

Founders' Day dinner honors Cabas, Tibbs

By LARRY SHIELDS, Staff Writer- *SalemNews.net*

The Salem Historical Society honored John Cabas and Howard Tibbs as "Citizens of Honor" for 2009 during Founders' Day dinner activities at the Salem Community Center on Tuesday.

About 130 people attended the dinner that also featured Keynote speaker Dennis Niederhiser, principal at Buckeye Elementary School, who talked about 155 years of Education in Salem - "The Significant 8's."

A Chinese auction drawing was also held.

The society said that during the 2006 bicentennial 24 people connected to Salem were recognized as "Citizens of Honor" and each year two more have been added to a total that is 28 to date.

Cabas, a local high school basketball coaching legend at Salem High School, had great influence on his players and was himself a star at New Castle High School and later at Mount Union College.

He established himself as one of the most prominent coaches in the state during the 1950s and 1960s and was a member charter member of the Ohio High School Basketball Coaches Hall of Fame.

Cabas compiled a 298-147 record from 1951 to 1972 and in 1959,

his most famous team, was the state championship runnerup finishing with a 25-2 record - the all-time boys' best ever season in Salem.

Cabas also served as president of the Ohio State Basketball Association.

The Salem High School gymnasium is named the John A. Cabas Gymnasium.

Cabas and his wife Betty have two children, Pam and Mack, who both reside in Salem.

Tibbs has deep roots to Salem, coming from a large group of families - the Ormes', Cyrus' and Manzilla families - who have held reunions in Salem since 1891.

Tibbs, a 1937 Salem High School graduate who was on the track and field team, became a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, a WWII United States Army Air Corps unit comprised solely of African-Americans. Previously no U.S. military pilots had been African-American.

As a photographic laboratory technician, Tibbs worked at different bases in the U.S. The captions with his published photographs and his writing relay historical and military experiences, along with aspects of the bigotry he and fellow segregated servicemen endured.

Tibbs married Betty Clark after his discharge and they had four sons. He graduated from Salem Business College and earned a bachelor's degree from Youngstown State University in 1951 and attended Capital Law School in Columbus.

Tibbs worked for the Internal Revenue Service in the Newark area until his death in 1986.

His grandfather, Civil War veteran Charles Howard owned Howard's Barbershop on Broadway Avenue in the 1880's and is buried in Hope Cemetery. Howard Avenue is named for him.

His mother and grandmother were musical which spawned his musical interest and led Tibbs to playing the tenor saxophone in bands while in the military.

The Tuskegee Airmen were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2007 and Tibbs connects Salem to its African-American citizens and the Tuskegee Airmen.