

Newsletter of the MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Mason, Ohio

and Alverta Green Museum

July 2022

WHAT A "HOOT!"

The Entertaining Life of Don Wolfe

Sally Sherman Caudill, Editor

Editor's note: We were so incredibly saddened to hear of Don Wolfe's passing on Fri. June 3rd at the age of 94. He was a true Mason icon and for many years had been the oldest-living direct descendant of William Mason. On a personal note, Don's daughter Sallie is my longtime friend, and I was so blessed to be able to spend time in both Mason and Florida with Don. I never tired of listening to his many stories and jokes, and especially hearing him sing, and watching him dance.

Don Blair Wolfe came into the world on January 28, 1928, in the living room of the Wolfe home at 208 W. Church St. His mother, Gretchen (nee Van Harlingen) was the great granddaughter of William Mason, our city's founder. His father was (Lee) Clair Wolfe, known to all as "Barney." He got this nickname because he ran the local Kroger store on the southeast corner of Main and S. East St. Mason's "Barney" had been good friends with the original "Barney," Kroger store founder, Bernard Kroger. As a young boy, Don would help out in his father's store, weighing produce for customers.



"Barney" and Gretchen Wolfe, Don's parents, 1971.



Don Wolfe, ca. 1952

At the age of 5, Don got his own nickname. In 1933, his parents attended the Chicago's World Fair and brought him back a souvenir – his very own cowboy outfit, complete with hat, vest, chaps, boots and toy guns with holster. Don proudly wore this outfit wherever he went... every day... and I mean, every day. As he would swagger through town, surveying downtown Mason as if it was his own personal ranch, everyone started calling him "Hoot Gibson, Jr." The "first" Hoot Gibson was a popular cowboy actor in Hollywood at the time. His namesake in Mason would carry on the name "Hoot" all his life.

Don's only sibling, older brother Bob (by 4 years) was his constant companion growing up. Along with



Janine Girton Hurley

Bernard "Barney" Kroger (top), founder of the Kroger grocery chain, poses with a young Don Wolfe. In front are Nelson Erbeck and Francis Girton, ca. 1930.



"Hoot Gibson, Jr.," 1933. "This town ain't big enough for the both of us."

story continues on next page

The Mason Historical Society and Alverta Green Museum are located in the heart of downtown Mason, Ohio. Established over 40 years ago, the Society's aim is to create, promote and preserve the history and heritage of Mason.

TO SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER
Join the Mason Historical Society at
Masonhistoricalsociety.org
Call: 513-398-6750
Email: mason.oh.historical@gmail.com

MUSEUM HOURS
The Museum is open from
2-5 pm every Thursday,
and by appointment.

Don Wolfe, cont.



A young Don Wolfe sleds on snowy W. Church St. in front of his home. Notice the Alverta Green Home/Museum in background, ca. 1932.

their friends, they wreaked havoc and had a lot of laughs as they made their way around town. The Mason of the 1930s was very different from the Mason of today, as you can imagine. The boys were always searching for adventure. Don told me several years ago that he and buddy, Al Voorhis, would often trek up to the Indian Mound Farm. He recalled that they would spend hours climbing and

playing on the Hopewell/Adena mounds that dotted the farm. (*Site of Harbor Freight/former Van Leunens at the corner of 42 and Western Row today*).

By the time he got to high school, Don became a well-rounded student, along with many of his friends. In addition to athletics, they became interested in the arts, joining glee club and chorus, where Don put his tenor singing voice on full display.

After graduating from Mason High School in 1946, Don immediately enlisted in the Army Air Corps, with his good friend Karl Spaeth. He was stationed in Washington, DC, and when the war ended, he attended Miami U at Oxford. He was able to finish his military service with the campus ROTC at Miami. During his first college summer, he decided to mix a bit of adventure in with his job search. He and a friend drove cross-country in a Model A Ford and took jobs as porters at the historic Old Faithful Inn at Yellowstone National Park. In this time before highways, they passed few cars during their long drive west. To keep track, they would reach out the window and make a tic mark in the dust on the side of the car whenever they passed anyone. It was during his time in Yellowstone that Don learned to play the ukulele. The staff would unwind in the evenings, sitting around the campfire, where Don would do what he did best – entertain.

Besides lugging guest belongings to their rooms, the porters were also responsible for breaking up “bear jams,” or more precisely, “traffic jams caused by bears coming into the trash area to bum for food.” When bears would arrive for a hopeful lunch, the porters would honk their horn, get out of the vehicle armed with a slingshot and would catapult a rock at them. The bears soon learned that the horn meant they were about to get whacked,



Arlene and Don Wolfe, ca. 1994

and would run off as soon as they heard the honk. A porter’s work is never done!

After graduating from Miami in 1952 with a business degree, Don landed a job at GE. Little did he realize how this job would change his life forever. It was here where he met a young intern by the name of Arlene Retallick from Lebanon, who was also a Miami U grad. Don had been a member of the Sigma Chi fraternity, and Arlene, four years his junior, had been the “Sweetheart of Sigma Chi.” Sounds like serendipity to me.



Don Wolfe in Washington, DC. 1946.



The Wolfe wedding party, October 30, 1954. Back row (l-r): Dr. Frank Batsche, Jr., Al Voorhis, Vic Thompson (*Don’s fraternity brother*), Bob Wolfe, and Bill Townsley (*Arlene’s cousin*). Front row: Micky McClure Hastings, Linda Worth (*flower girl*), Arlene & Don, Bobby Barrett (*ring bearer*), Dee Eby, and Dorothy Steen. Not pictured: Karl Spaeth. During the ceremony, the organist was Don’s brother, Bob, and the soloist was Ralph Spaeth.

Don and Arlene married in 1954. Their first house at 305 W. Church was just a block down from where Don grew up. The house had no indoor plumbing for the first year. Don recalled coming home from work, dog tired, and both of their fathers would be waiting for him, ready to renovate. I'm sure when the plumbing was finally installed, there was no one happier than Arlene, who'd had to endure the outhouse, day and night, while very pregnant with their first child, Steve.

The Wolfe family would keep growing over the years. In addition to Steve, Sallie came along five years later, then Scott, and finally twins, Sarah and Sharon. When the family was complete, the Wolfes moved out of downtown to 207 Lakeview in the Mason Heights, where they lived for the next 35 years. As if raising five kids and working a full-time job at GE weren't enough... Don also opened an insurance agency in Mason and ran it for many years. And if that weren't enough, he was a member of the Mason Community Players from the get go and performed in many productions AND he sang in a barbershop quartet. Whew, I'm tired just reading this!



favorite dancing partner, but his family and multitudes of friends navigated him through the tough times. In addition to his five children and in-laws, Don had 14 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren—two on the way.

If there is one word to describe Don, it would be that he was an entertainer, and this entertainer never lost his love for singing and dancing. He would break out into song at the drop of a hat. (His daughter Sallie told me it "embarrassed" him that none of his kids inherited his tenor singing voice.) And don't forget about his jokes; he was a master at the art of joke telling, and no one cracked up harder at them than he did! His laughter was infectious. Don, thanks for the music, the memories, the laughs and the joy. Thanks for just being you.

A private graveside service for the family will be held at a later date.



Barbershop quartet, ca. 1965, (l-r): John Williams, John Fox, Bob Dumford and Don Wolfe.

Don retired from GE as their parts service manager (and Ping-Pong champion) around 1986... and then he really got busy. He joined Kiwanis, served on the Mason Zoning Committee, and the Board of the Mason Bowl Swim Club, and he sang in the Presbyterian Church choir.

Don and Arlene were able to journey to all 50 states, their yearly timeshare on Ft. Myers Beach in Florida, as well as all around the world. They played a lot of golf and traveled to many weekend golfing getaways with friends. Don also loved racquetball, a game he often played at Countryside Y with his good friend, Al Voorhis. Don and Al even owned a boat together. The name of the boat... what else, but the "Hoot Al."

Don and Arlene celebrated their golden 50th anniversary in November, 2004. At the party, Don serenaded his wife in a heartfelt declaration of love that I'm certain didn't leave a dry eye in the house. It was just seven and a half weeks later that Arlene passed away. Don had lost his

Right
During the Friday night concert series in downtown Mason, 93-year-old Don was still dancing with the ladies – here with daughter Sallie. July 3, 2021.



Author photo

All photos courtesy of the Wolfe family except where noted.
Ancestry.com
Dayton Journal Herald, October 30, 1954
Many Thanks to Sallie Wolfe Nally



MASON'S WORLD-FAMOUS "BLIND FARM"

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

Editor's note: The more I explore the history of Mason, the more I realize what a special place it is. So many interesting stories are woven into the fabric of the town's history, that I am amazed at what we uncover. Thanks to Perry Denehy for bringing this story to my attention. While the property is actually in Union Twp., just south of Kings Mills, it was often referred to as being in Mason.

Though it is uncertain where the idea originated, in October of 1945 Martha Seasongood Stern was appointed chairman of a committee for the Cincinnati Association for the Welfare of the Blind to locate a farm which would be used as a vacation center and a vocational training

ground for the blind. In 1949 Stern decided to donate a 47-acre farm on Columbia Road for this purpose.



Max and Martha (Seasongood) Stern. Martha donated the Columbia Road Farm to the Cincinnati Association of the Blind.

Martha had always had great compassion for the blind. She was known to host an annual Thanksgiving party for them, a tradition she carried on for over 50 years. Her donation was to remain anonymous but later the Board for the Association of the Blind convinced her to allow them to name the project as a memorial to her late husband Max, and late son, Alfred M. Stern.

Mrs. Stern was a wealthy philanthropist from a famous Cincinnati family. Her brother, Murray Seasongood was a lawyer, a law professor at Harvard and had been Cincinnati's Mayor from 1926 to 1930. He founded the City's Charter Committee and was successful in establishing a reform agenda that broke up the corruption in the city's political powers. If you've ever been to Cincinnati's Eden Park, the Seasongood Pavilion is named in his honor.

At the time, this "agricultural college" was the only one of its kind in the world. On the farm sightless men taught

other sightless men the secrets of farming in the dark. Fred Ward, its Headmaster, was blinded at 8 in a shooting accident. He learned farming in his teens and developed a knack for teaching it to others. He felt farming was a way of life that the blind could fully enjoy despite their handicap. Students focused mainly on poultry raising and animal husbandry. Regular farm chores were assigned as part of their training. They planted and tilled their own gardens and if they were suited for the life, they graduated as full-fledged farmers.

As part of their training Fred advised blind farm students not to attempt to run a tractor by themselves. He would teach them how it operates and show them how they could run it with the aid of a sighted five- or six-year-old child. This was something he had practiced on his own farm with his children, but I don't think that advice would go over very well today.

In 1955 Dr. Wilfred Wright, director of readjustment services for the Department of Labor of the government of South Africa, visited the farm to observe and learn about the agricultural training program for the blind. He said that the government of South Africa wanted to establish a similar program for the many blind people that lived in their huge rural population.

The next year the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare awarded the farm a grant worth over \$100,000 in today's dollars that would allow them to travel throughout the United States demonstrating "that the blind can do things in farming not thought possible a few years ago, successfully, and economically".

An article in The International Labour Review (1960) read in part, "In the United States communities exist for the blind in rural areas in which training is given and has been largely developed. Thus in 1949 the Cincinnati Association for the Blind established a school for blind farmers at Mason (Ohio) on 47 acres of land

at which an agricultural course was given with emphasis particularly on dairy work and the keeping of poultry, pigs, and bees. The United States showed themselves to be pioneers in this field. In 1950 a training center for the blind was established in Athens modeled on work in America." ¹

With all the success and praise for the Blind Farm, it was not exempt from trouble. In 1951 a fire destroyed their dairy barn and hay and feed were lost. The Mason



The Cincinnati Enquirer, June 4, 1952

Fred C. Ward, the blind director of the school, instructs his two blind students, Gerhard Reichter and Paul Lanier in putting chicks in the brooder. At far right is Lyndon Jameson, Mr. Ward's sighted assistant.

LIFE IS A HIGHWAY FOR THE JOURNEYMEN

Gina Burton Arens, Editor

The dictionary defines “journeyman” as a worker trained in a specific trade who works for another person, but these journeymen are a band of brothers who enjoy camaraderie and the open road and have been together as a group for 44 years this month. Thanks to Bob Teufel for his help in telling their story.

“Few things have captured the passion, the sometimes obsession, of men like the motorcycle. There’s no mystery as to why this is. Motorcycles represent a peculiar combination of several manly elements: danger, speed, singular focus, solitude, mechanics, noise, and physical skill.

“Many famous men were motorcycle enthusiasts, think Marlon Brando, Bob Dylan, Clint Eastwood and James Dean; they combined their passion for things like acting, music, and adventure, with a love for bikes. Motorcycles were a perfect outlet for their zeal for life; riding the open road with the wind in their faces left them invigorated and inspired.”¹

The Journeymen were a motorcycle gang or club as they prefer to be called, that I remembered from the seventies. The idea was fueled through conversations at the local watering holes, specifically the Buckeye Lodge and the Pleasure Inn. Little did I know that the club formed in 1978 has survived years of rides and still exists! Talking with Bob Teufel, one of the founding members, I found out the club will be celebrating its 44th anniversary on July 9th. Their current clubhouse is in Edenton, Ohio, which is about five miles south of Blanchester. They are considered the “Mother Club” since there are now two other Journeymen chapters located in Wilmington and Oak Hills, Ohio.

Interviewing Bob I found that the group was surprisingly well organized. Several of the men had served in the military and Bob said that experience instills order and organization in a person. They had club officers, regular meetings, and monthly dues.

The very first president was James “Al” Winchester with Dale Powell as Vice President and Dennis Mullins as Treasurer. Bob Teufel served as Sargeant at Arms. He said his job was basically to keep the peace inside and outside the club. He was appointed to eh, “resolve problems.”

Two others, Mark Singer and Joe Mescher were Road Captains. The Road Captains mapped out routes for the club’s rides. During the ride one captain would lead the group and the other would ride at the very back of the group to keep an eye on everyone and help with any problems that might occur. Rides back then included from 14 to 16 people. A ride to Wilmington the first of June this year included about 30 riders. One planned for the July anniversary celebration is projected to draw 50-60 riders.

Of those original officers Bob is retired but is still active in the club. Mark Singer is also retired but is still a member



The Journeymen during their first year of forming the club in 1978.

(L-R) Bottom row: Steve Schutts, Jan Wells, Dale Powell, Al Winchester, Joe Mescher, Dennis Mullins, Dave Black, Mike Karem.

Standing: Joey Dorcheff, Bob Teufel, Mark Singer, Batman, Chuck Pollard, Brian Ferguson.

Top of van: Rocky Moore, Bart Wilson

even though his official residence is Florida. Dennis left the club years ago and Al, Dale, and Joe have all passed on. Bob noted that when Joe Mescher passed away, he was surprised to learn that Joe had five purple hearts from his service in Vietnam. Apparently, he had not shared that with anyone in the club. A humble hero. Two others, Bart Wilson and Steve Schutts, are also retired but still active in the club and have been members since the beginning.

The Journeymen wore jean jackets with the Club logo proudly displayed on the back. Another surprise I discovered was that it was designed by none other than my good friend Julie Sherman Miller, sister of my newsletter co-editor. Julie went on to become a successful artist

story continues on next page

The Journeymen’s jean jacket with logo designed by Julie Sherman Miller.



Blind Farm, cont.

Fire Department responded to the call. It was reported that James Knott, Mason fire chief, was overcome by smoke and heat. Damage was in the thousands of dollars. However, eight blind farmers were able to save all the livestock that night but received a stern warning from Sheriff Gerald W. Cowden who said, "a recurrence would result in wholesale citations."

In 1956 farm use shifted to mostly recreational with vocational training ending by 1958. Although not stated, the fact that the existence of farms in general declined significantly between 1950 and 1960, likely factored into the program's end.

The Blind Farm continued as a vacation retreat, hosting adults and children's camps for full weeks during the summer. Activities included swimming, boating, fishing, games and singing. The farm was sold in 1971.



The Blind Farm house today at 4915 Columbia Road, built ca. 1900.

The Cincinnati Post, Oct 17, 1945; Aug 9, 1950; Feb 24, 1956.
The Cincinnati Enquirer, June 18, 1950; Apr 22, 1955; Oct 3, 1955; Jun 30, 1956.
The Journal Herald, Sep 10, 1951.
encyclopedia.com
Patsy Baughn, Cincinnati Association of the Blind
international-review.icrc.org

MHS Monthly Events

All events held at the Alverta Green Museum/Mason Historical Society. Park on street or at Two Cities lot (enter thru white gate).

PHOTOS, FARMS AND FAMILIES

A HISTORY OF COX-SMITH ROAD

MON. AUGUST 29TH @ 7 PM

Sherri Reed Federle, a Mason Historical Society volunteer, grew up on Cox-Smith Road and has lived in Mason all but the first two years of her life. She will be sharing some history of the farms, houses and families who lived along this once rural country road. Photos will help tell the stories of some of the earliest homes in our area.

CEMETERY WALK

TUE. OCTOBER 11TH @ 7 PM

RAIN DATE – WED. OCTOBER 12TH

Join us at Rose Hill Cemetery for our annual fundraiser featuring the Mason Community Players. Come hear voices from Mason's past speaking from their gravesites about their lives and times. Tickets will soon be available at the Museum.

YOGA AT THE MUSEUM

EVERY MONDAY FROM 7-8PM • ALL LEVELS WELCOME



Wear comfortable clothes and bring a mat and water. No pre-registration is required, men and women are welcome to attend. Classes are donation-based; with half of all donations going back to the Historical Society.

The Journeymen, cont.

with her own gallery, keeping busy with ongoing artwork commissions.

How does someone become a member of the Journeymen? Bob says you need a sponsor who is already a member of the group. From there you are in a probation period until accepted into the group. Guys from all walks of life join the Journeymen. The common thread? They enjoy riding and the social aspect of the club. Their June ride ended at their clubhouse with food, drinks and a bonfire, AKA a party, like all rides.

The Journeymen sometimes, like other clubs, engage in fundraiser rides to support needy families especially during the holidays. They are proud to be a family-oriented club.

It turns out The Journeymen are what they have always been, a band of brothers who love the freedom of the open road and all that comes with it. They enjoy the friendship and family feel of the group that continues to flourish after 44 years. James Dean would be proud!

artofmanliness.com/lifestyle/gear/famous-men-and-their-motorcycles/

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

How are you enjoying our newsletter? Let us know what stories you liked, and if you have more to add to them. Also, if you have a story to share, that you think would be of interest to our members, email your ideas to: mason.oh.historical@gmail.com



The Board Report

Jay Meibers, President



July should be interesting this year based on the extremely hot & humid weather in the Ohio valley in June. Typically, things heat up as the summer moves along but let us hope that is not the case this year! However, awesome pool weather if you have access to one. In any case, stay cool, enjoy the summer and remember your deodorant!

We had an exciting June at MHS. On Friday, June 3 we set up a booth at the opening week of Music in Mason. It was a beautiful night with great music and a nice crowd. Many people visited our booth and we received four new memberships which was impressive. We will do this again the last Music in Mason night on Friday, July 29.

On June 13 we had our Ice Cream Social (ICS) & Baked Goods Auction. Despite severe thunderstorms at the start of the night we had a great crowd. Gene Steiner was once again incredibly entertaining auctioning off many delicious items. The Mason Mediocre Band performed prior to the auction and provided a festive environment. Everyone had an enjoyable time while supporting us with very generous bids and donations. Thank you to Sue Erbeck Rapp who coordinated this year's event and made the command decision that morning to have the ICS indoors. Also, thank you to all the members who assisted Sue and to everyone that donated items for the auction. The ICS was a big success netting us around \$3,500 and we could not have done this without all of your great support.

During the Ice Cream Social, we announced that Emma Schatzel was the winner of our first college scholarship program with an award of \$1,000. Congratulations to Emma who will be attending The Ohio State University this fall. Emma also supported us by bringing out baked goods for Gene to auction off.

Just a reminder 2022 membership dues must be paid by Aug. 1 to avoid cancelling your newsletter subscription and membership. If you are not sure if you have paid, please call or send us an email and we will check and get back with you. Happy Independence Day!

Right:
Board Member Missy Courts, and MHS President Jay Meibers present a \$1000 check to college scholarship winner, Emma Schatzel (left).



Bottom:
These decorated cookies (bottom) were one of the many baked goods donations that were auctioned off. Thank you to all of our bakers!



Congratulations to Rosemary Steiner, who brought in the highest total bids for her peach pie and “too much” chocolate cake – a whopping \$435!

THIS MONTH IN MASON HISTORY

Excerpts from *Around Mason, Ohio: A Story*, Rose Marie Springman

1875: The date of July 2 was set as the last day of school before summer vacation.

1876: On July 4, 1876, the United States was 100 years old but if there was any celebration in Mason or Deerfield Township, nothing was officially recorded. Council did not meet in July.

1882: In July the prison needed another tin cup and bucket.

1884: The local baseball club had a picnic at Wikoff's woods west of Mason and sponsored a moonlight hop on the Fourth of July.

1909: In July the Deerfield Township Trustees bought eight acres of land from Flora Tetric for \$1,600 to enlarge the cemetery.

1913: Fourth of July celebrations in town forced the council to pass an ordinance in late July to prohibit the use and sale of certain explosives.

1930: The great Mason fire destroys part of the east end of town. (Feature story appeared in July '20 newsletter.)

1932: The village of Fosters had its typical summer resort atmosphere. People flocked to the river scene during the warm months, many of them arriving on the “Morrow Accommodation,” a train from Cincinnati. Some people set up tents for overnight sleeping. Swimming, boating, picnicking, dancing, baseball, and children's games provided recreation summer after summer for thousands of people until late in the 1950's.

1950: July 13th, Boeing B-50 Bomber crashed on the Bishop farm north of Mason. (Feature story appeared in July '21 newsletter.)

BUSINESS MEMBERS *and* PARTNERS

LIFETIME MEMBERS

Air Authority Heating and Air Conditioning
Al's Heating and Cooling
American Legion, Post 194
American Legion Auxiliary Unit 194
Brunk Excavating, Inc.
Chris Champ – State Farm agent
Jeff Hill Video
Mitsubishi Electric Automotive
People's First Savings Bank
R.E. Middleton Construction LLC
Senour-Flaherty Insurance
Shorten and Ryan Funeral Home
Voorhis, Slone, Welsh and Crossland, Architects
Walldogs – Mason Sign Company
Yost Pharmacy, Inc.

BUSINESS MEMBERS

Artis Senior Living of Mason
Heritage Awards
Lt. Robt. N. Mount V.F.W.
9622 Aux.
Mason Bowl, Inc.
Mason Health Care Center
Minuteman Press of Lebanon
Mueller Funeral Home
Terry's Lawn Care, Inc.
Warren County Historical Society
16 Lots Brewing Co.

PARTNERS

City of Mason
Culver's – Mason
LaRosa's – Mason
Mason City Schools
Mason Community Grange
No.1680
Mason-Deerfield Chamber
Mason Public Library

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Please join us in welcoming the following new members to the Mason Historical Society

Dick Bene
Gregg & Denise Brown
Lee Carey
Tara Cognetti
Ana Ederich
Debbie Endres
Cathy (Richards) Harbison
The Linn Family
Ladd & Patty McCarnan
Pat & Cindy O'Connor
Lea Ann Patrick
Ron Prater
Deborah Rupp
Maggie Schatzel
John Weller