

CELEBRATING WHAT GOD HAS DONE AND WILL DO



We are grateful to the Lord for a full week of activities, and people enjoyed the opportunity to choose which ones to

attend. Kaye Halstead said, "it was great to see people engaged." In particular, the Legacy Stroll on Tuesday seemed to garner significant interest. "They came to see how people were honored and remembered," Kaye added.

Cindy Marshall of the Highlands Sun Times heard about the Legacy Stroll and wrote a beautiful story in the March 16th edition of the weekly paper. Brian Halstead plans to bring the Legacy Stroll back next year, with thoughts to make it an annual tradition.

"The Lord has done great things for us: we are glad" (Psalm 126:3). But where do we go from here? What will Maranatha Village look like in the next fifty years should the Lord tarry to return?

There is already a new generation of residents on our doorstep. They come for the winter, staying in the villas, the mobiles, or the RV park. One of those RV couples completely enjoyed their first winter at Maranatha Village. Let's look at a portion of Dave and Lori Maloblech's story.



Strolling through memories to celebrate 50 years

By CHRY MARSHALL
Because the time is right, the Highlands Sun Times will get around to celebrating the 50th anniversary of Maranatha Village. In the meantime, the paper is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Legacy Stroll, a tradition that has become a beloved part of the community.

"A friend from Piatt Lake, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula suggested we consider Maranatha Village. Before you knew it, we were applying to MV. That was in September, and we bought our RV the first weekend in October.

"To get to know people, we decided to immerse ourselves in everything we could, but we also wanted to have fun. We were successful at both! Dave played pickleball and softball in Sebring, mowed the lawns for the RV section, and participated in some shuffleboard and horseshoes.



I participated in craft classes, water aerobics, and helped at the Manor. We were surprised there weren't many opportunities to eat here—ha! We enjoyed every home fellowship, Village dinner, and hotdog roast. I told my kids it felt like I was at camp. So much fun!

"There is a warmth and genuineness here that we haven't experienced in a long time. We felt embraced, loved, and challenged in our faith. From our wonderful RV family to the residents at the Manor and everyone in between, we have loved every moment here and we can't wait to return next year!"



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REFLECTIONS OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION MARCH 5-11, 2023

How do you celebrate and honor a 50-year legacy? You party! And that's just what we did. To enjoy full participation of this Jubilee anniversary, the celebration was held in March while the northerners were still here. And it was a week-long celebration party thanking God for what He has done for us.

We began the week of celebration on **Sunday, March 5**, with an "old-fashioned dinner on the grounds." The morning service at Maranatha Baptist Church even included a quartet singing, "Jubilee." A huge potluck lunch was shared at Fogle Pavilion.

Monday, March 6, included an informal time of fellowship with a Bike-Walk-Golf-Rock-a-Thon from 9-11 a.m. Our favorite participants were Leo and Nancy Mendoza who decorated their golf cart with a wreath of roses and gold accents. They added letters saying, "Maranatha 50 years Jubilee," and then drove around waving at residents.



The Legacy Stroll came together on **Tuesday, March 7**, from 5-7 p.m. Anyone could purchase white lunch bags for \$5 each to use for the stroll. Many people purchased more than one bag to take home and label or decorate. There were five categories: "in memory of," "in honor of," "in tribute to," "thank you to," and "praying for." The most popular were the names of those who had left a legacy—parents, former military, war Veterans, and former pastors. Each bag contained a can of food that was later donated to a charity and a battery-operated candle that was turned on as the bag was placed along the pathway of the south lake. More than 150 bags illuminated the walkway as people strolled around the lake.

Gathering at Fogle Pavilion on **Wednesday, March 8**, in the afternoon was a "sweet" thing to do—for an ice cream social! Servers from all areas of the Village assisted at tables offering flavored sauces, whipped cream, and sprinkles. To conclude the afternoon, Brian Halstead led in an acapella hymn sing.

The community became involved in our **Thursday, March 9**, Health and First Responder's Fair. Inside Hamman Hall vendors, agents, and volunteer organizations from all over Highlands County displayed information and offered helpful gifts regarding health and well-being. Several people received gift baskets from the vendors. Outside the hall our first responders hosted information

booths about their responsibilities and services to our community.

Friday, March 10, brought an evening concert with Niah and Allisha Merrill at Maranatha Baptist Church. Their high-quality vocals and instrumental performances were worshipful, delightful, and encouraging. Many people were blessed by their obvious love for the Lord.

The week culminated with two 50th Anniversary Banquets on **Saturday, March 11**, at 3Gens restaurant in Highlands Ridge. The 217 guests chose festivities at either 11 a.m. or 4 p.m. and selected one of three delicious meals. Kathy Withers and Kaye Halstead did a wonderful job of providing decorations in gold and black that added a touch of elegance. Each attender received a 50th Anniversary ornament and history booklet compiled by Jerry Webber.

With so many choices of ways to celebrate, participants were exhausted at the end of the week. But all praise and glory go to our Father who moved among His people to provide and maintain Maranatha—a place where "living the legacy" continues "until He comes again."

[Editor's note: We are grateful to Brian and Kaye Halstead, Martha Martens, Linda Pyche, and Kathy Withers for planning a full week of activities. Thanks to Linda for pulling together this overview of the week.]



Geoff & Donna Bondi,
2011 (full-time)
Rochester, New York



“ During the 50th celebration we went to the picnic and banquet. They were both very well organized and informative about the Village history. It is a special blessing to be surrounded daily by fellow believers.



Tom & Jan Moen, 2014
Jordan, Minnesota



Don & Bridgett Mattern, 2022
Decatur, Michigan

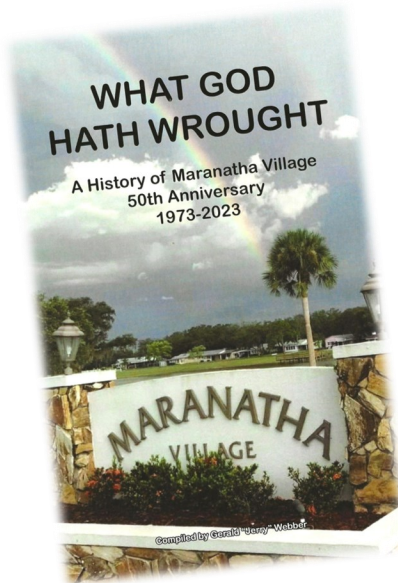
“ Special memories? The hurricane of 2022 and sharing our villa with our wonderful friends Wayne and Cleo Mott.

“ We started coming in 2008 to do work projects with CBM. A bunch of us from the mission lived winters in the RV park as we served in the Village. It was like one big family, sharing meals, visits, and campfires. We looked forward to coming together from our various projects to catch up during the winter.



“ The people in the Village have been such a blessing to us. Rich suffers from Fronto-temporal dementia. If he is out walking, our neighbors in the Village make sure that he is safe and that he doesn't get lost. This gives him some precious freedom to roam and enjoy his time outside. It gives me peace of mind!

CELEBRATING OUR HISTORY



[The following is a brief condensation of the booklet, "What God Hath Wrought," written by Dr. Gerald (Jerry) Webber for the 50th Anniversary. Copies of the booklet are available at the Maranatha Village office.]

Floyd Conway, a Cleveland, Ohio, businessman and faithful deacon at Cedar Hill Baptist Church, was gripped by a growing burden for the founding of a retirement community, especially to meet the needs of pastors, missionaries, and other Christian workers. At 54 years of age, he began to lay the groundwork for what would become Maranatha Village of Sebring, Florida.



With uncommon vision, by the time financing was obtained and permits in hand, Conway had laid out a site plan and finished architectural drawings for the first six dwellings. In the fall of 1973, construction began. Conway and his wife moved to Sebring in January of 1974 and lived in a mobile home on the property. Fred and Margaret Ripko also moved to Sebring to join the construction work, securing a place in town.

In time, three duplex units were completed. The Ripkos moved into one, followed shortly by Ray Shook and his wife and Mrs. Paul Metzler (Etienne), a retired BMM missionary from the CAR and the Republic of Chad. During the second year, three more buildings were constructed, and the Village grew to seventeen residents. The third year there were fifty residents, and from that



time on they could not build fast enough to meet the demand.

The vision of a church at the heart of the Village became reality within three years. Almost from the beginning, a small band of residents met in the Village office each morning for Bible study and prayer. By



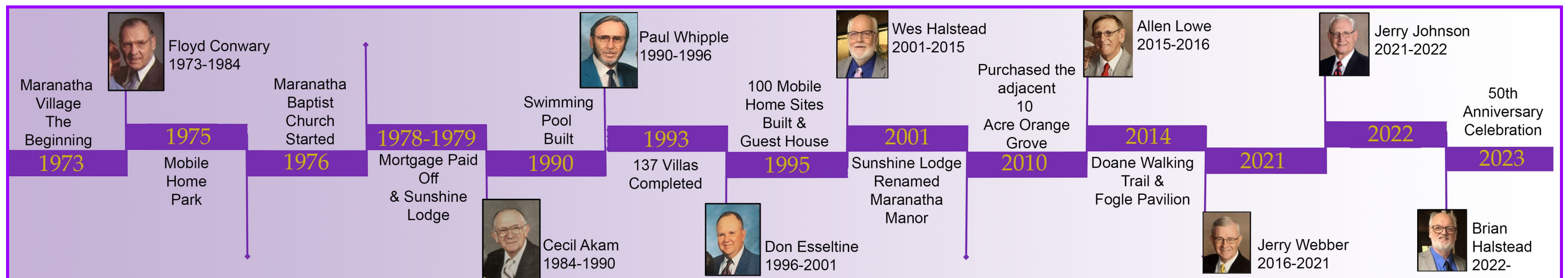
March of 1976, a group was gathering on Friday evenings to pray for the launch of what would become Maranatha Baptist Church.

No history of Maranatha Village would be complete without mention of what would become Maranatha Manor. It seemed almost a given that a retirement village would have within its borders a safe and secure home for seniors needing assistance with the challenges of everyday living. Thus was born "Sunshine Lodge," the forerunner of

today's Maranatha Manor. Sunshine Lodge was opened in 1978.

In 2001, the name was changed to Maranatha Manor and the ministry became a shared responsibility of the Village and Maranatha Baptist Church.

Today, residents come to the Village from a slightly broader background and we are about equally divided between layfolk and retired vocational Christian workers. The name by which we are publicly known, Maranatha Village, not only conveys our mission but amplifies a motto that has endured the years of its continuous use: "Helping Others 'til Jesus Comes."



CELEBRATING OUR STORIES

“ The fellowship is sweet. When we were asked if we knew anyone when we came, we said, “If not, we will probably know someone they know.” Nothing has changed, we enjoy the opportunities God has given us to serve Him.

Marie Moore, 2003
Randolph, New York ”



“ We enjoyed lunch on the grounds, and we appreciate the unity of the people, safety of living here, preaching of the Word, concerts, and conferences.

John & Jeanette Thorp, 1998
Watkins Glen, New York ”



“ It was a privilege to participate in each event of the 50th Anniversary of Maranatha Village from Sunday-Saturday. For me the special highlights were the Legacy Walk and the Banquet, but each event had its blessings and good times to remember.

” Muriel & Lucio Casas, 2019,
Falconer, New York



“ My greatest joy at MV has been the privilege to meet and serve literally hundreds of village prospects, and work with dozens of incoming residents in my seven years as Director of Marketing and Development.

Gerry & Connie Carlson, 2014
Rocky Mount, North Carolina



“ Special memories? Mostly just how God brought us here and provided for us to be here.



Bill & Ellen Katka, 2019
New Hampshire ”

Everyone who lives here in Maranatha Village comes with a story of how God worked in their lives in so many faithful ways, not the least of which was the way He brought each of them to this unique community. In preparing this special edition of the *Trumpet* to reflect on the week of anniversary celebrations, it seemed prudent to reflect on the history of a few residents as well.



Evelyne Metzler's roots in Maranatha Village go deep. Her father, Paul Metzler, was born and raised in Mishawaka, Indiana. Following God's call to missions in his life, Paul went to France to study French, where he met a lovely French tutor named Etiennette Luc. Upon conclusion of his French studies, he boarded a ship alone to travel to Africa for his missionary service. Though the couple had become engaged, Paul went ahead to get acclimated in Africa while Etiennette finished her last year of schooling. She eventually came to Africa, where they were married and served together for many years. The couple chose to retire in Sebring, Florida, and after Paul's graduation to Glory, Etiennette heard about the new retirement village that was being built. Knowing it was a GARBC-affiliated ministry, she was all for the idea. She moved into one of the first units available in 1974 before eventually moving to the Manor.



Jeff & Kerri Cline,
2021
Warren, Ohio



Jan Burgess was another of the earlier residents of the Village, coming here to live in the fall of 1985. Her husband was ready to retire at 55 years old from Consumers Power in Michigan. Jan was five years younger than he, and one of her first thoughts was, “I don't want to live there with all those old people!” But very quickly, Jan's musical gifts were found out and she began directing the choir at Maranatha Baptist Church. Her husband, George, worked for the Village on the maintenance crew while she enjoyed visiting with Ann Truax and other residents. “There are so many things to do here,” she observed and began serving others in person and through music. They both enjoyed the morning devotions, good preaching, and music at Maranatha Baptist Church. George passed away in 2002 and Jan continues her involvement in music and investment in people.

“ You can see and visit with godly like-minded friends every time you step out the door. Love the sign and good slogans at the entrance. The morning chapel services have been a super blessing and challenge.



Gen & Ernie
Schmidt (winter)
Minnesota ”

“ Our pastor in Michigan was Larry McCauley. He told my husband and me that we needed to come to Sebring, Florida, where his dad was. “It's a little bit of Heaven!” he said. I am thankful to God for the privilege of living here. Larry McCauley was right. It feels like a little bit of Heaven.

Ted & Yvonne Johnson Ertle,
1994
Michigan ”

