



WALTON RELATIONS

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Walton County Genealogy Society

March 2011

Museum Purchases New TV

Thanks to a very generous donation from the Chautauqua Cyber Club to the Walton County Heritage Association, the Heritage Museum was able to purchase a large flat-screen TV. The TV greatly enhances the videos shown to our visitors at the Museum.



The TV can be easily connected to a computer, so **Wayne Sconiers** will use it to display graphics during the computer classes he offers. Upcoming classes will include using Family Tree Maker genealogy software and making video movies from photographs and audio files. We will let you know when the classes are scheduled in future issues of *Walton Relations*.

Next WCGS Meeting

The Walton County Genealogy Society will be participating in the **Walton County History Fair** this Saturday, so our next meeting at the Walton County Heritage Museum will be on **Saturday, April 9, at 10:00 AM**. Please join us!

Upcoming Reunions

Wright/McCall (Alexander Wright line) – Saturday, March 12, 2011, 11:00 AM, at the DeFuniak Springs Community Center. Contact **Howard Rinker** at 892-5334.

Cawthon - Saturday, March 19, 2011, from 10:30 AM until 2:30 PM, at McLain's Family Steakhouse, Interstate 10 and Hwy. 331 South, DeFuniak Springs. All Cawthon descendants are welcome. Feel free to bring old photos. There will be a scanner and laptop at the reunion. The restaurant serves a buffet lunch but also has a menu. Attendees will pay for their own meals. Questions may be sent to either **Sarah McSwain** or **Linda Clark**.

Walton County Heritage Museum

Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, 1:00- 4:00 PM
1140 Circle Drive, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435
850-951-2127

www.WaltonCountyHeritage.org
WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net

Military Spotlight: Two Local Members of the WASP

By Diane Davis Merkel

My husband Chuck is the Historian for the 53d Wing at Eglin Air Force Base. While researching the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) of World War II, he became interested in Jackie Cochran (Bessie Pittman) not only for her many achievements in the field of aviation but also because of her link to DeFuniak Springs. He read several books about her, and I showed him the graves of Jackie's son and parents at Magnolia Cemetery in DeFuniak Springs.



While taking a course at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, Chuck found a plaque that renowned aviator Chuck Yeager purchased to honor Jackie. She certainly was a woman of great merit, but her time in DeFuniak Springs invites many questions and has prompted rumors for decades.



While looking through some World War II photographs, Chuck discovered a photograph of a WASP who obviously had a sense of humor. It appeared that, while loaded down with her parachute, she showed off her ankle for the camera. The photograph was taken at Tyndall Air Force Base (Panama City) in 1944.

Chuck then discovered there is a museum in Sweetwater, Texas, devoted to the WASP. The museum's website led him to another website that had a section called "WASP WWII Scrapbook," and there was the laughing WASP from the Tyndall photograph: Odean Bishop Parrish, known as Deanie.

On Page 3 of the Scrapbook, the name of a certain city caught Chuck's attention:

I was born in DeFuniak Springs in the Florida panhandle. During the depression, my family packed up and headed 450 miles south. I remember the trip – in a big flat-bed truck, piled high with everything my family owned, surrounded by bed springs. Even though I was only 5, I still remember sitting on mattresses on top of the pile with my sister and 2 brothers.

Chuck wrote to Deanie, hoping he could persuade her to visit Eglin Air Force Base and DeFuniak Springs. She graciously declined the visit, but she did share some family history. Her younger brother was named Walton in honor of Walton County! Her parents' best friends were their next door neighbors in DeFuniak Springs, the Whiteheads, and she visited them in 1951. She apparently has not been back to Walton County since then.

Deanie's father worked for Harbeson Lumber Company in DeFuniak Springs. Her maternal grandfather was a minister named James Edward Bell. Her father's relatives were Bishops and "red-headed" Murphys. Her Bishop grandparents lived in Glendale, and her Bell grandparents lived in DeFuniak Springs. Her relatives are buried at Cluster Springs and Gum Creek cemeteries.

Deanie was aware that Jackie Cochran once lived in DeFuniak Springs, but she said she never mentioned it to her. Her admiration of her fellow WASP is apparent. Deanie contributed to the biography of Jackie that appears on the WASP Museum website.



Deanie now lives in Waco, Texas, and sounds as vibrant as a young aviator. She and her daughter Nancy created the National WASP World War II Museum in Sweetwater (waspmuseum.org) and they led the effort to have the WASP receive the Congressional Gold Medal in March 2010 at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. Nancy wrote a book, *WASP in Their Own Words, an Illustrated History*, and developed a remarkable website about them, wingsacrossamerica.org, which has over 2,000 pages of WASP history, including the spectacular reproduction of Deanie's Scrapbook mentioned above. Deanie is currently writing a book about the only WASP who became a Carmelite Nun.

The next time someone mentions a female aviator from DeFuniak Springs, please be sure to acknowledge the contributions of Jackie Cochran **and** Deanie Bishop Parrish!



Walton County Research at the Office of the Clerk of Court

Compiled by Wayne Sconiers

Will Books: June 1916 - Feb 1937

Newspapers: early 1900s

Land Deeds: 1890-1977

Marriage Records: May 1885 - Dec 1976; 1977 and later at <http://orsearch.clerkofcourts.co.walton.fl.us/>

Divorce Records: 1977 and later are available via internet at <http://orsearch.clerkofcourts.co.walton.fl.us/>

Tax Rolls: 1940-2000

Official Records: Via internet <http://orsearch.clerkofcourts.co.walton.fl.us/>

Newspapers: On shelf, bound in large books

Most Popular Free Genealogy Websites

Abstracted from “50 Most Popular Genealogy Websites for 2011” by Kory L. Meyerink of ProGenealogists.com ~ Comments by Diane Davis Merkel

AccessGenealogy.com – Access Genealogy is known for its Indian (Native American) data, but it actually has more non-Indian data. This would be a great place to start if you have Indian roots.

AncestorHunt.com – This site offers dozens – perhaps hundreds – of free genealogy search engines and directories that are organized in a variety of ways.

Ancestor Search – This website offers an interactive directory of “the best free genealogy search engines.” You should check its “Freebies” and “Tools” sections for some unique help aids.

FamilySearch.com – The Learning Resources section claims to have the “world’s largest, free collection” of articles in a wiki format, which means that you can edit the pages to add more information. It also offers free online courses.

FindaGrave.com – This site offers a fabulous database of over 58 million grave records. My only complaint with it is that you cannot add additional information or correct misinformation without a rather laborious process. For example, if someone entered your grandfather with just his birth and death years, you cannot provide the full dates and biographical information without contacting the person who originated the record. That person decides whether or not to amend the listing.

Geni.com – This website boasts it is the “world’s largest free family tree” with over 100 million profiles worldwide. People can post projects they are working on, and there are discussion boards for interaction between members. As with many such sites, it can be overwhelming but you may find some new clues.

MyHeritage.com – The website offers free genealogy software called Family Tree Builder, which will help you produce a family tree designed to be shared with your family online. The Basic Plan is free.

ProGenealogists.com – This is the “Official Ancestry.com research firm” and allows you to link up with professional genealogists for a fee, but it also has free articles, tools, and links to other sources.

RootsWeb.com – Like ProGenealogists, this site is part of the Ancestry.com empire. RootsWeb was the granddaddy of genealogy sites and still has an enormous quantity of aids to assist you. It also offers free, unlimited web space for genealogists.

USGenWeb Archives – Like RootsWeb, GenWeb has been around for decades. It depends upon people “adopting” portions of the website. If you click through to the Florida GenWeb Project, you will find that Walton County needs to be adopted. Be forewarned, adopting such a site is a lot of work!

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Walton Relations is a publication of the Walton County Genealogy Society. Wayne Sconiers, President. Distribution is encouraged! For more information or to submit an article, please email its editor, Diane Merkel, at WaltonCountyHeritage@cox.net or call 850-897-4505.