

Uncle Ab From Abington — July 14, 1976

By Jim Jones

Well, it's all over. The Bicentennial celebration that is. The results of 10 months of work, Wednesday night meetings, phone calls, visits, letters, recordings, and plain hard work wrapped up in 3 days of festivities. The crowds came, saw, bought, watched, listened, laid their money down and went away, hopefully entertained and satisfied. They had no idea what those of us behind the scenes went thru. Best they didn't.

But for those responsible for the program, there is a deeper feeling that the casual observer can't experience. A sadness that we are done with the job. A sense of satisfaction in a job well done, a feeling of warmth for a wonderful group of people who have met, argued, quarreled and in the end reached their goal. A feeling that if no one else did it, we have taken a definite part in the birthday of our great nation. And Centerville had a show that will be a Pace-setter for years to come.

Friendships have been made and deepened over the past months. Small town America has a definite place in things, where hard work and a pull-together attitude can surmount obstacles that bigger cities overcome with more money. When one looks at the parade Charlie Killen put together, we wonder at what this man can't do. We look back on the Old Settler's reunion at the park Saturday and take great pride in Elsie Duke, Erpha Mathews and all those who were involved. We look at the Bicentennial art show a few weeks ago and at his many other contributions and Paul Hamilton appears in a new light. Here's a fellow who is indeed, a valuable citizen to our little town. We look at the maps of Centerville, the work that went into the research into past records. The efforts put into the cassette tapes, the work on the early farm land owners and Martha and Wilbur Sparks can stand up for a hearty round of well-earned applause. A more dedicated and hard working recording secretary than Irene Melvin could not be found--her work on other areas of importance is beyond the call of duty. So many more--Paul Elstro's handling of the flea markets and sidewalk sales, Clarence Andrews horseshoe pitching contest, Kendal Mathews flag and jewelry sales and his other work in nearly all areas, George Flanagan's announcing of the parade, Paul Merryman's Old Time church service, Ron Helderma's bus tours, Lon Rice's court trials, Dick Bohlander's handling of the Whitewater College Memorial, Inezetta Stiver's fantastic collection of pictures and memorabilia of the past. So many more who did their thing for Centerville and the Bicentennial. Kermit Heary started a fine project of recording the events. His unfortunate hospital stay left him laid up but his spirit was with us all and we did our best to carry on. Well, we can't name them all. We would if we could and space permitted. But a special thanks should go to Don McKinney who ran the whole show. As he said many times, "My shoulders are broad". True. But he had the inner faith that all would go well and that the Good Lord above would keep the rain away. He did, too, just in time. Well done, brother Don.

Better say thanks to Bob Miller for his help with the speakers at the water tower, the lighting and power downtown and the greatest fireworks display we have ever seen. A fine feller, Ol' Bob is and we are proud of him. The local police department who handled security and traffic with a flair that is strictly

professional but who kept a smiling attitude throughout it all, were a joy to work with. Our librarian, the town hall staff, the fire department, Ula Mull who handled correspondence, Roy Harris who kept track of the money. Well, we start down the list again. But we say again, many thanks good friends for this fine effort and great show, Maybe we should bury a time capsule for the Tricentennial committee. We can tell them what we did wrong and maybe it will help them correct mistakes. As Roy Harris said, "I have a stack of them a foot high". But we better tell them what we did right--and dare them to improve on Centerville's accomplishments. THAT will give them a real challenge!!!

(Ed Note: While you're passing out the bouquets, Jim, take a bow yourself... you shouldered the sound job practically solo... and did a super job.)