

EARLY RESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGE

Fifty years ago this year John Cooper Sr. opened Bella Vista Village. The first day of selling lots was May 21, 1965, with the very first lot contract signed by Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Beck of Bentonville.

The first houses built by Cooper were along Cooper Road. The Village Vista of February 1968 reported that the village's first permanent residents were Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Mann who moved from Wichita, Kansas, on January 6, 1966, to a home on Gwaltney Circle.

However, Cleo and Arlie Pettypool of Tulsa laid claim to the very first house built in Cooper's Bella Vista Village. The Village Voice of May 1987 reported, "John Cooper Jr. (had flown) to Tulsa and urged the Pettypools to build a house on their lot," which they had bought in early 1965. Pettypool said, "...we sat at our kitchen table (and) studied the five floor plans Cooper was then offering....John told us his dad was anxious to get a beginning goal of 45 house contracts sold and building under way."

Their "cottage" on Billingsley Drive was completed in time for a Thanksgiving 1965 celebration. The Pettypools spent their holidays and weekends in Bella Vista until they retired and moved here full time six years later. They told the Voice, "We could hardly wait for 3:30 every Friday afternoon when we headed for our cottage in Bella Vista and a delicious \$1.25 catfish dinner at the former Hill 'n Dale Restaurant on the shore at Lake Bella Vista." While the Pettypools moved to other houses over time, they remained in Bella Vista and are interred in the Bella Vista Memorial Garden Cemetery columbarium. He died in 2002 at age 95, and his wife died in 1998 at age 88.

The Bentonville Daily Record of August 31, 1989, reported on another couple who were also early residents of Bella Vista Village. William and Eva Cashin told reporter Eleanor Norton that when they bought their first lot in 1965, "About all the developer had to offer was conversation...." There were no golf courses, no country club, no Town Center and very few streets. After trading that first lot for one at the corner of Orr Lane and Cooper Road, they had Cooper build their house and moved to Bella Vista in July, 1967. At that time, as Norton wrote, "Cooper Road was a one-lane, gravel street, and the nearest store was a small one in the Old Bella Vista area near the barn...(that is) now Wishing Spring Gallery. The monthly assessment was \$5, and there was no extra charge for water....Everyone belonged to a Pioneer Club, that met for sociability over pot luck suppers....And when the first nine holes of the Country Club course were finished, Cashin bought the first golf cart...." He later served on the POA Board.

Many of the retirees who have moved to Bella Vista have brought with them so many experiences that their story could fill a book, and the Cashins were no exception. To read more about them, check out next month's Past Perspectives column.

Picture 1: This was reported to be the first house built in Cooper's Bella Vista Village, on Billingsley Drive.

Picture 2: This home on Gwaltney Circle reportedly housed the first permanent residents of Bella Vista Village, starting in January 1966.

Picture 3: Cleo and Arlie Pettypool owned the first house built in Cooper's Bella Vista Village. They are interred at the Bella Vista Memorial Garden Cemetery columbarium.

