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Club meets

1st, 2nd, & 4th Thursdays

At 11:45 am

Mullins Restaurant

Huntsville, AL

Opti - Topics

Opening

The Optimist Club of Huntsville assembled today at Mullins Restaurant for a regular Club meeting on yet *another* cold Thursday. We had 16 Optimists in attendance plus our guests.

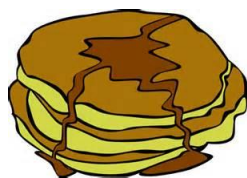
One of our guests was a prospective member, William Hampton, guest of President Al Adams. We were also happy to have Nell Berry and Chip Bowen, guests of Rev. Jim Berry with us. Chip was in first grade with our speaker today.

President Al Adams, asked Rev. Jim Berry to open the meeting in prayer, and Al led the Club in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Optimist Family News

Alberto Duarte sent out an email earlier reporting that **Ralph Caneer** is in Huntsville Hospital, which he had learned from Ralph's son, Art. The Caneer family asks that no one visit Ralph in the hospital. Ralph was at the pancake breakfast, and he joked that he is blaming it for his stay in the hospital.

Announcements



Pancake Breakfast Committee

Chairman Alberto thanked all of the many hard-working Optimists who helped out at last Saturday's pancake breakfast.

**Our business meeting
is held on the 3rd
Thursday of the
month at the Optimist
Recreation Center on
Oakwood Avenue**

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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He said it was a smoothly running team, even though “we kept running out of stuff.” He said it was a great project for working together as Club members.

The attendees gave Alberto a round of applause for the very successful event. Al Renz reported that preliminary figures indicate the event will raise nearly \$2,000 for the Hawthorne Conservatory.



President Al Adams reminded all JOOI Club Liaisons to recruit volunteers from their respective JOOI Clubs for Huntsville’s **Community Kite Festival on March 7.**

Youth volunteers are needed for both the Youth Tent and our Optimist Club booth between the hours of 11:00 a. m. and 3:00 p. m. Al also requested that the JOOI Club banners from the schools be borrowed for display in our booth.



Oratorical Contest Chairman Alberto Duarte reminded everyone that the contest will be held on **Saturday morning, March 7** at the Cooper House. This turns out to be the same day as the Kite Festival, but since the Kite Festival doesn’t begin until 11:00 a. m., there should be very little overlap.

Program

February Program Chairman Jim Berry introduced today’s speaker, Sonnie Hereford, IV. Sonnie is a native Huntsvillian who was the first African-American to be admitted to a white public school in the State of Alabama. Sonnie is employed with Wyle's CAS Group in Huntsville supporting Army programs. He is a graduate of Notre Dame Univ., and founded the Notre Dame Alumni Society in Huntsville in 1992.

Sonnie began by relating a memory of a Little League baseball game he played in Optimist Park as a youngster, and asked if our Club had anything to do with the park. (Yes!)

The first portion of Sonnie's talk recounted the state of race relations in Huntsville beginning with his father's determination to get an advanced education despite the roadblocks from prejudice in Alabama at that time. His father obtained an MD degree and began his practice in Huntsville in 1956. He gave many examples of what African-Americans had to contend with in the "separate but equal" policies of that era.

Sonnie's father brought suit in 1963 to enable Sonnie to enroll in the all-White Fifth Avenue School that was quite near his home. The presiding judge dismissed the objections of the Huntsville City Schools and ordered Sonnie's enrollment in the fall of 1963. A famous photograph (see photo section) shows his father leading him by the hand on the day he was supposed to enroll, but was denied by State troopers.

Six days later, on Sept. 9, 1963, Sonnie integrated Huntsville's (and Alabama's) public schools protected by Federal Marshalls. The Fifth Avenue School was located at the intersection of Gallatin Street and Governors Drive (near Huntsville Hospital). It was razed in 2003 and is now the location of the Spine and Neuro Center. There is a Historic Marker at the location to commemorate the historic integration event.

Sonnie said his experiences as the only African-American in his first grade class were quite good. Kids at that age "have no hate in their hearts." He said he believes race relations are improving with each generation as fewer and fewer parents are teaching prejudice to their children.

He closed his talk by showing some photos of the recent groundbreaking of the new Sonnie Hereford Elementary School (scheduled to open in the fall of 2016) at which he and his father, Sonnie Hereford, III, both participated (along with his mother).

Q & A Session

Q: Jessie Lang asked if the Huntsville City School System has done enough to have the Federal Court Order lifted and unitary status adopted.

A: Absolutely not. The School System has not met all of the criteria imposed by the decades old court order.

Q: George McDonough asked what the plans are for the old Council High building adjacent to the main library.

A: Plans are uncertain at this time, mainly due to a lack of funds. There is a strong desire to preserve the building and perhaps house some of the historic Black Archives. It is currently owned by the Huntsville Housing Authority.

Closing

President Al Adams gave our speaker a tile with the Optimist Creed on it, and asked him to draw for the attendance prize. Jim Roe won on the first drawing.

Dr. Carl Winkler led us in the reciting the Optimist Creed to close the meeting.

Clyde Nevins



Sonnie Hereford IV, 6, holds his father's hand as he arrives for his second day of integrated classes at Fifth Avenue Elementary School in Huntsville, Ala., Sept. 10, 1963.



**Our Guest Speaker
Sonnie Hereford, IV**



Jim Berry and His Wife Nell



**Chip Bowen
Guest of Jim Berry**



**Guest William Hampton with
President Al Adams**

Optimistic Quote of the Week

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

~Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

CALENDAR

- 2/19 Thursday 11:45 am Optimist Recreation Center
Business Meeting - Food - (Jim Berry)
- 2/26 Thursday 11:45 am Mullins Restaurant
Councilman Bill Kling - Huntsville City Council
- 3/3 Tuesday 4:00 pm 1st Commercial Bank
Board Meeting
- 3/5 Thursday 11:45 am Mullins Restaurant
Dr. Andrew Hugine, Jr. - President, Alabama A&M
- 3/12 Thursday 11:45 am Mullins Restaurant
**Mr. Jerry Mitchell - Executive Director
North Alabama African American Chamber of Commerce**
- 3/19 Thursday 11:45 am Optimist Recreation Center
Business Meeting - Food - (Alfred Adams)
- 3/26 Thursday 11:45 am Mullins Restaurant
Mr. Carlton Wright - Director of Bands, Alabama A&M
- 4/2 Tuesday 4:00 pm 1st Commercial Bank
Board Meeting
- 4/7 Thursday 11:45 am Mullins Restaurant
TBD - Alberto Duarte

THE OPTIMIST CREED

Promise Yourself -

To be so strong that nothing can disturb your peace of mind.

To talk health, happiness and prosperity to every person you meet.

To make all your friends feel that there is something in them.

To look at the sunny side of everything and make your optimism come true

To think only of the best, to work only for the best and to expect only the best.

To be just as enthusiastic about the success of others as you are about your own.

To forget the mistakes of the past and press on to the greater achievements of the future.

To wear a cheerful countenance at all times and give every living creature you meet a smile.

To give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.

To be too large for worry, too noble for anger, too strong for fear, and too happy to permit the presence of trouble.

Optimist International



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TO:

PLACE
STAMP
HERE