Mr. Ric Gibbs

Article by Katie Jefferson and Ellen Johnson

INTRODUCTION

By

Katie Sawyer

About 30 miles east of Washington, N. C., on highway 264, there is a sharp left bend in the road. Because of the sharp bend, you may slow up and notice that you are in the small town of Pantego (pop. 187). There are hundreds of
small towns up and down the east coast of North Carolina, but this town is special because it's my home town.

Most of these small towns have their "good talkers"; we have our own beloved "story teller." Though old in years, Mr. Ric Gibbs' boyish grin and mischievous gleam in his eyes belie his age. He has as winsome and happy an attitude towards life as he did sixty years ago when some of his wildest adventures—and misadventures—took place.

Mr. Ric can usually be found, on most clear days, in the post office parking lot, selling brooms for the Lions Club. But on this warm September afternoon Roy Armstrong, Ellen Johnson, and I went to Mr. Ric's home—one of the oldest in Pantego and the birthplace of his mother—to interview him for our school magazine, Life on the Pamlico. We were met by a large yellow and white cat, followed by a gray-headed, ruddy-complexioned gentleman with an endearing smile--Mr. Ric.

Soon we were seated around a large circular table looking at old books, for example, a Bible carried in the Civil War; sheet music; and family photographs. Thanks to Mr. Ric's unfailing memory and consummate ability as a story teller, we were soon transported back in time 60 years. His stories of the naming of Pantego, the high school band instrument "sting," the idolized "soda jerks," the high-kicking dancer, "Baby Wampas," the buying of liquor during Prohibition, and the involuntary end of his musical career in a dance band were only a few of his great treasure chest of stories.
We would like to thank Mr. Ric for sharing some of his stories with us. If you want to hear more, you can usually find him, on a clear day, in the post office parking lot selling brooms. Don't forget to ask him about the story of the first outboard motor in this area!

As we took our seats around the circular table, Mr. Ric studied an old photograph.

Mr. Gibbs: This class is one of the high school graduating classes of Belhaven. It's the class of 1927. That goes back a piece, doesn't it? About two thirds of these have gone by the wayside, and I noticed on the back of it it says the "Happy bunch."

"The Happy Bunch," Belhaven High School, 1927
Life: I was talking to Katie, and she tells me you're probably the most knowledgeable person about the social and economic development of Pantego. We have a lot of people at our college from Pantego, and we have a lot of interest in Pantego. We'd like to combine your recollection of your own family here and then get a more general insight into just how Pantego came to be. Maybe you can tell us where the name came from.

Mr. Gibbs: There are two versions that I know of how Pantego got its name. One of them was back in the early times when the Indians were in this area. There wasn't anything here but the wild natives of the virgin forest. One story was the Indians used runners back in those early times to convey messages from one tribe to another. One of their paths came through Pantego, and they stopped here to rest before they went on to Hyde County. They'd be running, and they'd be panting. They would stop here to rest, and they would "pant-to-go." Now that might be an old wives' tale or something.

But, really, I believe it came [from] the name of the Pamlico River—pant to go. That is really a more plausible explanation of where Pantego came from in name, you see. Pant-to-go and Pantego.

This house where we're sitting in right now was built by my great-grandfather, Thomas J. Latham. That's his picture over there. Back in those early times, all the land was a land grant from the Lord's Proprietors of England. England sent all these people to start these colonies. The idea was to give the land to a lot of people to cultivate it and bring more people in.

Life: When was your house built?

Mr. Gibbs: In 1830.

Life: Mr. Gibbs, in talking about his ancient home, discussed the early religious situation.

Mr. Gibbs: It's a little side issue of a religious nature; our church here is a Disciple Church, Disciples of Christ. A man came down from Pennsylvania. I don't know how he got here, but he either walked or rode a horse. It was the only way he could get here, I think, back in those early times. He spent a couple of nights in that east room. His name was Alexander Campbell. I don't know whether you have heard of him or not.

Life: No.

Mr. Gibbs: He was responsible for founding the early Disciples of Christ, the Christian Church, in this whole area down here. That's the reason he came. And, naturally, there was no place for him to stay. The people that were here took him in, and I think I can hear him walking around up there!

Life: When did Pantego get its identity as a town?

Mr. Gibbs: I think it was incorporated in 1760.

Life: It's almost as old as Bath.
Mr. Gibbs: Yes. Bath, I believe, was incorporated in 1752: Pantego wasn't long after that. Of course, Belhaven is a much larger town now; it was only three months away [from birth, figuratively], probably just a gleam in somebody's eye at that time! Pantego is much older. The old road, old 264, passed right by this house and cut through Back Ridge and went on to Hyde County, which is much older too. As we go much further East, we get closer to where the colonists first landed in 1585, I believe it was. You know, Sir Walter Raleigh's colonies?

Life: Yes, sir.

Mr. Gibbs: And, naturally, the population spread from there on. There was a lot of disease back in those times. I read where in the early times they were mostly Indians, and they contracted smallpox. I think there was a figure of 13,000 that died of smallpox. That was a fatal disease back in that early time.

Life: How did Pantego develop as far as industry and activity?

Mr. Gibbs: The main thing was timber, mostly pine. There was a lot of cypress and juniper too.

Life: Was there a lot of logging operations?

Mr. Gibbs: Yes. There was a lot of small logging operations and later on a big mill—one of the largest mills of its kind, I understand, in the world—was opened up in Belhaven, by the Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey. The old stack is still standing there. Have you ever noticed it?

Life: No, I haven't.

Mr. Gibbs: The old big stack is the only thing that is left there, and I often wonder what's holding it up. Of course it's only about two feet above sea level. It must have gone down pretty far with a lot of piling, for the whole mill is completely disintegrated, except for the stack.

Life: Were there other activities, like fishing and that kind of thing?

Mr. Gibbs: Oh, yes! Regular fishing, oysters and shell fish, like that, are generally common. I remember back in Belhaven when I was just a boy, why, they would ship oysters in the shell in big barrels. They'd fill the barrels up and ship them during the winter. They'd cover the tops over with burlap and ship whole carloads of oysters to hotels all over the country.

Life: When you were young, what was life like in Pantego?

Mr. Gibbs: Well, the main thing was the milling industry. There was a lot of cotton growing around here at that time. My grandfather, George B. Thompson who was a relative of the Lathams, [lived in this house which] was handed on down from generation to generation. They used to grow cotton right up to the front doorstep, and they'd have to go to town to get a chicken! Now they rotate
the crops.

When I married, I married a girl up from Virginia, and they did a lot of that [raising different crops]. Farmers, in that part of the country, were more or less self-sustaining. They raised hogs. They raised things to eat, and they had a big money crop.

I remember when the trains came here, the old Norfolk and Southern Railroad. There were eight trains coming in and out of Belhaven, and, naturally, running through Pantego everyday. And there was a lot of people riding on these trains. They were the old steam-type engines. It cost a dime from Belhaven to Pantego, which is three miles. We would leave early in the morning on the 9:00 train and spend the whole day out here and then go that afternoon on the 4:00 train. That was the Norfolk and Southern Railroad, and it is still called that.

Life: Where would those trains be going, would that be Norfolk?

Mr. Gibbs: No, they would start here; they had feeder lines.

Life: Oh, I see.

Mr. Gibbs: The main line ran from Raleigh to Norfolk. And the trains here, one of them would go towards Norfolk, and the other went towards Raleigh. For instance, the northern train would go on up here through Belhaven and would turn off to the right and go through Roper. From there it would go on to Mackey's Ferry where the big railroad bridge is that crosses the Albemarle Sound. They're talking about abandoning it. I hope they don't because that's really a historical thing in this part of the country. When that was first built, it was supposedly the longest railroad of its kind in the world. It ran over open water. [There's] some railroad down in Louisiana, that island hopped, you know; and there was one at Key West that island-hopped, you know. But this was over open water. Down through the years, I think a couple of trains went over in the sound.

Life: Is that right!

Mr. Gibbs: Yes. In fact Elbert [Elbert Jones who worked many years on the railroad] was on a train, and the car he was on fell over. He grabbed hold of a piece of timber, which saved him.

Life: Mr. Gibbs told us what it was like, when he was a small boy, to ride on a train.

Mr. Gibbs: I remember as a child, around 12, my mother would allow me to go to Norfolk by myself. Of course, when you rode on a train, it was just like a big family. You almost knew everybody on there. I remember the conductor. He had this real fancy cap and brass buttons. He'd go along and talk to everybody, you know, just like down-home folks. One thing I remember, if you had your train window opened and had on a light-colored suit, you'd better be careful. It would get full of soot. In other words, you'd get black, black all over!
Life: Did they have the dining car on there?

Mr. Gibbs: No. If you were going from here, they weren't elaborate. They were just feeder trains that fed the main lines. But the main line trains that would come through Washington, Raleigh, and, I guess, Greenville, and go to Roper and on to Elizabeth City and Norfolk were real beautiful-looking cars. I remember, they used to have a man come up and down the isle, and they'd sell sandwiches and fruit and things like that.

Life: That's when you were young?

Mr. Gibbs: Yes, I was about 12. Well, I'm still young, at heart, anyway, you might say!

Life: That's all that counts. Turning from his remembrances of trains, Mr. Gibbs talked about his father's drugstore, years ago in Belhaven.

Mr. Gibbs: My father ran the only drugstore in Belhaven for 30 some years. He opened there about 1910. And he closed up during the Great Depression in the late '20's and early '30's.

Life: Did you work for him in there?

Mr. Gibbs: Yes, I worked when I was just a kid. I worked behind the soda fountain.

Life: What was that like back then?

Mr. Gibbs: Well, most of the drugstores back in those early times had soda fountains. Now they're separate things. You have a restaurant and in another place a soda parlor. The soda fountain and the drugstore, along in the '20's, were sort of a meeting place. All the people would come in and sit down in the booths and drink Cokes and eat Nabs. It was a social event.

And I shall never forget [laughs]. The Hertford boys and girls would come on the train and would get off the train in Belhaven along about 4:00 to play a double-header. Basketball was the big thing back in those days. When they got off the train, they all would go right down to the drugstore and sit in the booths and socialize with everybody. And it just so happened that day the Feenamint representative had been in my daddy's drugstore. Feenamint was a laxative that just had come out at that time, you know, in chewing gum [form]. Of course, all the kids chewed gum, but none of us had heard of that before. The man left a whole bunch of free samples. You're way ahead of me, aren't you [laughing]?

Life: Yes, I kind of get the idea!

Mr. Gibbs: In any event, my daddy always liked to have a little fun, so he passed out those samples, being we all liked to chew gum. And we never had such a run on the restrooms!

Growing up as a young boy, [I remember] in the drugstore they used to have a soda jerk, preferably a nice looking young fellow that was popular with all the young people. My father, down through the years, had a whole
bunch of those that were imported from other parts of the country. The soda jerks were all lead dressers, you know. One fellow down there was named Johnny Davis. Obviously, like a young kid, I would go in there and nag Johnny Davis for a chocolate malted milkshake. I nagged him so many times that he just got fed up with it. In making a malted milkshake, you take a glass and you put the milk in there and you put chocolate syrup and you put a big heaping teaspoon full of something you call malted milk [powder] and two scoops of ice cream. Boy, something like that would cost you a couple of dollars now, I guess, if you could find one!

But in any event, why he got sick of me nagging all the time. Behind the counter he had a little place where he kept medicine in case somebody wanted to take a dose of something there. He had a sample of Sal-Hepatica. So Johnny thought he would fix me up real good. In place of the malted milk he left a whole spoon full of Sal-Hepatica. I never bothered him anymore!

The drugstore was a great thing. I noticed that down there in that place there [now] is a dress shop, The Villager.

Life: Mr. Gibbs told us about boat trips he took as a boy.

Mr. Gibbs: I remember when my mother took me on a boat trip. There was a lot of boats that ran from Washington, Belhaven, and Aurora. My mother was going to take me to a place called Como, N. C. It's up there in Hertford County. And the Chowan River runs up through that way. So we had to get on this boat. It had about three staterooms on there. My mother and myself, we got a stateroom. There was a whole lot of other things on that boat. There were ponies, pigs, chickens, and regular farm products that they used to farm. We left Belhaven; that was way before the inland waterway was completed. Now there's a big cut through there. We had to go all the way around Long Shell River and come up down the sound. It actually took us two days. To get up there on a boat you had to go all the way around the Albemarle Sound and go to Edenton. In Edenton we had to get transferred to another smaller boat. This was a steamer, and it took us up to the Chowan River. Then it went to a place called Tunis or Cofield, one or the other. And there was my uncle, my mother's sister's husband, waiting with a horse and buggy to take us on fifteen miles to Como. He was the mail carrier there at Como.

Life: Where did you go to high school?

Mr. Gibbs: Belhaven High School, class of 1930.

Life: What do you remember about high school? How was it different from the way things are now?

Mr. Gibbs: Well, it was more closely knit. I remember one time my father was on the school board. The old Belhaven High School was operated by the town. The county or state didn't have anything to do with it. There was a Dr. Napoleon Bonapart Mariner, who, incidentally, delivered me in Belhaven. I remember it
well [laughs]! It cost $10 [laughs]! And he was chairman of the school along in the late '20's. The school teachers were opting for a $2 a month raise. Dr. Mariner was one of these sorta dictatorial types, and he didn't want to give them a raise. My father was more liberal-minded, and he wanted to give them the raise. Dr. Mariner found out my father was going to vote for it [the raise]. Incidentally he [father] rented the place where the drugstore was from Dr. Mariner. My father voted for the raise, and the next day Dr. Mariner came down and raised the rent [laughs]!

Life: Mr. Gibbs told us that his main interest in high school was playing in the band.

Mr. Gibbs: The first thing I played was a clarinet, then saxophone, then, later on, the piano, ukulele. I'll never forget one humorous thing that happened. Back in the '20's, a company called the Universal Band Masters Association was going around to all the small schools organizing bands. The leader was named Scottie Moore. Incidentally, they were headquartered in a place called Lillington, N. C. Of course, you got around much slower in those days, but they had a big automobile called an Auburn. If you had one now, I guess it would be worth quite a bit of money. That thing was so long it had to back up to turn around the main corner in town [laughs]! They were selling these band instruments, Scottie Moore and the fellow with him, and they performed. Scottie played the trumpet, completely mesmerized the whole assembly. He could play that trumpet just about any way it could be played. Scottie would organize the band, sell the instruments, and, therefore, make a profit. And he sold everybody on it [the band]. So everybody decided to make down payments on the instruments. So I bought a clarinet, gave Scottie $5 down. A friend bought a tuba, quite an expensive brass instrument. I think he had to pay $30 down. So, anyhow, they were organizing the band in a number of little towns around here--Plymouth, Aurora; and they came back after two weeks and said they didn't have enough [to sign up]. They needed 22 and only had 18. So we had to give all the instruments back. Scottie came down to my Daddy's drugstore and opened up a great big gold-printed checkbook. I never saw such a beautiful checkbook in my life! They gave us checks, took all the instruments back, and left town in a cloud of dust. The checks all came back "payment stopped" [laughs]!

Life: When did Belhaven become larger than Pantego? Was that way back?

Mr. Gibbs: Well, the first name given Belhaven was by Dr. Bullock. He called it "Jack's Neck," and later on that name evolved into Bellport and, later on, Belhaven. I think that was about 1889.

Life: At that time Pantego was larger?

Mr. Gibbs: Yes, it was. Pantego was a bustling community. But, of course, when the railroad came about 1903, Belhaven grew much faster. They had a good harbor there for boats, and here [Pante-
go] you just had a small creek. And the big old steamers could get into Belhaven with the big open river.

Life: Better harbor plus a railroad?

Mr. Gibbs: Right.

Life: Mr. Gibbs explained that although he currently lives in Pantego in an old family home, Belhaven is his home town.

Mr. Gibbs: Belhaven is where I was born. Here is something I found in an old paper, about 1911 vintage, that describes how Belhaven got going. This was a poem to Dr. W. J. Bullock:

"Sure a bit of sawdust fell down from Roper's Mill one week and settled on some oyster shells, near by Pantego Creek and when Dr. Bullock found it, 'sure,' he said with a slow smile. 'Oh, I suppose I'll just leave it here and let it spread a while.' So one day he named it Jack's Neck, just because it looked that way, later changed it to Bell Port, and boats came in to stay. He brought a railroad to it, and it began to grow. But then he called it Belhaven, the sweetest name I know."

And I noticed that it was initialed at the bottom A. J. That was my aunt Agnes Jarvis!

Life: When did you get interested in jazz?

Mr. Gibbs: Well, I tell you, it's kind of a long story. I think I was born with a certain beat. You know, jazz is something if you got it, you got it; if you ain't got it, you ain't got it.

Life: Right, yes.

Mr. Gibbs: Way back when radio was just coming in, my father ordered from Chicago one of the original nickelodeons for the drugstore, jukebox as we call them now. It was a great big thing called a Globe Entertainer. It sat up about five feet high and had a glass panel in the front. It played the old 78 scratchy, tinny-sounding records.

Life: I remember.

Mr. Gibbs: The nickelodeon had a bank of 12 records on one side and a turntable in the middle and the knobs [with which] you made your selections. That thing would reach over there and get a record and put it on. It changed needles every time [it played a record]. One round and the needle was gone. It cost a dime a play. I was about 10 or 12, and my father gave me the chore of changing the records. We changed the 24 records 'bout every 30 days. I had to go up to Washington to buy the records from a music store, and I got to listen to them. They didn't have the sophisticated amplifying systems they have now, but to us they sounded plenty dog gone good! That's where I got my introduction to jazz. Duke Ellington was the main one that I liked. Of course, Paul Whiteman was one.

Life: About when was that, in the '20's?

Mr. Gibbs: Yes.

Life: Were people like Ellington and
Whiteman popular among the younger people?

Mr. Gibbs: Yes. You see, back in those days everybody was dancing. They had a big pavilion down there in Belhaven. It was built over the water and had a nice dance hall on it, and about the only thing you had to do was dance. Consequently, that was where the big bands came in.

Life: Would they have live bands come to the pavilion in Belhaven?

Mr. Gibbs: Yes. I'd heard some of the bands on the records, like McKinney's Cotton Pickers. Boy, they were really good!

I played in the late '20's in a band at Bayview called the Stubb Johnson Band. He was from Washington.

Life: Is that right?

Mr. Gibbs: Yes. His band was from Washington.

Life: Well, tell us about the hotel at Bayview. What was it like?

Mr. Gibbs: I understand the whole Bayview enterprise was started by the Bowers furniture people in Washington. Many years ago, the Bowers were big furniture people. And they built this hotel and a pavilion out over the water. It was really a nice place. They had a dance floor there that was made out of solid white oak. Boy, that was a real dance floor! You could skid all around on that thing!

I remember one time when we were just a bunch of young kids, about 17 or 18, we were going to have a big 4th of July program. We invited this dancer down from New York, possibly a Rockette. She was very scantily clad. She came out there, I remember, and we were practicing one Sunday morning. When she would kick up, the band would have to slow down the tempo to go with her kicking. We had to practice that [the kicks], and it took us a half a day before we got that down good! Of course, we were watching that girl mostly. We'd never seen any dancing like that! After that, I played in a band, Dick Martin's Band, down at Minnesott Beach on the Neuse River between New Bern and Oriental. I played down there for a couple of years.

Life: Is that a nice hotel there?

Mr. Gibbs: Didn't have a regular hotel there, but they had about 30 cottages, all along. They would rent out those cottages. Most of the people from up state came down and stayed, like, a couple of weeks.

I wound up my musical career with a band called Red Hopkins. He was from Pennsylvania. This band was headquartered at a hotel in Sanford, N. C. It was on the old highway # 1 going north and south. No. 1 went right past the marquee of that hotel. Red Hopkins told us he had the contract to play in a club in St. Augustine, Florida. Well, a bunch of young boys, we were going to Florida to play in a band for the winter! Boy, that was really something, you know!
Life: Oh, yes!

Mr. Gibbs: Red said in order to get there, we had to buy a bus. He was going to take $2 [each] a week out of our pay to get enough money to buy the bus. That was agreeable with us. We played dances there in the ballroom at the hotel; then we'd go out to play places all around. I remember Red had a whole library of special arrangements, a whole trunk full. We had to learn all those--took a bit of doing. We'd rehearse there at the hotel, and, I remember, he fed us. We had two meals a day. The chef at the hotel prepared these. We found out the chef owned a rabbit farm, out there about five miles. We'd been eating rabbit twice a day for three months!

Red had a beautiful wife; he introduced her as a "Baby Wampas." I always thought a wampus was some kind of a wildcat, out of the woods. We called them a "wampas cat." I found out she belonged to a dancing group out on the West Coast called the "Baby Wampases," a pretty far out name like the Rockettes. She was a beautiful girl, and she could dance. She did some dancing in front of the band.

But, anyhow, we played there for three months. We were supposed to leave on the bus for St. Augustine the day after New Year's. We were all excited about that. Red was supposed to get the bus ready. And we all got up on New Year's day to go, and no Red Hopkins. He had left with our money. And no bus and no nothing! He had left us stranded there. And I said, "Dang if I ain't had it!" Wound up my musical career! I said, "This ain't for me! Tell you right now!"

Life: How did you get home, Mr. Ric?

Mr. Gibbs: We bummed a ride home. You remember Howard Shavender?

Life: Yes.

Mr. Gibbs: Well, he played the tenor banjo in our band, and all he did was strum that thing, play a few chords. Of course, Howard imbibed on occasions--I mean right many occasions [laughs]! He was one of these characters that when he didn't have anything to drink, he was just as nice and sociable as you ever want to know. But when he took a drink, something clicked inside his brain and he became mean and wanted to fight. And there I was, Howard and myself, trying to get back home [from Sanford].

This was during Prohibition. You had to sneak around to get a "taste." We left Sanford early to bum a ride [home]. We had our instruments, baggage, luggage; and we had to get out and bum. Anybody'd pick you up then, won't do it now. And we got to Raleigh. I'd just bought, about three months before, a brand new Beausher saxophone, E flat alto. That was a beautiful instrument. And Howard--he was just dying for a drink; I could just read it all over his face, what he was after.

He said, "Let's go, there's a pawn-shop there in Raleigh." We had about $2 between us. So he talked me into going to that pawnshop. We went in there, and that guy gave me about $15 for that instrument I'd paid about $200 for.
Howard had an old battered up tenor banjo, and I think he gave him $2 on that thing.

So I had a little money; I saw my chance to get rid of Howard. I said, "Look, you go ahead and do what you want to and meet me down there at the bus station." So he and I parted company, and I came on home on the first bus. The next thing I heard of Howard, he had gotten as far as Washington. And with no money in his pocket, he hired a taxicab to drive him from Washington to Pantego. That was the kind of character he was!

Life: Did y'all ever get your instruments back?

Mr. Gibbs: Oh, yes! When I got home, I sent the ticket on in. And they shipped it on back.

Life: Tell me about the dances at the various places where you'd play. That would have been during Prohibition. Would people drink?

Mr. Gibbs: Well, yes. They always had what they called a hip flask, and they'd sneak out anywhere it was a little dark. They'd hoist it down. Some used a chaser, like a bottle of Coke or 7 up.

Life: What about the fellows in the band, would they drink?

Mr. Gibbs: Oh, we had a fellow in there in Washington, Snoots Bell. He played the piano, and he played the organ in church. He always had a bottle sitting down there somewhere, and he'd take a taste.

Life: What brand was it?

Mr. Gibbs: White lightnin'!

Life: They didn't have any brands?

Mr. Gibbs: No brands. Nobody had a brand.

Life: Did they have liquor stills around?

Mr. Gibbs: Oh, there were stills all around in the back of these woods. I remember one time the revenue officers came to Belhaven on a great big boat. And the old stills back that time were like an oil drum with what they call a worm, a copper worm drip out, and [a jug to] catch it down there. And I remember going down there to that boat at the dock in Belhaven, and they had about a 100 stills they'd captured. When they'd capture one, they'd take an ax and just beat it all to pieces, beat holes in it so it couldn't be used again.

Life: Was that a big industry, making liquor?

Mr. Gibbs: I imagine it was. All around in these woods you could see a puff of smoke coming up over there, and a puff coming up over there. It was a big industry [laughs]! Gosh, I reckon! In fact, I remember this one guy who used to go around Belhaven with a brown bag, and, of course, he was selling. He would have a half a pint in there with a chicken's neck sticking out! Acting like he had a chicken in there!
I remember one time my daddy told me a story about going to a "pill rollers" convention [druggists' convention] down in Wilmington, he and Mr. Sam Etheridge of Washington. Daddy and Mr. Etheridge went to the University of North Carolina at the same time. They were very good friends. My father got on the train in Belhaven and went to Washington to meet Mr. Etheridge. They went on to New Bern and got off at the station in New Bern to catch another train going to Morehead. It took quite a bit of doing to get from Belhaven to Morehead City then.

So, anyhow, they were walking around there, waiting for the train to come in, on the platform of the station; and Mr. Etheridge said, "Wouldn't it be nice if we had a little something to drink to take down to the convention." They said, where are we going to get it? They were kind of afraid to buy any, so [when] they saw a black man down on the end of the platform with a shoe box in his hand, they thought they'd go ask him where they could go buy a pint or so. He said, "Yes, I can get you some. Give me a couple of dollars, and I'll go get it for you." He said, "Hold this box till I get back." And he went off, didn't come back. And they opened the box up, and there the pint was in the shoe box!

Life: Finally, we asked Mr. Gibbs where he went to college.

Mr. Gibbs: I never went to college in my life. I went to the college of hard knocks [laughs]!
CONCLUSION

By

Ellen Johnson

Our visit with Mr. Ric Gibbs was a memorable experience. His stories that he shared with us were, indeed, fascinating. I'll never forget the tricks played by the soda jerks with the laxatives! It's wonderful to have a man with such insight and memory to tell you in vivid detail how things were 60 years ago. Who can forget Mr. Ric's re-creation of the dance pavilions and the