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Dru, I have known you longer than you have known your self. Not only did I know your mama and daddy, Edna and Ralph, but I also knew your grandparents, i.e. Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong as well as your grandfather Hamilton and his second wife, Mrs. Willie Mae. So, I have a good feeling for saying that yes, I know you.

When you were very young and Paul was a baby your family rented a house from my adopted Granddaddy Andrews who lived down the small sand hill from us in Winter Beach. The house was slightly south west of the structure that was then known as the Winter Beach School.

Before your mama and daddy were married, I visited your mama's family often. They lived next door to Miss Minnie Lou (Mrs. Collins) and her family. Miss Minnie Lou taught schools for many years. She died in 1956.

My grandparents Mr. and Mrs. Lightsey, i.e., Mary and Clarence, lived just south of the Collins family. Directly across the road, yes, road, not street, was where the Jenkins family lived. In fact one of the grandson's of Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins still lives there.

Behind your grandparents house near the outdoor john, there were several beautiful oleander bushes. There were three colors, white, red and pink. The fragrance still lingers in my mind.

Edna, your mama, along with her siblings, i.e., June, Irma, Bunnie and Leroy lived with Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong died when I was in grade school. Mrs. Eutha Armstrong must have been a highly intelligent individual because it is my understanding that she and Aunt Belle Mc Cullers Lightsey, received a WPA Grant and operated a preschool program for children in approximately 1935-36. It is my understanding that I was a pupil in the program which housed in the Hard Shell Church southeast of where we lived in Winter Beach.

As a young child, I think that I had a "crush" on all the good-looking older women, they were in their teens and I was six, in Winter Beach. Your mama was one of my heart throbs. I think that she knew that because I always did and still consider her to be one of my very best friends.

Age and marriage change things. In comes Ralph and he was a good looking, pleasant hard working dude and they were married. When they moved in near us I was pleased because I was in their home frequently.

Years passed and I grew up, as we all did, and changes took place. I did not see much of your family or you but kept up to date with what was happening.

I was aware of your marriage, family, divorce and seeing you try to raise all of your family and keep them in line. I applaud you for your concern, love and ability to make a difference.

In keeping up with you, yesterday, Sunday (May 8, 2016) I was visiting Buddy (ALVIN) Walker in Winter Beach. (You can still see your mother's home place from his front yard). During our visit, he told me that you have just be diagnosed with cancer. I was curious as to how you were handling the diagnosis and he was most complimentary.

WINTER BEACH PEOPLE DRU HAMILTON SKINNER
May 9, 2016 (SUNDAY)

It was not too long that his sister, Nina Walker Bass, who lived with him passed with cancer. She had suffered for about eight years and it was painful seeing her having to go through this agony. I did not ever hear her complain about her illness but she was ready to go long before the time came for her to make the transition.

After my visit with Buddy, I called Leah and spoke to her. Yes, the diagnosis was correct and she said you were handling it well.

I called today and after our conversation, I was convinced that you were doing well. In our discussion, you assured me that you were ready for the transition and though that it may be four to six months before you left. Your affairs seemed to be in order and I think that you have made peace with everyone involved.

Dru, I have always loved you and always will. As a friend, I trust that you will call on me when there is something that needs to be done which I can do for you.

Keep the faith and remember that a lot of us are thinking of and praying for your welfare.