Remembering the Day JFK Was Shot
50 years ago it was “a solemn cloud over the whole community”

For one weekend nearly 50 years ago, there was nothing unique about the Mount Horeb area.

It was wrapped in grief, sorrow and disbelief, just like every other community in the United States was for a few days in November because of shots that had been fired in Dallas, Texas.

On Nov. 22, 1963, while most people were at work and the kids were in school, President John F. Kennedy was shot by an assassin’s bullet in the early afternoon of what would have otherwise been an ordinary Friday before Thanksgiving.

“I turned around and went into my classroom and had to tell the kids. I said, ‘Wow, this is really bad news.’”

Quote from Vivian Stone, MHHS teacher in 1963

The village, like so many places, was in shock.

Before that, though, it was an ordinary autumn in Mount Horeb. On Nov. 21, grocery ads in the Mount Horeb Mail touted Thanksgiving specials from Kalscheur’s, Anderson’s, Kahl and Nygard, the Daleyville Store and the City Food Market. Hoff’s had boots on sale for people to get ready for the coming winter. Disney’s “Son of Flubber” was scheduled to play at the Strand theater and the Pokerville Inn, Blue Mounds, was planning to host a Deer Hunters Party.

But that all changed as news began to spread about what happened in Dallas.

Vivian Stone, then a teacher at the high school, heard the news from fellow teacher Fred Schwierske when they were out in the hallway outside their neighboring classrooms hanging out attendance slips for the afternoon classes.

“He said to me, ‘Had you heard that President Kennedy had been shot?’ I said that no, I hadn’t,” Vivian said. “I turned around and went into my classroom and had to tell the kids. I said, ‘Wow, this is really bad news.’”

She told her students, who wondered what it all meant. At that point they didn’t know if the shots...
were fatal. An announcement was made that the president had died. Classes continued that day, sort of.

“The whole afternoon just sort of shut down,” Vivian said. “The students were very quiet, they didn’t know what to say. Continuing with the lessons was not possible at all, but we kind of looked at them to have something to talk about.”

Connie Jo Zwettler, then a junior in high school, heard the news when she was at the grade school, now the Primary Center. The Junior Class Play, “Hillbilly Weddin’” was being performed for the younger kids. The night performance was then postponed for two weeks.

“It was very unreal,” Connie Jo said. “Nothing like that had ever happened before in our lifetime. We wondered what was going to happen next. People were kind of in a daze.”

Connie Jo remembers spending much of the next few days watching television, sitting in front of the set knitting Christmas scarves. She recorded the televised events with a reel-to-reel audio tape recorder.

“It seemed to be something I wanted to keep for a long time after that,” she said.

The president was honored with a page in the 1964 Berohbok high school yearbook, with a sketch of JFK and the headlines “A Moment in History: All Activities Ceased.”

“Shock and disbelief accompanied the startling announcement,” the yearbook staff wrote. “Many prayed, many wept, all had a deep sense of loss and incomprehension. Activities ceased; discussions stopped; there was no conversation or hurrying between classes. …”

The shock and disbelief came for reasons beyond the violence of the moment; it was also a product of the times everyone was living in. The Cuban Missile Crisis had happened just the year before. The fear of an attack by the Soviet Union was ever present. Public buildings had fallout shelters in case of nuclear attack. Students of all ages practiced civil defense drills, sitting in the hallways of school with their heads down to defend themselves against whatever menace might hit.

Bill Kalscheur was a fourth-grader in November 1963 and remembers the announcement about the president coming over the intercom and that his teacher cried. But, more than anything else, he remembers being afraid.

“I remember as a kid being in actual fear of a nuclear attack, so all this was in my head and then this happened,” Bill said. “We thought, ‘What’s going to happen next?’”

Away from school, people found out about it mostly because of television. Carol Johnson was watching “As the World Turns” when the voice of Walter Cronkite interrupted the soap opera to tell of the president’s death.

“I still cry when I hear his voice,” Carol said of the legendary CBS newsman.
Activities throughout town slowed to a crawl. Local churches had special services on Saturday. No one went out much.

“Life went on, but it was just slow,” said Susan Koller, who was teaching at the high school but helping out with the play at the grade school that day. “People were never jovial. It was a solemn cloud over the whole community.”

Most people were home glued to their televisions, watching the news, watching the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald, watching the president’s funeral.

“I remember sitting at home and crying and crying with the TV on,” Vivian Stone said. “It was so terribly sad.”

Susan Koller was coming home from church on Nov. 24 when she turned on the TV just in time to see Jack Ruby shoot Oswald, who had been arrested for the murder of the president.

“I thought, ‘I can’t believe it!’ Right on the TV, you never turned on the TV and saw people getting shot,” she said.

The funeral was Monday, Nov. 25. Residents of the Mount Horeb area, like people all over the country, remained in front of their TVs.

“It was horrible,” Carol Johnson said. “I remember little John saluting and Jackie in the black veil. It was so traumatic.”

On Nov. 28, the Mount Horeb Mail dedicated its entire front page to the president’s death. This was a change for the paper; generally its front pages were all about the community – school activities, births, marriages, deaths and business news. But the Nov. 28 front page included an editorial, a story about the president and a story about the new president, Lyndon Johnson. The stories included comments from new village president Curtis Witte, school superintendent D.A. Kobs, S.A. Sylvester, president of the State Bank of Mount Horeb, the Rev. Ruben Mostrom of Evangelical Lutheran Church and Milford Thompson, president of Pure Milk Association District 19. All expressed the same sadness and horror that echoed that of the entire nation.

The page 1 also included a photo by Cyril Burns, taken when John F. Kennedy had visited Mount Horeb on the campaign trail in 1960.

But in that issue of the Mount Horeb Mail it was clear that life was also getting back to normal. Beyond the news of the president’s death there was information about wrestling being the new sport at

The funeral of President Kennedy was televised on Nov. 25, 1963; Lyle Johnson photographed the images on his television set.

“"It was horrible, I remember little John saluting and Jackie in the black veil. It was so traumatic."

Quote from Carol Johnson, Mt. Horeb resident in 1963
the high school that fall, the announcement of 26 deer killed in the recent hunt, the names of five area men who were headed to the Army, plans for a Euchre Party at Bert and Mary Ann’s in Blue Mounds and reports of Ed Loeffel, with a 590, and Betty Burns, with a 513, bowling the high series at Corella’s.

The Historical Society has several items in its collections relating to the events of November 1963. There are the newspapers that reported the news of the assassination as well as Life magazines, there is a record album of the president’s speeches and a recently donated copy of the Warren Commission report about the assassination.

“It was the commemorative stuff that people held onto and it filtered in to us,” said Historical Society President Brian Bigler.

Some of the more unique pieces of the archives relating to the president’s death come from Lyle Johnson, who photographed more than 3,500 images of everyday life in Mount Horeb in the 1950s, ’60s and ’70s. Lyle took still photos of the president’s funeral on television, the kind of thing that would have been the only way to capture it in the days before VCRs and DVRs.

“It was what we’d always want to do when we were kids, take a picture of the TV,” Brian said. “And he did it.”

Your memories

What are your memories of the day President Kennedy was shot? A collection of memories of that day would be an excellent addition to the archives.

Email your recollections to mthorebhistory@mhtc.net, or mail them to MHAHS, 138 E. Main St., Mt. Horeb 53572.
Architect, Author Headline 38th Annual Meeting

The architect for the planned Heritage Center project and an author who collected oral histories about the area’s natural environment will be the speakers at the Society’s annual meeting on Oct. 13.

The 2 p.m. meeting will reveal all of the exciting things that have taken place throughout the year and give members a chance to participate in the Society’s operational decisions.

At 2:20 p.m. the public and the membership will have the opportunity to meet Bruce Roth, the architect for the new Southwestern Dane County Heritage Center as well as hear his presentation on the building. There will be time to ask questions of both Bruce Roth and Society board member Peter Riphahn, the project manager of the Heritage Center.

At 2:30 author Susan Gilchrist, who spent many hours in 2004 orally recording local residents about the natural environment of Southwestern Dane County, will discuss her new book that contains excerpts from these interviews and reveals the natural history of the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage area. Audience participation and conversations with some of the interviewees will follow her presentation.

It is hoped that audience participants will come away from this event with a broader understanding of the Historical Society’s goals for the future and an increased interest in conservation and the beauty of Southwestern Dane County.

A short meeting precedes the program with treats, beverages and social time after. The public is invited to attend.
Author Explores Residents’ Connections to the Land

What connects people to the land around them? Time spent there, the memories of things they’ve done, people they’ve cared about, hopes and dreams they’ve had, the beauty or uniqueness of the place itself.

That’s all part of the research done by Susan Gilchrist, who will present her work about the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage area south of Mount Horeb at the Historical Society’s annual meeting on Oct. 13. The presentation will include readings from her new book, *Views of the Ridge: A Changing Rural Landscape* and discussion about the project, the process of collecting oral history, potential uses of it in the community and applications to conservation.

The focus of Gilchrist’s oral history was not a period of time or an historical event, but the connection to a place: the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area.

Oral history can serve many purposes. This oral history project came about because the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and other conservation partners were interested in a landscape scale conservation plan for the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area. In order to find out what people connected to the land in the area valued, how the landscape has changed, how people who are invested in the place want it to be in the future, Gilchrist conducted 29 personal interviews, including 40 people, in 2004. Thanks to a grant from the Wisconsin Humanities Council, the answers to the questions, intertwined with personal memories, have been written into a book that paints a broad picture of the landscape over time in the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area.

People remembered farm life and a time when cheese factories and one-room country schools punctuated the countryside. Some referred to prairie remnants and recent work to restore prairies. Many noted changes in wildlife sightings over their lifetimes, with increases of deer, turkey and coyotes. People talked about changes in farm practices and their concern about about keeping the land.

Continued on page 10

Beyond the Studio:
Cyril Burns Photographs Captured History

By Jane Burns

The following essay is based on remarks made last fall by Jane Burns at a reception at the Mount Horeb Public Library to announce the addition of some area books and images into the UW Digital Collections, an online archive of photos and books. Among the photos now in that UW archive are three that were shot by Cyril Burns of John F. Kennedy campaigning in Mount Horeb in 1960. The photos, along with thousands of other images photographed by “Cy” are part of the Historical Society’s archives.

I was pleased the library thought of these images when it came time for this digital imaging project, and that the Historical Society has been able to use them over the years, too. My dad was rightfully proud of these photos and for having this bit of history in his possession, so much so that he never wanted to sell them.

Once when I was in high school I said, “Dad, you should call up everyone in these pictures and say, I have a picture of you with JFK and sell them one for like $100.” “Oh no, I wouldn’t do that,” he’d say. “If someone wants one, they just have to ask.” And indeed, that’s what happened. If someone asked, he’d make them a copy. It might take them a while to get it but they would get one and it probably was free.

That’s why it makes me so happy that technology has advanced to where, with a click of a mouse, the whole world can see my dad’s photos. He always wanted to share them and now even more people can see them. I recently found out that my dad bought his first camera, a pinhole box camera, by ordering it from the back of a comic book, probably in the 1940s. That little detail makes the technology of this digital project all the more amazing to me.

For those who don’t know, my dad was a studio photographer here in Mt. Horeb from 1958 until about 1998, the year before he died. If you’re over 35, there’s a good chance he took your senior picture, your wedding picture, your baby picture, your prom picture or your confirmation or First Communion picture.
But what I like about these JFK photos is they shine a light on another aspect of my dad’s photography that many people probably don’t know or remember. Besides the work in his studio, like any good photographer, he took his camera all over. He would even take it when he went fishing. With his camera, he recorded a lot of the history of this town and the Mt Horeb Area Historical Society has many of his photos from the 1961 centennial, Song of Norway, photo shoots with Dr. Gonstead and some business events. He shot a portrait of the man who is now the king of Norway during his visit to Little Norway in 1965, and my family still has a thank you note from a royal representative for that photo.

My dad was also a photo correspondent for The Capital Times for many years. Because of that, he was sometimes out shooting car accidents or plane crashes or blizzards. The Malone School book published in recent years, and for sale at the museum shop, has a 1962 Capital Times article about the last day of classes at that school. The photographs that accompany the story were shot by my dad. There is also a photo of Crown Prince Harald in a Little Norway book that was shot by my dad. My dad did a lot more of that in his early years here, probably because his business was just beginning but also probably because he didn’t have six kids yet.

But another thing most people don’t know or remember about my dad’s work was that his first studio was on Main Street, where Isaac’s Soaps is now. There was my dad’s studio, the movie theater and then Olson’s restaurant. That put him in the middle of a big news event in 1960 when Sen. John F. Kennedy came to town. My dad was right there, and the result is the photos that still exist today.

And it’s a good thing he shot those photos. In doing a little homework about this event, it sure didn’t get much coverage. In 1960 campaigns were not the media frenzy they are now, although it was this campaign that began to turn it in that direction. JFK’s visit barely merited a blurb in the Mount Horeb Mail to preview it. It was at the bottom of the page, inviting people to come have coffee with Sen. Kennedy. Other bigger news in the paper that day was that the Mt. Horeb Rifle Club won a championship, even if “rifle” was spelled wrong in the headline. A big story that week also related to the election and that was the referendum to vote on the new high school. And in really big news that day, much bigger than Sen. Kennedy’s visit, was a story saying that some cheese and butter had been stolen from the Ryser Bros. Factory.

There were no photos of it after it happened, just a report of the election. In fact, in the 1961 Centennial book published soon after, JFK didn’t even rate a mention in the “Distinguished Visitors” category. I guess the town was still recovering from the thrill that was the William McKinley visit in 1899.

In 1963, after the president was assassinated, the Mount Horeb Mail dedicated an entire page to his death. One of the photos my dad shot was used on that page (shown on page one of this newsletter).

John F. Kennedy did not win the primary election in Mt. Horeb that spring, Hubert Humphrey did, but clearly there was interest in his appearance here, the crowds in the photos bear that out. These are fun photos to spend some time with – to look at the fashions, to look for familiar faces. I’m in the newspaper business now and I’ve taken them to work; we had fun looking through the crowd to see if we could spot who were the reporters and who were the Secret Service agents. The photos are also a great look at the wallpaper that gave the Ivy Room at Olson’s its name.

The images can be found online at http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/WI/MountHorebLocHist2. They were made from the negatives, which will reside in the MHAHS archives.

Although it was more than 50 years ago, the Historical Society would still like to hear anyone’s recollections – or see other photos – of then-Sen. Kennedy’s visit to Mount Horeb in 1960. If anybody has any stories to share from JFK’s visit, please get in touch with us. You can call me at 437-0731 or email me at janeburns@mhtc.net, or the Society at 437-6486 or mthorebhistory@mhtc.net.
New Volunteer for the Archives

Christmas came early to the Archives in the form of Caitlin Besadny, our new volunteer. Caitlin is a 2012 graduate of Beloit College, where she majored in Anthropology with a minor in Museum Studies. Until some lucky museum finds a full time position for Caitlin, the MHAHS is the grateful recipient of her time and talent. Shan Thomas, the MHAHS Archivist gave her a huge project, which Caitlin willingly jumped into with a “can do” attitude.

Readers of previous Past Times will remember the description of the Photograph Cataloging Project started last year. Brynn Bruijn worked on the initial stage of the effort by sorting and sleeving thousands of our photographs in preparation for cataloging each one into Past Perfect, which is the museum and archives database software we use. Now Caitlin has taken over the project.

Caitlin takes each photograph and after assigning it a number, enters all the details about it into the computer database. She measures each photograph, dates it whenever possible and fills in all the names and places that might be identified on the back of the image. She then uses her anthropology skills and lists other features of the image. For instance, an 1890 photograph of a child in a studio would have it noted that the photograph has an example of 1890’s children dress, an example of a child’s toy and even notes the rattan chair on which the child is sitting. In the not too distant future, we

Building Fund Looks to Match $250,000 Challenge Gift

The Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society is in its final months of matching a generous gift of $250,000 offered to the Society in early 2013 by Steve and Marianne Schlecht. The money is to be used for the new Southwestern Dane County Heritage Center planned for downtown Mt. Horeb. The Schlechts’ gift came with the stipulation that the Historical Society match it by the end of December 2013. As of this date the Society has just over $100,000 to go to meet the challenge.

“We are excited about the outpouring of gifts we have received to date, some even from people who just thought it was great idea after reading about it in a Madison newspaper article," said Historical Society President Brian Bigler. “The generosity of Jim Kalscheur and the Schlechts early on in our fundraising efforts was a great kickoff.”

Bigler said the society will need to raise $2.5 million to see the project through to completion. “All the interest we have received to date is very encouraging,” he said. “People have also commented on how excited they are about the tourism and educational possibilities the Heritage Center will bring to downtown Mt. Horeb, not to mention the attention the community will receive because of it.”

Bigler said the attention will hopefully translate into state-sanctioned directional signs steering people off nearby Highway 18-151 to the downtown. If you would like to meet with a representative from the Historical Society’s Heritage Center Steering Committee phone 608-437-6486 or email the Historical Society at mthorebhistory@mhtc.net. For more information visit the Historical Society’s website at mthorebhistory.org, which includes a link to the Heritage Center’s Comprehensive Plan.

Checks may be sent directly to the Historical Society at 138 E. Main St., Mt. Horeb, WI 53572.

For gifts of stock, other contributions, or for more information contact Darlene Nowak at 608-437-4809.

Continued on page 11
Challenge Fund Grows

A big thank you is extended to all who responded to the Challenge Grant plea in the last newsletter. We are well on our way to meeting Steve and Marianne Schlecht’s challenge gift of $250,000 that must be matched by the end of 2013.

You will notice the insert in your newsletter that reveals the gifting levels available for the Heritage Center. People have been very creative in their gifting with offerings of stocks, IRA accounts, installment pledges and donations of personal property for the Society’s Estate Remnant Sale. If you have already given, or are unable to contribute at this time we ask that you pass the enclosed form on to a relative or friend. All amounts of gifting are greatly appreciated and will move us closer to groundbreaking day.

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If you have any questions please contact one of the Steering Committee members:
Sale Success

The Board of Directors would like to extend a huge thank you to Donna Read, who spent much of her summer in the Museum’s basement pricing items for the Society’s Estate Remnant Sale. Further thanks to the following individuals for their contributions:
Conrad and Vickie Anderson
Carl Arneson
June Bohn estate
Laurie Boyden
Jane Burns
Gerry Glaeve
Marietta Gribb
Phil and Ruth Halverson
Eileen Hanneman
  (Bud & Lorraine Hanneman estate)
Dave Hoffman and Teri Vierima
Debra Hoffman
Dale Johnson family (Mitzi Johnson estate)
Karen Johnson
Ron Johnson
Deb Lehner
Shirley Martin
Helen Martinson
Dawn McIntosh
Terri Meyer
Charles and Lucy Ramshaw
Donna Read
Betty Rosenbaum
Bob and Sharon Schiefelbein

Donna Read organizing donated items in the basement of the museum throughout the summer

Lois Schmidt
Shan Thomas
Dennis and Joan Thomson (Schurch estate)
Pearl Vierima
Esther Wagner
Other anonymous donors

Special thanks to the many who volunteered their time to help out before, during and after the sale:
Mary Jane Lynch
Jo Ann Skalet
Nancy Tans
Laurie Boyden
MHAHS Board Members

Views of the Ridge Continued from page 6

rural and agricultural in the face of current development. They also expressed understanding of the farmer’s need to sell a bit of land as his “retirement.” Almost everyone remembered a storm – the weather can be expected to affect those who inhabit rural areas. Several people shared their experiences of the 1984 Barneveld tornado. Memories of courtships or a death in the family give the accounts additional heart. A backdrop of beauty, the vision of the great Blue Mound and the breath-taking view of wide open vistas, floats on the horizon behind, coloring all the memories.

Although she grew up on a small farm in Pennsylvania and now lives in suburban Ohio, Gilchrist resided in Madison for about 30 years. She worked for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources from 1989 to 2007. During those years, she conducted an oral history of place in the pine barrens of northwest Wisconsin, which resulted in the book “Sand Country Memories: Oral Perspectives of Wisconsin’s Northwest Pine Barrens.”

Gilchrist is a veteran presenter at conferences for environmental educators, naturalist and historical interpreters, wildlife managers, bird conservation educators and more. In addition, she has been active in the storytelling community for more than 30 years and has performed professionally as a storyteller.
New Volunteer continued from page 8

will be able to search our catalog for all the images of a specific person, place or event as well as help researchers find illustrations of clothing, tools, agricultural practices, architectural styles, and much, much more.

In addition to the cataloging, Caitlin is carefully transcribing the steps she takes and will produce a step by step manual to be used for all future photograph cataloging. It will be titled “The MHAHS Photographic Image Cataloging Manual,” by Caitlin Besadny.

So, please join us in welcoming this bright and energetic young woman. We wish her well in her search for a museum position but secretly have our fingers crossed that she can stay a few weeks, at least.

Museum Building Updated

In order to prevent future ice dams at the Museum building and to assist with energy cost savings, the Board decided that we really needed to insulate the attic and replace the soffit so that there would be ventilation every foot along its length. To assist us with this very costly, but much-needed project, we received a $500 grant from Mount Horeb Utility Commission and a $1,000 grant from the Madison Gas and Electric Foundation.

Insulation work was done by Rockweiler Insulation, Inc. and the soffit work was done by Premier Building Solutions, LLC.

Archives Receives Grant

A grant of $1,000 received from Mount Horeb Rotary Club was used for the purchase of archival supplies, including ledger and document boxes to hold records from the Village of Mount Horeb.

One Small Farm, One Big Event

The premiere of Craig Schreiner’s book “One Small Farm” published by the Wisconsin Historical Society Press received a grand introduction on Sunday, Sept. 8 at Kalscheur Park in Pine Bluff.

The standing-room-only crowd of approximately 150 people was introduced to members of the Lamberty family of rural Pine Bluff, who are chronicled in the book. A birthday cake, complete with a black and white cow motif to celebrate the birthday of Marie Lamberty, the family matriarch, was enjoyed by all.

Schreiner’s book is available at the Mt. Horeb Area Museum during regular open hours or by calling the museum office at 608-437-6486.

October 2013 newsletter contributors: Jane Burns, Brian Bigler, Laurie Boyden, Johnna Buyse, Darlene Nowak and Shan Thomas; edited by Jane Burns with current photography by Laurie Boyden; historic photos and archival materials from the collections of the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society

Annual Membership in the Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society

- New Member
- Renewal

Name ________________________________

Address ________________________________

City ________________________________ State _______ Zip Code ________

Phone (__________________________) E-mail ________________________________

Membership Levels (Renewal to be paid annually in January)

- $20 Individual
- $35 Household
- $75 Contributing
- $150 Sustaining
- $500 Patron

These levels will be acknowledged annually in the year end newsletter

Additional Donations To:

- Museum/Society Operations $__________
- Contingency Fund $__________
- Building Fund $__________

Mail to: Mt. Horeb Area Historical Society, 138 East Main St., Mt. Horeb, WI 53572 All contributions are tax deductible.

We Depend On You! Thank you for your support.
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Archives Hours:
Archival Collections Research/Drop off
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2nd & 4th Wednesdays each month 12:30-3:00
3rd floor of the Municipal Building
138 E. Main St., Mt. Horeb, WI
608-437-6486

Mt. Horeb Area Museum and Shop
Hours: Friday and Saturday 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Sunday 12:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.
100 S. 2nd Street, Mt. Horeb, WI
Open May - December
Free Admission

F. Y. I. FOR CURRENT MEMBERS:
Your membership expiration date is printed on the mailing label of this newsletter. Please check to see if you are up to date through Jan. 2014 or beyond. If not, your membership is due. Please fill out the form on page 11 and send it with your payment. We appreciate your renewal and don’t want you to miss a single issue of our newsletter or any important information about Historical Society events.