

Ex-sheriff marks 50th anniversary of office

by Patty Leon
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Name: Robert Vernon
"Bobby" Sikes

Occupation: Currently retired, but served as Liberty County sheriff after his father, Paul H. Sikes, died in office in August 1959. Sikes said he served the remaining two years of that term and two terms by election. He left office for other interests and Bill Phillips was elected. During Phillip's second term he died and Sikes said he was asked to run again. He kept getting re-elected and served until 1992 when Don Martin won. On Sept. 9, Sikes marked the 50th an-

niversary of the day he was first sworn in.

Sikes also owned of the local distributorship of the Standard Oil Company, with an office in the McIntosh community.

Family: Sikes has been married for 63 years to Lynn and together they have three sons, Robert Clayton, Steven and Edward Gil Sikes. Lynn Sikes is originally from St. Simons.

Is it true you once saved the life of an inmate?

"Yes it's true. This was back before we took cigarettes and things away from them and he accidentally lit the mattress on fire with a cigarette. Smoke started to fill the area and we lived

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practically right across the street from the jail back then. We grabbed the keys and ran over and the city police was already there by then... and I said let's get the guy out of there, but nobody moved so I went upstairs and I pulled him out."

Sikes said he dragged the man out by his legs. The man was unconscious due to being overwhelmed by smoke.

What were your roots?

Sikes said he was born inside the old Caswell Hotel,



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Former Sheriff Bobby Sikes stands in his memorabilia room at his home. On the shelf behind him is photo of his father and his father's rev

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which stood where the new justice center is being constructed. The building was owned by Sikes' grandmother Clementine Elizabeth Caswell.

What led you into your career? Sikes said he decided to run for sheriff because he felt the Liberty County Commission office had wronged his father and family.

"He and the county commission were like that," he said gesturing in a motion meaning they didn't get along. "The county commissioner appointed himself as sheriff when normally it would have been transferred to the widow or the eldest son of the family, like when Mr. Bacon, the former school superintendent, died they transferred it to Mrs. Bacon and she was there for years. But they never extended that

courtesy to us. They just said they were going to do something different. I went up to dad's office the next morning, right after we buried daddy, and told them I wanted to get dad's stuff out of his old office and they gave me 15 minutes."

Determined, he campaigned and less than a month later took office.

What stories stand out for you? One man, a retired officer from Fort Stewart, stood out more than others.

"He was an explosive expert and he decided he wanted to knock a hole in

the side of the bank with a bomb," Sikes said.

Sikes said Coastal Bank had a branch on Martin Luther King, next to a laundry. The man went into the laundrymat and knocked a hole in a wall next to the bank's vault and loaded the hole with explosives. The bomb was set to go off later.

"His wife ironically had a fight with him and she called me and told me about his plan," Sikes said. "We interrupted his plans and arrested him. He was coming from Waycross in his automobile and we intercepted him in Walthourville. We followed him

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into town and we hand motioned to the state troopers — we had three in town back then — and we got as far as the gate at Fort Stewart and then had him arrested. When they were searching him, he had two pounds of TNT in this pocket, two pounds over here and a hand grenade in this pocket. Supposedly he was on his way to kill his wife because of their argument. He was going to kill her that night and do

might as well tell you about the people I killed in New York.' He had planted a hand grenade under the cement block under a garage door so when you opened it the grenade would go off and he killed two women. He blew their legs off. We found out it was true and we held him for New York."

What were working conditions like? Sikes said the job was 365 days a year, just as it is now.

cars as patrol vehicles and none had radio communications. The big difference, he said, was the population was smaller and folks would even come knocking at his door.

What are you doing now? Sikes said he and his wife spend their days relaxing and enjoying the coastal area of Liberty County. They own property on the marshes between Yellow Bluff to Half Moon.