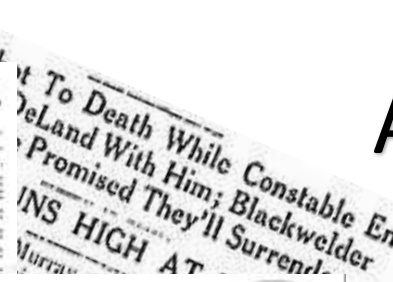


# Volusia Remembers Coalition presents ...

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*May 11/1939  
Daytona Beach  
Dear Sir I am  
a citizen of Daytona  
I am writing you  
in support of having  
off Gargis's job*



## Reflect and Reconcile Remembering Mr. Lee Snell

Saturday, February 27, 2021  
Noon (12:00 p.m.)

Old DeLand Road  
1381 Educators Road · Daytona Beach, FL 32124









Saturday, February 27, 2021  
Noon (12:00pm)  
Daisy Grimes, Presiding  
Volusia Remembers Coalition, Soil Collection Chair

Color Guard ..... Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)  
Daytona Beach, FL

“Lift Every Voice and Sing” ..... (Please Stand)..... Concert Chorale Bethune-Cookman University  
Dr. Terrance Lane, Director

Greetings.....Sharon Stafford  
Volusia Remembers Coalition, Co-Chair

Prayer of Reflection .....Pastor Reginald Williams  
Emmanuel Christian Ministries, Inc. – DeLand, FL  
Volusia Remembers Coalition, Community Historian

Welcome.....Mary Allen, Director  
African American Museum of the Arts, DeLand, FL  
Volusia Remembers Coalition, Community Historian

Volusia Remembers Coalition.....“Who, What and Whys” .....Nazrine-N Navetia  
Volusia Remembers Coalition, Finance Chair

Greetings .....Equal Justice Initiative ..... Gabrielle Daniels, MPH, MACS  
Project Manager  
Trey Walk, Justice Fellow  
Equal Justice Initiative, Montgomery, AL

The Story ..... “Lee Snell” .....Felicia Benzo  
Volusia Remembers Coalition, Education Chair

Spoken Words .....*Created to Honor Mr. Lee Snell*..... Dr. Rajni Shankar-Brown  
Associate Professor, Endowed Chair of Social Justice Education, Stetson University

Proclamations and Recognitions

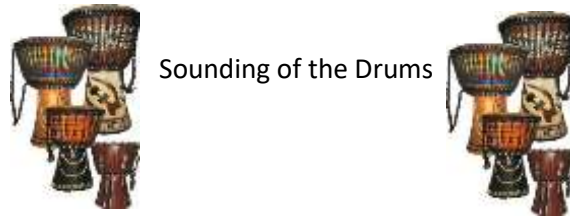
City of Daytona Beach.....Mayor Derrick Henry

County of Volusia..... Council Representative

County of Volusia Sheriff ..... Sheriff Michael Chitwood

Reflect ..... History of Lynching ..... Dr. Richard Buckelew  
Associate Professor of History, College Arts & Humanities, Bethune-Cookman University  
Volusia Remembers Coalition, Historian

Dance Performance ..... *"Strange Fruit"* ..... Carla Lester  
Professor, Speech Communication, Theatre Arts/Dance, Bethune-Cookman University



The Soil Collection..... Daisy Grimes  
Volusia Remembers Coalition, Soil Collection Chair

Remember, Reflect and Reconcile ..... Libation..... Retired Judge, Hubert L. Grimes  
Chief Judge, Raul Zambrano  
Seventh Judicial Circuit

Dance Performance ..... *"Glory"* ..... Jalen Blair  
Theater and Dance Student, Bethune-Cookman University

Appreciation..... Dr. Grady Ballenger, Volusia Remembers Coalition, Co-Chair  
Emeritus Professor of English, Stetson University

Prayer of Reconciliation ..... Reverend Wendell Webster, Senior Pastor  
Mount Zion A.M.E. Church, Daytona Beach, FL

Walking Together ..... The Prayer of Intercession ..... Concert Chorale Bethune-Cookman University  
Dr. Terrance Lane, Director

**Disclaimer:** Everyone attending this event is required to wear a mask. Gloves and other forms of PPE may also be worn, if desired. CDC guidelines on social distancing and government restrictions on gatherings will be observed.

## I could only imagine ....

Oh, how I remember the morning of Saturday, April 29, 1939. At approximately 7:29 a.m., I was driving west on Second Avenue in my taxicab. After serving in the Armed Forces, I came to Daytona Beach and became an entrepreneur, opening my very own taxi business in Daytona Beach... you know I had to support my family. I attended the local African Methodist Episcopal church, near my home, and I was a very respected man in the community. According to Florida Census records, I, Lee Snell was about 41; Lilly Snell, my wife, was 34; and Albert Edwards, our son, was in his early twenties. We lived at 312 Spruce Street, which is now the Midway neighborhood near Bethune-Cookman College. On that day in April 29, not far from my home, at the intersection of Second Avenue (now known as Mary McLeod Bethune Blvd.) and Keech Street, out of the blue a twelve-year-old White boy on his bicycle swerved into the path of my cab... I was shaken...the impact frightened me so. I jumped from the cab and there lay the helpless White boy. You know back in 1939 in Daytona Beach a man of color hitting a white boy...well.... but I was a law-abiding citizen, an Army veteran who served in WWI, a well-respected man in the community. A person with dignity and compassion for my fellow human beings.

So I waited for the police to arrive and the boy to be taken to nearby Halifax hospital... I just could not leave him there. For surely, I did nothing wrong. The boy rode his bicycle into the path of my cab. Because he was severely injured, I was arrested and taken to the nearby city jail. Around 2:15 p.m. or so that same afternoon, I heard the police saying that a White mob was forming. Lilly, you and Albert saw them, too. For safe-keeping, I was to be transported to the County Jail in DeLand, only thirty minutes away. About three or four miles outside the Daytona Beach city limits, Constable James Durden turned onto the narrow rural highway to DeLand, the brick road known today as the "Old DeLand Road"... just at that curve, a car with White men sped by the constable and swerved across the road in front of us. I could see them ahead, with guns. They had barricaded the narrow road in both directions. Next thing I knew, they jerked me from the constable's automobile and beat me with their guns... I held on to the Constable, then tried to run, but I was outnumbered. As I crawled toward the pines, the men shot me again and again. I lay on the side of that road, bleeding to death ... in 1939, modern times, I was lynched by that mob of White men!

As I think back over that day... I ask myself, if the police were transporting me "*for safe keeping*," why did so many people know the time of the transfer...why was I being transported by just one officer ... if a White mob was gathering, why was Constable Durden sent alone to "*keep me safe*"! Why was it so clear that the Constable knew the men who lynched me? I am still wondering if this was all planned by the mob!

My dear Lilly, I am so sorry I did not return home for lunch...I can just smell those hot butter biscuits cooking over that open-flamed stove. My Lilly, I love you dearly...tell our son Albert I am sorry I wasn't around to watch him grow into the adorable man he became. I am so proud of him, of his military service and his family. As I watch from above, I can see our children, grands and great grands as they blossom, some of them still living in Daytona Beach.

Yes, April 29, 1939, was an unforgivable day, and I'm grateful that people everywhere learned about it. My lynching sparked newspaper articles from across the country and around the globe...on the next day, *The Coshocton Tribune* (Ohio) had a headline, "NEGRO IS LYNCHED NEAR FLORIDA CITY," and the *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), that same day, reported "Colored Man Is Lynched," and *Nevada State Journal* (Reno) noted, "NEGRO DRIVER IS LYNCHED FOR KILLING CHILD – Florida Mob Grabs Reckless Driver and Shoots." Many, from Volusia and across the nation, also sent telegrams or wrote letters to protest my lynching. On May 7, 1939, Elizabeth Olmstead, secretary of the Anti-Lynch Association, wrote a letter of appeal to Frank Murphy, the Attorney-General of the United States; she also re-typed her letter to send it directly to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. B.J. Norman, my neighbor on Second Ave., also wrote to Attorney General Murphy about the lynching. He asked, if the Constable had been carrying a million dollars to the DeLand bank, would he have allowed two men to stop him and take it from him?

Although I was lynched by Earl and Everett Blackwelder and an inquest and grand jury hearing determined they should be tried for murdering me, headlines make clear that justice was not likely from the beginning. A news article from the *Daytona Beach Sun Record* on Sunday, April 30, 1939 seemed to call for justice: "Sheriff Acts in Negro Shooting." But later headlines show justice being denied: "NOT GUILTY PLEA SEEN FOR YOUTHS –Judge Petitions Court to permit bond for boys--even though they were charged with nine indictments. A May 3, 1939 headline in the *Daytona Beach Morning Journal* announced, "BLACKWELDERS JAILED; GRAND JURY CALLED";" but *The DeLand Sun News* reported on the same day that the Grand Jury had been recalled to reconsider the case, adding "State Anxious to Dispose of Trial at Once." And a *DeLand Sun News* headline tells the outcome, "Jury Deliberates for Only an Hour and Six Minutes before Returning an Acquittal Verdict by Unanimous Ballot." *The Chicago Defender*, a leading Black newspaper, said it best, "FLORIDA FREES LYNCHERS: CASE WHITE-WASHED."

Still the protest against my lynching continued. On May 4, the state office of International Labor Defense wrote a letter, requesting the Civil Rights Bureau to take immediate action. On May 6, Richard Greenleaf, Recording Secretary of the Orlando General Local No. 2, Workers Alliance of America, demanded that Attorney-General Murphy begin an immediate investigation. The ACLU called for justice, and both national and local NAACP officials wrote to protest the lynching. Telegrams were sent. Mary McLeod Bethune wrote to President Roosevelt requesting immediate action. She also wrote letters to the White newspapers in the state. "With such unjust handling of the case," she wrote, "there is no place safe for a Negro in the state." Even the future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall protested my death. When some White people started a campaign to smear my reputation, calling me a drunkard, my neighbors spoke out; they knew I was a non-drinker. And a local group of White ministers came to my defense. (No White person dared to spread lies like this about me in court.) Still the men who murdered me in cold blood were let go. Mrs. Bethune concluded, in an editorial for the *Daytona Beach Evening News*, "Citizens of Volusia County and of Florida, the eyes of America and the world are turned this way, taking note of your standard of justice. We are crushed, but we are not discouraged. We believe that justice will somehow triumph."

I did nothing wrong... it was an accident, and I am still heartbroken it happened... however, I was never given my day in court. I never had a chance to defend myself. You know my Lilly obtained the best DeLand lawyer she could to plead my case and ultimately Governor Cone sent an assistant state attorney general to support the county prosecutor, but despite everyone's efforts, a non-guilty verdict was given. It hurts me still to realize that Constable Durden knew the men who lynched me, and said so at the coroner's inquest, but then refused to identify them in Judge Frederick's court. Today feels like justice long delayed for me.

I must stop here for a moment and give thanks to my dear friend, Arthur Bowen who on November 10, 1939 made an application for me to obtain a veteran's headstone to mark my final resting place at Mt. Ararat cemetery here in Daytona Beach.

As we move forward and away from the hatred and racial terror of my time, I must also thank Professors Richard Buckelew and Andy Eisen, Daisy Grimes, the Volusia Remembers Coalition, Equal Justice Initiative and all the community for their research into my life and for remembering me, Lee Snell, on February 27, 2021. I hope their efforts can strengthen justice for all and bring healing to our community.

No, I did not have my day in court, but your efforts to recognize and honor Lee Snell will live on in the hearts of many for a very long time. To my grands, great grands and family members, Albert, Lilly, and I love you and will continue to watch over you from high above!

*I could only imagine* is a mental image....from the soul of Sharon Stafford, Volusia Remembers Coalition Co-Chair. It is not meant as a statement of factual detail, but as a way of hearing Mr. Snell's voice today.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are so appreciative to be partnering with the Equal Justice Initiative to bring the Community Remembrance Project to Volusia County. This project is very dear to the Volusia Remembers Coalition. Our mission is to remember, acknowledge, and reflect upon our history of racial terror, while recognizing the victims of lynching during the Jim Crow period in our county. Collaborating with EJI, we hope to place memorials to these victims at designated sites in the county. They will also be remembered through Soil Collection Jars and a monument with their names at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. We believe the dialogue we are beginning about our racial history and creating these memorials can help to transform a healing process within our community. Our goals emphasize three key points: Honor (*remember lynching victims and celebrate Civil Rights victories*); Educate (*explore our divided past and chart a united future*); and Reconcile (*cultivate a path to healing and reconciliation*.)

We would like to express deep gratitude to the County of Volusia, Bethune-Cookman University, Stetson University, The Baha'is of Volusia County, Zen Peacemakers, Inc., Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), City of Daytona Beach, City of DeLand, The Civitas Project, President Elizabeth Albert, Members Representative Josh Leclair, and Staff of Volusia United Educators (VUE), and Danny Fuqua, as well to our great community for your support.

Please stay connected with us as we move forward to ceremonies honoring four other documented victims of racial terror lynching: Lee Baily (September 26, 1891); Anthony Johnson (September 17, 1896); Charles Harris (September 17, 1896); Herbert Brooks (July 31, 1920).

Our final thanks goes to the family of Lee Snell and to all those who have heard his story and been saddened by it through the years. Thank you for joining us in beginning to heal this hard history.

The Volusia Remember Coalition is committed to a friendly and welcoming atmosphere where everyone will be respected. Please join us!!! For additional information visit: [www.volusiaremembers.org](http://www.volusiaremembers.org) or write to us at [volusiaremembers@gmail.com](mailto:volusiaremembers@gmail.com)



### VOLUSIA REMEMBERS COALITION STEERING COMMITTEE

Sharon Stafford, Co-Chair  
Dr. Grady Ballenger, Co-Chair  
Judy Thompson, Secretary/CIVITAS Rep  
Daisy Grimes, Soil Collection Chair  
Felicia Benzo, Education Chair  
Dr. Sam Houston, Social Media Chair  
Evan Keller, Public Relations/Communication Chair  
Bobbie Baugh, Web Designer

Tom Robertson, Finance  
Nazrine-N Navetia, Finance  
Rina Tovar Arroyo, Fundraiser Chair  
Mary Allen, Community Historian  
Reginald Williams, Community Historian  
Dr. Richard Buckelew, Professional Historian  
Dr. Andy A. Eisen, Professional Historian

#### Virtual Registration Required

Register Link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_apOU\\_qkmRIS3m-COxmTuvg](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_apOU_qkmRIS3m-COxmTuvg)

a confirmation will be sent to your email

for additional information visit: [www.volusiaremembers.org](http://www.volusiaremembers.org) or [volusiaremembers@gmail.com](mailto:volusiaremembers@gmail.com)



