

introduced Dr. Tom Flowers, the museum's first president



FISHING CREEK - On Wednesday evening, Dr. Tom Flowers led a gathering of about 60 members of the South Dorchester Folk Museum through an animated, sometimes funny, frequently poignant journey. He remembered and brilliantly relived in words the days of his youth on Hooper Island and how he, as a typical, sometimes mischievous lad, celebrated holidays in South Dorchester. The South Dorchester Folk Museum has preserved in audio and video documentation the presentations of 39 individuals, each of them having shared their recollections of life and times in southern Dorchester

What followed with Dr. Flowers was a month-by-month recollection of typical holiday seasons of his childhood.

"It was a superstition that you always had to wear new clothes on New Year's Day," he remembered. "And, you always had to wear new underwear if you were going into the hospital."

The valentines of past Februarys were recalled. He remembered enjoying movies at a theater on Hooper Island, owned by Elmer Hall.

"Elmer owned a baseball diamond too," Dr. Flowers remembered. "A team from Centreville came down here to play our local team and the 'skeeters' were so bad that their coach wouldn't let them play. So, they got bug nets and put them over their heads and went ahead with the game. And, you know what? They beat us!" Easters were also a favorite time.

Chilly dunks in Tar Bay were recounted as examples of how Aprils were spent.

"I used to wonder how my mother knew I had been swimming," Dr. Flowers said.

"Finally, I realized that she could tell by how clean my ears were, whether I had been swimming or not." Dr. Flowers also

made a point to describe the clarity of the water in the Tar Bay of his youth, remembering that he could see to the bottom at a depth of five feet.

Folk tales of May were recalled. An example: A young maiden could supposedly stand at a well and look in a mirror and see the face of the man she would marry.

Collecting blackberries in the month of June also contributed to young Tom Flowers attracting unwelcome pests.

"I went home after going blackberrying with 30,000 chig-gers," he said. The local medical doctor at that time, Dr. Meade, suggested to Mrs. Edna Flowers, Tom's mother, to put him overboard in Tar Bay.

"All night I stayed in that salt water and those chiggers jumped off," he said. "They evidently don't like saltwater."

Fireworks and firecrackers were remembered from Julys on Hooper Island, followed by the "dog days" of August, when swimming was prohibited simply because they were the "dog days of August."

"I never knew a kid that didn't like going to school," Dr. Flowers said as he brought his literal portrait into September. He remembered playing schoolyard games like Prisoner's Gold and Stick Frog.

Halloween was a time of harmless mischief and great fun, he recalled. A game they called Tick Tack created an odd noise by rubbing a piece of rosin across an outstretched piece of string.

Thanksgiving was not such a big thing on Hooper Island, Dr. Flowers said. But Christmas was another matter.

Mothers on Hooper Island would make root beer, he recalled. They would bottle it and cap it, homemade. "Sometimes it would blow up," he said. "And, there were always fruitcakes, and applesauce cakes." A

Christmas tree was never seen on Hooper Island until Christmas morning, he remembered.

The beauty of the Christmas tree and decorations of the local church were also remembered fondly.

Dr. Flowers remembered being stationed in Germany during one Christmas season and being delighted when a package from home was delivered to him. Inside the box was a coconut cake, from his mother.

"A square was cut out of the center of the cake," he told the group. "And in there I found that my mother had sent me six pairs of stockings."