**J. Elmer Spyglass**

James Elmer Spyglass was born November 1, 1877 in Springfield on South Limestone Street. He was musically gifted, and sang in Yellow Springs as a choir boy, and later performing in concerts and music halls. A year at Toledo Conservatory of Music encouraged him to pursue classical music studies in Europe. There, in 1906, almost penniless and with his opera dreams crushed, Spyglass found success singing Negro spirituals in the concerts and music halls throughout the Netherlands, France and Germany.

In 1930, after twenty years of singing to an adoring Europe, Spyglass retired to the suburbs of Schwalbach, outside Frankfurt, Germany. As the start of World War II came Spyglass had to report weekly to the local authorities as an “enemy alien”. He was so well liked by the Germans that he was not interned during World War I or World War II. When his house was bombed in 1944 by Allied planes, he helped his neighbors with their losses as well as his own damage.

After the war, Spyglass immediately contacted the American military to ensure a solid relationship with the people of Schwalbach and the American occupying forces. Spyglass worked to establish good communications between both parties. Spyglass helping find food for his community, which was scarce, as well as helped German citizens through a “denazification period”. His skills working with military and civilian problems impressed the American commanders and Spyglass was given the role of Chief Receptionist at the American Consulate.

Spyglass submitted an autobiography to the State Department for clearance titled “Where There’s a Will There’s a Way”. It was lost after it was sent to the State Department and was never printed.

He died in Schwalbach in February 16, 1957. The American Consul General, Mr. John Burns, the Mayor, Councilors and many of Schwalbach’s citizens attended his memorial service. James Elmer Spyglass was cremated and, per his request, his remains were brought back to Ohio and buried next to his mother and cousin in the Yellow Springs Glen Forest Cemetery.

*Jean Payne*

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