

CHAMBER CHATTER

The Newsletter of the Greater Waynesburg Area Chamber of Commerce

Juanita Thompson Chosen for Chamber Distinguished Service Award

Juanita Thompson has been selected as the recipient of the 1994 Greater Waynesburg Area Chamber of Commerce Distinguished Award. She is the owner of Thompson's Christian Book Store at the corner of Greene and Morris Streets in Waynesburg.

Mrs. Thompson's nomination stated, "in her own quiet way, she is like a private United Nations. Her door is always open to any and all of the foreign students in Waynesburg. She befriends them. She lets them know that they have a refuge when needed. She listens to them. She advocates for them wherever possible. She helps make their transition into Waynesburg life easier. She represents the community of Waynesburg very well."

The soft spoken Mrs. Thompson was born in Durham, North Carolina. At the time of her birth, her parents were both students at Duke University. Both parents became teachers, but her father, not feeling fulfilled, answered the call to enter the ministry. He pastored five rural churches in central North Carolina. The family later moved to New York when he became a minister of the Woodcrest Methodist Church in the Bronx.

Mrs. Thompson readily admits, "The most important influence on my life is the Christian training that I received from my parents."

Juanita met her future husband, John, while they were both students at Bob Jones University. She graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Christian Education and a minor in English, and John became an ordained minister of the Christian Church.

One of Juanita's earliest dreams was to become a missionary. Upon graduation she was selected as one of four students to represent the school doing mission work in British Columbia and Alaska. (This was before Alaska became a state.) "That summer was a high light in my life and more than ever I desired to become a missionary," she reminisced.

At the end of the summer she accepted a position as a housemother for twenty-five girls from broken homes at Greer School in Millbrook, New York.

Simultaneously while she was doing these things, her fiance, John, was a pastor, as her father had done, at rural churches in North Carolina. He later served as the pastor for the Wind Ridge, Holbrook, and Rogersville Christian Churches.

It was during this time, December 1952, that John and Juanita married. Their only child, John, was born in 1954. It was also during this time that the Thompsons decided to follow their dream and enter the mission field.

By May, 1955, they were on their way to

Singapore for language classes. They expected to reach their destination of the Philippines by September.

In July, 1956, having been in the Philippines less than a year, the Thompsons were on their way from their base in San Toedora to Manilla. Juanita had not been well and the purpose of the trip to Manilla was to seek medical treatment for her. On July 10, her husband, John, began to suffer from a severe headache. The following day, he had a temperature of 102° and complained of aching bones. Juanita persuaded John to see a doctor at the American Hospital for his flu-like symptoms. After an examination, the doctor suggested that he remain in the hospital overnight. Juanita was informed that she could not see him until visiting hours the following afternoon. She went 'by chance' the next morning to see him. When she got there she realized that John was very sick. "There were five or six doctors working over him. I prayed as I had never prayed before," she remembered.

"Later the doctor approached me to say that John was critically ill with what they thought might be polio. About 9:30, the doctor called for an iron lung. About 11:30 I was able to see John for the first time in the iron lung," she recalled. "His body was already paralyzed and much damage had been done to his respiratory system. But, this was only the beginning. In six days, beginning July 21, John suffered from five serious blood clots in the trachea tube - each one brought him within a step of death."

At first there were hopes of recovery, and a return to the mission field, but that was not to happen. Even though their dreams of being missionaries in the Far East had been shattered, this remarkable couple did not give up in despair. As the saying goes, if God closes a door, he opens a window. They began to develop dreams of opening a book store in Waynesburg, in spite of

the fact that Rev. Thompson was confined to an iron lung. Through the use of various mechanical devices, he was eventually able to be out of the iron lung for periods of time.

The dream of their book store became a reality. In 1957 Thompson's Christian Bookstore opened at its present location. John did all the ordering and book work from his rocking bed in the room off the bookstore. He laid where he could look out the window and see the traffic on Greene Street and the trees on Duvall's Hill beyond. Customers would often "peek" in on him and would leave the store uplifted and encouraged by the serenity that the Thompsons exuded.

John died of polio in 1977.

The Thompson's son, John, went on to graduate from Wheaton College in Illinois. He is now a librarian at Garrett Theological Seminary in Chicago.

Since Reverend Thompson's death Juanita has carried on not only with the bookstore, but also her own form of ministry.

"I love working with the international students at Waynesburg College," Mrs. Thompson beamed. "We seem to have a way of finding one another. I want to make them feel comfortable. I generally offer them anything that they need. Every Friday I have the 'Internationals' down. Sometimes I cook for them, sometimes they cook for me, and sometimes I take them out. I love to spend time with them. I really enjoy showing them Greene County. This is such a beautiful place and they seem to enjoy it. They thrill at the sight of deer and our beautiful scenery. They really seem to appreciate it. I like to help them by encouraging their enthusiasm and they encourage me by their presence. It's a privilege to work with the international students."

One of Mrs. Thompson's most treasured memories of the foreign students is of Viji a student from Malaysia, who attended Waynesburg College. He returned to Malaysia and went

(Continued on Page 2)

General Membership Meeting & Speaker Wednesday, October 26th at Noon Pepper Tree

Speaker: Juanita Thompson

All Chamber Members are urged to attend and to bring a friend.
If you are unable to attend, please feel free to send a representative.
Meetings begin promptly at 12:15. Please feel free to be seated anytime.

Juanita Thompson

(Continued from Page 1)

on to medical school. He gave up medicine to go into seminary. "Just think, maybe someday, he will be the Billy Graham of Malaysia. Wouldn't that be wonderful," she exclaimed.

"I don't feel that I do anything by myself. I get excited thinking about my days. I love to do what I do. It's not work if you love it. I have a real joy in working with people. God has given me a gift of working one on one. I'm not a person for the public, I like small groups. I like to encourage people that everyone else has given up on. I like to stick with them. There's good in everyone," she attests.

Juanita is a familiar face at the local nursing homes. She has conducted a weekly Sunday morning church service at the Curry Home for over 17 years. "I love old people," she asserts. "They have taught me a lot more than I can ever teach them... isn't that neat?"

Mrs. Thompson admits to have had no idea about running the bookstore when her husband died. "He did all the ordering and the accounting. He did everything! I don't feel that I have much business ability, but I guess I've gotten this far, haven't I," she asked. At Thompson's Christian Bookstore can be found a wide assortment of Bibles, books, music, gifts and jewelry.

"Greene County is where I want to be. There's no place in the world I'd rather be than here. I'm so content. It's God's will," she proclaimed.

She is always there to give selflessly of herself to aid someone in need. She serves as constant reminder that she believes in the dignity of man, no matter what their status in the community. She is such a positive, quiet role model to all whose lives she touches. I am proud and honored to say that I know Mrs. Thompson," were further comments listed in her nomination.

These are just a few of the many things that Juanita Thompson does in her unselfish manner for the people of the community. Her door is always open and she is always willing to give help to anyone who needs it.

When told of her winning the Distinguished Service Award, her first words were, "Why would I ever win anything like that. I don't deserve it."

Mrs. Thompson will be guest of honor at the Greater Waynesburg Area Chamber of Commerce Distinguished Service Award Dinner and Dance to be held at the Elks in Waynesburg on Saturday, October 22, 1994. Dancing will be to the music of the Lee Barrett Orchestra. The public is invited. Reservations can be made by calling the Chamber office at 627-5926.

**Calling Dasher, Dancer,
Prancer, Vixen, Comet,
Cupid, Donner, Blitzen;
and, of course Rudolph**

Santa is going to need all the help he can get on Saturday, December 3rd, so please call 627-5926 to help him.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Andrew Corfont, Community Bank; Chad Moore, First Federal; Millie Wonderling, Bowlby Library; Richard Scott, Scott Enterprises; Clark Patterson, Huffman-Whipkey; Mary Parkinson, Greene County Nurses Assoc.; Karen Palmer, WANB; Christine Gardner, Hospice Care; Jack McCracken, McCracken Pharmacy; Ed Stiles, Integra Bank; Suzanne Huffman, Community Bank; Mary K. Pruss, Peacock, Keller; Linda Krajnak, West Penn Power Company; Jim Moore, Greene County Messenger, John Loeper, Fox Motor Co.; John Owen, Special Events Commission; Lisa Mascara, William H. Martin, Inc.; David Cline, Waynesburg College.

President John Owen called the meeting to order at 12:15 p.m. He welcomed everyone and asked for introductions around the room. On a motion by Mary Pruss, seconded by Chris Gardner, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved as written. On motion by Millie Wonderling and seconded by John Loeper, the Treasurer's report was approved. On a motion by Jack McCracken and seconded by Lisa Mascara, the Secretary's report was approved.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Jack McCracken (Co-Chairman DSA) announced this year's DSA award was presented to Juanita Thompson. The banquet is scheduled for October 22 at the Elk's Lodge. A cash bar at 6:00 p.m. with dinner at 7:00 p.m. and dancing to the Lee Barrett Orchestra. Jack also asked all Chamber members to please support this endeavor. Andrew Corfont (Sing Along Co-Chairman) reported the Sing Along will be moved to downtown this year on the Court House steps, Friday night December 2nd, beginning sometime between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. He will issue invitations to all church and school singing groups and WANB has agreed to broadcast live. A concession was discussed, however decided against. Clark Patterson (Christmas Parade Co-Chairman) reported he is still waiting on official ok from the borough to hold the parade on Saturday, December 3rd. He did state there will be no stopping during the parade this year, and he needs walkie-talkies and volunteers during that day.

OLD BUSINESS: There was no old business to report.

NEW BUSINESS: John reported the Chamber would be sponsoring a political debate between Bill DeWeese and Phil Lanzatella, scheduled for Sunday, October 23rd at 4:00 p.m. in the Waynesburg Central High School Auditorium. Chad Moore questioned why the Chamber would become politically involved, and Jack McCracken explained that the Chamber was not endorsing either one of the candidates, however only providing an arena in which they can debate the issues informing the public, and also stated the Chamber has done this in the past.

SPEAKER: John introduced David Cline, a member of the Pennsylvania Economy League, promoting tourism in Greene County. Mary Holleran, Regional Director of the Pennsylvania Economy League in this area, together with some of the County officials and members of the PEL are discussing the possibility of exploring tourism in Greene County. This membership meets once every month. David stated during the next meeting the membership will be approving a brochure

including different businesses and shops in Greene County that can be distributed statewide at the Welcome Centers in Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio and maybe in Canada, informing people as to what is available in Greene County. The brochure will include maps, phone numbers, addresses and descriptions of the businesses. The long term goals include funding from the County Commission, possibly hiring a full time director of tourism, establishing a self-supporting committee, and trying to improve the signs identifying the different areas. In closing, David invited all interested members to attend the meetings held on the third Thursday of every month in the Commissioners meeting room in the County Office building.

ADJOURNMENT: On a motion made by Jack McCracken and seconded by Chris Gardner, the meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia A. Houglund

WANB 4th Annual Food Drive Dance and Auction

WANB 4th Annual Food Drive Dance and Auction will be held November 18 from 8:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. at the Waynesburg Moose. \$5.00 donation. ALL PROCEEDS BENEFIT GREENE COUNTY CORNER CUPBOARD.

CCSC Health Plans Now Open To Current Chamber Members

Chamber members now have even more opportunities to enroll in the Blue Cross/Blue Shield Group Health Care Plans available through the Chambers of Commerce Service Corporation.

Effective immediately, New and Current Chamber member firms, presently insured through a non-Blue Cross of Western Pennsylvania program, can enroll in the CCSC group health care program at any time during the year, provided they have evidence of in-force coverage.

As always, CCSC offers these plans to groups with a few as one employee and with no exclusion for pre-existing medical conditions. For more information on these plans, contact the Chambers of Commerce Service Corporation at 412-227-6555 or 1-800-377-3539.

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Tell Us How We Are Doing

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(Optional) Name _____



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