

# Shelbyville Times-Gazette

VOL. 123 NO. 22 ONE SECTION NEWS — 16 PAGES  
TWO SECTIONS ADS — 26 PAGES

SHELBYVILLE, TENNESSEE, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 1996

35¢ A COPY - BY CARRIER IN SHELBYVILLE \$1.00 A WEEK

## First Presbyterian Church Hosts Fisk Jubilee Singers

'Heaven Came Down and Glory Filled Our Souls' at the First Presbyterian Church house last Saturday night as the Fisk Jubilee Singers thrilled a large crowd. Their enduring art form of songs with Biblical messages and African rhythms has been heard since 1871, when a group of Fisk University students began a worldwide fund-raising tour so their school might have a permanent home.

Reverend Gordon Turnbull 'seized the moment' as he offered the sanctuary of his church for the performance. Even in this late 20th century, with the Civil Rights demonstrations far behind us, it took some courage to assemble a black and white audience in the antebel-



**Bob Scruggs**

**Bell  
Buckle**

lum setting of First Presbyterian, where once slave owners and their slaves, who nevertheless sat in the balcony, worshipped. From Turnbull's warm greetings for the Gilliland Historical Society, to the reception for the Fisk singers afterward, it was clear that the unity of

the evening was a community benchmark.

The Jubilee Singers repertory went from splendid to glorious. The concert went by quickly, as the songs were never overly long. There is no point in critiquing such a superb group as the Jubilee Singers. They came in goodwill, were enthusiastic and animated, and gave the audience a rich experience. During the reception, Mrs. Dorothy Smith gave some of us a poignant moment, as she recalled her earlier student days as a Jubilee Singer. Her delight was evident as she saw new soldiers joining the ranks of the Singers.

The audience got an unexpected bonus during the two intermissions

when an unheralded, richly talented Troy Simons stood up and delivered 'My Tribute,' and 'His Eye is On The Sparrow.' The stunning beauty of his powerful and flexible voice brought the house down! Simons manages Simons Graphics business; however, he will undoubtedly receive many invitations to sing in the coming days. Simons had led the entire audience in singing the Negro National Anthem, giving the first hint of his awesome ability.

The evident goodwill of the evening suggests that it is time for community churches to get to know one another better by staging visits between black and white congregations. Some churches in Shelbyville

have initiated this already; more need to do this. Ministers often hear the call to 'start the ball rolling,' and in this instance, it is a loud and important call indeed.

The Gilliland Historical Society, with Mai Dee Hendricks at the helm, in addition to creating an African/American resource center, has expanded the memory of Jim Gilliland from that of a talented black man to that of a talented man of whom all should be proud. The Fisk Jubilee Singers need to visit here at least once a year, and perhaps twice a year. The goodwill and unity exemplified by their visit needs to be a daily element of life here in our Bedford County.