Oconee Bells spring into the limelight

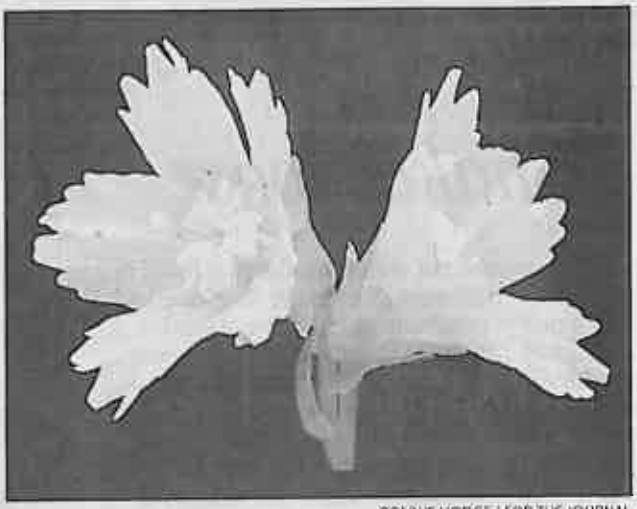
BY CARLOS GALARZA
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — Gene and Bette Borman are making a name for themselves by capturing on camera the sights, sounds and colorful history of Oconee County.

In the just about five years since moving to the area and establishing their video and Web design business called GBA Productions, the Bormans have collaborated in producing "Oconee: Land Beside the Water" in 2008, a historical journey that captures major milestones and landmarks. They followed that project last year with "Experience Oconee," which highlights many of the events and beautiful places that continue to attract visitors to the area.

At this week's Oconee County Council meeting, Arts & Historical Commission Chairman Luther Lyle showcased the Bormans' latest production, a five-minute video on DVD dedicated to Oconee Bells, one of the rarest wildflowers in the United States. The white or pink flowers bloom for only about a week in early spring.

Native Americans were very familiar with the flower they called Acony, and probably showed it to early botanists, who eventually got the credit for "discovering" the species endemic to a small part of the southern Appalachian Mountains, Lyle said.



RONNIE HODGE | FOR THE JOURNAL

A new short video is circulating in town that traces the interesting history of the local area's rare widlflower — Oconee Bells.

ON LINE

For a quick view of the **Oconee** Bells video, **go to** www.gbaprductions.

Lyle said the Oconee Bells DVD project, copies of which are circulating at local libraries and being made available to area middle schools, was made possible in part through donations from the Walhalla Garden Club and the Cherokee Bear Clan.

The Bear Clan was instrumental in obtaining through a license agreement limited use of the song "Acony Bell" included in the DVD. Acony Bell was recorded by singer/songwriter Gillian Welch, noted for her Appalachian music renditions, in her 1996 debut album, Revival.

Bette Borman said footage of the flowering plant was taken last spring along the Oconee Bells trail at Devil's Fork Park.

It can only help draw people to our area," Bette Borman said. "We are truly blessed with all the beautiful things we have in this county."

The Bormans now are trying to pull funding together for their next project — literally an inside look at Stumphouse Tunnel and the tunnel town that developed around it during its heyday.

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