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We had a very successful Ribbon Cutting and Grand Opening on June 8. A nice crowd was there for the ribbon cutting and people continued to arrive for the grand opening all afternoon. Everyone was pleased with the new location and the expanded exhibits. The technology exhibit fills an entire room. It includes farm equipment, telephone, kitchen implements, and audio-visual equipment. Newly acquired old wall telephones and an Edison record on a tube were attractions.

We participated in the village garage sale, with only a few sales but with a number of people asking for tours of the museum. Since the tours were one of our reasons for joining the event, it was a success for us.

Romeoville High School has asked us to work with their National Honor Society and Advance Placement History classes this year. The students will help with projects and tours, while both organizations learn that senior citizens and teens can work together and enjoy each other's company. We have a display in the alumni tent at homecoming, and will be recognized at the October 18th football game.

On October 4, the society will have its booth display at State Representative John Connor's annual Senior fair. This is always a good event for us. The seniors stop and talk with us and enjoy the display.

If you live in the area, or return for a visit, please stop in and see our new look. Displays will change on a regular basis. We have schedule hours and can also accommodate visits by appointment to suit your schedule hours and can also accommodate visits by appointment to suit your schedule.

Nancy Hackett, President

The composite image is divided into two main sections. The left section shows a photograph of a sign for the Romeoville Area Historical Society. The sign is white with a blue border and features the society's logo and text: "14", "Romeoville Area", "Your History IS Our History", "Historical Society", and "James P. Scasopnek Museum". The right section has a dark blue background with white text that reads "ROMEOVILLE HIGH SCHOOL PARTNERS WITH THE ROMEOVILLE AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY". Below this text is a logo for "THIS IS R HOUSE" featuring a large orange letter 'R' inside a shield-shaped border with the words "THIS IS" above and "HOUSE" below.

**Special Exhibits: 2019-2020**

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Oct. - Nov. | Early Romeoville Veterans                       |
| Dec. - Jan  | Christmas & Toys                                |
| Feb. - Mar. | Boy Scouts<br>Girl Scouts<br>Other Youth Groups |
| Apr. - June | Farming   |



**James P. Sczepaniak Museum**



**Romeoville American Legion**



**Mayor John Noak & Nancy Hackett**



**Thomas Cameron - guest singer**



**State Senator - Pat McGuire**



**Commemorative Brick Garden**



# White Fence Farm Marks 65 Years: 'It's Like One Big Family'

## The iconic restaurant opened along Route 66 in September 1954.

By Joe Ward, Patch Staffp 24, 2019 7:09 pm ET | Updated Sep 24, 2019 7:10 pm ET



The Hastert family is celebrating 65 years of owning the iconic White Fence Farm restaurant in Romeoville. (Patch file photo)

ROMEOVILLE, IL — The White Fence Farm may have hit retirement age, marking 65 years as a family-owned restaurant this September. But the beloved Romeoville restaurant is nowhere near done serving up its famous fried chicken and making new life-long customers.

Robert C. Hastert opened the White Fence Farm in September 1954 as a humble, family-style restaurant. In the next 65 years, the restaurant has added more dining rooms, an animal farm, an antique collection, a car museum and five carry-out locations. (Some form of restaurant has existed on the site since as early as the 1920's, when the then-owner of the state operated a hamburger stand.)

White Farm Fence, 1376 Joliet Rd., has become a local favorite and a popular destination along Route 66. The restaurant has also created a family of its own, especially among staffers who have been there for decades and families that come back year-after-year, said Laura Hastert, the restaurant's third-generation owner.

"I was pretty much born here," Hastert said. "The managers my dad and grandpa hired are still here. Now, their families all work here. It's like one big family." Hastert was working as a business manager in California when she came home in the late 90's to help her dad run the business after her grandfather passed away. She came home to many of the same people who helped run the business in her youth, and helped serve some of the same families, too.

### ***RELATED: White Fence Farm In Romeoville Named Among 'Great Suburban Restaurants'***

For example: Judy Rice, White Farm Fence's front-of-the-house manager, has been with the restaurant since 1983, Hastert said. Now, Judy's kids work there. General Manager Larry Bigger and his wife, Shirley, met at the restaurant and have been around since the 1970's. Day manager Chuck Ker has been employed at White Fence Farm for 40 years. As has Beverly Svoboda, payroll specialist. Head cook Hue Moran has manned the kitchen since 1974. "They treat it like their own," Hastert said of her employees. "It's a great place to work. Who gets to go to work and make people happy? We do."

(Patch file photo)



Customers have been along for the ride as long as some employees, Hastert said. There's one family who has visited on their deceased grandmothers birthday for 20 years. One customer decided to have his own antique car — a 1947 Ford pickup — displayed at the business' antique car museum, made up of business founder Robert Sr.'s collection. One customer has donated over 800 antique music boxes to the collection, Hastert said. "The tradition alone," Hastert said. "It feels really good."

There have been changes over the years. Although the alpaca's have been around for some time, Hastert now collects the animals' wool and sells it in the business. The practice has been a hit with the local knitting community, Hastert said. The alpaca wool has sold out all four years it has been available.

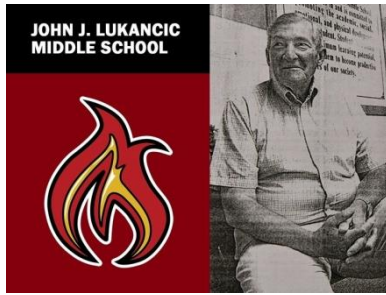
There are no plans to close the business, although customers did have a recent scare. After the 2018 closing of a restaurant with the same name in Colorado, some customers got confused. The rumor spread like wildfire, leading to an outpouring of grief, anger and sorrow from lifelong customers, Hastert said. (As it turns out, previous generations of White Fence Farm actually helped the Colorado one set up shop. It was sold recently, and the new owners didn't last long, Hastert said.)

"I can't tell you the millions of calls I got about it," Hastert said. Hastert does not have a succession plan just yet. She does have three adult children that could take over the business. But they'll have to pry it from her hands first, she said. "If I can figure out how to run it from the grave, I'll do it," Haster said with a laugh.

## Romeoville School Namesakes: John J. Lukancic

*This is the first in a series of six articles that explore the people the Romeoville Valley View Schools are named after.*

By Village of Romeoville, Patch Contributor



John J. Lukancic Middle School opened in 2006. But who was John Lukancic?

He grew up in the Joliet area and attended Joliet Junior College, Lewis University, and Northern Illinois University. He began his teaching career in 1960. Over the next three and a half decades, he spent time at North View, all of Valley View School District's junior high schools, West View (today called A. Vito Martinez), and finally the Valley View District offices as Assistant Superintendent in charge of personnel. He retired in 1994, having served the district in some capacity for 34 years.

When the district decided to build a new set of schools, the middle school was quickly pegged for John Lukancic. The new building opened on August 23, 2006 and, ever the educator, Lukancic was in attendance. "I couldn't miss seeing the kids coming in to school on their first day and meeting the teachers," he said. The official dedication of the school took place on September 7, 2006.

Lukancic still resides in the area.

## Romeoville School Namesakes: Beverly Skoff

*This is the second in a series of six articles that explore the people the Romeoville Valley View Schools are named after.*

By Village of Romeoville, Patch Contributor



Beverly Skoff Elementary School opened in 2005, but who was Beverly Skoff?

Mrs. Skoff was born in Joliet and attended Wilson School, Joliet Township High School, and Joliet Junior College, where she received an Associate's Degree. She started her career in education as a substitute teacher.

After marrying her husband John, the couple moved to Romeoville in 1951. Mrs. Skoff periodically served as a substitute teacher in the Valley View School District while raising her three children. She went back to school, earning a Bachelor's Degree in education with a minor in psychology from Lewis College (now Lewis University) in 1962. She became a full-time teacher in Valley View when North View School opened in 1964. She left North View for St. Ambrose School prior to classes starting in 1966, but continued as a substitute teacher in Valley View during the summers of the 45-15 year around school plan\*. In 1970, she found a long term home in Lockport with Homer School District 33C. She taught there until she went on medical leave in December of 1991. She passed away in August of 1993 at the age of 64.

Beverly Skoff preferred teaching elementary school, especially first grade. She was skilled in identifying learning disabilities in young students and placed a high value on reading, encouraging her classes to enhance their learning through books. An accomplished pianist, she often used music to help the kids express themselves. She was devoted to the success of her students both inside and outside of the classroom and would give individual attention to kids when needed. When one of her students was afraid to play on a swing, she worked with him to overcome that fear. By the end of the school year, he enjoyed swinging as much as the other children. Mrs. Skoff cared about her students and would follow their progress even after they left her class.

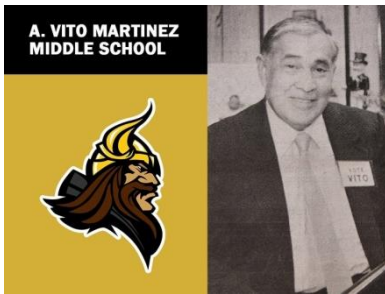
In the mid 2000s, Valley View School District approached the Skoff family about acquiring some of the land they owned to build two new schools. Because Mrs. Skoff had taught in the school district for several years, the family requested that one of the schools be named in her honor. The district granted that request. The new middle school was named after John J. Lukancic and the new elementary school was named after Beverly Skoff, the lifelong teacher.

\*The 45-15 year around school plan was implemented when the number of students outpaced the available school facilities. In it, students were divided into four groups. Each group of students would stay home for 15 consecutive school days and then go to school for 45 consecutive school days while a different group stayed home.

## Romeoville School Namesakes: A. Vito Martinez

*This is the third in a series of six articles that explore the people the Romeoville Valley View Schools are named after.*

By Village of Romeoville, Patch Contributor



West View Junior High opened in 1966 and in 1991, was renamed A. Vito Martinez Middle School. But who was Vito Martinez?

Arnold Vito Martinez moved to Hampton Park with his family in 1960, served in the Korean War, and was an engineer for 35 years with ComEd. During his time with ComEd, he helped to put up the antennas on the John Hancock building in downtown Chicago.

He served for 20 years on the Valley View School District School Board, all but two of them as president. He was also the board's first president. He guided the district through rapid growth, the 45-15 year-round school plan\*, uniting the teachers' union, the coordination of the district's curriculum, and the closing of two elementary schools. He had a vibrant sense of humor as well. During a particularly testy school board meeting, an audience member called him a name, "Ayatollah Martinez,". In response, Martinez photocopied a dart board with his photo in the middle and sold them for \$1 each, with proceeds used to help send the district's cheerleaders to a competition in Florida.

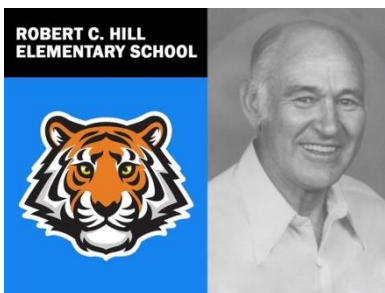
In 1991, the district decided to rename West View after him. During the ceremony, he received a memento with the number 23,045 on it. According to the calculations of the board treasurer Paul Swinford, that was the number of handshakes Martinez had given out over the course of 76 high school and middle school graduations. "My heart is in kids," he once said in an interview. He died in 1992 at the age of 62.

*\*The 45-15 year around school plan was implemented when the number of students outpaced the available school facilities. In it, students were divided into four groups. Each group of students would stay home for 15 consecutive school days and then go to school for 45 consecutive school days while a different group stayed home.*

## Romeoville School Namesakes: Robert C. Hill

*This is the fourth in a series of six articles that explore the people the Romeoville Valley View Schools are named after.*

By Village of Romeoville, Patch Contributor



Park View Elementary opened in 1962 and was renamed Robert C. Hill Elementary School in 1977. But who was Robert Hill?

Robert Hill was raised in Vienna, IL as a farmer. He moved to unincorporated Romeoville in 1958 and built a home in College View next to Lewis University. He worked at Stateville Correctional Center for a few months, but could not stand seeing people locked up. He then took a job as the head custodian of Park View Elementary.

He started there in 1961 and was a cheery individual who did his work thoroughly and with pride, whether it was a freshly waxed floor or just sharing a joke with a second grader and making them laugh. The school was always clean and well maintained and he would consistently make time to talk to the students, telling them about his job and all the things he did to keep the building in good shape. He kept up morale and grew geraniums for the classrooms.

Hill was a friend to everyone he met. His wife used to say he could find someone to talk to no matter where he went. He was not just the guy you went to when a mess needed cleaning or when something was broken. He was also the guy the kids went to when they lost their lunch money, the guy staff went to when their car wouldn't start, and the guy you could talk to if you just needed someone to listen.

"Dad loved his work, I think, because he loved all the people," recalls his son, Robert A. Hill. "He loved the kids especially. He was like a school dad, a dad to everyone." When Hill missed work because of back problems, he received hundreds of handmade get well cards from kids and teachers, proving just how much he meant to those at the school. Given this, it is not surprising what happened following his unexpected death in 1977 at the age of 59. When he passed away from an infection after gall bladder surgery, the students of his beloved school wrote a letter to the district asking to rename the building Robert C. Hill Elementary. The name was officially changed later that year.

# Romeoville School Namesakes: Irene King

*This is the fifth in a series of six articles that explore the people the Romeoville Valley View Schools are named after.*  
By Village of Romeoville, Patch Contributor



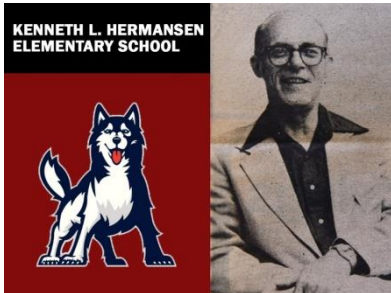
Opened in 1969, Ridge View Elementary School was renamed Irene King Elementary School in 1978. But who was Irene King?

King moved to Lockport in 1949, bringing with her 18 years of teaching experience. She began instructing eighth graders at Chapman Rural School, a one room schoolhouse located near today's intersection of Route 53 and I-55. She transferred to Valley View School (today called Kenneth L. Hermansen) in 1954 to teach first grade. She would move twice more in the district, first to Park View (today Robert C. Hill) and then to Ridge View (now Irene King) before retiring in 1975. In total, she spent 26 years teaching in the Valley View School District.

In 1978, Ridge View Elementary School was renamed for King. The dedication ceremony was held in 1979 with King, who had since retired to Florida, in attendance. When asked about her most rewarding experience as a teacher, she replied it was "teaching a child to read and watching the words come to life for the first time." She died in 1981 after battling cancer. She was 73 years old.

# Romeoville School Namesakes: Kenneth L. Hermansen

*This is the last in a series of six articles that explore the people the Romeoville Valley View Schools are named after.*  
By Village of Romeoville, Patch Contributor



Kenneth L. Hermansen Elementary School opened in 2001. But who was Ken Hermansen?

He was born in northern Indiana and served three years in the U.S. Army during World War II. After teaching sixth graders in Freeport, IL, he moved to the Romeoville area in 1953 with a master's degree in education. He was hired as the principal at Hillside School, a one room school house near the intersection of Boughton Road and Naperville Road. He was also named Valley View School District's first superintendent, a position he would hold for 20 years.

During his two decades as superintendent, he oversaw the growth of the district and, when the growth outpaced the available facilities and finances, he instituted the state's first year-round school year, the 45-15 plan. In it, students were divided into four groups. Each group of students would stay home for 15 consecutive school days and then go to school for 45 consecutive school days while a different group stayed home. This program gained national attention.

Additional contributions included starting gifted and special education programs before they were legally required, bringing the middle school concept to the district, and modernizing the district through additions to Valley View School and the planning and construction of five elementary schools.

He eventually stepped down as superintendent and returned to the classroom: teaching social studies at Romeoville High School during the day and psychology classes at Joliet Junior College at night. He retired from education in 1984 with 31 years of service to Valley View School District. He went on to serve four years as a Village of Romeoville Trustee and sat on the boards of the Fountaindale Library and the Romeoville Chamber of Commerce. He was also a member of the Jaycees and Lions Club.

Hermansen moved to Florida in 1991 and passed away in 1999 at the age of 75. When a new elementary school was built in 2001, it was named after Ken Hermansen, the innovative administrator who brought so much growth and success to Valley View School District.

## Local Obituaries



**Clarence Dean Kinder**, age 88 passed away, peacefully surrounded by family, Thursday November 15, 2018 at his residence in Romeoville, IL where he resided for sixty years. Clarence is a Korean War Veteran, serving US Army 1951 to 1953. He later went on to retire after many years of service having earned the degree of Master Machinist. He is survived by his loving children Michael (Patty) Kinder, Virginia (Gary) Jordan, Britt (Lisa) Kinder, Patricia (Thomas) Watson and Nicole Kinder; grandchildren Michael Keith Kinder, Katie Kinder, Kari Kinder (Marti Martin), Kimberly Jordan, David (Nicole) Jordan, Kelly (Matthew) Pfau, Kristin Kinder, Kayla Kinder, Matthew Kinder, Kevin (Shian) Watson, Kathleen (Brandon) Capell, James Watson, Carey (Scott) Garn, and Amanda (Brian) Sanders; great grandchildren Matthew, Isabella, Liam, Emma, Nathan, Ryder, Isabella, Jayce, James, Layla, and Adeline, also numerous nieces and nephews. He is also survived by his best friend, Harold Wilson. He found great comfort from their dogs Rosie and Rufus Bear. He is preceded in death by his wife Joyce Kinder; parents Commodore and Pearl Kinder; siblings Ruth (Don) Armstrong, Thomas Keith (Fannie) Kinder and Ila Mae (Lee) Bennett. Family and

friends are welcome to his memorial visitation on Saturday December 8, 2018 from 2 pm until the time of service 4 pm at First Presbyterian Church of DuPage, 180 N. Weber Rd., Bolingbrook, IL 60440, and also are invited to attend the inurnment and Military Honors, Monday December 10, 2018, 9:30 am at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL.



**Harold Gene Wilson**, age 88, of Joliet, and formerly of Lockport and Romeoville, IL, passed away Thursday, February 7, 2019, while wintering in Florida. Born February 23, 1930 in Sturdivant, MO, he was the son of the late Adrian C. and Lola B. (nee Proffer) Wilson. Harold proudly served in the Navy and Navy Reserves from 1948-1954. He retired in 1985, after working 30 dedicated years for Fisher Body, a division of General Motors.

Harold loved to garden, fish, hunt, play cards and support his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren at their music and sporting events. Harold is survived by and was a wonderful father to Gary (Claudia) Wilson and Gail (Eugene) Matsui; proud grandfather to Jessica (Keith) Carlton, Anna Wilson, Ryan (Pam) Matsui, Michael Matsui and Krista Matsui; five wonderful great-grandchildren; his loving sister, Shirley (Robert) Sheets; and numerous loving nieces and nephews. He also held a very close relationship with his brother-in-law, Lee (Donna) Costellia, whom he viewed as a son. Harold was preceded in death by his beloved wife of 54 years, Georgia Lee (nee Costellia) Wilson; his parents; and four brothers, Adrian, Charles, Earl and Freddie. Family and friends described him as brave, consistent, hard-working, and master of all

things green, especially tomatoes. He was one of the most kind, gentle, and beautiful souls to ever grace this world. Funeral Services were held at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery. A Celebration of Life will be announced for sometime in late May or June.

Romeoville Are Historical Society  
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