



The Downtowner

The Newsletter of Friends of Historic Downtown Louisville

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A Franchise Built on Loyalty and Service



For Mr. Henderson selling Chevrolets is serious business – well, most of the time!

By Maiben Beard

Henderson Chevrolet has been an integral part of Broad Street since opening its doors on January 1, 1933. At that time, it was one of three Louisville dealerships, including Ford and Chrysler. Today it is the only dealership in Louisville. It has always been a family business, with a loyal clientele. “A great asset to the community,” remarks Frank Easterlin.

The man behind Henderson Chevrolet, Clarence Henderson, is a native Louisvillian – “One of the few full-time native Louisvillians left,” he said. As the second son, his family often called him “Brother,” and somehow it stuck.

In a recent interview, Mr. Henderson remarked, “When I pass away, I don’t want ‘miss’ on my tombstone, cause I haven’t missed nothing.” This is certainly true.

Growing up, he was a “grease monkey,” hanging around the garage, tinkering with cars. In 1946 he was a member of the undefeated Louisville Academy

high-school football team that beat favored Dublin, in the district championship. “Everything just gelled in that game,” he said. He graduated from the University of Georgia in 1951 during the Korean Conflict and volunteered for the Air Force. Thinking he would have a week or two before he had to leave, Mr. Henderson was surprised when the recruiter called him 3 days later to see if he could depart the following day. Mr. Henderson’s mother urged him to stay, but his father gave him neutral advice: “Do whatever you think is best.” These were his father’s favorite guidance, which instilled a spirit of independence in the younger Mr. Henderson from an early age.

Heeding his country’s call, Mr. Henderson headed to Atlanta, and, before he knew it, was on a plane to San Antonio, Texas, for basic training. After completing basic training, he was sent to Nashville, Tennessee, anticipating deployment overseas. But instead of going overseas, he was assigned to the Air Force base in Warner Robins.

Quickly discovering that a young man could not make much of a living on a corporal’s salary, Mr. Henderson applied and was accepted to Officer Candidate School. After graduation, he was sent to an engineering school in Illinois. Eventually, he was deployed to Japan, where he lived and served for three-and-a-half years.

When his time in the Air Force was up, Mr. Henderson had to decide whether to reenlist or come back home. “There was a shortage on the job I was doing, so they were begging me to stay. They offered me all kinds of things, including a promotion to captain. But I knew my daddy wanted his sons to take his place, and he’d always been mighty good to me, so I decided to come home.” Mr. Henderson returned to Louisville shortly before July 4, 1955, and began working at the dealership on July 5.

After selling cars for over fifty years, Mr. Henderson has quite a few stories up his

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The elder Clarence Henderson at work, 1952.

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The Downtowner's Images of the Month



Henderson Chevrolet circa 1935, above, and 1950, below.

Henderson Shuns Retirement, Vows to Carry On

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sleeve. One involves setting a customer's car on fire. "I was trying out this elderly lady's car, and went down Highway 24. I was going to see if the passing gear was working. She never went into passing gear, so I decided to test the transmission. On the way back to town, right across the river, I kicked it into overdrive, and when I did, the accelerator hung up wide open." After doing everything he could to free the gear up, he decided he could not risk coming into town with the car going so fast. He pulled over by the Armory and tried to rectify the situation. "The motor was running wide open, so I switched it off, which caused it to backfire, setting the grass on fire under the car." After moving the car out of the burning grass, the same thing happened again. Mr. Henderson was not able to get under the hood because the car kept backfiring. Eventually, the motor started tearing apart, and the car quit running. "So then I was out there trying to make up my mind what I was going to tell this lady about her car. I thought, how am I

going to explain to the lady that I tore her car up?" After catching a ride back into town, Mr. Henderson got lucky. The lady decided to buy a car that she had seen at the dealership, and he never had to explain what happened to her car.

Mr. Henderson has always been a fixture in the community. Not long after his return from Japan, he joined the Louisville Volunteer Fire Department, where his involvement continued for 26 years. He also joined the Lion's Club around the same time, and is approaching 52 years of membership.

He tries to carry on what his father started, with loyalty and service to customers being his top priorities. Many of his customers have been buying cars from him for years, and deals are made all around town, even in the Post Office, where he recently sold Friends president Helen Aikman a new Chevy Aveo. "When a sale is completed, it doesn't stop," he said, "I've got a lot of people who call on me right now for all kinds of things. I have to look after my

customer. Most of them are widows, and when they have something go, wrong they call me."

"He is wonderful about helping you out in a jam," attests Rosa Green. "They come get your car and bring your car back. That's the reason people buy here, because of the good service. You couldn't get a better deal on the service anywhere."

Another local "widow lady" recalls an evening when she was sitting in the backseat of a friend's car. When it was time to get out, she realized that her seatbelt was stuck. Not wanting to spend the night in the car, they called Mr. Henderson, who came by and had to sit in her lap for half an hour trying to get the seatbelt unstuck. Finally he managed to get it undone!

Though an avid hunter, fisherman, and golfer, Mr. Henderson claims he would make a horrible retiree. As long as he is in good health, Mr. Henderson vows, he will continue to run the family dealership that has served Louisville for over seventy years.

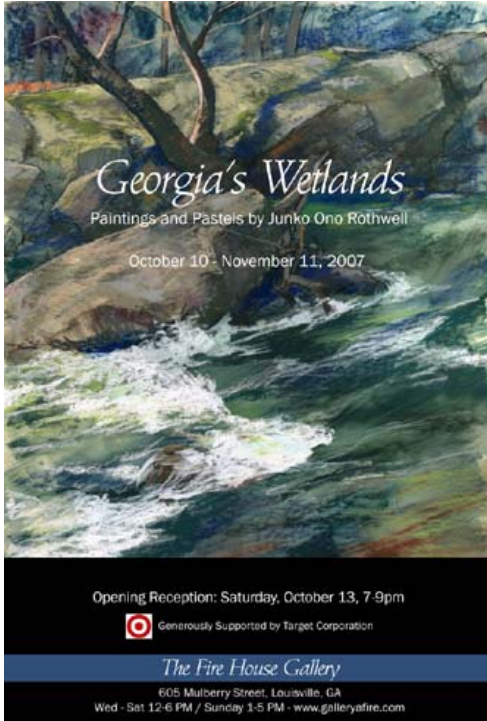


News From

THE FIRE HOUSE GALLERY

An Environmental Eye –

Junko Ono Rothwell Captures Georgia's Precious Wetlands



include about forty paintings – ranging in size from smaller 10x12” pieces to larger oil canvases at 48x60”. All of them reflect “the beauty of everyday life and ordinary things.” With every change of tide, the painter sees new compositions. “Early in the morning there’s a very orangish bright light and in the afternoon there’s a golden time from four o’clock to six o’clock, when there’s such a beautiful strong light. Watching all of the changes I try to capture the movements in the atmosphere.”

“I also love the creeks in the northern mountains, too. The composition in the mountains with rocks and streams and darker paths changes dramatically in the fall.”

“Mostly I go out with other artists,” she adds. “I’m a member of the Plein Air Painters of Georgia – there are about thirty members, and once a month we decide on a place and meet on location. We pick a place like St. Simon’s and stay a while and paint for a week.” It’s a great experience for camaraderie and study.

“I can always learn from others. It’s the best chance to learn how to capture the marsh or how to use the colors. We learn from each other – we paint side by side and you can see the differences in our styles and get inspiration

from the other artists.”

Still, this openness to venturing around the state has made Ms. Rothwell a witness to encroaching development of Georgia’s natural environment. “When we go to paint I can see so many changes. Once we painted a beautiful field and when we went back the next year it was gone. Sometimes I feel very sad to see the changes and I hope we can keep our Georgia landscape as beautiful as it is.”

The Gallery selected Ms. Rothwell’s work for exhibition this month in an effort to harmonize with Ogeechee-Canoochee Riverkeeper’s October 20 fundraiser dubbed, “At Water’s Edge,” an elegant evening at Old Town Plantation featuring speakers Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Chairman of Waterkeeper Alliance, and author Janisse Ray. For more information regarding “At Water’s Edge” call or email Chandra Brown at 912.764.2017 or cbrown@ocrk.org.

We hope you will all join us for the opening of Ms. Rothwell’s exhibit on October 13 in our celebration of Georgia’s most delightful and critical natural resource.

October 10 - November 11, 2007

Georgia's Wetlands – Paintings and Pastels by Junko Ono Rothwell

Opening Reception, October 13, 7-9 pm

Japanese-American painter Junko Ono Rothwell has lived thirty years in Georgia, and she’s traveled nearly every inch of the state exploring and painting what she finds. Ms. Rothwell has been especially drawn to Georgia’s waterways – its marshes and channels, creeks and rivers – and it’s not surprising.

Raised on the Inland Sea in Japan with its thousands of small islands, Ms. Rothwell remembers her own childhood home perched on a hill above a small stream. “Whenever I stand next to water, whether streams in the mountains or coastal marshes, it reminds me of home,” she says.

An open air painter, Ms. Rothwell explains, “I can learn and understand more with the subject in front of me. When I stand in a field, I can watch the water rise at high tide, smell the ocean, hear the birds and taste the salt air. When I paint on location I see and feel everything vividly, as if I have become part of nature. This is what I try to express on my canvas.”

The exhibit at The Fire House Gallery will



Ms. Rothwell’s stunning “Sunrise at Creighton Island, Georgia”

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Chamber to Host City Council Candidate *Meet and Greet* in Gallery

On Monday, October 15, from 5 to 7 pm, The Fire House Gallery will open its doors to the public for a “Meet and Greet the Candidates” event, organized by the Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce to give Louisvillians an opportunity to get to know their candidates for City Council in the upcoming November election.

Two Louisville City Council seats are up for grabs. Larry Atkins and Elmo Hutchins are vying for the seat being vacated by outgoing long-time City Councilman James Davis. Tom Watson is running unopposed for the seat he currently holds.

The Meet and Greet program is intended to

give candidates and citizens alike a low-key forum to exchange ideas and concerns in a relaxed atmosphere. The candidates will not make formal statements or engage in formal debate. Refreshments will be served.

This event is yet another voter information service provided by the Chamber to the citizens of Jefferson County. Earlier in the month, on October 11, the Chamber will hold a more structured event for voters in the city of Wrens, where ten candidates are running for city office, including for mayor. Says Chamber president, Lil Easterlin, “We carefully structure these

events to meet the special needs of each community. With so many candidates in Wrens, we felt it was important to make sure the voters heard a clear statement from each candidate, whereas in the smaller election in Louisville a less formal approach seemed more appropriate.” This year’s candidates in Wadley, Avera, and Stapleton are all running unopposed, and Bartow has no elections scheduled for this fall, eliminating the need for such events in those communities.

Friends commends the Chamber for its continuing commitment to voter education all across the County.

This Month

At The Pal . . .

The published movie schedule for The Pal this month includes:

- “The Nannie Diaries” Oct. 1 and 2
- “Halloween” Oct. 5, 6, 8 and 9

Show Times are Friday, Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday at 7 p.m. For more information, call The Pal at 478.625.9998.

. . . and The Bistro

- Oct. 6 – An Evening of Bluegrass with *Fret Not*
- Oct. 20 – Joyce Stevens and Friends

For updated information, call The Bistro at 478.625.1522 or visit Friends online at www.ourlouisville.com.