

MEMORIES

OF MY

LIFETIME

Kenneth O. Gill

About The Author

The author came from two family bloodlines that landed on the Virginia shores then later moved into the Wingra area of Georgia. From that time they moved into the central western part of Georgia that included Floyd County, Georgia. This is the beginnings of the Coffee County lineage in Georgia.

From its origin in the Coffee County community of Wingra, Georgia, the lineage spread hundreds of miles. The author was the fourth of seven children of the late Grade Coffee Gill.



It was in the late 1800s when the author's parents were both born in Wingra, Georgia. At that time when the author's father, Grade Coffee Gill, was the fourth of seven children, the author's mother was the fourth of seven children. Their father was a carpenter and a maker of a treadle sewing machine usually made by Singer or White.

After the death of Grade Coffee Gill and Grade they moved to the south near Paula Gorda, then back north to Plant City, and over to Sarasota, where

Picture of Kenneth O. Gill

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Picture of Kenneth O. Gill

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About The Author

The author came from two family bloodlines that landed on the Virginia shores then later moved into the Wiregrass area of Georgia . From that time they moved into the central western part of Florida that included Hardee, and Manatee counties. This

is the beginnings of the author's Gill and Corbitt lineage in Florida.

It was in eastern Manatee county in the Bethany community that his parents met in the early nineteen hundreds, and were married. Kenneth was the fourth of seven children of Oliver R. Gill and Gracie Corbitt Gill.

It was in 1898 when Oliver and Gracie were both born into their respective families. A time when there was no electric power, telephones, radios, televisions, or paved roads. The families all traveled by wagons pulled by an ox or a horse, and their clothing was made either by hand or by the use of a treadle sewing machine usually made by Singer or White.

After the marriage of Oliver and Gracie they moved to the south near Punta Gorda, then back north to Plant City, and over to Sarasota, where

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Kenneth was born.

From his early childhood he was able to see and tell of his surroundings in great detail, much more than those of his company. Whether on a trip or just sitting on the porch in a chair he observed things and could tell of them when others did not see them.

In two other of his books he tells of the times of his hunting for pirate treasure, and of the family

ancestry which takes you right along with him at the time.

Since he is now eighty five years of age it would take a book of an extreme number of pages to tell of the houses he built, the vehicles he repaired, the many trips he took to Fish Eating Creek with his family, his church life, the musical instruments he played, and the square dances he called. He has been a person with much influence in the lives of those around him.

So, at this time let him tell you in his own words in the “Memories of My Lifetime”.

**Kenneth’s brother
Chas. D. Gill**

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MEMORIES OF MY LIFETIME

It was at my home in Jacksonville, Florida on October 12, 2003 while sitting on my front porch with my eldest son when he ask me to record everything that was important in the events of my lifetime. What happened, who was there, where it was, and so forth, and so I’ll try to tell you some of the things I can remember from my early childhood until September 2010.

Palmer Grove

My parents were living on Webber street in Sarasota, Florida about one quarter of a mile west of the Philippi Creek bridge. They were between Tuttle avenue which runs north and south, and Webber street that runs east and west. If you were at the corner of Tuttle avenue and Webber street and walked east toward the bridge over Philippi Creek there was seven wood frame houses on the right side. We lived in the fifth house when I was born on February 23,1925.

As you go on down toward the bridge past the seven houses, the next building was the cook house

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which was like a big dining room with a kitchen built on the end of it. The Palmer Corporation owned the grove in which we lived and would feed their employees in this dining room.

The next building toward the bridge was the company office building, and the next was the Commissary which was next to the bridge. Behind the Commissary and the Office was the Work Shop where their equipment was repaired. My daddy, Oliver Gill, was one of the men who repaired the equipment and Charlie Blount was another one. I

don't remember the other men that worked in the Shop.

Behind, and south of the Work Shop behind the Office building was a corral where they held the mules they used to work the groves. The name of the grove was Hyde Park Grove Inc. and was owned by the Palmer Corporation. They grew oranges, grapefruit, and tangerines.

There was a big barn in the corral that was used for the storage of hay. When I was very little I remember being in that barn and climbing on those bales of hay. It seems to me that probably those bales came up to my shoulders. They might not have been that high, but we climbed up on the hay while

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playing where the mules were kept.

The row of houses that went from the intersection of Webber St. and Tuttle Ave. also went south along the east side of Tuttle Ave.

There was four houses south of the corner house. It was in one of those houses where Floyd Ziegler lived with his family. Floyd was L.M.'s daddy. The Ziegler's eldest son was Grayson who was later killed in a motorcycle accident. Grayson and L.M. had a sister but I don't remember her name. They all lived in one of the four houses going south on Tuttle Avenue.

Those four houses was on the east side and there was nothing on the west side except orange groves. That was the section that had the temple oranges in it.

Tuttle Avenue was a dirt road that ended at the fourth house. There was no bridge crossing the Philippi Creek on Tuttle Avenue to the south.

Going back north to Hyde Park Street, there was a gate across Tuttle Ave.. You couldn't come into the orange grove from the north on Tuttle Ave. unless you had a key to the gate. Since my daddy worked there he had a key to the gate. Sometimes on Sunday I would go with him for one reason or another. This

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was in later years that we went thru that gate.

As we went south on Tuttle Ave. through the orange grove there was nothing but orange trees on both sides of Tuttle Ave. until you got to the water tank. This was probably a quarter of a mile south of Hyde Park St. on the west side of Tuttle Ave. This was where they filled the tank on the spray machine to spray the orange grove. I don't remember how the water got into the tank but I suppose they pumped it up there.

It was right beside the only big ditch between Hyde Park and Webber while we were living in that frame house on Webber St.. One of the few things

that I remember in particular was when I and Janet Mae was standing in the back seat of the car while Mama was driving. Janet Mae was my older sister in the back seat with me.

We stood up on our tip toes and looked over the back seat as Mama was driving the car going down Webber St. toward the bridge. Daddy had tied a rope to the back of the car and then tied it to his motorcycle. Daddy had been working on the motorcycle, and Mama was pulling him down the road trying to get it started. He fell down on his side

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and was being dragged with the motorcycle behind the car down the road.

We yelled and Mama stopped. He wasn't hurt bad. That is one of the earlier memories that I have of that Hyde Park area.

One day, I don't know who I went with, but I went down to the bridge, probably in the car with Mama because my Daddy and Charlie Blount had been hauling dirt with a big GMC dump truck. This would have been in the year of 1929. The weight of the loaded truck broke through the boards of the bridge.

The truck wheels fell thru the bridge and they had to go get another dump truck. They backed it up to

the loaded truck and shoveled the dirt on to the empty dump truck. With the dirt transferred they could jack up the empty dump truck that fell through the bridge.

They had to put timbers under the truck so they could move the truck and repair the bridge. This wooden bridge only stood four or five feet above the water down at the Creek. When they built the bridge they never put any fill in the road bed to raise the bridge above the water, so the bridge was low.

You could stand on that bridge real quiet and see the fish swimming through the channel which was

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the deepest part of the water. One day my Daddy was down there with a fish gig and he giggered a rabalo. What we then called a robalo, we now call a snook. It was longer than I was tall. When I first saw it was when Daddy brought it to the house and hung it up under the water tank that stood behind our house. That fish was so big that Daddy got Charlie Blount to help him skin it. Four families ate the meat of this snook. I think this was also in the year of 1929.

Another time in the summer time, if you walked under the water tank the water leaking out hit the frame and cooled the air. It was real cool under the water tank in the summer. In the winter time

because the water tank had a leak, I can remember that after Dorlos was born in October of 1927, of going out in the morning and seeing icicles hanging under the tank. One icicle was longer than I was tall. By then I was probably four years old at the time.

Osprey

I was born in 1925 and my folks had left the Palmer Grove. Daddy and Charlie Blount I think, ran a dredge boat for C. Woodburn Matheny,

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because they were living in Osprey.

The 1926 storm had come by and we had been living in a tent. Charlie Blount and his family had been living in a tent while Daddy helped him build a house. Charlie must have bought land in Osprey.

They had just finished the house when the storm came. We all went into the house and stayed in the new house with Charlie and his family during the storm. They knew the tent would not stay up in the storm so they took the tent down because it was a bad storm that killed many people.

Hyde Park Grove

Both families moved back to work in the Hyde

Park Grove where we then lived in the third house from the corner. Two houses down from where we lived before. This is where my brother Dorlos was born on October 3, 1927. Charles Dorlos Gill is his name, but some folks call him Charlie. I am sure the icicles on the water tank and the big fish were after Dorlos was born. I was four years old at the time.

I remember the Charlie Blount family. The children were: Lucille, Elsie, Elizabeth, Leonard, Evelyn, Dewey, Curtis, Wilber, Richard, and Joyce.

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Dewey was too young to take part in it but the Ziegler kids had a play house built out behind the house where they lived. The Ziegler kids invited all the neighbors to come and see a play they had got together. They had been practicing at school and made up a play about something and they were putting it on as a presentation in their play house at night. I remember when they did that because it was several years after that their eldest son was killed in a motorcycle accident.

Beginning of Summer 1930

Grandma Blount's House.

We moved away from that area to Novus Street in Sarasota to a house that belonged to Grandma

Blount. Grandpa James Blount had already died. He was not my Grandpa but we called them Grandma and Grandpa Blount.

Their youngest son Doris married my oldest sister Cleo. It was just before they got married or just after that we moved into Grandma Blount's house. Grandma Blount only had her daughter Edna living with her at that time.

Her daughter Minnie had been married to Jack

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Thornton, and they had seven children. They were: Ella Mae, Olive, John Henry (Buddy), Edsel, Peggy, Julian, and Jean. These were the children of Minnie and Jack.

Minnie was getting married to Coleman Constable, or maybe she had just gotten married to him. He had just built a small frame house out by the railroad track. We're talking about a half of a mile east of School Avenue on Novus Street on the south side of the railroad track. We lived in that two-story house for about two months.

While we were there the Thornton children wanted to go swimming down by the railroad track. They had to walk the railroad track east to Tuttle Avenue about a half mile down the track to the waterhole.

There was a sawmill on the east side of Tuttle Ave. on the south side of the railroad track, and

there was a waterhole close to it. The sawmill used the water from this waterhole to cool the first steam engine that I ever saw to run the sawmill.

They walked down the railroad track to the waterhole and Mama let us go with them. I went with them and I was only five years old. At the waterhole there was a log across the waterhole

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under the water. While they were swimming, I walked across the log a few times and then my foot slipped off the log and I went under.

I came up, then went under again, and again, for the third time. A person don't usually go down three times and survive, but someone grabbed my hair and pulled me out. I think it was Ella Mae, and that was the closest I ever came to drowning. I survived that one.

I don't remember any other things about that house except that there was a great big pine tree in the front yard and pine cones were all over the ground.

While we lived there Orbidue, my oldest brother, walked to school up town to Central School. His teacher was Mrs. Rutledge and she taught the second and third grades.

Orbidue had started the second grade at South Side School then we moved in February of 1930. So he transferred to second grade at Central School.

Orbidue was born at Punta Gorda, Florida in 1921.

Also in the year of 1930 my daddy's sister aunt Orbie died on February 23 but because we were about to move daddy moved one load of furniture before we went to the funeral.

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Gocio Road

We moved away from Novus Street in August of 1930 to a white house on the north side of Gocio Road about a half mile east of Lockwood Ridge Road. Orbidue was very unhappy when we moved, for he had to catch a school bus to go to Bay Haven School. He wanted to go back to Central School and have Mrs. Rutledge for his third grade teacher.

When he got to Bay Haven School he found that Mrs. Rutledge had been transferred to Bay Haven School to be principal. She not only was the principal but she also taught the third grade. She bought him a new pair of shoes that year.

Janet started first grade that year at Bay Haven School and they both enjoyed school that year. We lived there from about August of 1930 until August of 1931.

A few other things that happened while we were there at Gocio Road. One day Mama came out of the kitchen on to the back porch and above the door

was a hole in the ceiling where someone could climb up into the attic of the house over the door. There was no cover over the attic access. As Mama walked under the access hole something dropped down out

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of that hole and hit the collar of her dress and down her back inside of her dress. When she screamed somebody grabbed the back of her dress with their hand. Mama just knew that it was one of them big house spiders that climb around in the top of houses. When they got it out it was a tiny mouse that was squeezed to death. It was not funny.

Texana Platt and her family of kids had come to visit us that day. It was on a Saturday or Sunday.

Another thing that happened was while we were playing in the yard, we had been told: "Do not throw sticks or rocks into the palmettos because there is a bumble nest out there". Well, Texas Platt's oldest girl Jessie May had to be smart. She picked up a stick and threw it right where the bumble bee nest was, where the bees were buzzing around in the palmettos.

She then turned and ran back into the yard in the middle of the crowd of children where we were in the yard playing together. The bumble bees took off after her, went through the rest of us and straight to her and stung her. They did not sting anyone else.

So, we learned to pay attention to what we were told and to not throw sticks or anything into a bumble

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bee nest.

It may have been that same weekend or maybe another weekend, but Dora Lee, Texas Platt's second oldest daughter went into the ditch in front of the yard and squatted to relieve herself because she did not want to go out to the privy. She just squatted down in the ditch.

The next thing we knew we heard her screaming. Somebody started running to her to see what was wrong. She said: "Don't come over here, go get Mama". What had happened was, she was passing a tape worm. They took hold of that worm and pulled it out. I had never seen such a thing in my life but it was an experience that really happened. I was there and I saw it. You never hear of such things happening today any more.

While we lived on Gocio Road, between us and Lockwood Ridge Road there was a big red house on the north side of Gocio Road. That is where the Denham family lived with their two sons, Ellis and Roger. Mr. Denham later was voted in as a County Commissioner.

While the Denham's lived in the big red house they had a dairy. Ellis and Roger had to gather the

cows up for milking when they came home from

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school. I don't know if they helped with the milking, but they did have to gather up the cows.

Ellis was the same age as Orbidue and Roger was my age. He was in school with me for several years. Both of them were on the football team at Sarasota High School and both were excellent players.

They had gotten a lot of experience of running by chasing cows and jumping palmettos. Both of them were very good at running a cow across the woods.

Some time later after they had moved away from there Uncle Will and Aunt Solon Bunkley lived in that same house. One time he raised a hog that grew so big he weighed seven hundred pounds. They called him Billy.

I remember when they butchered Billy. They had a big wooden sled that they used to hook up behind Rodie the big red mule. He pulled the sled instead of a wagon. They brought the sled up to the hog pen and put it inside the hog pen. When they shot Billy he fell over on the sled or maybe they rolled him on top of the sled.

Rodie pulled the sled with Billy on it out under the limb of a big tree so they could hoist him up and butcher him. I was only five years old then and that was the biggest hog I had ever seen in my whole life.

While Uncle Will and Aunt Solon lived in the big red house we went there on Christmas eve. This was about 1932 or 1933. It was strange for us to do Christmas on Christmas eve because we had always gotten our presents on Christmas morning. But they did it on Christmas eve.

The tree was upstairs, and they opened their presents on Christmas eve night. They made all the kids go out in the yard and wait because Santa was coming down the chimney upstairs with toys. That was the only time that we opened presents on Christmas eve.

Arlington Street and South Side School

The depression years were upon us and everyone was having a hard time so we were sure glad to get moved into the house on Arlington Street. At that time Arlington Street was not a paved street but it was on the maps.

There was a house about one half a block west of Tuttle Avenue on the south side of Arlington and it was two blocks north of Hyde Park Street. We lived in that house until 1936. Right after we moved into that house was when I started school at South Side

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School in September of 1931.

This is where we lived when Grandma Laura

Corbitt died on February 14, 1936.

It had to be in the late summer of 1931. When I turned six years old out on Gocio Road because I had to wait until school started later that year so I could start.

At South Side School my teacher was Mrs. Oaks and there were too many in the class. Mrs. Dorothy Jones taught the second grade and did not have a large class that year. They took three or four from Mrs. Oaks class and put them with Mrs. Jones.

I was one of the ones that got moved. They took the kids they thought were more advanced and moved them to the second grade. Another one that got moved was Laffette Miley who had an older brother Norman. They lived on a farm at Fruitville.

He became my friend and we called him Laffy. He was with me in all my early years at South Side School.

My third grade teacher was Mrs. Cosby, my fourth grade teacher was Mrs. Griffin, my fifth grade teacher was Mrs. Cromarty, and my sixth grade teacher was Mrs. Rice. Mrs. Rice was principle of the school.

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It was during my sixth grade year that we moved away from Sarasota up to Tampa. We moved to Tampa after Grandma Laura Corbitt died on February 14,1936.

Another thing that happened while we lived at Arlington Street was when I climbed up a leaning pine tree and a limb broke and I fell. I woke up later in the house, and I had injured a vertebrae in my spine where it joined my neck. It still gives me trouble today. That happened in 1932 when I was seven years old.

I also sold the Grit papers when I was nine or ten years old while we lived at Arlington. At that time I had money in my pocket because I sold those papers for five cents per paper. I bought them for three cents each and sold them for five cents each, and so I made two cents a piece profit on each paper.

One weekend I was downtown with Mama and Daddy to get groceries on Saturday. I was in front of the B & B grocery supermarket where they sold Davis ice cream for ten cents a pint. I went into the B & B and bought me a pint of that ice cream. I went back out on the sidewalk and eat all of it by myself. When it was gone I went back in the store and bought me another pint. It was butter pecan

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flavored Davis brand ice cream. I ate that second pint, threw the box in the trash, and went back in and bought me the third pint of butter pecan ice cream. I ate that one also by myself and it didn't make me sick. That was the only time I ever ate

three pints of ice cream alone.

We had a sweet potato patch on the west side of the house, and further west from the sweet potato patch was a bay head swamp with big trees growing in it. It was wet down there and banana trees grew there.

One time Daddy cut some bananas and wrapped them in a coat and then put them under the bed to ripen in the dark. You have to cut them while they are still green on the tree to keep them from getting ripe too quick.

Out behind the house on the south side of the house we had a chicken house where Mama raised chickens. She ordered them from Montgomery Ward by mail, and they cost two dollars for a hundred baby chicks. We always counted them when they came for there would always be a few dead ones. They always put six or eight extra in because they knew this would happen.

I helped Mama build pens for them, and when

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they were big enough we would put them in with the big chickens. We built the big chicken house with screen wire on both sides. One morning when we went out to feed them we found that someone had cut the screen and took out a lot of chickens. This was after they had gotten big. All of the chickens were white leghorns.

We had a neighbor living south-west of us on Hyde Park Street and his wife Teresa told Mama one day that she was so tired of eating those white chickens that her husband had brought home. He just kept bringing those white chickens home. Mama never told her that he had stolen them out of our hen house. I helped Mama fix the screen.

I was the one that always helped her build or fix anything. Out back between the house and the chicken pen was the water pump and the wash shed where we washed the clothes.

We would drive three iron pipes into the ground to fit the cast iron wash pot legs then set the iron wash pot on them. We would pump water into a bucket and pour it into the pot until we had enough water in the pot. We would then build a fire under the pot so we could boil the clothes in the pot. We had to take the clothes out of the pot with a stick so

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we wouldn't get scalded, and put them on a bench to beat them with a batter-board.

After beating them the first time we turned them over and beat them again and then put them back into the pot to boil some more. Then we would take them back out and beat them some more, and then put them into some rinse water. We did this every week and we always helped with the washing.

We had a back porch on the house where we had

an ice box. To put ice in the box the lid on the top of the box had to be lifted. Then to put meat and other food in the box you would open the door on the front. Sometimes Mama would put the meat on top of the ice because it was colder there.

When the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus returned each year to their winter quarters in Sarasota, there would be a bunch of real rough roustabouts that would come with it. One time right after the circus came to the winter quarters somebody came into our house while we were asleep. They came in the back door of the house and took groceries off the kitchen table.

Mama had placed them there when she came in from buying groceries on Saturday. No one ever locked their doors then because there was seldom

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anyone who would break into a house.

Mama had left the groceries on the kitchen table for the night and put the meat in the icebox on the back porch. Somebody had stole the groceries and the meat out of the icebox. We always believed the circus hobos stole them. They just wandered around the country side looking for whatever they could steal. While the circus was in the winter quarters they had nothing to do.

While we lived at Arlington we had a fireplace in the living room on the west side of the house. We

always had a fire in it in the winter time to warm the house.

One day Daddy came home with a Atwater Kent radio but we could not listen to it until he got some money and went to town and bought a battery for it. It was powered by a battery. The speaker was a big round thing that set on top of the radio box which was about eight inches high and eight inches wide and about two feet long.

When Daddy got the battery for the radio so that it would play we enjoyed it. On Saturday night we would all sit in the living room and listen to the Carter family singing on the Grand Old Opry. That was my first experience of listening to Country

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Music. I don't know what ever happened to that radio but it was the first radio we ever had.

We had a wooden garage out back of the house. That's where Daddy parked the Model T Ford truck that belonged to the county of Sarasota. Daddy worked at the County Stockade north of the circus winter quarters. He drove the truck home at night and parked it inside the garage because it had a canvas top but had no curtains over the doors.

I think we also had a 1926 Buick at the same time. Gas was about eleven cents a gallon, and down at Hog Creek at the fish House in Payne Terminal the fishermen could pull out the long hose

and fill their fuel tanks with distillate. It was what their boats used for fuel. It was not gas or diesel but it was called distillate.

It was something like if you mixed gasoline and diesel. It was only eight cents a gallon and the Buick would run on it all right. So, Daddy would fill the tank whenever it needed it. There was nothing illegal about it and it was cheaper than gasoline. I don't think Mama used it in her Whippet.

When she was nursing she bought her a 1927 Overland Whippet Coupe. She drove it for many years and still had it when we lived at Sulphur

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Springs in 1937.

About 1934 Janet had no shoes and she went to school and to Sunday school barefooted. Mama talked to the produce manager at the B&B store and he said that he would buy huckleberries for ten cents a quart. So, Mama took us in the woods between Tuttle Avenue and Philippi Creek where we picked fourteen quarts of huckleberries. She sold them to the B & B and got \$1.40, then took Janet to the shoe store and bought her some shoes.

I remember a storm came through in 1934. Frank Stephens was a city of Sarasota electrician. He was on work duty twenty four hours a day when the storm hit Sarasota. He brought his family with Maggie his wife and six kids to stay with us. Our

house was very solid. His kids were: Una, Annie Lois, Frank jr. (Buddy), J. D., Betty Mae, and Bobby.

The storm did much damage and when it was gone all of us kids walked north to Bahia Vista Avenue about a mile. Then we went east on Bahia Vista about one and a half miles to Philippi Creek. While the water was flowing swift and was up to my arms we held on to each other and walked across the bridge. The little house on the east side of the Creek on the south side of Bahia Vista had water up in the

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windows, it was completely flooded.

We went on past the house on east Bahia Vista to the red brick building on the right that was the Sarasota Baking Company in 1934. In later years the Mennonites used it for a church for years. We walked around to the back of the building where the trucks backed in to load and unload.

In that room was wooden flour barrels. When the trucks came in they put the old bread on shelves and sold it for half price. The bread that was on the shelves that was more than a day old was taken from the shelves and put in the barrels. They sold it for animal or chicken feed or to poor folks like us to feed their children. It cost fifty cents a barrel and we bought a half barrel for twenty five cents.

Everything was put into the barrels, the bread, cakes, pies, everything. They put it in paper grocery bags for us. We had six bags full for twenty five cents to feed two families.

Frank Stephens was a farmer and he farmed about eight acres north of seventeenth street east of Lime Avenue.

I think it was that same storm that broke an electric power line that Farley Bridgeman's mother stepped on and was killed. She came home from

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town on the city bus, got off on the north side of Bahia Vista to walk thru a path to her house. She stepped on the fallen electric line and was electrocuted leaving five children.

There was a farm house in the east side of Tuttle Avenue where the Byrd family lived. I knew Milton Byrd. He got so he would not cry when his daddy beat him. Later that house became the Welhelm Rest Home.

North of us across the woods through a path was a house where a trucker named Morris Posey lived. Mama carried me to his house and he took us to the doctor when I fell and broke my arm. The doctor fixed it with a splint.

When we rode the school bus to school we went west on Hyde Park Avenue. Our drivers was Waples Platt, Freeman Hancock, and Joe Brooks.

We went west and stopped at a house and picked up Doris Gault. I think she had a younger brother. A little farther we picked up James and Verna Winters. They were my age in school. Then on to U.S.41, and south to South Side School on Webber Street.

It was while I was at that school when for the first time I ever saw a dragline. It was parked on the back of the school grounds. It was big and strange

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looking. I had never seen one before and I think it stayed there the whole school year of 1935 and 1936.

Moving To Tampa

Daddy went to work for the Tampa Bay Dredging Company dredging out around the docks at Port Tampa because work had played out in Sarasota. These docks were where the banana boats docked when they came in from South America. For the first few weeks of dredging he would only come home on weekends. I think that Doris Blount also worked on the dredge with Daddy. I guess that Daddy voted for the wrong man in the election. If you voted wrong you got laid off and could not work for the county anymore.

Then Daddy had Frank Stephens come with his

truck and move us to Desoto Park in Tampa. This was where Cleo and Doris had an apartment. We spent the night with them, and then Daddy found us a house on 22nd Street and we moved there. Then I was in the sixth grade. We must have lived there for several weeks for that is when I got the measles, pleurisy and pneumonia.

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Sulphur Springs

When we moved to Sulphur Springs I was still in the sixth grade for the rest of the year. We moved into a house on 12th Street. A block and a half north of Temple Terrace Highway. Then Cleo and Doris moved into a house on the south side of us. I was big enough to baby-sit Cleo's kids when they went dancing on Saturday night.

There are many things that I remember while we lived in Sulphur Springs from about May of 1936 to August of 1937. Remember I started sixth grade in South Side School, then continued in Desoto Park School, and finished the sixth grade in Sulphur Springs School. This was all in the same school year term.

I went the whole school term of the seventh grade in the Sulphur Springs School. My teacher was Mrs. Wolfgang. The school was full and our

classroom was the school auditorium. At the end of that year my teacher failed me because I could not give oral reports in front of the whole class. I could write a story about a book I read, but she required two written reports and two oral reports from each student or she failed them. So she failed me for the

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whole seventh grade that year.

I met a boy from the next road over by the name of Doryal Stringfellow. He lived on the next road over to the west, and his sister was named Sevilla.

I really liked her and I thought she was my girlfriend. Mama told me to stop going over to their house. But, I said to Mama: They want me to come over, they like me and keep asking me to come back. Mama said: Yes I know, but you will wear out your welcome. That's when Mama taught me to not go to anyone's house too often or you will wear out your welcome. I never heard from them or had contact with them again after we moved back to Sarasota.

I had another friend that lived down the street named Luther Welsh. We both had air rifles and shot birds of all kinds. What we killed we cleaned, cooked, and ate them all. We would get a pot and some rice from our mothers, then we would skin the bird and boil it in water and add the rice to the pot. It was like chicken and rice.

We would also find bottles and trade them at the

store for Penny Pop. It was like Cool Aid. The store was on Temple Terrace Highway at the end of the block where we lived. The name of the store was Behnkey's Grocery Store. They had two sons, the

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one was named Walter but I don't remember the others name. They were German.

We mixed up the Penny Pop and put it in clean bottles. We then dug a hole in the ground on an empty lot and put newspapers in the hole. Then we went down to the railroad cars on the sidetrack by the orange packing house and looked for cold water draining out the end of the railroad car. When we found cold water coming out we knew that there was some ice in the ice-box of that car.

We climbed up on the car and opened the top door where they loaded the ice, then we climbed down inside and got chunks of ice. We would then wrap the ice in newspaper and put it down in the hole with our drinks. We put lots of newspapers over the hole and covered the hole.

The next day our drinks were really cold. We would get a bottle each day until the drinks were all gone. Then we would do the same thing again. That was the summer of 1937 when I was twelve years old.

One day Mama stepped on a nail in a board with her foot and she got blood-poison. About the first

week in August Daddy carried Mama to Aunt Nicey's house in Sarasota. Aunt Nicey was married to Mama's brother Dolan Corbitt. She had the Corbitt's

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Old Folk's Home where she kept old men and women.

Aunt Nicey had a son named Archie Hickox, who was my mother's brother, Dolan Corbitt's, step son.

Some of these were Welfare patients of Sarasota County. She had them in a house next door to hers so she could care for them. She put a bed for Mama just inside the front door, and she could see outside of the front of the house. At that time Mama was pregnant with Loreeta. Mama was glad at that time because Dr. Patterson could come out and doctor her foot every day. He got rid of the blood-poison, and she got well.

Doctor Patterson was the only doctor around that could cure blood-poison. Most people who got blood-poison died.

While Mama was at Aunt Nicey's house Cleo looked after us in Sulphur Springs. That summer we had went to the Cumberland Presbyterian Bible School in the building beside Behnkey's Store.

A block north of us was a family named Hunter. The woman was a friend of Mama's. She had grown up at Bethany when they and Nettie Locklear were

girls. They went to school and to church together. Her name was Beulah and her husband's name was

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Josh Hunter. His brother Monk Hunter lived on East Avenue in Sarasota.

Beulah and Josh Hunter had several children. The oldest was J.H, or J.C. and the next was Junior. He was my age and had a sister named Romona. Romona was Othella's age.

If you went past their house to the north it ended at the woods. There was a cow trail or woods road, through the woods to a dairy. Their name was Wilson. I don't know if she was a widow but I never saw her husband. Mrs. Wilson milked about six cows and sold milk and butter. Many times I took an empty gallon glass jug and walked down to Mrs. Wilson's and gave her the empty jug and twenty cents. She gave me a jug full of fresh buttermilk that I took home for all of us to drink. It cost five cents a quart.

I went about once a week to get buttermilk, and there is nothing like it in the world. It was real genuine fresh buttermilk made from fresh cream off of the cows milk. In the woods to the north of Mrs. Wilson's Dairy the trail led to what we called the Sink Hole. The ground sank down like a funnel and in the bottom was clear blue water. Deep, deep, deep, no bottom.

There were fish in there and the water was clear and blue. There were also other sink holes like that in that part of Florida. They told us that if you ever fell in you would just keep on going down because there was no bottom to it. Some others did swim there but we could not.

East of us on the north side of Temple Terrace Highway was a real sandy place. We called it “the sand dunes”. It was not a special place, it was just sandy and some people brought bicycles there to ride over the sand dunes. We went there to play sometimes.

Another thing that happened while we were at Sulphur Springs that summer of 1937 was the song “You Are My Sunshine “ came out on a recording.

We used to walk down town to the swimming pool by the Hillsborough River. Sulphur Springs Pool was a big underground spring that was deep, deep, with no bottom to it but part of it had been walled in to make it safe for swimming. I think they charged ten cents to swim there. On weekends it was always full of people.

It was real deep, like six feet to the bottom, and the overflow was a creek that run into the river. The spring was on the north side of the river and on the

west side of Nebraska Avenue.

In the middle of town was a movie theatre, and I think the name of it was “Roxy”. I remember that I took Cleo’s son Clyatt Blount there and we saw “The Prince and the Pauper” starring Errol Flynn. That was the first time I ever saw that movie because we usually saw western movies on Saturday.

Just north of town on the west side of the street was a Dog Racing Track. It was the first I ever saw. That was before Jerry Collins bought the Sarasota Kennel Club in Sarasota.

Captain Ide’s House

Captain Ide was a Captain in the Salvation Army where our family attended their church for a short time.

While Cleo was keeping us when Mama was at Aunt Nicey’s. One Saturday about dark Daddy and Frank Stephens came with Frank’s truck. We didn’t know that Daddy was coming.

We had to move everything out of the house and pack it up the best we could, then load it on the truck. We got it loaded about midnight but Mama’s baby grand piano was so big and heavy we regretted

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that we had to leave it. Mama loved it and played it all of the time. After we loaded the truck we all

climbed up on top of the load of stuff. We rode there all the way back to Sarasota. Sometime in the early morning hours we arrived in Sarasota.

From U.S. 301 highway we turned east on to 22nd street which is now 17th street. We went across the railroad tracks and on east to one block east of Lime Avenue. Then we turned north after we crossed a bridge that was over the ditch. That dirt road is now Charles Street which was named after my nephew Charles Blount.

We then went north almost a block to a white house that belonged to Captain Ide. Daddy had rented it from him. The dirt road stopped at the house at that time. It did not go any further north.

This is the house where Loreeta was born on September 14, 1937.

All of the woods to the north did not have any roads or streets yet not even 19th Street.

There was a big drainage ditch along the north side of 17th Street. We crossed over the ditch on a wooden bridge to get up to the house and we lived in that house for a few years.

One of the things that happened there was that

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we had to catch the school bus at the bridge on 17th Street. If I was late and missed the school bus I would have to walk or ride my bicycle to school. This I had to do a few times.

When I registered for school I had not been there before so I had to take a placement test to see which grade I should be in. They put me in the eighth grade in Junior High School.

One day I rode my bicycle to school and after school let out I started home riding my bicycle on the sidewalk going north on the east side of Washington Blvd. About three blocks north of the school there had been a fire between Wood Street and the railroad track.

From the sidewalk I could see tombstones and wooden grave markers where the fire had burned the grass and weeds. They were about one hundred yards south of the railroad tracks and forty feet from the sidewalk looking to the east. I got off of my bicycle and walked to where the grave markers were and read many. Some were veterans of the Revolutionary War, some were veterans of the Civil War, and others were not veterans. I guess there was thirty or forty markers that I could see.

Later I talked to Murray (Sam) Corbitt who was 40 my first cousin about this. He said that one day he had walked with others by the Luke Wood house which at that time was on the north side of Wood Street and about 600 feet to the east of Washington Blvd..

They had also seen tombstones and other grave

markers north of the Luke Wood house. He thought the cemetery was only in that area. I think the cemetery was 800 feet east and west and 100 feet north and south and extended west from the Luke Wood house west across Washington Blvd.. This is because that I have learned that there are still two graves on the west side of Washington Blvd.. I think they ran U.S. 41 right through the cemetery.

When they were preparing the land for the Ford dealership to be there the bulldozer pushed the top of the ground to cover the culvert that they put in the ditch. The culvert drained the water from the fountain in Luke Wood Park to the east. At that time they also pushed all the cemetery markers to the south to cover up that ditch. The cemetery is now under the Used Car Lot of the Ford dealer.

While we lived in Captain Ide's house I caught rattlesnakes in the palmettos and sold them to Texas Jim Mitchell at Sarasota Reptile Farm. He paid me a

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whole dollar for a six foot Diamond Back Rattlesnake. That was a lot of money.

Captain Ide's house had a tower and a water tank, but when we moved in there was no water. Daddy rigged up a pitcher pump on the well so we could have water. We did not have a bathroom but

we had a Privy out behind the house.

While we lived there the county brought in a bulldozer and cleared the right of way for Charles Street all the way to 19th Street. They cut the grade ditches for all the streets to the north and the east all the way to Tuttle Avenue.

While we lived at Captain Ide's house Mama bought some property for taxes along Charles Street, and along Lime Avenue. All of it was just west of Captain Ide's house. We got some used lumber from somewhere and built a small house on Lime Avenue on the north end of the five lots that was on Lime Avenue.

Later on we moved from the Captain Ide house over to one we built on Lime Avenue. That house was a block to the west.

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Lime Avenue

We lived in that house for a few years and then Daddy bought a load of rough lumber from Rayl's Saw Mill south of Sarasota and we built a new house on the middle of the property. That left two lots on the south side of the Lime Avenue property for Orbidue when he came home from the war.

Our new home had three bedrooms and Mama lived in it until she died in 1952. When we moved into the new house we used a part of the old house to park the car in. In the other part of the house we helped Mama build beds for her to grow mushrooms. I helped Mama haul horse manure to grow the mushrooms in from Captain Hyer's Stables down by the circus quarters. Mama got the mushroom spawn from the company that bought the mushrooms.

We had to water them every day just the right amount and when they were ready to pick we had to pick them every day. We would then pack them and ship them to the mushroom company. They bought all we could raise, and we did that for quiet a long time.

While we lived here is when I got my first car. It

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was a 1926 Model T Ford. It did not have a body on it only the front part and a windshield. I built a small flat truck body on the back. I bought it from Wilber Turner. It was in the weeds on the west side of Orange Avenue and south of Sixth Street. He lived there in a house or an apartment. He had the wheels stored in a little house. I paid him three dollars for it and he helped me put the tires on it.

Someone, maybe my brother Orbidue, helped me pull it home and I got it running. I drove it for a few

years. I still have the title to it today. During World War Two while I was working at Page Field south of Fort Myers, Florida, the American Legion had a scrap metal drive for the government.

They got soldiers and army trucks from Sarasota Air Base to help them. My uncle Will Bunkley sat on his porch across the street and watched the soldiers pick up my Model T Ford and put it up on the load of scrap iron on the army truck. They also took all of our bicycles, lawnmowers, plows, and anything made out of iron. They put it all on the load of scrap iron.

While we lived there Mama went down to Homestead, Florida to visit Aunt Julia's children. Some were named: May Belle, Minnie Dell, and Aunt

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Julia had other children. It may have been to go to Aunt Julia's funeral. When she came back home she had brought a plant with her.

It was called *Monstera Delisiosa*. We planted it on the south side of the house and it grew very big. The fruit that grew on it was a tropical fruit that tasted like pineapple. It was green in color, and was shaped like a ear of corn with the shucks off, but it tasted real good and it had a lot of fruit on it. But not very many at a time.

When you peeled off the outer part what was left

was real good to eat. That was the only Monstera plant that I ever saw with fruit on it.

It was about this time that my sister Janet had started dating boys. I remember a few of them: Armistice Drymon and his brother Art. She met William (Bill) Kelley at Nokomis and his sister Addie was the pastor of the Church of God in Nokomis. We went to a revival there several times.

They got married while I was working at the Venice Air Base in 1944.

I worked with two of Bill's cousins. They were Duval Boone and Ed Boone. They were machine operators. Janet and Bill had two children. Marvelle was the first and then Gayle. They were

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married about fifteen years and then they divorced.

Marvelle married Jack Hester and Gayle married a man named Walter who was a no good and beat her up all of the time. Gayle finally divorced Walter and later married Jerry Ryan. They are still married after being together for many years. Marvelle had married Jack Hester but after a few years they divorced.

Janet met and married Paul Bundy. Paul had a filling station and sold used cars at a place in White City on the north side of Sarasota. Later Janet and Paul moved to a place northeast of Cross city Florida, and had a cabin in North Carolina.

Gayle and Jerry had moved to Chatsworth, Georgia and they built a house close to Janet and Paul's cabin in Bryson City, North Carolina. After Janet and Paul got into bad health they sold everything in Chatsworth and in Bryson City and moved down to a place north of Cross City where they are living now.

Paul died several years ago and was buried in Old Town Cemetery. Janet sold their home and went to Houston, Texas to live with Loreeta. After about two years she also died, and is now buried next to Paul at the Old Town cemetery. Gayle had moved south to

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be close to her mother in her old age but that did not last very long.

When Orbidue came home from the Navy in 1950 he bought a sixteen feet by sixteen feet plywood hutment from the Air Base and put it on the back of his lots. He later married Louise Culpepper and they had a Jim Walter house built on his lots. They lived in the hutment until the house was built.

A few years later I had bought some lots at the corner of Charles Street and 19th Street. I bought that hutment from Orbidue and Louise and put it on the corner of my property. I had a community store there for a while.

Later Orbidue and Louise bought a house in the

south part of the county and while he was there he bought a real nice boat. I think it was a Sea Gypsy. He put a Johnson outboard motor on it and enjoyed using that boat for a few years.

When Orbidue went into the Navy in 1942 some of his friends were: Hanson Gay, Clark Smith, along with several others went in the service about the same time.

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My Earlier Years

As I am telling this story I am living in Jacksonville, Florida. I am 85 years old, and will be 86 in February. I am trying to record the memories of my lifetime which my eldest son Mitchell ask me to put into writing so that others could know.

When I quit school I was already working part time at the Piggly Wiggly grocery store. They later changed the name to Margaret Ann. When I quit school I went to work full time for thirty five dollars a week. I would work nine hours a day and sixteen hours on Saturday.

I worked stocking and carried out groceries but after I worked there for a while times got kinda hard and money was scarce. So I quit the grocery

store and went to work for A.D.Good Construction Company driving a dump truck.

Fort Myers and Page Field

We finished the work at the Sarasota Air Base around the taxi strips, and then we took the trucks to Fort Myers. There were eight or ten trucks. Henry Ritchie drove one of the trucks, his brother John

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Junior drove one, and we needed one more driver. Daddy had just run out of work at the city garage so he drove one of the trucks to Fort Myers.

When we got down there we worked at the Buckingham Gunnery School, and a few other places. Then Daddy went to work at Page Field as a mechanic for the post engineers. Page Field was south of Fort Myers about six miles on highway U.S. 41.

He told me there was an opening for a mechanics helper and if I wanted to I could go to work there. So I went there and signed up with the Post Engineers and went to work with them. This was because A.D.Good was taking their trucks back to his hometown in Wildwood just north of Orlando. He was then going to take them to South America to work and I did not want to go there.

That was shortly before I got married in April of 1943. I stayed there on that job until November. I had married Myrtle Waters, and Mitchell was expected to be born in January of 1944.

Being a time of war the government required me to get a letter from her family doctor in Sarasota saying that I needed to bring her to Sarasota so that he could take care of her and I could work there.

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Back To Sarasota

Venice Air Base

So I got a release from that job and moved to Sarasota. This was on Friday in November of 1943 while World War Two was in progress. That was the only day that I did not have a job in all of my working years. During the war all wages and prices were frozen by the government and could not change. Also all workers were frozen on their jobs and could not leave and go to another job.

After I moved to Sarasota on Friday I went to Venice Air Base on Saturday morning. I signed up with the Post Engineers as a truck driver.

I had built a little two wheel trailer that I loaded our furniture and stuff on but I could not get my check from where I worked at Page Field until Friday at noon. I had bought an axel with the wheels and tires on it from a junk yard, then I got

some boards from the dump and built a trailer to bring our stuff on to Sarasota.

While I worked at Page Field we got paid on the first and the fifteenth of the month. That last paycheck was fifty two dollars. I could not get a higher wage at that Base because it was a fourth

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class air-base, the lowest pay of all the air-bases. Venice was a second class air-base so I got a higher pay on that job.

In later years I always talked to my boss before I changed jobs and told him why I was going to another job. The next job would have more pay or better working conditions, and my bosses always told me that they hated to see me leave. They would always tell me that if it didn't work out for me to come back and they would make a place for me.

It was twenty miles to Venice from home so we always had four men in the car going and coming from work. I stayed at the Venice Air Base until the war ended and they closed the Venice Air Base.

German Prisoners

A lot of interesting things happened while I worked at the Venice Air Base. The military government was holding a lot of German prisoners at a camp in Mississippi. Since they were so

crowded they moved some of them to smaller camps so they could be outside in the air and sunshine.

They built a prison camp inside the Venice Air Base and brought a hundred and fifty prisoners to

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live in that camp until the war ended with Germany. The men liked the Venice camp because they could go to English classes every night and learn to speak English. Some worked as cooks or as dish washers in the different mess halls and kitchens.

They had been captured by American allies during the war in Africa. They did not like the camp in Mississippi and were glad to be moved.

I was assigned by the Post Engineers to be a permanent driver for the labor crew. This was a group of colored laborers who were replaced with the German prisoners, and the foreman was a Venice man named Pete Edge. Pete was a good man to work with if you were not lazy. The labor crew took care of the things that required manual labor. Things like picking up trash, digging with shovels, and hauling freight to and from the railroad station in Venice.

We did whatever jobs needed to be done. My truck was a one and one half ton flat bed Ford truck. We even moved a sixteen by sixteen hutment one time that we carried to somewhere south of

Venice. I think it was somewhere between Venice and Englewood. The place we took it was called site thirteen. It was right on the edge of the waters of the

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Gulf of Mexico and was fenced in as a military site.

It had a few towers that were about fifteen or twenty feet high where a man could stand at night and look for enemy submarines in the Gulf.

When we moved the hutment we used two long timbers that were longer than the trucks body. I backed up to the hutment we had to move and the interpreter was named Johan Blunk. When he started with us he probably only knew about one hundred words in English. There was not very many that could speak English at first but Johan did very good. He was my age and had a sister Herma Blunk, that was Loreeta's age.

When I backed up to the hutment Johan spoke to the men and they lined up along the side of the hutment. He yelled something in German and they all bent down and put their hands under the building. He hollered again and they stood up and lifted the side of the hutment up high enough for two men on the truck to slide the timbers all the way under the hutment.

They let it down on the timbers and I backed the truck up some more. The truck body was only

twelve feet long and eight feet wide, and the hutment was sixteen by sixteen in feet. The men moved to the

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other side and bent down when Johan told them to. When he hollered again they stood up and brought the hutment up level on the truck. Then they pushed it up to the cab.

They raised one side at a time and moved the timbers to the outside edge of the truck bed, then we drove slow and easy to site thirteen. We put it where they wanted it to be. I think it was 12 or 13 miles from the Venice Air Base.

When the prisoners started with us they always had a guard with us with a rifle. But none of them wanted to leave anyway and later we did not even have a guard.

We put shell or rock along the sides of the runway and sometimes the wind would blow it all away. We had to fill the low spots along the runway. One day we were out working by the runway and the wind was from the south-west. All planes had to come in then from the north-east. The south-west end of the runway went almost to the beach at the Gulf. So, when we were working there if a plane landed or took off we would all have to back away about an hundred feet until after it passed. After it passed we would resume the work

along the runway.

One day everyone was watching toward the

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hanger because that is where the planes came into or took off from. We were all busy when all of a sudden there was a loud whoom noise, we looked around and saw a plane coming in over the Gulf downwind.

There were no markings on this plane. It was a P-38 fighter plane painted solid black. When he landed the military police met him by the time he stopped and took him in their Jeep. We knew he went to the Commanding Officer of the base. He must have come from an island or carrier in the South Pacific. If he had come from very far he would have dropped his wing tanks for fuel.

When the wing tanks got empty of fuel the pilots would drop them from the plane. We saw a lot of planes flying around and around the air field, and then we would see that one wheel was not down. The landing gear was hung up and he would have to crash-land. The pilot was burning up fuel before he had to crash his airplane.

The emergency vehicles always lined up along the runway. Sometimes the pilots came in pretty good and sometimes they crashed and caught on fire. At times a pilot could land his plane on one wheel and then spin around without a fire. There were times

we knew the pilot did not get out alive.

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One day we went to the Officers Club House on Venice beach where they had a party the night before. We had to cleanup inside and outside. The prisoners loved that because when they were finished they received a Pepsi Cola. Pete Edge had brought a case and when they were finished they then walked on the beach picking up shells. They would always do anything that needed to be done because Pete was always good to them.

We had a guard with us that day, a Georgia boy named Register. He carried a thirty caliber Carbine rifle as all of the guards did. The men wanted him to show them how good he could shoot so they threw a bottle out in the water and said: Shoot the bottle. He did and shot just a little high. The second shot went to one side, and the third shot hit the bottle. They all yelled: Hoorah, now let Kenny shoot.

Johan would go with me to the dump at times and we talked. I had told him that me and Archie Hickox hunted rabbits and frogs and that I had a single shot rifle, he knew that I could shoot. He had probably told the other men. So they threw another bottle out in the water, then Register handed me the rifle.

I told him that he would have to cock it ready to

shoot because I had never had a rifle like that in my
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hands before. He fixed it ready for me to pull the trigger. I raised it up and sighted it on the bottle. Then I waited for the bottle to come up on the wave which was about two feet. Then I held steady and waited for the bottle to go down again, then when it came up and stopped I sighted it and pulled the trigger. The bottle exploded the first shot, then the men really yelled and teased Register because I had shot better than him. Someone said: Do it again, and I said no and handed the rifle back to Register.

Now Johan Blunk was raised in North Germany in Norden, East Freesland. North Germany is like the south in America. The boys in the north were like the crackers and red-necks over here. He had hunted in the woods just like we did. That may have just been a lucky shot for me or I might have done the same thing three more times. We'll never know, but they all knew that I was not just bragging that I could really shoot.

I was only twenty years old and it had been only three years since me and Archie were shooting together.

When the war was ended I think the military government shipped the prisoners back to Mississippi, and then back home. Many of them

wanted to stay here . They would have stayed if they would have had a sponsor. A sponsor must let them bring their family over here and be responsible for them for five years. Because of this not many people was willing to sponsor them.

I gave Loreeta Herma's address in Germany and she wrote to her many times she told me many years later . After thirty years had passed Loreeta wrote to her again at the same address at 419 Mackerig A, Norden, East Freesland, Germany (Deutschland).

Herma had grown up, married, and had a family. She had moved but someone must have known her and forwarded the letter to her. She wrote back that Johan had just died. Johan was my age and we were both born in 1925. I don't know if they still write to each other but she told me this last year. It was so amazing that they could make contact after thirty years had passed.

Muckland Celery Company

When they deactivated the Venice Air Base I had to find another job. My brother in law Mack Waters, worked as a foreman for the Muckland Celery Company. They grew celery where Daddy and

Charlie Blount had dredged out the ditches of the area to drain the water off of the muck at Unit Three of the celery farms.

They needed a truck driver to haul celery out of the field. I went to work for the Muckland Celery Company in 1946. Their office was on Fruitville Road across from Bobby Jones Golf Course, and next to the celery packing house. The repair shop was behind the packing house and their mechanic was Cully Albritton.

The railroad that brought the Circus in was beside the packing house. There was a railroad side-track that was close to the packing house where they loaded and shipped the celery to the north.

We would bring the celery from the field to the packing house where it was washed, trimmed, sorted, and packed in the shipping crates. The crates were then put on a moving conveyer belt that took it through about sixty feet of water of about 33 degrees. That was to pre-cool it before it was loaded into the rail-cars with ice for shipping.

When I was not in the field they let me help the mechanic. He liked to drink so some days he did not even come to work at all. Since I was his helper they fired Cully and let me be the only mechanic.

They had six trucks and a couple of cars. I had to

keep them up along with the tractors, water pumps, spray machines, and other things. This was the first time I ever did spray painting. They had a ditching machine that the elder Mr. Roher had built and I had to clean it and paint it. I used a spray-gun that was made to spray oil on the springs of a vehicle but I used it for paint to spray paint on the ditching machine. The ditching machine was named The Red Devil.

I also learned a little about welding and using an acetylene torch for cutting steel or iron. Toward the end of 1947 they decided to close down the company. So, I bought the commissary building and moved it to a corner lot I had bought on 19th St. and Charles Ave..

As A Mechanic

Then I went to work with Pete Deal at the Cities Transit Bus Company. This was where they serviced and repaired City busses. Their shop was on the west side of Central Avenue between 9th and 10th Streets. I worked with Pete for a while and then went to work at Stinnett Pontiac shop, and that was

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not good.

Dozier Corbitt went to work at the Ford garage

after world war two as a mechanic when he came home from the Army. He left the Ford company to start working in a shop on the side of Henry Smith's Trail Service Station at South Tamami Trail and Bay Road. He ask me to come to work with him so I worked with Dozier for several months. That was good until we caught up with all of the work.

Then Henry Hutchinson came by and ask me to work on his trucks at my home. He had four or five dump trucks and he drove one of the trucks hauling dirt. At that time Victor Kostecos owned the Purity Ice Cream Store on Main St. in Sarasota. We called him Bill the Greek. Bill had married Henry's daughter and Daddy was running a dragline for Henry.

I was doing work for Henry in the afternoon after I got home from working with Dozier. Since work was slow at Dozier's I left him and worked all day at home in my back yard. I did not have a shop at that time to put the trucks in to work on them. I repaired the brakes and changed the oil in them.

School Busses

After a few weeks in September of 1948 Henry Smith called me and said: We need a school bus

driver out your way and I would really appreciate it if you would drive a school bus for us. He was the shop foreman in repairing school busses and he also drove a bus route himself.

The schools had only about thirty-five busses at that time. The route he wanted me to drive was to go north from Lockwood Ridge and Beverly Terrace across Desoto Road to Bayshore Drive then go south from Ringling Art Museum and down to Bay Haven School. The bus would leave there and go to Junior High School, then end the route at Senior High School.

There had been seven drivers on that route and I believe the one before me was Melvin Head. All of these drivers had been driving the route in the last two years and had left because there was a problem on the route. Some rough boys that rode the bus had run off all of the drivers. They were Bobby and Dickie McLeod, Norris Walker, and sometimes one or two others.

Henry said: If you think you can handle it you can

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have the job and we will appreciate it. We do need a bus driver out there. I started driving the school bus in September of 1948.

I was still working on Henry Hutchinson's dump trucks and when Henry Smith ask me if I would

work in the school bus garage on the school busses. I told him no because I still have to work on the trucks at home. So I could not work in the shop that first year. I told Henry Hutchinson that he would have to get someone else to work on his trucks the next year. I also told him that I would be working with Henry Smith on the school busses.

I got out of working on the dump trucks and only drove the school bus making some out of town trips. I got paid two dollars and a half for each trip and my drivers salary was one hundred and twenty five dollars a month.

When school started the second year in September of 1949 I went to work on school busses with Henry Smith. I had already known him for many years and for the next six years I drove the bus run, worked in the bus garage, and drove the out of town trips all I could.

I straightened the boys out on that run and all of the bad boys became my friends. I still see them

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sometimes, like in October at Pioneer Days in Sarasota. Bobby became a captain on the City Fire Department, Dickie McLeod became a deputy sheriff in Charlotte county, Norris Walker finished school and bought a dragline and became a dragline operator. They were all good respectable men.

While I drove that route many times when there

was trouble on another route they had me to switch routes for a few days so I could correct the trouble, and I did. I helped correct any bus route problems that I could.

Jimmy Hightower was the transportation supervisor and he was good to work with. He was Henry Smith's fishing buddy. Henry had a cabin at Little Sarasota on Lake Okeechobee. They went down there fishing on many weekends.

I worked with them for seven years until July of 1955 then I decided that I was just not making enough money to raise six children so I quit the school bus job.

Surgery

While I had worked for the school I had built up enough sick leave time so that I could have some

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money while I got a hernia repaired that I had for a long time. So before the leave time ran out I went to Dr. Suggs in Bradenton and he repaired the left hernia.

He only charged me what the insurance paid. He did the operation at the Bradenton General Hospital, which was a wooden hospital in uptown Bradenton, about Ninth Avenue. Then I had to take it easy for a few weeks.

Shanaberger

I then went to work for Shanaberger. He had three dump trucks, a Cletrack front end loader on tracks, and a gas driven welder.. That was all of the equipment that he had when I went to work for him in 1955.

He had brought all of that equipment with him when he came down from Pennsylvania. He had been in the business of delivering coal in Pennsylvania.

Shanaberger had rented a building for a shop on Bay Road that Frank Smith had built for tractor repairs. Shanaberger started buying more equipment. He would get a contract to clear some

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land, then buy new equipment from a company on a credit. When he had done a few big jobs using that equipment and then not paying like he promised they came and took the equipment back.

He went to another company and did the same thing. Meanwhile he bought one piece of equipment and did pay for it so he always had some equipment to work with.

The shop that he rented was around the corner from Azar's Skating Rink and next door to who we called Aunt Fanny Crocker. Her sister had died and

I talked to her many times.

On the other side of the shop was Cecil Maus Taxidermy Shop where Paul Arcadi worked. That's where I first met Paul (Butchie), his mother, Joyce, and her sister Shirley. Joyce and Shirley were twelve years old the first time I met them. Paul was cleaning animal hides, fish, and birds, for Cecil to mount. When Paul had trouble with his motor scooter he would come over to the shop for me to help him fix it. He rode a English Motor Bike so we got to know each other pretty well.

I worked for Shanaberger for one and a half years. He had bought many dump trucks that had been traded to the Ford dealer. I would take two

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junk trucks and build one good truck out of them. If he bought three junk trucks I could make two good trucks out of them. While I worked for him he had accumulated enough equipment that he could clear land, haul dirt, cut grades and lay out subdivisions. We could do all of the work ourselves even to putting in paved roads.

We had rollers, graders, draglines on tires, with two on tracks, three bulldozers, a back hoe, a front loader, and six five yard dump trucks. We also had one seven yard and two or three eight yard, along with two ten yard F-700 Ford tandems that dumped. Another thing we had was a asphalt

distributor for paving.

He bought the F-700 trucks from a company in Venice at a good price because their mechanics could not fix the brakes to work right. He carried me to Venice to look at them and they were nice trucks. I told him that I could fix them. After he bought them I found out that one master cylinder and several wheel cylinders were the wrong ones that had caused all of the trouble. When I got them all corrected we had two good trucks.

Shanaberger was paying me \$100. dollars a week while the other mechanics were getting \$75. or \$80.

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dollars a week. He paid for my work uniforms and all my meals at the Don and Eunice Restaurant on the Bee Ridge Road as well as furnishing the gas for my truck.

I went to work at seven a.m. and stayed until everything was fixed that could be fixed that night. Many times I went home at one thirty or two a.m..

A friend of his came down from Pennsylvania and he put him in the shop helping me. He was only a fair mechanic. I had a young man named Don Thomas from Bradenton that was eighteen years old and was very good. They both went home at five o'clock.

One day Shanaberger came out to where I was and said: Kenny, there's nothing wrong with your

work, but when others are helping you are not turning out enough work. So I want you to watch out for another job and I will put my friend from Pennsylvania over the shop but don't be in any hurry just listen out for another job.

That afternoon I went to Standard Auto Parts where my brother Orbidue was manager. I ask him if they knew where any one was looking for a mechanic. I told them what Shanaberger had told me and they were shocked. They answered yes: Ray
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Pendersen at Desoto Terrazzo needs a mechanic and he doesn't even know it yet. Hugh Wade has been his mechanic and today he came in here and told Cecil Ivey he just had surgery and needs to be inside. He ask if he could work in our machine shop with Allen Hardison and Freeman Hancock. He told him yes, he can work here. All of these men were my friends for many years.

Desoto Terrazzo

I went down to Desoto Terrazzo and talked to Ray Pendersen. He did not know that Hugh Wade was quitting. He knew he had been in the hospital. I told him what the pay was I was getting and he said: I can't pay you that much but I can start you at eighty dollars a week. That will be for nine hours a

day and five hours on Saturday. I told him: O.K.. When I first talked to Ray on Thursday he wanted me to start Friday morning. I told him that I could come Monday that I had stuff to fix at Shanabergers first. That I would fix it on the weekend and start Monday. He said, O.K..

Shanaberger had a friend by the name of Ken Martin that had a dredge boat and built sea walls.

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He had four men to do the work. When work started getting behind Shanaberger called on Ken Martin and his four men to help in the shop and yard. They could not catch up on all the work at Shanabergers.

Ray Pendersen did not have a workshop but he said: We will build one right away. And he did. He had the men to clean out the first two sections of the sheds that held marble chips and cement. They poured a cement floor and made them into one room for a workshop. It was about sixteen by twenty four feet in area.

I built doors for the front and work benches along the wall. Later I put two windows in it and lights overhead. They went out back by the railroad side track and built a twenty by twenty four cement storage building.

When a railroad car of cement came in the crew unloaded it into the cement house. It had a big door

openings on both sides so they could put cement on the trucks every morning. That was O.K. until cold weather came and the north wind blew. My shop doors opened on that side also, and it was cold.

When I started I told Ray that I could fix brakes and motors on anything that he had on wheels. That I didn't know anything about terrazzo machines that

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had five horse electric motors on them. They had commutators and brushes that had to be replaced and fixed. He said: That's O.K. you will learn.

If I didn't have a truck pulled apart on the inside I could close one door to block some of the cold wind. Sometimes when a carload of marble gravel came in it would always be in hopper railroad cars. I had to set up the under-car conveyer and the high conveyer then open the door and let the gravel come out.

It would go on to the under-car conveyer that moved the gravel on to the low end of the high conveyer. Then it moved the gravel up high and made a pile about 16 feet tall. I put in on a concrete slab that was put there before my time.

Any time that I unloaded a car that came from out of state I was under the ICC state regulations for transportation. I did not know that at first but later on the company would be told to pay me for each day and each week I worked overtime. That was

because I had unloaded a car that came from Georgia. If I had known I would have recorded the dates.

That gravel was a base material that made up the terrazzo before the color was sprinkled on the floor. I also learned to repair the electric motors. If it had

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to go to the electric motor repair shop it was very expensive. I learned to re-solder the wires in the commutator bars where they had got hot and slung the solder out.

If the commutator had to be turned I carried it to someone with a big lathe to turn it for me. Later at Interstate I had a lathe and turned them myself. I learned to re-work the armatures, and to check the field coils. Sometimes I would splice a wire that was burned into. I used a spray can of liquid insulation to cover the splice or to cover the windings sometimes.

I saved the company many dollars on the repairs of the electric motors after I learned how to do it. One day the bosses were checking on the jobs and at one job the man who ran the grinder was squatted down with a wet croker bag in his hands. He would jump at the grinding machine to try to hold it so he could grind the floor. But when he grabbed the machine it shocked him so hard that it knocked him

away from the machine.

Those machines ran on 220 volts A.C. electric current. The boss told him to stop and to take the machine into the shop. I knew that electric circuits had to be grounded and when I checked this

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machine it had two wires that were hot. That put 220 volts directly connected into the switch box with no ground wire attached. I repaired the ground wire and connections to the machine and the worker did not get shocked by the electric anymore. I then checked all of the other machines. I think there was nine or ten machines with five horse motors and six or seven did not have the ground wires connected. It was a wonder that someone was not electrocuted.

I made up a lot of connector boxes that they needed and the big box was called the Boss Man. It plugged into the city utility pole to a fifty ampere outlet and all other electric cords plugged into it. I think they cost about forty dollars for me to build them but at the Terrazzo Machine Supply the cost was \$165.00.

I made twenty five or thirty of them while I worked there. The Boss Man had two openings or fifty amp plugs, one for thirty amp twist-lock plugs, and two 110 volt outlets for small cords. The 110 volt openings were for water pumps or lights. This

box was so all of the machines could run at the same time on the job.

Monroe Coblents owned 24% of the company, Charley Werner owned 24%, and Ray Penderson

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owned 52%. Ray held the controlling interest in the company. The company profits had fallen a lot and they decided to sell the company. Ray went over to see Bud Weinhold who owned Intra State Terrazzo.

They agreed to move me over to Intra State letting me repair all the equipment for the two companies. Intra State would pay my salary. Desoto Terrazzo would pay Intra State for the repairs on their equipment but I would not get extra pay for fixing the Desoto equipment and trucks.

When I found out what they had planned I told them: No, I won't do that because Intra State had twice as much as Desoto and I needed all of my time to work on the Intra State equipment. I knew I could have lost my job.

Instead of the agreement Ray now decided to sell to Bud Wienhold. Bud hired all of the good men from Desoto.

Intra State Terrazzo

He then got Bill Malone and Andy Anderson who owned A and M Terrazzo to take half of everything

from Desoto. They divided it, even the sheds in the

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yard and the trucks and material.

We hauled our part of the sheds over to Intra State and put them up around the yard to park the trucks in out of the weather. That stopped a lot of rusting and deterioration on the trucks and the equipment that was on them. I had been repairing the rust spots and painting the trucks. The sheds cut out about two thirds of the body work on the trucks. So, it really pays to park your vehicle under shelter and cut out the wear of the sun and the rain. It will make it last a lot longer.

I went to Intra State Terrazzo in 1962 from Desoto Terrazzo. Bud Weinhold was the boss and his brother in law was the general superintendent. His name was Mac Aikenhead.

One of the men who ran the grinders was a young colored man named Charles Larry. He was real smart and a hard worker. Today he owns Intra State Terrazzo. Charlie bought out Mac's interest first when the family decided to sell out. Then he bought out Marge who was Bud's wife, and last he bought out Bud. He kept the company from 1984 until 2008.

He sold the company to some people in Bradenton and they moved the company to the area

of

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Pennsylvania Avenue. That was west of U.S.301 in the southeast part of Bradenton, south of Oneco.

While I was at Intra State I built two river gravel shakers to screen and clean the river gravel. It had a hopper on top to dump in the river gravel with a front loader. The tractor loader front bucket would load it up and when it was turned on it would let the sand and trash fall through the metal screen. The screen was on a slant that let the clean river gravel slide down into another box under the end. I made two of them about 1964 to 1965. In 2004 one that was still good was out under a shed while the other one they were still using.

Those shakers let Intra State put in the cleanest and best river gravel in the area. It was used in Florida rooms, walks, driveways, and the area around swimming pools. Those shakers worked good for thirty five years and is still working. When I am in Sarasota I go by and visit with them. The builders don't use terrazzo much anymore they mostly use concrete.

Those years I spent with Intra State I learned a lot. I learned how to build bins to store loose rock and gravel in that did not crack open. I would lay a wall three concrete blocks high around the bin then

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put in the next course using a lintel blocks. I would then place two #5 rebar in that course before we would continue up with the wall.

Every third or fourth course would be lintel blocks with the rebar in it. When we got nine courses of blocks laid using three rows of lintel blocks I would put more rebar down every opening in the blocks and pour it full of concrete. That way it did not crack open and not one ever fell apart.

Another way I built the bins was to pour a concrete floor slab 20 by 30 feet with a two by six laid flat on stakes to hold it at the finish level. It was 6 inches in from the outside form. I would loosen the two by sixes after the floor was poured but leave them in place. I would form the back wall and pour it on top of the floor leaving the rebar sticking out of the ends.

I would let it dry and then remove the long two by six. Then stand up the back wall and put bracing in the back of it. I would set the wall in the slot where the two by six came from then it could not slide back.

I then formed and poured the end walls on top of the floor, the same as the back wall and let it dry. We would leave the rebar sticking out the back end of the walls. We removed the other two by sixes and

stood the end walls up and welded the rear rebar

together on the corners.

I formed and poured the corners with concrete and they never cracked or came apart. They are still standing today on the property west of the A.C.L. Railroad by the siding south of 12th street. I built a lot of equipment for Intra State Terrazzo.

I built bodies on the trucks when he bought four one ton Ford cab and chassis. I got the steel from the O'neal Steel Co. in Tampa and built heavy flat bodies on all four trucks. Each of them had electric winches behind the cab on the headboard frame. There was room under the floor of the body to slide in two ten inch wide junior channel-irons. They had low side-flanges where it was easy for one man to pull them out and put them back.

The grinder/driver could back the truck up to a floor he had to grind and unload by himself although he had a helper with him. Those big grinding machines weighed over nine hundred pounds. He would pull out the ramps then hook the cable to the machine which lowered it on to the floor.

When he finished grinding the terrazzo floor he would load the machine back on to the truck by himself. One man could do it by himself. The crews

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could grind three floors a day with two men.

I also built a big mixer truck to mix terrazzo mud

with. I used a body like they would spread dolomite in the orange groves and put it on a 1970 seven hundred Ford cab and chassis. The big box has a chain conveyer that run off of the trucks P.T.O..

It moved the ground up marble out of the box on to a rubber belt conveyer that carried it to the mixer. The mixer was mounted on the rear of the truck frame.

Both sides of the truck body was floored on which to stack bags of cement and bags of colored marble chips to be put in the floor. One man could do all of the mixing by himself. Before I built the truck it took six or eight men on the truck to shovel gravel into the mixer for a floor.

I must have saved the company a million dollars in the fourteen years I worked for them. They still used that truck in 2001. That has been thirty one years.

One time I went to Saint Petersburg to an auction with Bud when he bought a TD-9 International bulldozer. He had it delivered to our shop where I went over it making adjustments and repairs where it was needed. He hired a man to haul it to his place

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in Tuxedo, North Carolina. I went with him and we stayed there for ten days. We cleared the bottom of his valley for a long way, and opened up the creek to let the water drain out.

When we had it clean we built a dam about four feet high and let the area fill with water. It became a lake. Years later Bud raised the dam to eight feet that caused him to have a two acre lake that was eight feet deep. He had it stocked with Rainbow trout fingerlings. We cut hollow trees and laid them across the mountain road for culverts. He had fifteen miles of roads on the fifteen hundred acres of the woodlands in the mountains.

There were many Black Walnut trees over two feet in diameter and he sold some of them to furniture manufacturers. There were a few times when I carried my R.V. over there and parked it for several days. We had some good times up there. At the first Bud put a mobile home up there and later he built himself a mansion overlooking the lake.

Bryson City, North Carolina

I bought a Lot in Possum Holler Park in Bryson City, N.C. that was close to Janet and Paul's cabin.

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Then I bought a small mobile and reworked all of the plumbing pipes so I could drain all of the water out. I moved it up to my lot and built a porch on to it.

I went there on vacation and enjoyed it many times. Before I left Intra State I went there five

times in one year.

I hired Leroy to put in a septic tank and a light pole for the electric. The lot was up on the mountain across from Bear Hunter Campground.

Back To Intra State.

While I was at Intra State I accumulated thirteen thousand dollars in the profit sharing plan but the capital gains tax had not been paid on it. So when I drew out my money Marge told me I would have to pay \$3600. in taxes. I went to Ruth Cook and she refigured my past five year of taxes and I only had to pay \$1600. in taxes. She saved me about \$2000..

I worked for Intra State for fourteen years and left them in 1975.

School Bus Garage Again

I went back into the school bus garage again.

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George Kinsey was the shop foreman then and he was a good one. I had worked with Henry Smith before and they had built the new bus garage east of Sarasota Junior High. We had moved there to work on the busses. That was in 1951. The old bus garage was behind Central School down town. Then I left the school bus garage in 1979 after being there for

five years.

Lake City Area

I bought a big two story house from Hugh Kirby in Lake City on two and one half acres. It had pecan trees on it. One year we gathered and weighed seven hundred pounds of pecans and sold them. Most of the years I did not get that many because the squirrels would get them.

When I moved to Lake City I thought I would be working in the Columbia County School Bus Garage but they moved a man from the maintenance department into the bus garage so I didn't work there.

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Live Oak

I put my application in at several places and finally went to work in a tractor shop in Live Oak. I was driving thirty two miles one way to work. I did not have the money for gas for my truck so I rode my motorcycle in all kinds of weather. I rode a 360 Honda motorcycle.

When a mechanic in the Live Oak Swanee

County School bus garage had a heart attack and had to quit work they called me to come to work there. They were just finishing a new bus garage.

We moved there after three weeks and had a good shop foreman, Wally Altamose. Wally grew up in his fathers diesel shop and when he was old enough he went on the road driving semi's. He was well experienced but because he was not a local boy all of the local people did not like him.

They never liked me either but me and Wally got along real good. He found that I knew school busses and he was real glad because he put me on the lift rack in the new building. It was the same job I did in Sarasota.

I inspected all things on the school busses whether it was underneath or on top. The lights,

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flags, instruments, spring shackles, mufflers, exhaust pipes all had to be checked. I changed the oil and greased the busses.

The other men in the shop were not real mechanics except Wally, and they could not keep up with all the things that I found that needed to be fixed. When I first came to Live Oak in the old fallen down shop I found out that just a few weeks before my time Wally had inspected a late model bus which was one of the good ones. He found out the brakes were worn out and needed to be

replaced. So Wally said: This but is not safe to drive until it has been repaired.

After Wally went home that Friday afternoon the coach came over to get a bus to carry a ball team to a game. He wanted that late model bus but someone told him that it was grounded, that Wally said it can't be used. Then he said: I am not taking the old bus. He got a key to Wally's office from somewhere, probably in the supervisors office, went in, and got the key to the grounded bus and drove it anyway on the trip.

When Wally came in on Monday morning and found out about it he got mad. This meant his authority did not mean anything. He went to the

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Transportation supervisor and told him the brakes were bad and worn out, and he had grounded it. That it was not to be driven until it was fixed.

The supervisor backed up the coach and said Wally was wrong to get upset about it. Wally then went to the School Superintendent and he backed up the coach. Wally was not from this tribe of Indians he was an outsider.

Wally went back to his office and got on the phone to a Mr. Wright in Tallahassee. He was the State of Florida School Bus Safety Officer. Wally told him what had happened. Mr. Wright said: Wally when the drivers come in tomorrow morning

tell them they will have to wait for me to inspect their bus before they can go out again.

Mr. Wright had a helper but I can't remember his name. I knew them both real well because they came to Sarasota a lot. They also sent other shop foremen and officers to Sarasota to see the operation there. They said it was a model for the state.

I knew that no authority in the state could put a school bus on the road if Mr. Wright grounded it. Swannee county had thirty seven busses and four men could not keep them all on the road. In Sarasota five men serviced and kept up one hundred

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and eighty four school busses and thirty eight pieces of equipment for the maintenance department. They also had mowers, tractors, and other vehicles that had to be repaired.

The next morning Wally told the drivers and Mr. Wright had already arrived there. As he inspected a bus if was safe then it was O.K'd. He would let the driver take it. Of the thirty seven busses he grounded fourteen of them as unsafe.

The Supervisor called all of the surrounding counties to borrow busses until theirs could be repaired. The repairs needed most were steering, exhausts, and brakes. When I went there there

were still four busses that had not been returned. When I ask about them Wally told me why they were there.

The school board hired mechanics to work nights and weekends until they had all of the busses back on line again. Wally could see right off that I knew more than the other men could ever learn. So he was glad to put me servicing the busses at once, and to work the service inspection rack in the new building.

On the day that Mr. Wright grounded the fourteen busses some of the men had to make their afternoon

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run and then come back to school and take another run also. They did that for each route until all of the busses were repaired and safe.

They found out to not cross Wally on his job because he knew what to do. When I got there this situation had just ended and they had just got all of the busses running. Me and Wally got along just fine but the others never did like us.

The colored man told me he had just started doing mechanic work two years before on his own car. He got a job at the Chevrolet dealer sweeping the floor and helping the mechanics. That was all the experience he had when they hired him to work

on the school busses.

The other mechanic was a country farm boy that could not read or write. He was a shade tree mechanic, just a local boy. They called him Junior. Junior had worked on tractors but I think the man who had the heart attack was a good mechanic and did all of the repairs.

When the year was almost gone Wally came in one day and said: Kenny, I've got a problem. I got a phone call last night from the boss of the company I used to work for. They want me to come back there to work in Greenland and rebuild diesel generators

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for them. They will pay me twenty thousand dollars a year for a three year contract. Also I can come home for two weeks two times a year with all expenses paid.

I said: Wally, I don't see how you could pass that offer up, I think you should go. I would hate to see you leave here but it sounds good for you.

A few days later he came in and said he had received another call last night offering him \$25,000. a year on a two year contract. Then I said: I hate to see you go but I think you should go. The next day he was gone to Greenland.

Since I was driving thirty two miles to work I couldn't take the shop foreman's job although they offered it to me.

When there was a ball game on Friday night and a visiting bus needed gas or a tire changed it was the shop foreman's job to be there and take care of it. I think they put the colored man in as a temporary shop foreman until they could find a permanent one.

Fort White School

I found out about that time that Ft. White School was looking for a maintenance man for their school.

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I went there one afternoon and applied for that job.

I lived ten miles south of Lake City at Columbia City and Ft. White was ten miles further south of where I lived on highway forty seven. The pay was the same as the mechanic's pay where I was.

I have been out many times when a school bus would break down at an intersection and the air leaked out and the brakes locked. You have to go under the bus and release the brake shoes to move the bus. Sometimes in the rain. So I said, It's time for a younger man than me to do that kind of work.

So I worked to qualify for the job at the Ft. White School. I did not graduate and I did not have a G.E.D. certificate. You must have one or the other to be hired by the Columbia Schools.

The only place that was giving the G.E.D. test was at the Junior College in Jacksonville at that time. A Mr. Romine was the principal, and he told me that I would have to go to Jacksonville to take the tests. I went to Jacksonville to the college and paid the fourteen dollar fee. I waited for two hours to take the first test that night.

I went back a few nights later and took two more tests. I did not know whether or not I had passed any of the test. A few nights later I went back and

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took the last two tests. Then I had to wait about ten days to find out if I passed or not. I had to have the G.E.D. certificate to get the job.

Seven other men had applied before me, but Mr. Romine said I was more qualified than any of them. If I would show him that I was trying to get the G.E.D. certificate he would hire me for the job. Each time I took a test I called him at home to let him know what I was doing.

After the last test he called me several times and asked if I had received the certificate. It was to be mailed from Tallahassee. The score must average no lower than thirty five. No test score was to be lower than twenty five. My low score was fifty four and my average was eighty three.

The school board was pushing him to hire a maintenance man because the school had not had

one for six months. He needed to hire one as quickly as possible.

About two weeks had passed when one afternoon he called me and told me to come on in because he had called the office in Tallahassee. They had told him that I had passed all of the tests and they had mailed the certificate a week before. So if I did not receive it it was lost in the mail. If it was necessary
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they would send me a duplicate of it.

At Live Oak I had inspected a late model bus and it needed the brakes replaced, so I wrote that on the work list to be done. The next month I wrote it up again, and again the next month it still had not been done.

Before I left I went to the transportation supervisor and to the county school superintendent and told them. I said: I am going to Ft. White to work but you should know about this before you have bad trouble again.

The mechanics go to lunch at eleven thirty to a school nearby and eat in the lunch room. Also some drivers who are women do that also, and when they finish eating lunch they all go back to the bus garage and sit in the garage until about two twenty.

School is out at two thirty and then the drivers have to make their afternoon runs. The mechanics talk instead of doing their work and the busses are

not being worked on.

I told them about the bad brakes that I had wrote up on the work sheets three times. So I left it with them and went to work at Ft. White.

I had to drive only ten miles one way but I had to get a Florida State Wastewater Plant Operators

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license. So I went over to Gainesville because it was the only place I could take the test. I registered and they gave me a book to study to learn about bacteria in the plant, and about operating the plant.

They told me when to come back to take the test. I studied the book and understood it. When it was time to take the test I did not have any trouble passing the test the first time I took it. I got my Class-D Wastewater Plant Operators license.

The man they were going to hire before I applied had gone to Gainesville and had failed the test four times. He had to keep working as a janitor at the school where they had no plant.

My license also covered operating the drinking water system and adding chlorine. I had to do test every day on the drinking water and waste water. I also had to keep daily records and send in a monthly report. The man with a Class A license that was over me came once a month to do test and to fill out a report on the school water systems.

He sent my reports into Tallahassee along with

his. When I was about to leave he told me that he had done the test ever since the school had been built and the wastewater worked well the best while I was taking care of it. It had been six and an half

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years.

One day one of the lift pumps quit working so I called maintenance and they sent a plumber down. We disconnected the pump and lifted it out. I washed it off and took off the bottom plate. There I found a little boys underpants tangled up in the impellor. He probably messed in them and flushed them down the toilet.

When I got all of the cloth out we tested the motor and it ran alright so I put the plate back on. We put it back down in the tank and hooked it up. It was alright. That was the only trouble I had with the lift pumps during the six and a half years I was there.

So I left there with a good record behind me.

On the north end of the school building was an electric transformer with two padlocks on it, and a fence around it. The fence also had a padlock on the gate because the electricity coming to the school was high voltage.

One day the lights went out in two classrooms and they had to leave the rooms thirty minutes early before school was out for the day. When I

checked the electricity I found the lines to those two rooms were dead. I called the power company and a man came out with a crew and checked the incoming

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lines.

There was a transformer on the light pole on the northwest corner of the school yard. The three hot lines coming from the transformer were underground all the way to the fenced in transformer by the school building. All three wires were hot coming off of the pole transformer but at the other end at the transformer by the building one of the wires was dead.

The foreman called for a generator truck that was down south. I think it was in Orlando and they had only one generator truck. So when school was out they had to wait for the generator truck to come, then I went home for my supper.

When I got back to school the generator truck was there. The men disconnected the dead line and hooked up a hot line from the generator truck. That sent electrical impulses into the dead wire.

Then the foreman took a unit like a metal detector and walked along over the underground wire while watching the meter on his machine. When he stopped out in the open school yard he said: The trouble is right here. The men got shovels

and dug a hole where the trouble was.

The hole they dug was three feet wide, six feet

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long, and about four feet deep. They found the wire had burned into two pieces. The wire was as big as a water hose and when the hole was cleaned out a service man got down into the hole and went to work splicing the burned wire.

He had a special built connector that repaired the burned wire. When he had finished with the repair they hooked up the repaired wire to the school transformer and turned the power back on.

It was about twelve thirty a.m. when they finished. They covered up the hole and left. I still had to turn on the sewage waste water plant and be sure it was all right. I also had to check the chlorinator and the drinking water. When everything was ready for school to start I called Mr. Romine at home to let him know: You can have school tomorrow.

He had told me to call him no matter what time it was so he would know. Then I went home and went to bed at about two A.M.. I had to be back at school by seven o'clock to open up everything and get ready for school to start for that day.

Lake City Church

I had married Joyce Arcadi in June of 1983. We

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were going over to my son-in-law and daughter's house, Lawton and Gracie Anderson, about a mile from where I lived. They had a five acre farm, a white horse, and a Ford tractor that came with the farm.

A church bus full of people came over from Jacksonville every Thursday night and had a bible study and teaching service. I was going there before Joyce and I were married so we continued to go after we were married.

Brother Dyal was our pastor in Jacksonville and he rented a house in downtown Lake City with a big room where we could have church services. Our local pastor was Kenneth Reid and he lived in the house. We had a private school there for all the kids in our church in Lake City.

Several families moved from Jacksonville to Lake City to live, work there, and to help build a church there. Joyce's daughter Tavis went to this school just as the other church children did.

We were in a church service two times a week in Lake City and everyone went to the Jacksonville church on weekends. After a year the church quit growing and Brother Dyal said: We will close the church here and move all of the families to

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Jacksonville.

I still had three years to work before I could retire at age sixty two. All of the Jacksonville families moved back to Jacksonville. Lawton got transferred to a route in Jacksonville, and they put the farm up for sale then moved to Jacksonville.

Charlie Walker had married my daughter Elizabeth (Tuggy), and they moved there after he transferred to a different section of the State Road Department but he kept on mowing grass along the highways but now he was over in Jacksonville.

That left Joyce and me in Lake City so we drove to Jacksonville to the church services for three years until I could finish up my work. We could not move to Jacksonville until July of 1987.

About July of 1986 I traded a half an acre of the north edge of my property to Hugh Kirby in exchange for an old forty foot semi-trailer. He parked it beside my barn, and then after we had loaded it he would move it to Jacksonville for me.

He would park it on the lots that we were buying which were three blocks west of the cemetery in Dinsmore. The lots I had bought in Jacksonville were sold to me by two real-estate salesmen by the names of Luker, and Burner. They had bought a cow

pasture along the north side of Trout Creek and

sub-divided it into lots. We had bought three of those lots to move our mobile on when I retired.

We had a well drilled on our lots and we cleared the bushes, trees, and stumps off of the land. We would go to Jacksonville on Friday afternoon when I came in from work. We would stay with a church family on Friday and Saturday nights so we could work at clearing up our land a little each weekend.

I found some thirty six inch culverts in a pasture east of Ft. White and bought them. Then I had a wrecker deliver them to Jacksonville because our road did not have culverts in it.

The first weekend that we had culverts there Joyce and I dug out the ditch on one side and rolled one section of culvert into the ditch. There was a small liter stump (a pine tree stump) in the bottom of the ditch and we could not chop it out. So I used my new chainsaw to cut it off under the water and the dirt. This let the culvert lay down level.

A neighbor asked if I wanted him to get a man with a backhoe to dig out the rest of the ditch and put the rest of the culverts in place for \$150.00. So I agreed for him to do it. The man's name was Robert Butler. Later he helped me with the tractor many

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times and I helped him many times.

After we got the land cleared we had a septic tank installed with a drain-field. We were then ready to

move when I retired from the Ft. White School.

Lawton and Gracie bought the lots beside us and Charlie and Tuggy bought some lots across the street from us. My lots totaled one half acres of land.

I put in my application to retire at the end of February after I was sixty two years old on the twenty third. I was training Don Yoder to take my place at work. He was very good and his wife was a teacher at Ft. White.

In December of 1986 I came into the lunchroom and sat down. I was sweating and it was cold outside. A woman bus driver came in and said: Mr. Gill are you all right? I said: I am sweating and I just came in from the outside and it is cold out there!

Then she said: You need to go see Dr. Ravindra in Lake City and let him check your heart. So I called Joyce and told her, then she called the doctors office and got me an appointment for Friday. This was on Wednesday and on Thursday the doctors office called and wanted me to come on in. I did. He examined me and had me to go to the hospital the next morning for more tests.

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The doctor called Dr. Wesley at the North Florida Regional Hospital in Gainesville and arranged for more tests. He came in about nine thirty to see the

results of the tests and he called Dr. Wesley at the North Florida Hospital and told him that he was sending me to him.

Dr. Wesley examined me and admitted me to the hospital for more tests on my heart. Then he scheduled me for a by-pass surgery on Saturday at noon. They came and got me early Saturday morning, after they had changed my surgery to eight o'clock that morning. I think that was to get it done before my family arrived. They did four by-passes after they split my breast-bone open to get my heart out so they could work on it.

I went back to work ten days later and changed my retirement date to March. That would give me another month of pay. No one had told me to draw my retirement pay and keep working until I had earned the maximum allowed.

I could have worked until July or August and also drew my retirement pay. Don Yoder did real good and I retired at the end of March 1987.

Let me tell you one more thing that happened around January of 1986. I got a phone call from the

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security man who was a deputy that lived on the school property. It was about one thirty a.m. and it was cold. He said that we had a water line spraying water all over the place. It was about twenty five degrees on the outside and the water pump

pressure switch had frozen on.

The one thousand gallon tank had a pressure release on the top of it and we had sixty pounds of pressure on our water system. When the switch froze in the on position the pump would not shut off. The pump was down inside a four inch well pipe and it kept on pumping until the pressure release blew open.

The water was spraying one hundred feet out from the tank and the cut off switch was inside a small house in the back yard. I had to go into my office room to get the key to open the little house and turn off the water pump. Then I locked up everything and went back home.

The school was ten miles from my home and I had to be back at school at seven o'clock in the morning. I went back at six thirty and made a list of what I would need to fix the trouble. After I cut off the pump I had opened a drain valve on the big tank so that when I came back at six thirty, the tank was

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drained.

A few days before I had checked the old water system at the old school building. I had connected a water line to the new school water system with a valve. Now I turned on the old water pump and opened the valve that let the water into the new school.

It had a sixty gallon tank and that let the restrooms and the lunchroom kitchen have water. The pressure switch on the big tank had been mounted side-wise instead of on top of a pipe so it let water lay against the diaphragm. It froze when it was on.

I called the maintenance office and gave them a list of things that I needed to make the repairs. Pony Express brought them to me about eight o'clock and by nine o'clock I had the repairs completed.

While I was at Ft. White school I found many things that had been done wrong by the maintenance men. As I found them I corrected each one of them before I left there. So I was glad to finally be able to leave there and I felt that I had done a good job for the school.

The people there were good to work with and in later years I stopped by the school to visit with them.

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After I got the semi-trailer parked by my barn I loaded everything that I wanted to save in the trailer.

I cleaned out the barn and even hauled seven loads of stuff and put it in dumpsters.

Those were things that I had that I intended to repair, use, or sell, someday. But now I realized

that the someday had already passed several years ago. That thought helped me to throw those things away that I did not need now.

I disconnected the mobile home that we were living in and got it ready to move to Jacksonville. A brother in the church named Bencini, transported mobile homes in his line of work. One day when he had carried a mobile home to Tallahassee he stopped by our place on the way back to Jacksonville. He pulled our home to our lots in Jacksonville and set it up on blocks that were five high.

That made it high enough so that we did not have to use a sump-pump for our septic tank. We hooked up the sewage lines, and water lines. When the electric power company J.E.A., hooked up the electric we began living there in July of 1987.

The real estate men had a bulldozer to mark out the roads and to cut small ditches along the roads for drainage. I disc the shoulders of the roads and

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started grading the road with Lawton's tractor that had a grading blade attached to the back of the tractor. I have kept these roads graded for twenty three years and now the tractor is worn out and I am worn out at eighty five years of age in this month of September of 2010.

A Few Other Memories

I got my drivers license when I was sixteen years old and I think I paid two dollars for them in 1941. I don't know when Florida first required drivers to get a license but I do know that the first drivers to get a license had to go to the county judges office and pay one dollar and they gave them a license. There was no test each year to renew them and they never expired.

In 1950 I was driving school buses and the state required all school bus drivers to pass a driving license test or they could not drive. Some drivers including Henry Smith had never taken a test. Sarasota had thirty five bus drivers.

Margaret Moore, Mrs. Maudie Williams, and myself, Kenneth Gill, passed the test the first time, when all other drivers failed the first test. Most

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passed the second time and some never did. In Manatee county fifty five out of sixty three failed the first test.

It was about 1940 that Charlie Blount had bought land north of Clark Road. Twenty acres I think. He paid daddy twenty five cents each to take out the stumps, all sizes. My brother and me helped daddy to do that.

Me and Dorlos were part of the charter members

of Boy Scout troop six in 1941. It was sponsored by the Sarasota Rotary Club. Our Scout masters were Mr. Russell, and Dan Smith.

In 1939 Maude Plyler, aunt Mollies daughter, told Mama about her and an old man digging for buried money at Rye Bridge. We went to Mama's sister's house , aunt Ardelia, who lived in Rye to visit and to dig up the money. When we arrived we found a fence had been put up and daddy would not let us dig for the money.

Sometimes we went to the Bethany Baptist Church, and one time to Bee Ridge Baptist Church to an all day singing with dinner on the ground.

The way we got into square dancing was my cousin Archie Hickox invited me and my wife to go with him and his wife on Saturday night to a square

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dance. We went and learned to square dance, and the callers were Frank Wallace, Floyd Lowe, and Clarence Hawkins. The dance was held at the Moose Lodge over Barth's Grocery Store on Ringling Blvd.. Later it was held at the South Trail Fire Department.

One night the band had started playing music but none of the callers were there yet. Our crowd wanted to square dance. They ask me if I would call the dances, so I did. It was my first time. After that dance ended Candy Rowell, the band leader, called

me over and told me: Kenny, I want you to call the square dances from now on wherever I am playing.

I said: Candy that was my first time to call. Then he said: I know, but I like the way you call. I called square dances for the next fifteen years.

In 1940-41 me and Archie went fire fishing in Sarasota bay many times and always got fish. We put a lantern on the front of a boat and giggered the fish, always getting lots of fish.

Later in the 1950 and 1960's I carried my family on weekends down to Matthew Lake on Fish Eating Creek. We went camping with T. H. and Edith Peel, Charles and Darlene Blount, and Bert and Holly Ann McKinney. We fished and camped.

When they opened the area for hog hunting we
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took thirty nine hogs the first hunting season. Only one Razorback sow.

I built a new house on the Sarasota/Manatee county line in 1962, and also had a cabin in Bryson City, North Carolina. One year a real estate man in Gatlinburg offered me the old home place of Dolly Partin's parents for forty thousand dollars. It still had the old log house and a newer frame house on the property.

In 1957 I helped to organize a Volunteer Fire Department (NEAVFD) for the area where I lived, and I was a captain on the fire crew. Also I was

voted on the board of directors for five years. I quit the department in 1962.

I had got a C. B. radio and was a part of a group of forty. We formed a club and got a charter from the state. We were the Suncoast Search and Rescue Club, and we worked with the Manatee County Sheriff's office for eight years. The sheriff was Wysenfelt, and the police chief was Clyde Gill. The last year I was elected to be the director, and near the end of that year the members voted to disband the club. I sent the charter back to Tallahassee, and nine families went camping on weekends at Lake Manatee until they closed the area after two years.

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About 1961 Cephus Busby lived on 19th St. and he was trying to teach me to play the fiddle, but before I learned very much he died. I never learned to play the fiddle.

My first cousin Thelma Bunkley married Nick Myers and one day he bought a mare horse, a little colt, and a little calf. They were all in the same pen. One day I saw the colt nursing from the mare on one side and the calf nursing from the mare on the other side at the same time. I should have taken pictures but I didn't.

So now, I hope that you have learned and enjoyed many of the things and times, that I still remember and have recorded in the Memories of My Lifetime.

Epilogue

As you have seen in this booklet is recorded some of my personal family life, and is listed many of the places I have lived and worked, along with the types of work I have done in my life.

Since my life has been so full and the books so small, I have not gone into detail about many other things and places that has been included in my life.

Having started out as a teenager learning to do mechanic work I later learned to be a builder of houses and buildings during my lifetime. But when I was not working other things happened in my life.

I have been married three times. I bare six children by Myrtle my first wife, two children by Clara, my second wife, and now I have a step

daughter by Joyce my third and last wife. The two children by Clara were Wesley, and Dee.

Also there were the pirate treasure hunts along the Peace River. I have a writing on those hunts titled Kenneth's Treasure Stories.

Then there were the times when the calling of square dances took place, and the many trips to Fish Eating Creek, and other remote spots, when the weekends were spent under anything from a piece of

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plastic, a tarp, a tent, or a camping trailer. All of the camping was taking place while the fish, the soft shell turtles, and other wild game was being taken for food.

Yes, my life has been long and full up until this time and only God knows what is yet to happen during my future lifetime.

The Author.

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