

Okaloosa County News Release

December 4, 2015

Kathy Newby, 850.651.7515, knewby@co.okaloosa.fl.us; TDD Dir. Ed Schroeder 651-7131, eschroeder@co.okaloosa.fl.us

NR15-94

Okaloosa Commemorates Local Park Ranger in its Centennial Year

Park Ranger Andrew Hill was recognized at Beasley Park recently in a ceremony highlighting the important part he played in the history of Okaloosa County during the Segregation Era. Andrew Hill, an African American, was the first park ranger at the only beach area park “For Colored Only,” as the sign read during the 1960s. His daughter Daisy Wiggins, along with a committee of caring citizens were instrumental in the John C. Beasley Park Commemoration plaque.

Chairman Commissioner Nathan Boyles, Tourist Development Council (TDC) Liaison Commissioner Carolyn Ketchel and Commissioner Wayne Harris were in attendance, along with Honorable J.D. Peacock, Fort Walton Beach Mayor and TDC member Mike Anderson and TDC member Tom Rice. The Citizens Committee Members participated in the unveiling of the plaque commemorating Park Ranger Andrew Hill and they are: Daisy Wiggins, Ranger Hill’s daughter, Stacia McNeese, Raymond Nelson, Okaloosa Branch 5633 of the NAACP and Ted Corcoran, Greater FWB Chamber of Commerce. On the committee, but unable to attend were Michelle Anchors, Keefe, Anchors & Gordon, and Tammy McDaniel, Tammy’s Journeys.

Everyone is encouraged to view this historical plaque located at Beasley Park. A Beasley Park timeline of events from 1960 to 1965 are below:

- On June 2, 1959, Florida Parks Board approved the expenditure and construction of the John C. Beasley State Park.
- On March 19, 1960, The John C. Beasley Park was dedicated and also in 1960, Andrew Hill was appointed as its park ranger.
- In 1964-65, the park was desegregated and Ranger Hill retired from the Florida Park Service.
- May 27, 1976, the Park was transferred from the State of Florida to Okaloosa County.

Photo Captions:

1. NAACP, Tourist Development Council, Citizens turn out to recognize Park Ranger Andrew Hill with commemoration plaque at Beasley Park.
2. Committee members recognized: Raymond Nelson, NAACP; Commissioner Boyles, Ted Corcoran, FWB Chamber; Stacia McNeese, Daisy Wiggins, Commissioner Ketchel.
3. Stacia McNeese, left, and Daisy Wiggins unveil a photo of the plaque at Beasley Park. They were instrumental in this recognition of Park Ranger Hill.
4. Daisy Wiggins, daughter of Andrew Hill, views plaque for first time.
5. Daisy Wiggins, daughter of Park Ranger Andrew Hill gives her approval of plaque.

###