**Joseph E. Lewis**

Joseph (Joe) Lewis was born in 1930 in Sabina, Ohio, his parents being Joseph H. and Ada (Ball) Lewis. His family often chose to rent out their home in Sabina, while they lived and worked on farms located outside of Sabina. This afforded them the opportunity to pay for their home. They later purchased their own small farm located in Sabina. During World War II when meat rationing was a reality, they raised and sold chickens. Joe attended the Sabina public schools where he played the cornet in the high school band and represented the school at Wilmington College in Clinton County Scholastic Competitions in Chemistry, Biology and American History. Joe always had a keen interest in science, aviation and the development of electronics during the war. One of his close friends and classmates was able to receive flight training and his pilot’s license in exchange for work performed at a local airstrip. So one day when they were both in their teens they went flying.

After graduating from high school in 1949, Joe worked in a tool factory to raise money to go to college. He had enrolled at Ohio State prior to the start of the Korean War. With the outbreak of the War, Joe and some of his friends decided that they would join the Air Force. Individually each in his own time made the commitment. Joe enlisted in August 1950. The fact that an Air Force Recruiter lived in Sabina helped. Joe scored well in the sciences and mat so he was able to attend the school of his choice, which was Electronics and RADAR, in Mississippi at Keesler Air Force Base. Racial discrimination was prevalent in the south and elsewhere in the 1950s. It was not an unusual experience in towns or on public transportation. A few days before he graduated from RADAR school, while taking a bus into Biloxi, he remained seated behind the bus driver after they had departed the base. He should have moved to the rear of the bus. When they reached the bus terminal, the driver told Joe that he should have moved to the rear of the bus. He told the driver that, “as long as I paid 25 cents and was in uniform, I’ll sit any dam place I want to ride.” This did not set well with the driver, but Joe got off the bus without any further discussion. At graduation from RADAR school, Joe was assigned to an Air Rescue Squadron, located in Japan. It was his responsibility to maintain the RADAR on aircraft for which he was responsible. When those aircraft were located in Korea and encountered RADAR malfunctions, then he was flown there to make necessary repairs.

After a four year enlistment, Joe received an Honorable Discharge from the Air Force. Upon arriving home he was employed at Dayton Air Force Depot, repairing radar systems, some of which were familiar to him, others for which he would be trained. A new DOPPER RADAR system was scheduled for repair in the early part of 1956. He volunteered to be trained, so in early 1955 he was back in Mississippi and Keesler AFB. As a civilian going to school, he spent the entire summer there.

For several years Frances Atchison and Joe had known each other and corresponded while he was in Japan. With his return home their friendship had developed into love. Her family had retired from farming and moved to Washington Court House where she was employed as a surgical Technician at Fayette Memorial Hospital. In March 1956 Joe and Frances were married in Rodgers Chapel in Washington Court House, Ohio. They moved to Dayton, Ohio where Frances was employed at Good Samaritan Hospital until their first child, Lorraine, was born. Two more children, Joseph II and Dianne Kay were born during the seven years that the family lived there.

Dayton Air Force Depot was phased out in 1962. Joe’s job was transferred to Wright Patterson Air Force Base in that year. The Lewis family was interested in moving to a smaller community than what their present community presented, so they moved to Yellow Springs in 1963. It was close to Wright Patterson and was the small community that they both sought. Wright Patterson provided a wide range of opportunities for Joe to experience. He held positions as Electronics Equipment Specialist, Data Systems Analyst, and Logistics Management Specialist



When the Lewises moved to Yellow Springs they transferred their church membership from Greater Allen African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in Dayton to Central Chapel AME Church in Yellow Springs. Rev. William Wheatley soon enlisted Joe’s services as Church Treasurer and Church Trustee. Under Pastor H. Mason Brown the construction of the new church began in 1970 and was completed in 1972. The Church grew with new pastors and new members. Joe maintained Trustee membership for most of five decades

Joseph and Frances Lewis

Joe retired from Wright Patterson in 1986 and immediately went to work for government contractors for the next eight years.

Joe was appointed to a seat on Yellow Springs Council in 1991. He subsequently ran for election twice and was elected to two four-year terms. He retired in 1999 having served 8 ½ years. During his tenure he served as Council Vice President and Council President (a position he at retirement). During his tenure, the first section of the Little Miami Bike Trail was built. The Whitehall Farm was auctioned with the Village Council playing a significant role that preserved the farm from future development. Council played a significant role in ameliorating chemical waste found in ground water along Dayton Street near the former Vernay Plant.

*Joe Lewis*