



## **FAMILY ASSOCIATION**

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### **NEWSLETTER July 2003**

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IF A RENEWAL FORM IS ENCLOSED, YOU NEED TO PAY DUES

2003 REUNION INFORMATION FROM JESSE VAWTER

#### ***2003 VVV Reunion in Pensacola Florida***

Thursday, July 31 through Sunday, August 3

This will attempt to briefly summarize the letter that I recently sent to each of you. We continue to make minor adjustments to the schedule you received in the previous VVV Newsletter. You will receive the official reunion schedule at registration.

Registration will begin Thursday at noon and last to 5 PM at the Days Inn – Historic Pensacola, 710 N. Palafox St., Pensacola; The phone number is (850) 438-4922. Be sure and call soon to make your reservation. Just mention you are with the Vawter group to receive the group discount.

Reception at 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM at “1700 Scenic Hwy” – Definitely worth the time and effort.

A group trip to The Navy Air Museum located at the Pensacola Naval Air Station. An IMAX movie (about \$6), called ‘The Magic of Flight’ Parts of the movie are filmed while flying in the cockpit with the Blue Angels. This was the high point of our trip to Pensacola last year. Lunch will be on your own, but the CUBI Bay restaurant, located in the museum, has good food and the walls and ceilings are covered with memorabilia. We will have our VVV Opening ceremonies here (10-15 minutes).

The Family History Center agreed to stay open for our group, and show us how to use their files to research our ancestry. Don't miss this one.

The Scenic Diner will cater our Friday night meal. Many suggested we bring our favorite dessert and share. Those who want to, please bring a favorite dessert and share it with the rest of the family. Bring the recipe, because you are sure to be asked for it. Any leftover desserts can be eaten the rest of the weekend.

The Saturday morning Genealogy session, led by Georgene Jurgensen and Jim Vaughters, will take a slightly different turn. In addition to us all telling our favorite family story(s), we've asked them include some of the more interesting stories that they have uncovered in their VVV genealogy research. Both are great storytellers!

The banquet on Saturday night will be held at the Angus Restaurant. They are known for their food and Ralphe negotiated a great price.

On Sunday morning, we will have an informal morning devotional before we get on the road. For those who have the time, consider worshiping with Ralphe and Caroline. Services are at 10:30 AM at Christ Church.

Don't forget to pass to Jesse and Laneil Vawter the names and pertinent information for any VVV family member that has passed away since our last reunion so that your loved one can be remembered in the Memorial Service.

Don't forget:

- make your hotel reservations
- bring your favorite dessert and recipe to share if you want to
- order and pay for the Vawter Crest shirt and or the 2003 VVV Pensacola shirt if you want one
- send in headcount and names of those who will attend
- come prepared to have a great time and meet new 'old friends'

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#### DOOR PRIZES

A popular tradition at the reunions is the giving of door prizes. These items are donated by the members. Some bring handcrafted items; others bring something that is unique to the area in which they live. There is always a wide variety.

#### RESERVATIONS

Please be sure to return your meal reservation form to Jesse and Laneil Vawter. They also need to know the names of those who will be attending.

VAUGHTER CEMETERY  
ELBERT COUNTY, GEORGIA  
By Jim Vaughters

Among the many legacies that Swift and Julian Vaughter left us was the knowledge of the original house and the family cemetery. They are on the first 125 acres that John Vawter owned. As was typical, the cemetery is about 200 yards from the house. Both are in the center of the 850 acres that were given to the State of Georgia and that were the subject of the first big ceremony at the 2002 reunion.

The State is now a partner with the family in preserving these landmarks. While the cemetery was the site of the Sons of the American Revolution ceremony honoring John's grave, it is important to recognize all the family members buried there.

1. John Vawter, born Virginia about 1750, son of Richard Vawter and Frances Towles, lived in North Carolina about 1775-1800, moved to Elbert County, died 1817, probate estate 1818-1834.

2. Joannah Vernon Vawter, second wife of John, daughter of Richard Vernon and Saran Tinsley, born Virginia about 1763, married John about 1792 in North Carolina, wrote a will and died 1826. A sister, Sarah, married William Ward, a Revolutionary soldier, and a brother of Frankey Ward, first wife of John Vawter. Another sister, Elizabeth, married Anthony Dearing who, along with John Vawter, acted as Richard Vernon's power of attorney for land he owned in North Carolina.

3. William Vawter, son of John and Frankey, born about 1780 in North Carolina, never married, headed the lawsuit of John's estate vs Cooper and Frankey Bennett (John's own daughter) to recover slaves leased out in Pendleton, South Carolina, wrote a will and died in 1828.

4. Richard Vawter, son of John and Joannah, born about 1795 in North Carolina, never married, became guardian of three slaves and sued John's estate and won their freedom and \$3,000.00, acquired much of the land that made up the final 850 acres, wrote a will and died in 1856, gave all his property to the children of his brother Lindsey, inventory recently found.

5. Lindsey Vaughter, son of John and Joannah, born 1808 in Georgia or South Carolina (census records vary), might be the Lindsey Vaughter listed as being in Indian Wars in the 1830s, married Mary Polly McMullen Hulme in 1844, was appointed guardian of his own children under the will of his brother Richard (the original guardianship order was in Swift's house) in which bond was set at \$11,000.00 (!), died in 1863.

6. Mary Polly McMullen Hulme Vaughter, born 1812, married and widowed, married Lindsey in 1844, had six children, signed an employment contract with her former slaves in August 1865 (original was in Swift's house), showed as Mary Vorters in 1870 and 1880 censuses, died in 1890.

7. Jesse Richard Vaughter, son of Lindsey and Mary, the only child of theirs not buried at Harmony Baptist Church Cemetery, born 1846, he and his brother named in an 1847 deed in which their uncle Richard gave his property to them (original in Swift's house), four years old in 1850 census, not named in Richard's will of May 1, 1856, probably died before.

The edges of the cemetery have some miscellaneous unmarked stones lying on the

ground. While there is no documentation of the other family members buried there, the following ones are likely permanent residents:

Elizabeth Vawter Crump, daughter of John and Joannah, born about 1800 in North Carolina, named numerous times in John's estate, married Pleasant Crump 1822, had a baby 1823, died 1823, no record found of her burial.

L. Vawter, 1850 census "Female, 76 years old, born Virginia, farmer, lived with Mr. and Mrs. Hanks." No other record of this person in Elbert County, before or after. Possibly a cousin of John and had lived in North Carolina. Possibly a widow of a Vawter man, such as the elusive Warton. Being born in 1774, prior to the Revolutionary War, and living until the eve of the Civil War, certainly makes her an interesting historical figure.

Query: Do other members of the Association have information or thoughts on this cemetery?

#### CONGRATULATIONS

Heather Jean Gipson of Indianapolis received the Juris Doctorate Degree on May 11, 2003. The ceremonies were held in the Sagamore Ballroom at the Indiana Convention Center, with 264 candidates. She received the bronze level pro bono award, and is a member of Alpha Kappa Delta and the American Health Lawyers Association.

She is practicing in the area of health law and is employed by the Indiana University School of Medicine, office of compliance services, and continues to teach as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Indianapolis.

Heather is the granddaughter of VVV Association members Milton and Charlotte Pickett of North Vernon, Indiana.

#### NAMES LISTED AT VETERAN'S PARK

Following the 2002 reunion in Georgia, the Historical Society of Elbert County, Georgia, placed the name of John Vawter on the list of Revolutionary War soldiers. His name was chiseled onto the granite monument at Veteran's Park in Elberton. The name of William Ward, brother of John's first wife Frankey Ward, was also placed on the monument.

Thanks to Richard Greene for following through and persevering in order to complete this project.

#### PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

Do you know someone who might be interested in becoming a member of the association? Send their name(s) to the news editor, and we will mail complimentary issues of the newsletter. Several of our members have learned of the association in this way.

Melba Vawter Ashburn has sent this obituary of her daughter, Diane Marie Wilmonen. Those who attended the 1993 reunion in Oklahoma City will remember Diane and the solos she sang. Melba is writing a book about her daughter's long journey with breast cancer, and will call it "God is Using Me." Melba also said the Vawters in Idaho are having a reunion at Hells Gate State Park on the Snake River in July, and expect about 80 people to attend. We hope someone will send a report of this reunion for the newsletter.

#### DIANE MARIE WILMONEN

**Diane Marie Wilmonen** passed away at Lewiston, Idaho, August 25, 2002 at age 54. She was born at Lewiston, Idaho, April 30, 1948, to Robert and Melba Vawter Ashburn.

"God is using me," became Diane's focus during her 6 ½ year journey of faith with breast cancer. When in 1997, she learned the cancer had metastasized to the bones she was told there was no cure. Her faith in God did not waiver as she continued with four surgeries, four sessions of Chemotherapy, and radiation. Appointments with doctors, regular hospitalization, and continual MRIs, scans, and tests consumed much of her time and energy after breast cancer was diagnosed on Good Friday, April 5, 1996.

Diane received a bachelor of science degree from Lewis Clark State College and became a classroom music teacher in Lewiston's Elementary Schools. Her love of music and teaching children was a dream come true for Diane. However, due to the ravishes of cancer, she was unable to continue and sadly retired in 1998.

Music was Diane's passion. She studied music at WSU and her lovely soprano voice was appreciated as she was a choir member and soloist for twenty-five years at the Congregational Presbyterian Church. Also she participated in the Stuart Churchill Chorale for many years, and she sang with the Washington Idaho Symphony Chorus, Sweet Adelines, and had leading roles in musical productions at Lewis Clark State College.

Nothing was more important to Diane than her family. She planned and organized for every occasion. She loved every precious moment she was able to spend with grandson, Michael 3, and said of baby granddaughter, Hana Marie, ten months, "I just want to live to see Hana walk down this hall."

Diane worshiped at the Congregational Presbyterian Church her entire life. Her baptism there was in 1948, by Pastor Douglas Vance, and her marriage was officiated by Pastor Paul Hovey in April, 1967.

Diane loved the vacations that her family managed during the years of their marriage. Favorite places were the Oregon Coast, Crooked River, Dworshak Dam and the Canadian Rockies. She longed for one last trip to the ocean in May where they had reservations in Lincoln City.

Her collection of angels symbolized a connection to Heaven. These beautiful gifts from family and friends were a comforting presence to Diane when life was so unpredictable. During her last

month at home before she was hospitalized, she selected angels to be given to friends and family who were her special angels.

Diane was a member of the Congregational Presbyterian Church, Xi Chapter of Alpha Delta Kappa, Chapter AR of PEO, the Lewiston Education Association, and the Valley Breast Cancer Support Group.

Survivors are her husband, Kenneth Wilmonen, at the family home; son, Robert Wilmonen of Lewiston; son, Scott Wilmonen and his wife, Miki Kurosawa, of Meridian, Idaho; two grandchildren, Michael and Hana Marie Wilmonen, of Meridian. Also she is survived by her parents, Robert and Melba Ashburn, Lewiston; sister, Julie Kay Randall, and her husband, Gary, of Sammamish, Washington; brother, Douglas Ashburn, of Genesee, Idaho, and his wife, Susie. She is also survived by four nephews, Casey and Corey Bayless, and Teague and Gavin Ashburn, and numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins.

#### FLORENCE BEATRICE FITCH

**Florence Beatrice Fitch**, 91, of North Vernon, Indiana, died Thursday, 15 May 2003, at St. Vincent Jennings Hospital in North Vernon. She was born in Jennings County, Indiana, 21 March 1912, the daughter of Jesse Francis and Elizabeth Leahigh Clarkson. She married Earl Fitch on 11 January 1936.

Mrs. Fitch worked for 14 years at Muscatatuck State Developmental Center, retiring as a ward clerk. She was a member of Church of the Nazarene in North Vernon and the adult Sunday school class of the church. A lifelong resident of Jennings County, she was a graduate of Hayden High School. She enjoyed mowing the grass, gardening, flea markets and yard sales.

Surviving are a son, Earl Fitch Jr. of North Vernon; two daughters, Juanita P. Speer of Coral Springs, Florida, and Brenda K. Bennett of North Vernon; grandchildren, David Speer of Reddington, Indiana, Dennis Speer of St. Cloud, Florida, Daria Fish of Coral Springs and Chris Bennett, Gena Allen, and Jennifer Penegar, all of North Vernon; and ten great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband in 1978; brothers, Omar, Wilford and Jennings Clarkson; and sisters, Goldie Hyatt, Ethel Peterson, Gladys Engle, Pearl Engle, and Lottie Clarkson.

Florence Fitch's grandparents were Thomas and Elizabeth Vawter Clarkson. Her great-grandparents were Jesse R. and Sarah Parks Vawter, and her great-great-grandparents were William and Frances Vawter, all of Jennings County, Indiana. For many years, Florence placed flowers on the graves of her ancestors buried in the old Vawter Cemetery near North Vernon every Memorial Day. Just a few days before her death, she purchased flowers for this year.

FLORENCE MAUDE FITZGERALD VAWTER

**Florence Maude Vawter Fitzgerald**, 99, died 22 December 2002. She was born 21 February 1903 in Franklin, Indian Territory, the daughter of James Wesley and Martha Ann McCasson Vawter.

She was a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and was one of the last few original enrollees of her tribe. Her grandfather was removed to Oklahoma on the Choctaw "Trail of Tears." She later moved with her family to Bethany, Oklahoma.

She graduated from the high school at Oklahoma Nazarene College, now known as Southern Nazarene University, where she was active in the Shakespearean Club and the Platonic Literature Society. She received her Life Teaching Certificate from Central State Teachers' College in Edmond, Oklahoma, and moved to Pernell, Oklahoma, to teach at Wyatt's Chapel School and help her family during the Great Depression. Later, she moved to Dale, Oklahoma, to teach first grade and music. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from East Central College in Ada, Oklahoma, in August 1957.

Florence taught school for 36 years before retiring. She also spent approximately 75 years giving vocal and piano lessons privately, and accompanied many vocal and band students in competitions. In her lifetime, she witnessed many changes in world history. She was four years old when Oklahoma became a state; six years old when Geronimo, the leader of the Apache nation, died at Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. When she was born, automobiles and airplanes were a novel new idea, and television, space travel and antibiotics were not even in the experimental stage.

Surviving are a son, David Fitzgerald; a daughter, Dr. Marcia Fitzgerald Guinn; a son-in-law, George Guinn; a brother Silas M. Vawter; three granddaughters, Milynda Guinn Moore, Lia Guinn Ingram and Lisa Fitzgerald; and great-grandchildren, Sascha Ingram, Leif Moore, Ashley Ingram, Davey Ingram, and MacKinley Moore.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Eugene Frank Fitzgerald, in 1961; and sisters and brothers, Eula, Eunice, Ethel, Beatrice, Alice, Elbert, Albert, Zona and Lillian.

This information was taken from an obituary that appeared in the *Pauls Valley Daily Democrat* on Dec. 26, 2002. It was sent to us by Fred Wicker. Florence Fitzgerald and Fred's mother were first cousins. Florence's brother, Silas, has attended several reunions, and will be remembered by some for having defeated Jim Vaughters in a tennis match at Lake Murray State Park. At the time, Silas was 70 years old.

INFORMATION NEEDED

As always, we thank the many people who have provided information for this newsletter. Please remember to send news of your family, such as marriages, births, deaths, graduations, special events or awards received. Perhaps you see something in the newspaper with a Vawter/Vaughter/Vaughter(s) connection. Please send a copy of that article.

ROBERT LAVERNE VAWTER

**Robert Laverne Vawter**, 71, of Newaygo, Michigan, died 7 April 2003 in McAllen, Texas. He was born 15 April 1931 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the son of Robert C. and Margaret G. Hamacher Vawter.

He was a member of First Baptist Church in Newaygo and retired from Rapistan in 1986.

Surviving are his wife, Ila Dygert Vawter; a son and daughter-in-law, Robert Dale and Colleen Vawter; a grandson and granddaughter-in-law, Peter John and Kristin Vawter; a granddaughter, Aimee Louise Vawter; and his mother, Margaret G. Hamacher Vawter.

He was preceded in death by a daughter, Bonnie Jean Vawter DeHaan; a brother Duane Vawter; and his father, Robert C. Vawter.

Burial was at Merriman Cemetery in Lowell Township, Michigan.

Robert was a longtime member of the VVV Association, and along with his wife and parents attended many reunions. Ila has provided violin music for the Memorial Service several times. We thank Ila for sending Robert's obituary. She said that although he had pancreatic cancer, he had little pain and was a great witness to all who visited him and to all his caregivers.

DEWEY VAWTER, JR.

**Dewey "Buddy" Vawter, Jr.**, 74, Zionsville, Indiana, died 28 June 2003. He was born 8 February 1929, the son of Dewey and Lora McDaniels Vawter.

He was an electrician 40 years for Ashpaugh Electrical Service, and an Indiana National Guard Sgt. From 1947 to 1950.

Surviving are his wife, Jeanette L. Leonard Vawter; a son, John E. Vawter; a daughter, Linda S. Potter; and eight grandchildren.

Funeral Service was held at John Wesley Free Methodist Church, where he was a member, with burial at Mt. Pleasant Cemetery.

Dewey Vawter, Jr. was a longtime member of the VVV Association. He and Jeanette attended the 1987 reunion held in Columbus, Indiana. We thank Esther Barker Vawter of Fresno, California, for bringing this obituary to our attention.

OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

The October newsletter will have a report of the 2003 reunion in Florida, information about Van's Creek Baptist Church records, and a report of the ceremony honoring the grave of Confederate veteran Hiram Vaughtner at the family cemetery in Red Hill, Franklin County, Georgia.



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