

## Q &amp; A

# The Ebony Girls

Sisters say they mimic the Golden Girls ... minus Blanche

Move over, "Golden Girls." Stevensville has the Ebony Girls. Benton Harbor natives and sisters Barb and Lois Peeples and Gladys Peeples-Burks retired and moved in together 12 years ago.

The "Golden Girls" was an American TV sitcom that ran from 1985-92 about four mature women who lived together – sensible Dorothy, ditzy Rose, man-hungry Blanche and blunt Sophia, Dorothy's mother.

"We're the 'Golden Girls' minus Blanche," Barb Peeples said.

All three sisters worked in education, with Barb Peeples, "the youngest," and Gladys Peeples-Burks, 87, working most of their years with Benton Harbor Area Schools. Lois Peeples, 77, said she was a teacher in the Chicago area and was the last to retire in 2004.

"That's when we bought the house," Lois Peeples said. "They had both retired, and I said, 'I'm not going to stay in this.' They were having so much fun going on trips and all. I said, 'I'm out of here, too.'"

The sisters sat down recently with Staff Writer Louise Wrege to talk about their life living together.

**How did you become the Ebony Girls?**

**Lois:** After we realized we could be the Ebony Girls, a takeoff of the "Golden Girls," there was a fight to see who was going to be Dorothy.

**Barb:** Because she was the most together person, it ended up with Lois being the Dorothy of the group.

**Lois:** That was easy.

**Barb:** Gladys is Sophia. She's the oldest one. She's the wisest one. That's what Sophia was. And I don't mind (being) Rose.

**Lois:** She balked at first.

**Gladys:** Rose was smarter than they gave her credit for.

**Lois:** She's always positive. She's always a lot of fun. That's what Barb is, not so much the ditzy part.

**Barb:** And most of our mail comes to "The Ebony Girls." Everybody knows us as that.

**Lois:** There's even a catalog that



Don Campbell / HP staff

Calling themselves the Ebony Girls, from left, sisters Gladys Peeples-Burks, Barbara Peeples and Lois Peeples are all retired and live together in Stevensville. They are pictured here on Wednesday.

comes here, "The Ebony Girls." I don't know how that got to be.

**How did you know you could live together?**

**Lois:** What prompted us to do it primarily was the need to watch out for each other. We were each alone. We knew we could do it because we had always traveled together. We belong to the same organizations. We knew we could get along. We have our moments. The house is big enough, you can get away.

**Gladys:** Some say they could live with one sister but there's no way they could live with two.

**Lois:** They're shocked to hear that we're still together.

**Gladys:** We have some cousins in Fort Lauderdale who mimicked us and they're sisters and the three of them live together. They're managing.

**Barb:** They looked at the amount of money that they spend and how much they save staying together. Economically, it makes sense.

**Barb:** We enjoyed taking cruises. We loved long car trips. Now, we're getting too old to drive.

**Lois:** We had gone abroad. Never had any problem. We knew we could live together.

**The house is beautiful. Did it look like this when you bought it?**

**Lois:** No. In fact, Gladys wondered when Barb and I decided (we wanted to buy this house) and wanted us to reconsider it. We said to Gladys, "We're going to go back and look at that house (in Stevensville) again," and she said, "For what?"

**What was the house like?**

**Lois:** The colors were terrible.

That's one thing that turned you off. There was blue everywhere.

**Barb:** Especially light blue. We could see beyond that.

**Lois:** The carpet was worn. There had been a dog in here so there were pet stains on the carpet. The windows needed replacing.

**Gladys:** It was pretty much superficial, though, and they could see past, although we did spend a lot of energy and money bringing it to be comfortable and fresh. Structurally, it's a sound house. We're the ninth owners. It was built in 1974.

**Barb:** It's hard to believe that that many owners had so much space and they didn't do anything with it.

**Lois:** Half of the lower level wasn't finished.

**Barb:** We saw it and were like, wow, we know what we can do with all of this space. It's four bedrooms. We turned one into a library. This was the only house that we saw that offered three bedrooms with their own bathrooms. Plus the extra room because we like to entertain.

**Lois:** We used to have a big stay-at-home cruise party. The first time, we invited over 100 people.

**Barb:** We turned the house into a cruise ship because we like cruising. We had the different decks.

**Lois:** Captain's dinner, talent show around the pool.

**What are your duties? Who does what?**

**Gladys:** When we first moved here, of course I was 12 years younger. I actually did the yardwork. I even cut grass occasionally.

**Lois:** And lopped off trees.

**Gladys:** I'd cut down trees and move shrubs.

**Lois:** Barb and I would look out there in amazement – What is she doing out there? It would be 90 degrees and there would be a heat advisory and we'd call out, "Gladys, they're telling old people to come in out of the heat." And she'd say, "Well, if I see any out here, I'll tell them to go inside."

**Gladys:** Over the years, I have switched pretty much to perennials. It's mostly just weeding and watering. I love the outdoors, and I love working in the yard. Now I confine most of my outdoor activities to the flower garden. I grow a lot of things in pots.

**Lois:** She can just sit back and read books. I cook. I read recipes and try out new dishes on these two. Most of them are pretty good.

**Gladys:** They are.

**Barb:** She's more critical of her cooking than we are.

**Lois:** I'm always trying something new.

**Barb:** I do the cleaning except for our personal space. If you walk into cobwebs, I'm to blame.

**Do you belong to the same organizations?**

**Barb:** Gladys and I belong to Calling All Colors, and Lois helps. Calling All Colors will be holding their annual fundraiser Oct. 8 at the Hilton Garden Inn. The monies raised will help fund the program and provide scholarships for students attending Lake Michigan College who have demonstrated a passion for improving race relations in the Twin Cities area.

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