



The Tale Twister

Cullman Lions Club

March 29, 2021

Program

Lion Charlie Powell introduced our guest speaker for the evening, historian and author, Mr. Robin Sterling, who has written a number of books, detailing history of Cullman and surrounding counties of North Alabama. His writing career was secondary to his "day-job" which was as a contractor supporting various Army weapons systems, most notably the Multiple Launch Rocket System, one of the deadliest made. Mr. Sterling grew up in Cullman County as the son of a successful farmer. He is retired from support contracting to his family's 260-acre "heritage farm" in western Cullman County. The main topic of his presentation tonight narrowed down to the history of Cullman's fairgrounds, which was surprisingly colorful, indeed. His history lesson follows...



Lion Charlie Powell (l), Mr. Robin Sterling, and Lion President Javon Daniel.

In the days before Social Security and nursing homes, most counties had a poor house or a system of poor farms where the indigent could eek out a living from small

garden plots and donations from churches, private citizens, and local governments. In 1902 the Cullman County commissioners bought a couple hundred acres of an old farm for its Court House which a few years later became the County's "poor farm," called the County Farm managed by an overseer with a small budget. This property included our present-day fairgrounds. It was regularly inspected by a County grand jury which made recommendations on budget expenditures. Old newspapers reference a cemetery on the property which has been lost in time.

In the 1930's the County began planning for a local airport and took in a portion of the County Farm for this purpose, clearing many trees and leveling a field, as necessary. In 1935, following implementation of Social Security, the County discontinued its County Farm; some of the farm residents were placed in relative's homes or foster homes. The airport work continued under President Roosevelt's Civil Works Administration (CWA) with 200 workers; the plan included a runway of 2,500 ft. a roadway, and a steel hanger. CWA money ran out before the complex was completed, but the runway was still used by small aircraft and several airshows. Corrugated pipe which had been purchased for the airport was put to good use in highway construction a few years later. To facilitate the highway construction, a convict-prisoner work camp with 150 convicts was established on the old County Farm property. These workers helped in construction of highway 278 and



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a road from St. Bernard College to the highway.

In 1939 the State Aviation Commissioner declared the airport unfit for emergency landings. Thereafter, the old runway was converted for use as a racetrack for jalopy car races, which drew good crowds. In 1942 the convict camp was closed and the highways in Cullman declared completed. Later, in 1947 the camp was reactivated with 60 convicts for completion of highway 69. In 1948 the Cullman Sportsmen and Conservation Club met to discuss another site for the aging convict camp and purchasing land for a park for game fishing and recreation. This was done, and the park opened in 1951. It is now referred to as Sportsman's Lake. Other property of the original County track became the Cullman Fair Grounds a few years later.

Mr. Sterling documented the above history and much, much more in his book, Old Tales of Cullman County. This was a most interesting presentation for we Cullmanites. The three copies Robin brought with him were purchased by Club members immediately after the presentation. This book can be found in local and Wallace State libraries; it can be purchased on-line, too.

Other Business

Lion President Javon Daniel announced that the election of Club Officers for 2021-2022 would be held during the April 12th meeting. Lion Steve Murphree, as head of the nominating committee, named officer nominees for this election. Lion Steve also explained that after nominating committee discussions, it decided to allow current

officers to be included on this slate of officer nominees. This decision was prompted by the Covid-19 pandemic which has not allowed to accomplish what they were elected to do in serving a full 12-month, active term. Lion Steve also explained that by tradition, the President of our Club has only served a single 12-month term, except on one past occasion. This election would potentially be a second exception to that tradition. However, Club members will still have the option to vote for a nominee, other than the incumbent, for each position. Lion President Javon asked for additional nominations from the floor, but none were made. A motion was made from the floor and seconded to close nominations, and the Club then voted to approve this motion. See page 3 of this newsletter for the full slate of nominees. (In this listing of nominees, ("i") following a name indicates the incumbent officer.)



Lion Steve Murphree talks about the upcoming Club Officer election.

Lion Secretary Don Smith reported on the Board of Directors (BOD) meeting, Monday, March 15th , as follows:

1. Funding was approved for Operation Help.
2. An ad hoc committee, led by Lion David Bussman, was formed to explore



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hosting a meal of some sort for the essential workers in Cullman during the Covid-19 epidemic.

3. Lion Steve Murphree volunteered to head the Officer Nomination Committee for Lion Year 2021 -2022.

4. The Club is submitting itself to our Lion district as a contender for MD-34 Club of the Year, as well as Lion David Bussman for MD-34 Lion of the Year.

Lion Fair Vice-President Chris Robinson reported on the Fair BOD meeting held Monday, March 22nd as follows:

1. Lion District 34-A had requested that it be allowed to store its Disaster Assistance trailer in a secure location at our fairgrounds, pending assurance that the trailer had insurance coverage.

2. Lion Steve Murphree discussed plans for a scholarship contest for local students for agricultural related videos to be shown during the 2021 Fair.

3. Lion Charlie Childers wanted everyone to know that the Fair is planned for October 7th thru the 15th.

4. The BOD discussed moving ahead with an audit after a recommendation from the Club's BOD. Lion Fair President Charlie Childers and Lion Fair Secretary Barry Willingham will clarify the issue

further with the Club's BOD, concerning the type of audit that would be made.

Upcoming Programs and Events

Apr 5: No Club meeting.

Apr 12: Club meeting in Bldg #3, as usual. Election of Club Officers will be conducted for 2021-2022. The Cullman Fair Board will meet afterwards.

Apr 19: No Club Meeting

May 22: Annual Shred-a-Thon in the King Edward parking area. Lions should be on the scene between 8:30 and 8:45AM.

Tale Twister Input

If you need something special or to report a correction in the *Tale Twister*, see Lions Carey Thompson or Don Smith at the meetings. Lion Carey can be reached at 256-739-0580 (H) or 256-426-3207 (C). Lion Don can be reached at 256-737-7433 (H) or 256-426-7722 (C).



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NOMINEES ONLY . . . THIS IS NOT A BALLOT

Nominees for 2021-2022 Cullman Lions Club Officers

President

- Lion Javon Daniel (i)
- Lion Wendell Copeland

1st Vice President

- Lion Milford Parrish (i)
- Lion Richard Gurley

2nd Vice President

- Lion Charlie McBrayer
- Lion Cody Smith (i)

3rd Vice President

- Lion Tim Sinyard (i)
- Lion Sam Tucker

Secretary

- Lion Don Smith (i)
- Lion Craig Gadow

Treasurer

- Lion Jerry Bonner (i)
- Doug Doggett

Lion Tamer

- Lion Dave Gratz (i)
- Lion Gary Murphree

Tail Twister

- Lion David Bussman (i)
- Lion Mike Ponder

Director (Vote for 2)

- Lion Fred Osborne (i)
- Lion Charlie Powell
- Lion George Krigbaum
- Lion Casey Smith (i)

Membership Committee

- Lion Lummie Speakman (i)
- Lion Gordon Boyd