

Honoring Living Legends

The DeKalb History Center held its Sixth Annual Black History Month Celebration on February 28. This year we honored four Living Legends who have made great contributions to the arts in DeKalb County.

Before the luncheon started, guests were treated to piano solos performed by **Emmanuel Smith**, a senior at the DeKalb School of the Arts.

Publisher Carolyn Jernigan-Glenn presented the awards with warm appreciation for each honoree. Recognized in alphabetical order were Clarence G. Carter, Jason Lary, Don P. Roberts, and Beverly "Guitar" Watkins.

Born in Montgomery in 1936, **Clarence G. Carter** attended the Alabama School for the Blind in Talladega and Alabama State College in Montgomery. He graduated in 1960 with a B.S. in Music. His professional career began with his friend Calvin Scott. They signed to Duke Records and cut four singles. Their first royalty check was for 25¢!

Carter later began a solo career and in 1966 signed to Fame Records in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. There he released his first single, "Tell Daddy" (1967). Several singles followed including "Slip Away" (#6) and "Too Weak to Fight" (#13). Additional soul singles followed culminating with "Patches," which hit #4 in 1970 and won the Grammy Award for Best R&B Song in 1971. "Slip Away," "Too Weak to Fight," and "Patches" all sold a million copies.

Carter's career dipped in the 1970s as disco became popular, but he found a new audience with "Strokin'" and "Dr. C.C.," which appealed to an African American working-class audience interested in blues and soul. "Strokin'" was given further acclaim when it was used in the Eddie Murphy remake of *The Nutty Professor*. Carter's soul sound also found an audience within the hip-hop community. The horn break from Carter's song "Back Door Santa" is sampled in the Run-D.M.C. Christmas song "Christmas in Hollis."

Carter was married to former Fame label mate Candi Staton from 1971 to 1973, with the marriage producing one son, Clarence Carter, Jr. He moved

to DeKalb County in 1983 and has been here ever since! Clarence Carter married his present wife, Joyce Jenkins-Carter, in 2001.

Jason Lary was born in Macon. He and his wife, Debra, have two sons, Jason, Jr., and James. Lary has worked for three decades producing, managing, and promoting local, national, and international artists. He has a dual degree from Clark Atlanta University and is a DJ and sound engineer.

He has had an executive and production role in DeKalb's largest concerts throughout the past decade. Lary financed and was executive producer for the successful Lithonia Jazz and R&B Series at Lithonia Amphitheater. He brought worldwide talent to Lithonia from 2004 - 2008 including The Temptations, Melba Moore, and Morris Day and The Time. He also produced the only two concerts at the Stone Mountain Tennis Center, they featured Roberta Flack (2005) and KEM (2006).

Lary was one of the founding producers of southern dance music

Continued on page 3



From left to right: Beverly "Guitar" Watkins, Clarence G. Carter, Jason Lary, and Don P. Roberts.

Photo by Edward Anderson

Inside this issue

- Upcoming Events, page 2
- Benzur Photographs, page 4
- Silent Auction, page 6

Upcoming Events

**For all of our upcoming events,
please check our website for additional information!**

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Lunch & Learn: Little Known Facts about the Civil War in DeKalb County and Georgia, by Dr. George Coletti **on Tuesday, May 21 at Noon.** Dr. Coletti will be asking the audience questions and providing prizes for correct answers! Prizes include copies of his book, *Stone Mountain: The Granite Sentinel*. An example question is "How many men depicted on the Stone Mountain carving attended West Point"? Free—bring your lunch!

Log Cabin Storytelling

10 a.m. Wednesdays in June and July at the Biffle Cabin (no session July 3rd), 720 West Trinity Place, Decatur. \$4 for DHC members and \$6 for non-members. For registration or questions please email forgey@dekalbhistory.org or call 404-373-1088, extension 22.

June 5	Fun with Brer Rabbit and Friends with Josie Bailey
June 12	Gotcha! Trickster Tales with Cathy Kaemmerlen
June 19	Tales of the Gullah with LaDoris Davis
June 26	Georgia Tales and Tails from Possums to Gourds with Cathy Kaemmerlen
July 10	The Tapestry Cats with Ann Ritter
July 17	Take Me Out to the Ballgame! With Deborah Strahorn
July 24	Appalachian Folktales with LaDoris Davis
July 31	Fiddlin' Dan the Mountain Man with Reuben Haller ✦

BENEFACTORS - Living Legends



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Living Legends (cont.)

beginning in the 1980s. He worked in various capacities with three dance and hip-hop groups. He was the engineer and tour manager for Egyptian Lover through the 1980s. He also worked with Success-n-Effect as their finance and road manager.

And most notably he produced, wrote for, and managed the A-Town Players. Lary's group was the first act from DeKalb County to sign a world-wide distribution and production deal with Warner Bros. Records in 1995. As part of the A-Town Players, he produced, managed, and co-wrote the longest-running Billboard charted song of 1995-1996, "Wassup, Wassup" (Bankhead Bounce). The song spent 43 weeks on the Billboard charts.

Don P. Roberts is a music educator, director, producer, and choreographer whose credits include consulting for the award-winning film *Drumline*, and creating and directing the theatrical production, *DRUMLine Live*, which has been touring since 2008. In 2010, Roberts was appointed as Associate Producer and Executive Band Consultant for the ESPN Television series, *The Battle*, which featured Historically Black College and University (HBCU) marching bands.

Born and raised in Atlanta, Roberts received a B.S. in Music Education from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University and an M.A. in Music Education from Jacksonville State University.

Roberts began his teaching career as the band director at DeKalb's Gordon High School in 1986 and was Chairman of the Music Department and band director at Southwest DeKalb High School from 1990 through 1996, when he became Instrumental Music Coordinator of the DeKalb County School System, building one of the most innovative music programs in America.

Roberts' expertise and innovation are apparent in his accomplishments, which include leading the Southwest DeKalb High School Marching Panther Band to perform in Macy's

Thanksgiving Day Parade. It was the first African American Band to do so, and it was the only band in America selected to perform in the Opening Ceremonies of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games. In 2008 Roberts was recognized by Grammy Award-winning artist Dallas Austin and his foundation as its 2008 "Maestro of the Year in Music Education."

Beverly "Guitar" Watkins has been called "one part soul singer, one part rockin' roadhouse mama, and one part gifted songwriter." She began playing music as a child and in high school played bass for a band called Billy West Stone and the Down Beats. Watkins frequented the DeKalb Musicians Supply Company, a local Decatur shop, and bought one of her first guitars there.

Watkins learned guitar and got her earliest musical sensibilities from several aunts who had a quartet named the Hayes Family, and from her grandfather, Luke Hayes, who played the banjo. At family get-togethers these musicians would assemble, and the blues and gospel were passed on in a true folk process to the young Watkins.

Watkins spent the early 1960s playing rhythm guitar with Piano Red & the Interns. She recorded with Piano Red from about 1959-1965 and can be heard on his singles "Doctor Feelgood" and "Right String but the Wrong Yo-Yo."

After the breakup of Piano Red, Watkins played with Eddie Tigner and the Ink Spots, Joseph Smith and the Fendales, and then with Leroy Redding and the Houserockers until the late 1980s. Subsequently she has been based in Atlanta, playing throughout the area, including Underground Atlanta.

In the late 1990s she was "rediscovered" by Tim Duffy and played until her surgery in 2005. In July she will be an eight-year cancer survivor! Since her recovery, Watkins is again playing music to appreciative audiences. This is the eighth award for Watkins. In addition to others, she received a French "Grammy" in 2000 and a W.C. Handy Award in 2001. ✦

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Views of the “DeKalb Building”

Gabriel Benzur was a *Life* magazine photographer, the only one in the southeast. He met his future wife, Frances, who worked for *Time* magazine, and they married just before World War II. After the war they settled in Atlanta, moving here from White Plains, New York. Benzur eventually became an independent photographer, specializing in architectural photography. These photographs were taken for Logan and



Williams Architects, Atlanta, in the late 1940s. Benzur died in 1963.

His son, also named Gabriel Benzur, allowed DHC to scan the collection of 90 photographs, which also include Agnes Scott, Columbia Seminary, and the Emory Woods apartments.

These photos show views of the DeKalb Building, located at 430 N. McDonough Street. Built in 1950 under the direction of Scott Candler, Sr., the building lasted only a quarter of a century before it was deemed inadequate and torn down. With three floors and a basement, the building housed a variety of courts and departments over those years.

It was initially built to serve as an office annex to the courthouse and included a sleek new jail. It also housed two Justices of the Peace, Juvenile Court, the DeKalb Police Department and Probation Officer, and the Departments of Public Welfare and the Water System.

In the mid-1960s, as the county moved out of the historic granite courthouse, most of the court functions moved into the DeKalb Building until the “modern” courthouse was finished. By 1969 all court functions had moved out of the DeKalb Building.

In 1970, the county proposed a bond issue to provide, in part, new facilities for departments housed in the DeKalb Building. The county jail was of particular concern. The building was not used by the county after 1974 and was demolished. ✦



- from Gabriel Benzur



Jail

\$2,500,000



The Problem--

Insecure, Insufficient Space

The DeKalb County Jail is pitifully inadequate. It is an overcrowded, insecure fire trap which was recently termed "deplorable" by a Grand Jury. It is so overcrowded that, at times, 60 prisoners must sleep on the floor.

Some of its worst conditions are lighting so poor that flashlights must be used after dusk; overcrowding so bad that 18 men may be housed in a 12 foot by 12 foot cell; ventilation so inferior that the jail becomes an oven during summer months; a hall so narrow that internal security is jeopardized; walls so fragile that they offer little resistance to escape efforts.

A recent Grand Jury called the conditions alarming and said the present facility "produces intolerable problems with administration, safety, sanitation and security."

THE BOND ISSUE WOULD PROVIDE:

1. \$2,500,000 for a new jail.

The illustration on the left is from a circa 1970 booklet issued by DeKalb County: "Your County... Your Future" A Plan for Progress...Vote May 26th."

DeKalb's burgeoning population was already overburdening county facilities. Twelve different bond issues were addressed in this publication, but they did not all pass immediately. ✦

Annual Meeting

We celebrated our 66th anniversary at Historic DeKalb Courthouse on March 22. At the Annual Meeting, new directors and officers were elected. Officers for next year are President Jack Regan, President Elect Mary K. Jarboe, Treasurer John Hewitt, Past President Melvin Bettis, and Secretary Cathy Mullins. New board members included Melvin Bettis, Gordon Burkette, Sharon Collins, John Coleman, Bob Kelly, Vee Nelson, Jack Regan, Joe Stoner, and Claudia Stucke. Outgoing board members, Albert Martin, Ken Thomas, and Stuart Zola were thanked for their service to the organization. The party included a silent auction as a fundraiser. Over 130 generous restaurants, artists, hotels, and merchants made donations to the auction, which was a huge success! More than \$7,800 was raised to benefit the History Center.

Our guests enjoyed food from **Badda Bing, Black Tie Catering, Endive Fine Catering, LowCountry Barbecue, Sawicki's, Soiree Catering, Sun in My Belly, and Zest Atlanta**. Décor or services were provided by **After Five String Quartet, Alecia Lauren Photography, BASH Atlanta, Bloom Floral Design, Eagle Rock, One Sound and Entertainment, The Plant Peddler, PPI, and Zest Atlanta**.

Silent Auction Packages included donations from Academy Theatre, Aikido Center of Atlanta, Alecia Lauren Photography, Alliance Theater, A New Leaf Landcare, ART Station, Atlanta Botanical Garden, Atlanta Braves, Atlanta History Center, Atlanta Preservation Center, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, BB Salon, Bash Atlanta, Beryl Ferris Immigration Law, Bicycle South, Bicycle Tours of Atlanta, Valerie Biggerstaff, Bikram Yoga Decatur, Bold American Events, Kimberly Brigrance, Mark G. Burnette, Café Alsace, Café Lily, Cakes & Ale Restaurant, Callanwolde Fine Arts Center, Michael C. Carlos Museum, Cason Photography, Center for Puppetry Arts, Charlie Yates Golf Course at East Lake, Chattahoochee Nature Center, City of Decatur, Inside CNN Studio Tour, Color Wheel Studio, The Cook's Warehouse, The Corner Pub, Courtyard by Decatur Downtown/Emory Marriott, Edible Arrangements, Dad's Garage Theatre Company, Dairy Queen, Dancing Goats, Decatur Arts Alliance, Decatur City Jewelers, Decatur Ghost Tour, Decatur Healing Arts, Decatur Yoga & Pilates, DeKalb



& Silent Auction

Symphony Orchestra, Carla Doan, Mark Dowdy, Eagle Eye Book Shop, Edible Arrangements, Emory Conference Center Hotel, Eyeworks of Decatur, Charlene Fang, Fernbank Museum, Fleet Feet, Floral Couture, Fox Theatre, Fresche Salon, Carol Gilman & Nancy Kelly, Carolyn & Earl Glenn, Greene's Fine Foods, Hair Brain Salon, Helmet Hairworx, T. Martin Hart, High Museum of Art, Paul & Dianne Hiltman, Historic Oakland Foundation, The History Press, Jazmin Spa, Jazzercise Decatur Fitness Center, Jekyll Island Authority, The Jekyll Island Club Hotel, Perry Julien Photography, Kavarna, Bob Kelley, Gene Kelly, Ginger Krawiec & Jack Regan, Margaret Lacey, Leon's Full Service, Little Shop of Stories, Lotus of Life Chiropractic, M. Cary & Daughters, Albert & Vivre Martin, Maxim Barbers LLC, Shawn McDaniel, Mediterranean Grill, Mei Zhong Yang Style Taijiquan Association, The Mercantile, Mingei World Arts, Musical Expression Studio, Betty Noble, Noni's, Noodle, Oakhurst Market, Oh Baby! Fitness, Pope Ozio & Associates, Parker's on Ponce, Pets Playhouse on Ponce, Plaza Theatre, William Power, Raging Burrito, The Rain Barrel Depot, Jana Rider, The 17 Steps, Six Flags Over Georgia, Skip's Chicago Dogs, Spectrum Entertainment, Stone Mountain Park, Claudia Stucke, Style Stage Atlanta, Sweet Melissa's, Taste, Thinking Man Tavern, Nora Tocups, Twains Billiards & Tap, Universal Joint, Variety Playhouse, Wahoo! Grill, Well Beings Pain Relief & Peak Performance Center, George Wieder, The Wellness Center at DeKalb Medical, Wyld Center, Young Chefs Academy, Stuart Zola, Zoo Atlanta ✦



In Memorium: Leon L. Kitchens, Jr.

We were sad to learn that Mr. Kitchens, a long time supporter of the DeKalb History Center, recently passed away. He has been remembered by contributions from

**Monique Farill
Dr. & Mrs. Edward Jones**

Thanks to all who have joined or renewed. Membership donations are extremely important to our mission. If there is a correction to your listing, or you have questions about your membership, please call Melissa at 404-373-1088, extension 22.

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DeKalb History Center

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