



Whitesbog Preservation Trust

NEWSLETTER

1st Quarter

www.whitesbog.org

2019

Birthplace of the Highbush Blueberry - Historic Center for Cranberry Innovation

Harvesting Stories - 15 Minutes with Jim “Buddy” Jefferson

Transcribed by Sarah Augustine - March 2019

Harvesting Stories – An initiative funded by the New Jersey Council for the Humanities to record oral histories from the Whitesbog community. Today we present a transcription of an interview with Buddy Jefferson, but the actual interview, (and others!) can be seen this June at the 36th Annual Whitesbog Blueberry Festival. ‘Harvesting Stories’ videos can also be seen at our website: <http://www.whitesbog.org/whitesbog-history/harvesting-stories>.

“So, I’ve been working all of my life; about sixty some years of work. Are you going to ask me my age? {Laughs}. I’m 81 years old. I will be 82 in a couple of months. I work for the Pemberton Township Board of Education, where I’ve been employed for the last 25 years, but prior to that, going to Burlington, I worked for a family-owned business. It was called the ‘Toy Factory’. Thirty-some years, I was in top management there. They sent me to school. I went to Rider College; I went to New York Management Association School; I got to serve on the Board of Education in Burlington City for thirty-four years. So, I’ve had a great run, great experience, I have no regrets; I have a beautiful family - I have a wife and four children, three of which are college graduates and the top with their companies and whatever, and so it’s just been a beautiful run... for me. And I love coming back here, and I come back here quite often; I just ride through the village, ride just to ... because it brings back some beautiful



Jim “Buddy” Jefferson with a photograph of his family from an earlier Whitesbog era.

memories. And I believe that... I truly believe... that Whitesbog was my start. And I’ve had a beautiful life because of it. Beautiful life.”

“Well, it’s my past, and in retrospect as a kid we thought it was horrible; but in retrospect as an adult, I see it as a path to success, really. We thought as kids that we were probably the poorest kids in the village, and that everyone had more than we did, and that those who were able to move from Whitesbog, [to] someplace else, were better-off, when in fact in retrospect that was really not the case. So, when I think about Whitesbog and the village, and Whitesbog as a whole, I see it as part of my success story in life.”

“My name is Jim Jefferson, better known as ‘Buddy’ by those who know me well. What brought me to Whitesbog were my parents; I was born and raised here in

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Whitesbog. From 1936-1954, this was where I lived. We were raised in a village [Rome] where everybody knew everyone; you were in part of everybody's family. My mother and father, I thought, were very poor, and the reason why I thought that I think is because we were probably the only family that didn't have a car! Everybody else had a car. They could get out of the village, they could go places, and the only way we got out of the village to go places was with our uncle, aunt, or a friend. So we saw that as being awful but ...”

Interviewer: Did you have everything you needed here?

“Yeah, we had what we needed ... we didn't have what we wanted, we had what we needed. The beautiful part for me personally - I had aunts and uncles that really took a real interest in me... so I got a lot of hand-me-downs, I got to go places that probably my brothers and sisters didn't get to go, and I got the leftovers that other kids didn't get. So, I saw that as an asset.”

“My dad had a blueberry field - four and a half acres of blueberries- on Route 70. Now how did he get that blueberry field ... we didn't have money to buy it. Harold Haines and his wife donated to my dad, my uncle, and Lou Grant four and a half acres each of their property back in 1946. So they could have their own blueberry farm, but yet work here. So they worked here, and they worked on their farm as well. When you think of those kinds of things, I think of the impact that the Haines had on my life. I can tell you just that there's stories after stories that just bring chills to me.”

“Well, blueberries was a way of life. Blueberries and cranberries. And I started working when I was nine years old. My dad was what they considered a “row boss”, you know like, he was kind of the leader of the gang; and so I was able to go out and work even at nine years old. We were permitted to work in the winter time. We used to make the blueberry shoots ... I don't know if you know how to make blueberries ... how the bushes start. They start as you prune the bush, and you prune off certain cuttings and then in the winter time, you cut those cuttings to a certain length, and then you put them - you stick them in the ground ... they have to be cut a certain way... you stick them in the ground in a tray, they grow all winter in a heated area and when they're big enough, then we take them out and we put them out in a field. Not as a bush, at this point it's still in a nurturing phase. And so, we were allowed to do that because we were friends with them. We'd get like seven cents an hour, or five cents an hour, or six cents an hour ... whatever it was. But still it was a way to make some money that you wouldn't

ordinarily make. And then of course as the bushes got bigger, we were able to take them out and plant them in the field. Because my dad was a row boss, I was able to go out in the fields and work at eleven years old, or twelve years old, when the other kids weren't allowed to go because he knew when the overseers were going to come, or when people were going to come to investigate whether you had child labor going on. He could chase us away and we could get away with that. And so as a result, my sister and I ... my oldest sister ... we loved to work, the others didn't care that much about work, so we'd go out and work as much as we possibly could and it was a chance to make some money. It was great ... it was great. And I scooped cranberries as a kid. And the cranberries you could make good money. I was a good picker, too; I was one of the best.”

“I just enjoy working. I wanted to be ... I wanted to work. And so, I even picked by hand. As you got bigger, and I was in high school, it was a way to make a lot of money real quick. If you were good at it and the cranberries had a good crop, you could make a bunch of money - what we called a bunch of money - don't forget I said I worked for 6 cents an hour, and if you could get a dollar an hour, that was big time money, you know, so, when you worked in cranberries you could make more money than you even did in blueberries. It was a great way to you know, to finance yourself.”

“I didn't get to work in the Packing House until I was like a junior in high school. Um ... you just worked in the field. We ... I hate to say this, but blacks didn't work in the Packing House. Ok ... it was only in 1952 that we began to be able to work among the other folks in terms of the Packing House, or driving the vehicle, or working around in the village. Now as a little kid, I worked right here in Miss White's flower garden, and I spent many hours weeding her flowers and things like that. I worked with an adult, but it was an opportunity here, again, to work and make a few dollars, and she was very sympathetic about the fact ... she knew we were poor ... so to give a kid the opportunity to earn a couple pennies, or a quarter, or a nickel, or whatever it was, just kind of blessed her as well as me.”

Interviewer: Tell us a little about Elizabeth.

“Well you know, from a kid's perspective - from my perspective as a little kid - she [Elizabeth White] was the richest person in the world, I mean who had a car, and a house like this, and was always dressed very stately ... you know what I mean? And at the same time, very compassionate ... caring ... about every single person she came in contact with. I mean, we looked at her as kids

thinking: 'Oh my gosh, what a beautiful lady.' and yet she was common in terms of how she treated us. And to live in a house like this, where you could drive around the back ... she had an elevator in the garage that would bring you upstairs¹ ... and she was just a beautiful person. And she would put on her hat and whatever, and be around here... you see now here in her flower garden {pointing to photograph}, I worked in this garden ... that meant a lot to me ... that meant a lot to me! To work in the boss or the owner's garden, and flower garden or whatever; and yet, she would take time to converse with you, even as a kid. It was just a beautiful, beautiful thing. She stands out as being extra, extra special, like an angel almost, in terms of if you were a kid like I was. It's like she was an angel, a gift that you don't get to see or to be around very often in your life. I've been around some very famous people in my life, because of the company that I worked for, but when I think about those persons as compared to her, there was really no comparison. Because as a kid, five or six or seven or eight years old, to look at a person like that who's wealthy in our mind, owned this whole great big place, and yet would talk to us and speak to us and nurture us just as if she was a nobody. It was a great, great experience. I cannot tell you enough about how I feel deep down inside about Whitesbog. Now my sisters and brothers don't necessarily see it the same way; but at the same time they realize that this is where we came from, and that's what made us who we are. So ... I'm telling you, I can't I can't express to you the memories that I have here." {Smiles, and laughs thoughtfully}.

"When Rome was originally built, back ... and that was back in some time ... it was one of the top villages for migrant workers. And, in my travels, and I travel down in the Bridgetown areas where you had those vegetable farms, you had chicken farms and whatever ... no village could compare to Whitesbog. No village could compare to Whitesbog for migrant workers. And the one thing that I have to share ... with Whitesbog, we were considered migrant workers and whatever but they took care of you ... they really took care of you, as much as you know, we were segregated because that was a time. Blacks were blacks and whites were whites and then we weren't to be together and so we accepted that. Where could you go that that wasn't the case? It was the case everywhere you went but Harold Haines, Isaiah Haines ... I don't really remember Joe Haines too much ... he was a little kid when I was here, but Isaiah Haines and Harold Haines actually ran the village. They took care of every single person. If a person got in trouble, they got them out of it. If something happened in the village, they were there to

take care of you. You had the assurance of knowing that you were going to be taken care of no matter what."

"Yes it is ... absolutely. Ms. White, and if you read the stories, way back, I think it was Coville,² who lived right down the street right down in New Lisbon on Browns Mills Road. He and Ms. White together developed the first blueberry. Yes. So see? It's not the thing to do. You don't wait until you retire to enjoy your life ... you better enjoy life every single day, because tomorrow may not be."

"I have no regrets. Life has been good; God has been good... and I have just had a great life. Whitesbog is a part of that, all of the people have I have met here, and nurtured me, and helped me, and pushed me along - I will never ever forget. Never. The Haines ... the Darlingtons ... the Humphreys ... the Paynes ... all of those people are a part of my life. Thank you ... I could talk forever." ■

Footnotes

- ¹ The elevator still exists and is actually located in Suningive's front hallway.
- ² This was most likely Stanley Coville, Frederick Coville's son, that lived in Browns Mills. It is however correct that Frederick Coville and Elizabeth White, together, developed the highbush blueberry. ■



Moonlight Walks at Whitesbog

"An almost magical experience."

Listen to the night sounds of the Pines and experience the seasonal changes of the Pinelands. Moonlight Walks are 3-5 miles of easy-paced hiking over sandy roads and trails, led by experienced leaders.

Monthly on Saturdays closest to the full moon. \$5/person donation, reservations requested 609-893-4646

"You haven't fully experienced Whitesbog until you've walked its hushed trails and less-travelled byways by moonlight."

Whitesbog at Volunteer Appreciation Month Event



Whitesbog receives a Certificate of Appreciation. Pictured are: Tom Keck (State Park Service), Terry Schmidt (DEP representative), Allison Pierson (Whitesbog Executive Director), Kiyomi Locker (Whitesbog Archivist), and Dave Robbins (State Park Service).

On April 29th, in celebration of April being National Volunteer Month, the Division of Parks and Forestry held a volunteer appreciation event at Wharton State Forest for our Officially Recognized Friends (ORF) groups.

Volunteer groups in attendance received a certificate of appreciation, had the chance to have one-on-one conversations with Director Olivia Glenn, go on a guided tour of Batsto Village, and to network with other friends groups throughout the state. In addition, Assistant Commissioner Ray Bukowski was in attendance and gave remarks about his time in the State Park Service and talked to individual Friends Organizations about their upcoming plans.

We look forward to attending this event annually in the future. A special thank you to Batsto Citizens Committee / Historic Batsto Village for donating the refreshments and the Accidental Jug Band and friends for performing.

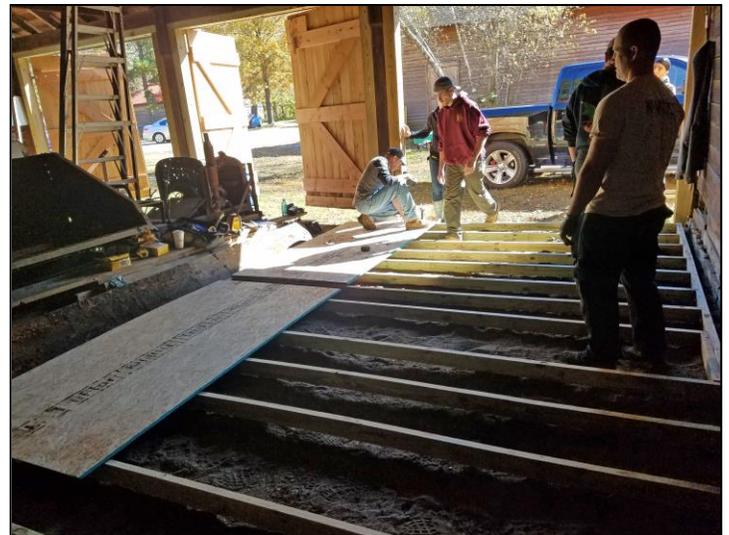
In addition, we would like to say thank you to the New Jersey Governor's Office of Volunteerism for collaborating with us on this event and providing our volunteers certificates signed by NJ Department of State, Secretary of State, Tahesha Way. ■

Zach Rubeo Completes Eagle Scout Project



Eagle Scout, Zach Rubeo (fourth from left) with project colleagues - ready for action.

This past summer, Troop 100 member, Zach Rubeo from Marlton, New Jersey completed his Eagle Scout Project at Whitesbog Village. His project consisted of directing his team of volunteers to clear out a previously unused barn to build a wooden floor, so the space could be used to store equipment or could act as a place to host various events and activities. The project was a great success as materials were relocated from the barn to make space for the flooring which has benefited the Whitesbog Preservation Trust. The completion of this project allowed Zach to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout in February and would not have been possible without the help of the Whitesbog Preservation Trust. ■



WHITESBOG EVENT SCHEDULE

For more information call (609) 893-4646,
e-mail us at WhitesbogPreservationTrust@gmail.com
or visit us on the web at www.whitesbog.org.

May

26 - Suningive House Tours 12 - 4 p.m.

Take a tour of the historic home of Suningive, designed and built for Elizabeth C. White, the "Blueberry Queen". The home has been preserved and slowly restored with the help of the Whitesbog Preservation Trust. This beautiful Craftsman home constructed in 1923 has unusual features and hidden treasures, unique fixtures and woodwork, garage and porches with 2nd and 3rd story views out over the cranberry bogs, her native pine barrens botanical garden, pond and woodland trails. Tickets are \$5 which are a direct donation to the Archives funding, which is located inside the house. The event will be from 12-4, with tours running throughout that time. Last tour begins at 3:30 pm.

June

1 - Blueberry Festival Planning Meeting 9:30 a.m.

Join our team as we prep for the Blueberry Festival! Short meeting at the General Store to get started on some projects.

1 - Volunteer Work Day 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Come out and join our volunteers in outdoor or indoor projects in the village. You can choose from helping to clear trails and garden paths or helping to organize our supplies for events! Both get you lunch in the General Store classroom and time to enjoy the beautiful natural surroundings! Tools provided, tasks for all ages, meet at the general Store at 10 a.m.

1 - Village Walking Tour 1 p.m.

Hike the Historic Village, learn about Whitesbog's role in history and visit Suningive, the worker's cottage and other museums & buildings that speak to Whitesbog's heritage. \$5 donation/person, advance reservations requested but not required - 609-893-4646.

1 - National Trails Day

A variety of guided hikes and programs will be happening including a dog walk gathering, nature walks and more. Check our Facebook Event page for more information.

8 - New Jersey Free Fishing Day all day & everywhere

For more information see the state NJDEP website: <https://www.njfishandwildlife.com/ffd.htm>

11 - Board Meeting 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Board Meetings take place in the General Store and are open to the public

15 - Moonlight Walk 8 p.m.

Listen to the night sounds of the Pines, learn about Whitesbog and experience the seasonal changes of the Pinelands. All walks are 3-5 miles in length, weather permitting and led by experienced leaders. \$5/person donation, reservations requested 609-893-4646

15 - Pre-Festival Work Day 6:30 p.m.

Festival meeting 6:30 p.m. at the General Store.

17- 21 - Blueberry Festival Prep-Week for Staff and Volunteers

Join in the fun as we get ready for Blueberry Festival! Volunteers get free t-shirts and pizza lunch. Great for offices and teams, clubs and families to come out and lend a hand! Contact

whitesbogevents@gmail.com to set up a day to help out or check our Facebook page.

22 & 23 - 36th Ann. Whitesbog Blueberry Festival 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The Whitesbog Blueberry Festival is an old-fashioned country fair set in the Pine Barrens historic village with museums, historic homes, a General Store, tractor-pulled wagon rides to the blueberry field to pick heirloom berries, local handmade craft vendors, local folk music, with berries for sale from a local blueberry farm. This event helps support many local businesses, artists, farms, chefs and proceeds benefit community programs and preservation of the historic village, farm fields, trails and Elizabeth White Gardens, open to the public for free year-round.

July

6 - Volunteer Work Day 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. (See June 1 for details.)

6 - Village Walking Tour 1 p.m. (See June 1 for details.)

13 - Pemberton Twp. Water Carnival 4 - 11 p.m.

Start preparing your Water Carnival float entry now! Join the festivities with food trucks, games, local and community organizations. Watch the Parade of Floats as they cross the water of Mirror Lake and stay for the fantastic fireworks display! More information on the Water Carnival Facebook page.

13 - BBF Volunteer Thank You Picnic 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

While we will be putting away supplies from the Blueberry Festival, we will also take some time for a long lunch to thank the many volunteers, groups and staff who put on the festival: Free lunch in the General Store classroom and picnic area if the weather is nice. New volunteers welcome!

20 - Moonlight Walk 8 p.m. (See June 15 for details.)

23 - Board Meeting 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

28 - Blueberry Living History Event 1 - 4 p.m.

Visit all the village's interpreted museums and historic landscapes, pick blueberries, take a wagon ride and more at the summertime Living History Event! The Village comes alive with workers and residents from the 1920's. Join them in their daily activities, walk the trails, explore the houses and the Cranberry & Blueberry Museum. Visit Suningive, the home of the "Blueberry Queen". Talk with those who helped make the blueberry one of America's favorite fruits. We would LOVE to see you become a part of our Living History. Call 609-893-4646 for additional details. It's \$8 for adults, \$5 for kids children 3 & under are free. Tickets are available in advance at Eventbrite and there is a discount for families when buying in advance on Eventbrite only. The General Store will be open with snacks, jams, pie, toys, local interest books, maps, and more from 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. The Accidental Jug Band will be playing on the porch of the store. Last Village tour begins at 3:15 p.m. Wagon rides leave every half hour from the front of the General Store. Last ride leaves at 3:30 pm. Wagon ride included in price of admission.

A Baseball Team from Whitesbog



This image comes from the Whitesbog Preservation Trust Archives. Its time period might be the 1930s, but might be earlier, or might be later. Do you know anything about this team? If you have information, contact the Archives at whitesbogpreservationarchives@gmail.com. Collected information will be shared in a future Newsletter issue.

The Whitesbog Blueberry Festival is Back for its 36th Year

As always, blueberries will be the star of the show. Enjoy fresh, locally made blueberry pies, donuts, muffins, fritters and more from the bake shop. Fresh blueberries will be available for purchase by the pint, or to pick your own. ■ The General Store will be open, offering locally made crafts, Pine Barrens memorabilia, old-fashioned toys and candy, snacks, chocolate covered blueberries, cold drinks, and much more. On the porch, you'll find jams and jellies, festival T-Shirts, ice cream, and a native plant sale. ■ Wander through our historic worker's cottages. Visit the Makers Workshop for hands-on activities like screen printing. ■ The Whitesbog Gallery will be open as well with an art exhibit of local makers. ■ Stop by the Cranberry and Blueberry Museum for an informative overview on the village and its agricultural roots. The Barrel Factory will be open for a series of talks covering topics such as the history and ecology of Whitesbog and surrounding Pinelands. ■ Browse the wares of over 30 Vendors. There will even be face painting and airbrush tattoos! ■ On the beginnings of our new stage, hear the local sounds of musicians. ■ Be sure to take a tour of Suningive, the home of Elizabeth Coleman White. ■



Workers Cottages, the Ice House, and other historic buildings will be open for visitors to catch a glimpse of life in a 1900's farm town. ■ Visitors can also hop on a guided wagon tour that loops through the village, cranberry bogs, reservoirs, and blueberry fields. ■ Back by popular demand, entry is only \$5.00 per car load! Pedestrians, bicycles, and motorcycles are likewise \$5 each. Admission is cash only. ■ Handicap and motorcycle parking is available in the main village lot. Parking is remote, but complimentary shuttles are available. ■

Join us for the screening of
HARVESTING STORIES

during the 36th Annual
Blueberry Festival
at Whitesbog Historic Village
June 22nd & 23rd



Harvesting Stories is a project to record oral histories from our community. We hope to use these stories as a tool to connect the people who lived and worked in the village, their families, migrant farm workers and people living in the community today.

799 Lakehurst Rd Browns Mills, NJ

HISTORIC
*Whitesbog
Village*
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SINCE 1857
NEW JERSEY COUNCIL
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

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Whitesbog is administered by the State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Parks and Forestry as part of the Brendan T. Byrne State Forest.

The Whitesbog Preservation Trust has received a FY 2019 General Operating Support Grant and a FY 2019 Project Grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the Department of State

Funding is made possible in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts through a grant to the Burlington County Board of Chosen Freeholders.

The Whitesbog Preservation Trust has received a New Jersey Council for the Humanities Grant for FY 2018 for "Harvesting Stories" and oral history video interview project.

The 1772 Foundation, in cooperation with the New Jersey Historic Trust, has provided Whitesbog Preservation Trust with a Capital Preservation Grant for the repair and restoration of a worker's cottage.

2019 Board Meetings at General Store, open to the public
 May 21, June 11, July 23, Aug. 27, Sept. 24,
 Oct. 22, Nov. 10 (membership meeting), Dec. 3

Staff

Allison Pierson, Director
 Jennifer Rubeo, Bookkeeper/ Assistant
 Kyomi Locker, Archivist

Newsletter

Mark Ehlenfeldt & Allison Pierson - Editors

Committees - 2019

Membership & Fundraising - Lise Mainor, Roni Detrick, Allison Pierson
 Building & Restoration - John Joyce
 Garden & Landscape - Mark Szutarski, Terry Schmidt, Tom Besselman
 Education and Interpretation - Allison Pierson, Lise Mainor, Jeff Macechak
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 General Store - MariAnne Torres
 Marketing & Communications - Allison Pierson, Ed Mattson,
 Caroline Weigle, Mark Ehlenfeldt, JoAnne Claire
 Events & Programs - Kenny Willitts, Caroline Weigle, Allison Pierson



THE 1772 FOUNDATION

The Mission of the Trust is to restore, protect and enhance historic Whitesbog Village, in order to preserve the White family legacy and to inspire audiences of all ages to experience:

- the origins & innovations of cranberry & blueberry cultivation
- the rich culture and unique ecology of the New Jersey Pine Barrens.



Visit our website: WWW.WHITESBOG.ORG or call: 609.893.4646



Whitesbog Preservation Trust
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