

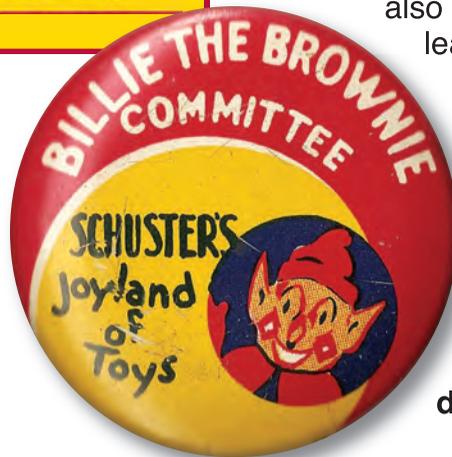


**October / November 2018**

**Don't miss our pre-holiday program on November 14th at 7 p.m.!**  
**BILLIE THE BROWNIE**



For many Milwaukee-area children in the 1950s, listening to Billie the Brownie on WTMJ Radio was a not-to-be-missed event during the weeks leading up to Christmas. Billie (who actually was an elf) was the creation of Schuster's Department Store.



The show's format was simple: Billie and Santa chatted a bit about whether the boys and girls listening had been good. Billie got a report from Santa on how all the work at the North Pole was going. Then came the most eagerly-anticipated part: Billie read letters sent to Santa by children from all over the area. There were *thousands* of letters. Was one of them yours? Or your brother's or sister's?

Eventually, Billie would also appear on TV and accompany Santa on his float at the annual Christmas parade in downtown Milwaukee, also sponsored by Schuster's. Come learn about the history of this much-loved holiday tradition, presented by the **Milwaukee County Historical Society** in the Hunt Room of the Hales Corners Library.

**The program is FREE for all HCHS members!**  
**For non-members, a donation of \$5 is suggested.**

**BAKERS ARE NEEDED! We need volunteers to make "Billie's brownies" (i.e., your favorite brownie recipe) or Christmas cookies for this event. Please bring them with you to the program!**

## **CHRISTMAS-THEMED WINDOW DISPLAY**

Once again, it's time to create our historical window display at the Hales Corners Library. This year's theme will be "Christmas in Grandma's Kitchen," and will feature holiday baking traditions and a display of cookbooks, recipe cards, baking utensils, etc. Be sure to stop by during December to see what our Society has put together.

## **HCHS PROGRAMS FOR 2019**

Our Program Committee is in the process of booking four engaging programs for 2019. Remember, the programs are always **FREE** for HCHS members. Watch your mail in December for the program brochure enclosed with your 2019 membership renewal letter.

## ZEIT TRIBUTE WELL ATTENDED AT THE BEN HUNT CABIN



On October 6th, a long-overdue tribute to **Bob Zeit** took place when a Serviceberry tree planted in his honor was dedicated near the Ben Hunt Cabin. Featuring white blossoms and red berries, the tree will grow to a height of 20 feet. Adjacent to the tree is a sign that memorializes Bob's years of service. Bob's widow, **Jan Zeit**, unveiled the sign to the applause of her family, HCHS members, and Village officials. The following tribute to Bob Zeit was written by **Randy Sannes**, HCHS vice president, and was read at the event.

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Bob was known to his family as a loving husband, father, and teacher. To me and others in the Hales Corners Historical Society, he was an outstanding protégé of Ben Hunt. Bob was one of a few individuals still around that actually knew Ben Hunt. He worked on crafts with him and was influenced by him, as so many others were. Bob was truly a student of Ben's.

Bob emulated Ben in many ways: as a teacher, an artist and an exceptional whittler.

Let's talk about those traits:

**TEACHER** - Bob shared his knowledge of Ben, as captured in our book, *W. Ben Hunt, From Whittlin' Jim to Lone Eagle*. His transcribed tour of the Ben Hunt Cabin filled 20 pages of the book. His knowledge of Native American artifacts was amazing. He even mastered playing the Indian flute. Bob conducted whittling classes for young and old alike, although he set a minimum age requirement of 12 years old due to those sharp knives. He conducted tours of the cabin, sharing first-hand stories of Ben Hunt.

**ARTIST** - For over 20 years, Bob met weekly on Tuesdays from 1 – 3 p.m. with Priscilla Riebs, Anita Hantsch, and Jane Campanelli, cataloging the Ben Hunt collection. When they started, they thought it would only take a few years to complete. Bob drew a copy of every artifact in pencil, which are miniature works of art! If one of the ladies was not sure what the object was, Bob always had the answer. He could identify its tribe, the age, where the artifact was from, and even who donated it.

**WHITTLER** - Bob was an exceptional whittler. He held whittling classes occasionally for the Historical Society in the cabin. I took one of his classes and made a kachina. I can't say it was a work of art, but Bob told me that Ben Hunt advised everyone to sign their work. So, mine reads "RDS 10/99." It's hard to believe that was 19 years ago! Bob was involved with wood carving groups and often hosted them in the cabin. He liked to whittle Santas, and if you were lucky enough to have one, it was a masterpiece!

Finally, as a person, Bob was a kind, soft-spoken gentleman. I tried several times to get him to become an officer of the Hales Corners Historical Society. He always turned me down politely, preferring to do his thing with the Hunt cabin and collections. That was his demeanor, to be in the background, not seeking any attention. He probably would be upset with all this fuss today, and especially the sign honoring him. Well, Bob, you deserve more than this for all the time and effort you provided the Hales Corners Historical Society, and especially for preserving Ben Hunt's legacy. The sign and tree are where they should be, close to Ben's cabin where you devoted so much of your life.

You were a person that I admired in so many ways. You once told me, "I hope you take over the cabin when I'm gone." Well, I have, but I will never be able to fill your shoes.

God bless you & your family.

**Randy Sannes**

*Photos on facing page courtesy of Katy Galewski and Chris Schachtlie*



Cathi Kottke, Konrad Kottke, Korben Kottke, Ralph Zeit, and Ken Kottke gather around Jan Zeit.



## PHOTOS, PLEASE

Our Society has recently received several historic photos for our collection. Below are a couple of them. The top image was donated by **Mel Schmidt** from his family archives. Mel, at 93, is the oldest resident of Hales Corners, living his entire life in the Village. The bottom photo is courtesy of **Bill Ritzman**, of Ritzman Appliances. Thanks, Mel and Bill!

We always appreciate receiving more pictures of old Hales Corners, and will copy and return them to you if you wish. We have very few photos of interiors and would welcome some.

**Please contact [strekow@strekow.com](mailto:strekow@strekow.com).**



*The Hales Corners Baseball Team posing in front of the former Meinzer Drug Store. Three players, all in the front row, are identified: (left) Bill Klug, (4th left) Norman Schmidt, (5th left) Clem Lougney.*



*Rapid Transit Car 301 traveling past the Bosch Tavern, c.1940s.*

## TALES OF THE CORNERS

**From the files of the  
*Tri-Town News and Hub***

### **80 YEARS AGO (1938)**

The Whitnall Park Golf Course Clubhouse is completed before the end of the golfing season.

Seventeen new homes were built in Hales Corners this year!

### **70 YEARS AGO (1948)**

“Visual Education” is the topic of the Hales Corners PTA meeting. The demonstration of a filmstrip projector shows the advantage of this modern technology.

Work begins on the new telephone building on Forest Home Avenue. It is needed to convert the area to the dialing system.

### **60 YEARS AGO (1958)**

Hales Corners Country Fair Shopping Center holds its grand opening.

The first jury trial to be held in the Hales Corners justice court is to decide a speeding case.

### **50 YEARS AGO (1968)**

The final planting of the Hawthorne Garden Club’s beautification project, between Grange Avenue and Janesville Road on Highway 100, will be completed soon. The crab apple, maple, and plum trees were purchased with donations from Hales Corners businesses and the Lions Club.

Construction starts on the new Hales Corners Village Hall.

Four area servicemen in Vietnam distribute 95 pounds of gifts sent by the Hales Corners Woman’s Club.

***Research by Katy Galewski***

## **HALES CORNERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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