

Farney Leads Paint Brigade

(This article was condensed from an article in the February 2006 Vero Beach Magazine, and is used with permission of the publisher. Courtesy photo.)

Painting houses is not part of the job description for Meals on Wheels volunteers. That's something that Jim Farney '53 and his Sea Oaks, Fla., neighbors took upon themselves, working on the homes of Meals on Wheels clients on Farney's Meals on Wheels route. Sea Oaks has an active group of 10 men (five regulars, five alternates) who cover the route throughout the week. But on those Saturdays when the Paint Brigade teams up to work on a client's house, 15 to 20 men usually report for duty.

The Paint Brigade is not officially connected with the Council on Aging or Meals on Wheels, and volunteerism with the program is not a prerequisite to working on the Paint Brigade—less than half its members currently deliver meals. More of a calling than a club, the brigade is the spontaneous occurrence of good friends working together to help those less fortunate than themselves.

It started with Jim Farney. He and Elizabeth '52 moved to Sea Oaks in 1990 from Hartford, Conn., after he had retired as a senior vice president with Traveler's Insurance. He is proud of his 27 years as a Navy reserve captain, five of which were spent on active duty.

Raised in a tight-knit Kansas farming community, he learned early that there is never a shortage of opportunities to help. His parents, whom he describes as "hard-shelled Baptists," saw to that by volunteering to help those in need through their church. One of Jim's first acts of volunteerism was to give blood, a practice he began in college and continues to this day.

After arriving in Vero Beach he volunteered for a time with Habitat for Humanity and then moved to the Meals on Wheels program. After six years he was offered the rural Wabasso/Winter Beach route in Hidden River County.

The disparity that exists between the volunteers' comfortable life and those of the Meals on Wheels clients awes and humbles them, so when Jim got the idea to start fixing up clients' homes, many were right on board.

Most of the 15 to 20 Paint Brigade volunteers have been part of the Brigade



since its start three seasons ago. Of the 13 homes where Jim delivers Meals on Wheels, 11 have been spruced up by the brigade. The projects are funded by the men who do the work—Jim determines the cost of materials for each job, then all pitch in 15 or 20 dollars a man. No books, no fundraisers, no annual reports, no fuss.

The organization of the Paint Brigade is equally low-key. Jim Farney

calls the crew together when he spots a house that needs painting.

"It takes a lot of imagination for Jim to envision these homes fixed up because they're in such bad shape," says one volunteer. The brigade works on five or six houses each season, and the members find out about each new assignment through word of mouth and the fliers that Jim sticks in doors and distributes on the tennis courts. On the specified day, workers converge at the selected house. After the prep work is finished, a house usually takes two to three hours to paint, not including the fine trim work.

Most of the men admit to not being naturally handy, but on the Paint Brigade a willingness to help more than compensates for lack of skills. The camaraderie of the group and the pleasure they get from transforming houses is a strong motivation to pick up a scraper or a brush.

What is the secret to Jim's success? The golden-tongued eloquence, the skillful salesmanship it must take to recruit such a fantastic group of volunteers? Jim's explanation is simple.

"I tell them, 'I need your help,'" he says.

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Upcoming Events

Saturday, July 1 – 6:30 p.m., Ulysses Alumni and Friends Gathering at the Landmark Restaurant. Event host: Pam Annis.

Wednesday, Aug. 16 – 9 a.m. to noon – Alumni Cookie Break at SC! This annual event takes place each fall on Move-in Day, the alumni staff provides cookies and encouragement to all who battle the boxes (and furniture, and clothes, and... well, you get the picture!)

Thursday, Aug. 24 – 7 p.m. – Moundbuilding Ceremony.

Oct. 13, 14 and 15 – Homecoming! Reunion classes are years ending in "1" and "6." Special highlights: end of the campaign celebration and the Mound renovation.



Builder Baby Brag Page

Let us help you share the good news of your expanding family!

If you and/or your spouse are alumni of Southwestern College, we invite you to submit your baby's photo to be included on the Builder Baby Brag Page. We'll post the picture on the alumni Web site, along with your names, class year(s) and e-mail address, so friends and classmates can extend their congratulations.

Babies are eligible from 0-12 months of age, one photo per child. At least one parent must be an alumnus/a of Southwestern. Submissions must include parents' names, class year(s), current address, phone and e-mail, as well as the baby's name and birth month.

Once this information is sent and verified, we will send a request for the photo of the baby. (Parents understand that by submitting their baby's photo and name, they are giving permission to post the photo, name and birth information along with parents' names and e-mail on the alumni Web site.)

As our way of saying congratulations, the alumni department will be sending you a special gift, and you will be invited to attend Homecoming in the fall to be a part of a Builder Babies photo for *The Southwesterner*!

See www.sckans.edu/alumni for more information!

Hall of Fame Inductees April 8, 2006

For full details on these honorees, visit www.sckans.edu/news



Business Hall of Fame

- Craig Anderson '82
- John T. Smith '64
- Wendell Smith '65



Scholars Hall of Fame

- DeWitt Clinton '68
- William Brooks '50
- Todd Diacon '80



Educators Hall of Fame

- William Medley '49
- Mary Lou (Bauer) Martin '60
- Tillman "Curley" Vaughan '14
(accepted posthumously by Ed Schroeder '53)

• Geoffrey Moon '97
(Marilyn McNeish Award for Special Education)



Claudia Ellerman '99 won a new Dell laptop by signing up to pay for a brick on the renovated Mound with Southwestern's new automatic payment program. Each month SC automatically deducts \$10 from Claudia's checking account to pay for her brick.