



# VILLAGE NEWS

November/December 2019

As seen in the Chicago Tribune

## Post office named for an American hero, Tuskegee Airman who lived in Olympia Fields

By Mike Nolan

With people filling a room at Olympia Fields Village Hall for a ceremony naming that suburb's post office in honor of her late father, Gabrielle Martin said her dad would have been surprised at "all the fuss."

A member of the famed Tuskegee Airmen who flew dozens of missions in World War II and was downed by enemy fire, Robert Martin might have simply shrugged his shoulders and said "I was just trying to do my job the best I could do," Gabrielle, one of his three daughters, said.

"Dad was really kind of a humble man," she said.

Robert Martin lived in Olympia Fields from 2008 until his death at age 99 in July 2018.

For his military service, he was awarded honors such as the Distinguished Flying Cross and Purple Heart. Martin was discharged from the U.S. Army in 1945 with the rank of captain.

U.S. Rep. Robin Kelly, who had introduced legislation in February to name the post office in the airman's honor, called Martin "an American hero."

Martin's son and three daughters were in the audience, with Kelly telling them "your father earned this day a long time ago."



After the event at Village Hall, Martin's children went to the post office where a plaque dedicating the building in their father's honor was unveiled. The post office is at 3033 W. 203rd St., adjacent to the Olympia Fields Metra station.

Martin was born in Dubuque, Iowa, on Feb. 9, 1919. Before the war, Martin earned a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and after being discharged from the military worked as an electrical engineer for the city of Chicago before retiring in 1988.

Martin was part of a group of black aviators who served in the U.S. armed forces at a time when he and other airmen trained and lived in segregated facilities. The administration of President Franklin Roosevelt made flight instruction available at selected black colleges as part of the Civilian Pilot Training Program, and an air base was established and devoted to training black pilots near the famed

Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, founded by the pioneering black educator Booker T. Washington.

Martin earned his wings in 1944 and was commissioned a second lieutenant, then flew with a squadron based in Italy. On his 64th mission, Martin was shot down by enemy gunfire near Zagreb, Yugoslavia in March 1945.

He spent a month behind enemy lines with partisans in a secret Yugoslavian camp before the Allied advance allowed him to return to his unit's base in Italy.

Martin was also a founding member and later president of the Chicago chapter of Tuskegee Airmen Inc.

Gabrielle Martin said her father was an avid golfer and played the sport—in all 50 states. He "remained curious about life and never stopped exploring," she said.

Despite the obstacles her father faced as a black man in the armed forces and as a resident of a nation where "Jim Crow was alive and well," she said her father told his family he "had to take a stand" against Nazi atrocities, and "felt it was his duty to serve his country."

She said the family hoped that the naming of the post office in her father's honor would "inspire others to aim high."

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## Don't Let the Grinch Steal Your Holiday Joy

With the holiday season upon us, many people are preoccupied with the details of holiday planning and shopping. Unfortunately, safety precautions we normally take can be forgotten as the excitement of the season causes us to let our guard down. The Olympia Fields Police Department wants this to be a safe holiday season for all, so we remind you to follow these simple tips.

With "free shipping" being offered by many retailers, you can prevent a holiday "Grinch" from ruining the season by promptly collecting any delivered items from your front door.

Be sure to lock your doors and windows! Don't leave the curtains open with gifts in plain view. Christmas presents displayed around your tree can be a pretty sight, but can also be tempting to burglars. It's better to scatter the gifts around the house, in closets or cupboards, where they can't be so easily seen. Be sure to lock your vehicle and please do not leave valuables such as cell phones, wallets, purses, laptops, gifts and other items in plain view.

If you are leaving town for the holidays, make sure your home appears occupied. Leave interior and exterior lights on timers and have your neighbor pick up newspapers, mail, and take flyers off your door. Ask a neighbor to park in your driveway. Put a timer on a talk radio station for several hours a day.

With identity theft and credit card fraud on the rise, pay special attention to your financial statements and transactions during holiday shopping and report any unauthorized transactions immediately.

The Village is here to serve our residents to the very best of our collective abilities. Don't hesitate to contact us with a question, problem, concern or comment.

We continually strive to increase the level of service provided to our residents and your input is vital in helping us achieve that goal.

From our family at the Village of Olympia Fields to yours, we wish you and yours all the best this holiday season.



## Let it Snow! Let it Snow!

It is the Village's commitment to maintain Village-owned streets and public parking areas in a safe and passable condition, especially in the winter months. In order to accomplish this, street crews apply highway deicer salt to pavement surfaces until snow accumulation reaches 1.5 inches or more. At that time, salting operations are suspended and plowing operations begin.

During snow plowing operations, snow is pushed to the side of the street and is continuously repeated until the storm subsides. Once the storm has passed and all streets have been plowed of snow, a final drive-through pass of the Village is done and another application of salt is applied to rid the pavement of any unplowed snowpack. Under normal conditions, it is the goal of the Public Works Department to have all streets plowed and salted within 10 hours after the storm has stopped. Obviously, with larger snowfall totals, completion times are extended.

As unfortunate as it seems, safety and traffic flow dictates that main streets be plowed first, followed by secondary streets and finally cul-de-sac and dead-ends. It is important to note that not all streets within the Village of Olympia Fields are the responsibility of the Village to plow. For instance, Western Avenue, Governors Highway and Lincoln Highway are State-controlled; and Vollmer Road and Crawford Avenue are County-controlled.



## It's Time to Register Your Pet

The 2020 dog license tags are now available at Village Hall. Any dog in the village must be licensed annually per Village Ordinance by January.

**Proof of current rabies must be provided when completing the license application.** The annual fee is \$10 per pet.

If you have not received a renewal notice in the mail or if you adopted a new pet recently, please stop by Village Hall and register your dog today!



# The Gibson Place Dedication Ceremony

Dr. Ernest Gibson often encourages others to “cast down your bucket wherever you are and try to fill it with humanity.” He and the late Mrs. Carolyn Brodie Gibson did just that when they arrived to the Village of Olympia Fields in 1996.

At a ceremony on October 12, 2019, Olympia Fields residents, special guests and the Gibson family gathered to witness the Wysteria Owners Association’s dedication ceremony for Gibson Place, a park and retention pond area at the entrance of the subdivision.

Dr. Ernest and Mrs. Carolyn Gibson were recognized for their service to Wysteria and to the Village of Olympia Fields. Wysteria residents Tom Essig and LaDonna Hudson shared remarks commending the Gibsons for their leadership and vision to improve Wysteria. It was important for Ernie and Carolyn to make sure that every member of the Wysteria community knew that they were an intricate part of the Wysteria family and community’s success.

Ernie served as President of the Board of Directors of the Wysteria Owners Association (WOA) from 1999 until he stepped down from that position at the end of last year. During Ernie’s tenure as President of the WOA, major enhancements were made to the infrastructure of the subdivision including extensive renovation of the retention pond area – drilling a well to maintain pond water level, installation of a sprinkler system, installation of street lighting and the construction of a fence/barrier system to surround the entire subdivision. All of the enhancements proposed and implemented by the WOA Board were approved and fully funded by the residents of Wysteria, a true testament to their confidence in Ernie’s leadership.

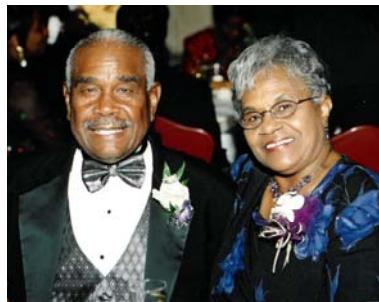
Carolyn supported Ernie’s work on WOA projects and simultaneously left her own significant mark in the community as an appointed Village Clerk in 2001 and elected Village Trustee from 2003-2018. The three Village Presidents that Carolyn served under, current President Sterling Burke, State Representative Debbie Meyers-Martin and Cook County Circuit Judge Linzey Jones, attended the dedication and each shared their high regard for the Gibsons.

Both Carolyn and Ernie had a resolute presence and participated over the years in every volunteer committee assembled by the Village President to tackle problems related to governance, education and general enhancement of life for residents of Olympia Fields.

Prior to moving to Olympia Fields to retire, Ernie was the Chief Administrative Officer at the College of DuPage and Carolyn was

an educator in Wheaton, IL. Most notably, the Gibsons served in the trenches of the Civil Rights movement. The power couple owned and resided in the motel in Birmingham, Alabama where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other Civil Rights leaders met often to strategize. The Gaston Motel was eventually bombed in 1963.

We are so fortunate that Ernest and Carolyn Gibson found their way to Wysteria in Olympia Fields. The community is a better place because of their dedication and desire to serve.



Located at the entrance of the subdivision, Wysteria Owners Association’s held a dedication ceremony for The Gibson Place in honor of Dr. Ernest Gibson and the late Carolyn Gibson.

# Something You Should Know ....

## Sanitary Sewer Lift Stations

A lift station, also called a pump station, is an underground pit (called a “wet well”) that’s connected to the underground sewer network and equipped with special pumps, electronics, water leveling and a monitoring system. A lift station is a critical asset in a sewer network.

- Purpose** - Lift stations have one purpose: to pump and move raw sewage thru a sewer collection system, often from a lower elevation to a higher elevation or when long distance restricts gravity flow engineering.
- Maintenance** - A properly operated lift station is the key to keep raw sewage flowing thru the underground sewer network. Failure of a lift station system is often the result of poor mechanical maintenance, a clogged pump or a power failure.

A lift station is an integral part of an effective sewage collection system. Raw sewage makes its journey underground in sloped pipelines that take advantage of gravity to keep costs down. This type of pipe system is commonly referred to as a gravity pipeline. In some situations, it's necessary for wastewater to enter the pipe system from a lower elevation. In order for the raw sewage to continue the journey towards a wastewater treatment plant, it needs to be efficiently transported to a higher

elevation. This can't happen naturally for obvious reasons – it would defy the laws of gravity and physics. Fortunately, we have the sanitary sewer lift stations to help.

Eventually, the raw sewage reaches a storage container referred to as a wet well, which is essentially a holding cell that empties out once it reaches a predetermined level. While in the wet well, the wastewater is carefully monitored in order to detect sewage levels. Coarse (solid) materials are removed at this stage. Once the wet well is full, a lift station pump will “lift” the sewage upwards using a pressurized sewer force main. A sewer force main is a system that consists of pumps and compressors. Its purpose is to elevate the wastewater to a higher elevation so that it can continue its inevitable journey towards treatment.

The Village of Olympia Fields Public Works Department maintains and operates 10 sanitary sewer lift stations. Each station is inspected and monitored daily to ensure it is functioning properly. The result of a failure in these lift stations would be the inability to move raw sewage out of Olympia Fields causing backups in homes, businesses, and in public right of ways. The cost to ensure proper function of these 10 lift stations is high, but the cost of failure is substantially greater.

## Suburban Woods Road Resurfacing Project Update:

### Streets & Sidewalks



Road resurfacing in the Suburban Woods subdivision began the last week of October and was completed on November 7<sup>th</sup>.

The entire subdivision is now beautifully resurfaced with new roads. All that is left to

complete this project is swale regrading where needed and minor landscape restoration.

The completion of the swales and landscape are TBD due to weather conditions.

