

SSPR's History and Summary

Benjamin F. Gibbs was one of the sons born to Mortimer and Eunice Gibbs on January 31, 1925, in Sharon, PA. Benjamin attended Sharon schools and worked for his father, the sole proprietor of Gibbs Hauling. After graduating from Sharon High School in 1943, he immediately enlisted in the U.S. Army. He was stationed in France and served for three years. He received numerous medals and an honorable discharge as a Technical Sergeant in May 1946.

After returning home, Benjamin knew he needed to find employment, and he didn't want to work for his father's hauling business, so he applied for a position at the Westinghouse Electric Corporation in Sharon, PA. He was hired as a laborer and showed up for work the next day for his scheduled shift. Benjamin worked that first shift and knew this job was not for him. He never returned to that job again. He observed his dad and brothers owning trucking businesses, hauling refuse for the local businesses and residents. Hence, he purchased a dump truck to haul topsoil and filled dirt. He searched the Shenango Valley for property to house his trucking business. In Hickory Township, in 1948, he stumbled upon two farms owned by Mr. McClendon and Mr. Spangler. After talking to them, they agreed to sell him their farms, totaling 31 acres. His next step was to go to a local bank to secure a loan to purchase the property. While he was waiting for his loan to get approved, a local businessman heard about the potential property sale and tried to intervene and get the property for himself. Thanks be to God; the banker would not let him interfere and told him Gibbs's money was just as good as his. Then, the banker approved the loan for Benjamin.

Benjamin had a three-fold purpose for purchasing this property. First, he needed space for his trucking business. Secondly, he knew of several underserved individuals struggling to buy property to build homes and wanted to help them. Lastly, he wanted to be a blessing to the community by creating a haven where underserved individuals and families could come and recreate in the green outdoor space.

In March of 1948, Benjamin attended a church function in Franklin, PA. While there, he met Josephine Lawson and fell in love with her. So, on April 17, 1949, they married and moved to the farm in Hickory Township. Nine children (Bundles of Joy) came from that union, as their mother called them.

Over time, his business grew into an excavating and paving business. At the same time, he was developing a park-like facility on the property, which was called Skyline Summit Recreational Park. He built a pavilion and a basketball and tennis court, dug a swimming pool, designed a putt-putt course, and built a corral for two ponies and a horse. He would either rent a bus or drive his dump truck to Sharon and Farrell and load up the children and youth to bring them to the country for recreation. However, the park suffered and went dormant as his paving business grew. Skyline Summit Recreational Park's original intention was to create a space that would provide a safe place for minorities/underserved children and families to connect with nature and recreate in green outdoor spaces.

However, In October 2020, a non-profit corporation called Skyline Summit Park and Recreation" (SSPR) was established to serve ALL youth and families, including the

minorities/underserved. Eleven acres of the original 31 acres have been donated to the non-profit SSPR as a legacy on behalf of Benjamin F. Gibbs, Sr., and Josephine L. Gibbs. The SSPR Board of Directors is honored to be able to fulfill their legacy by making their dream a reality.