *The Historian* by Gladys Baker Knuth. Marvin was her brother and Larry her brother in law.

MARVIN L. BAKER, U.S. NAVY, A.O.3

[Text and pictures courtesy Gladys Baker Knuth]

In 1946, when Marvin was 16, his mother, Hulda, moved with him, his brother Kelly and sister Gladys to Boynton Beach. Following the death of Marvin's father Claude in 1943, the family had lived in Salt Lake City, Utah for a while, but when her mother Dorothea Offerman died, Hulda decided to come to Florida to be close to her father, William Offerman. The Offermans had lived in Boynton since the 1920s.

Marvin attended Boynton High School and graduated in 1949 with the last class to graduate from the 1927 high school.

Marvin enlisted in the Navy in September, 1950 for a four year term. He had longed to become a pilot, but his vision prevented this. He did become part of an aircraft crew as a bombardier, flying a Navy Neptune anti-submarine bomber. Although his home base was Jacksonville, Florida, he was stationed in a number of different places including French Morocco. With but six months of his four year term remaining, he was stationed in Reykjavik, Iceland, patrolling the Icelandic/Russian border.



Marvin L. Baker, United States Navy
December 3, 1932 to December 31, 1953
Age 21 years

On December 17, 1953 as they were returning to base something went amiss with the plane's radar, and the aircraft flew into the side of Myrdalsjokull glacier. The winter weather was extremely bad. The many attempts to reach the crash site were to no avail.

At one point a helicopter did succeed in landing, and one body was found. The remaining aircraft and crew were under too much ice packed snow.

Recovery of the aircraft was not until 28 years later, in 1981 at the end of summer, when some sheepherders, rounding up their sheep from their summer grazing discovered the aircraft, finally exposed. Marvin's body, still mostly intact, even with his wallet, was returned to his mother in Boynton Beach. He was laid to rest October 31, 1981. The graveside service was attended by many of his friends even after 28 years.

LAWRENCE D. KNUTH, Lt. U.S. MARINE CORPS

[Text and pictures courtesy Gladys Baker Knuth]

A native of Boynton Beach, Lawrence D. Knuth—who was called Larry— was the son of Orville C. and Marguerite W. Knuth. Larry and his three brothers, Myron Orville Knuth, Warren L. Knuth and Steven R. Knuth are all now deceased.



LAWRENCE D. KNUTH, U.S. MARINE CORPS
December 17, 1940 to April 29, 1966
Age 25 years

[Continued on page 4]

[KNUTH – Continued from page 3]

They grew up on the family homeplace, the Knuth Dairy , west of what is now Congress Avenue.

Larry completed his early education at Boynton Beach Elementary School and attended Seacrest (now Atlantic) High School for a year prior to entering the preparatory program at Georgia Military College in Milledgeville. Georgia. His academic and athletic records at GMC were exemplary earning him the rank of Cadet Colonel and Battle Group Commander during his senior year. After graduation he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps. Before he reported for active duty, Larry completed his Baccalaureate at Florida State University.

Larry was attached to the First Battalion, 5th Marines. He served in California, Hawaii, Okinawa, Viet Nam and board the U.S.S. Princeton. He was killed in action at Phu Loc, a province in northern South Viet Nam. Lt. Knuth was the first Viet Nam war casualty from Boynton Beach. He had only four more months remaining in his term of service prior to his death.

Several years ago, Ray Davidson, a syndicated columnist at an alumni dinner at Georgia Military College, gave an “off the cuff speech.” GMC had sponsored a “missing man table” based on one of Ray Davidson’s columns. After commenting on Larry’s record as a cadet at the school, Davidson wrote, “Larry graduated from GMC and entered the Marine Corps. He gave his life in Vietnam with 7 of his fellow Marines of C Company 1st Marine Division, 5th Infantry Battalion, the Marines signature profession. . . . I can tell you of Operation Osage, an amphibious assault mission that failed to encounter much enemy resistance and cost us 8 dead and 7 wounded. After failing to engage the enemy the Marines were dismounted when an Improvised Explosive Device, a booby tram, was triggered at an old well . . . A former Marine, Gary Johnson, . . .states, ‘I owe this man my life and he was a great friend. He has never been forgotten by this Marine and never will be.’ He told me that for all these years he has searched for Larry’s family. It is important to him to let them know that Larry never suffered, that he was with Larry when he died.”

In July, 2008, Ray Davidson and Gary Johnson sent a letter to Kurt Knuth, Larry’s nephew, son of his brother Warren, describing what a good friend and platoon leader Larry had been. He had hoped to reach Larry’s mother to tell her what a special son she had.

WHAT IS A GOLD STAR MOTHER?

Shortly after World War I, a group called the Gold Star Mothers was formed in the United States to provide support to mothers who had

lost a child in service in the War. The name came from the custom of families of servicemen hanging a banner called a Service Flag in a window of their homes. The Flag had a star for each family member in the military. Living service members were represented by a blue star, and those who had lost their lives were represented by a gold star. Today, membership in the Gold Star Mothers is open of any American woman who has lost a child through military service for the United States.



Sample Service Flag showing 2 blue stars and one gold star. This particular flag would indicate 3 members of the family in service, one of whom had been killed.

HULDA OFFERMAN BAKER

A Gold Star Mother And a Remarkable Woman

[Information and photos courtesy Gladys Baker Knuth]

Hulda Margaret Threasea Offerman was born October 9, 1896 in Red Bud , Illinois. She learned to play the violin at an early age, began teaching by age 16 and developed into an accomplished violinist by young adulthood. When she was 18, she went to St. Louis, Missouri and studied music formally and her



Hulda Offerman c. age 16

[Continued on page 5]

[BAKER –Continued from page 4]

talents grew to include the piano. When she began playing professionally, she worked under the name of Harriet Overton after being advised that she would be remembered by a more common, simple name.

Hulda fell in love with and wed Claude Charles Baker in 1926. They had 3 children, Marvin, Kelly, and Gladys.

Claude suffered a heart attack and passed away in March 1943. Following his death, Hulda moved her family to Salt Lake City, Utah. As a single parent, she worked two jobs to make ends meet—one in a local music store, and one as a stenographer on the local Army Post. She also had the privilege to play the pipe organ in the Mormon Tabernacle.

In the fall of 1946 Hulda's mother Dorothea passed away leaving her father alone in Florida. Since she had no other family in the west, she moved to Boynton Beach to be close to an aging father, William Offerman, whom she cared for through the remainder of his life.

Hulda continued working. For a while she was a secretary at the Air Force Base in Boca Raton and then at Joe Harless Realty. Her leisure time was spent playing in local churches and teaching music to the area children. Many of her students ultimately became accomplished musicians. In the late 1940s she helped develop and organize, and then directed an orchestra at Boynton High School. For 20 years she played for Miss Gillian's Dance Studio, an activity which gave her great pleasure.

She was an active member of the First Baptist Church of Boynton Beach and played as an occasional organist in the church. She was also an avid Sunday School member.

She was noted for a wonderful sense of humor and was given to gracious hospitality. She was also always ready for adventure. Even at age 72, she travelled to Europe with a friend for several months to visit the family of her girlfriend. Before she could return home, she telephoned collect from Norway to say that she was broke. The family assumed she must have had a very good time. She loved gardening, sewing, baking, cooking and painting pictures.

At age 86 a stroke from a blood clot caused her to become paralyzed on the right side of her body, but ever determined, after many months of therapy, she re-learned to walk, talk, dress and feed herself. She had great courage and was tenacious of spirit in striving to overcome her challenges. She rarely missed church during her elder years.

Hulda died January 23, 1996, just six months short of her 100th birthday. She had outlived a husband and a son, endured great challenges, but never gave up. She lived to know her grandchildren and great

grandchildren. She had achieved wonderful talents that she shared with others throughout her life.



Hulda Baker with son Kelly and daughter Gladys at her 99th birthday party in 1995.

BOYNTON WOMAN'S CLUB PLANS EVENTS 100TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The Boynton Woman's Club came into being the same year Palm Beach County was born. The events below mark part of their year long celebration. All events are in the Historic Mizner Woman's Club Building.

Friday, October 9, 2009, 7:00 p.m. Historic Play by playwright Rick Harlowe. Champagne with Cake to celebrate the 100th Birthday of the Woman's Club \$20.00 Call JoAnne Weld 736-9357 or Pat Kropp 266-9081.

Wednesday, October 28, 2009, 6:00 p.m. Spaghetti Dinner prepared by Woman's Club. Call Mary Scheitler 491-8033

Saturday, November 7, 2009, 6:30. Boynton Woman's Club 100 Anniversary Gala – Elegant sit-down dinner and historical musical tour through the decades. Call Pat Kropp 266-9098

We are proud to serve Boynton Beach, Ocean Ridge, Manalapan, Gulf Stream, Lantana, Hypoluxo, Briny Breezes, and all areas west of Boynton Beach to U.S. Hwy 441, and, on occasion, greater Palm Beach County.

Other (Specify):
 Minority History Seeking Sponsors Fundraising
 Telephone Hospitality Membership Public Relations
 Archives/Preservation Program/Planning Mailings

I will be willing to serve on the following committees (Circle choices):
 PATRON (\$50.00) _____ CORPORATE (\$100 or more) _____

INDIVIDUAL (\$25.00) _____ FAMILY \$35.00 _____

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP: _____
 Telephone _____ e-mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Street _____

Name _____

2nd Member's Name _____

Members' Name _____

BOYNTON BEACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

THE HISTORIAN
 P. O. Box 12
 Boynton Beach, FL 33425-0012



A Boynton Methodist Sunday School group probably photographed between 1909 and 1911 near the time Palm Beach County was created. The block building in the background is the Boynton Methodist Church built in 1908 at the corner of Federal Hwy and Ocean Avenue.