

Early Days In Winter Beach

Daisy Delilah (Dee) Dukes

I remember as a child walking with my “Paw” to me but to others he was Sylvester Woods, of course of Winter Beach. We would head towards North Winter Beach Road which is now 69th Street with a “mail sack” slung over his shoulder. We walked along U.S. #1 back then, today it is called Old Dixie Hwy, going to meet the 10:40 train. The present-day U.S. #1 had not been built yet. By train is how the U.S. Mail was delivered to and from the Winter Beach Post Office. This was taking place back in the 50’s when “zip codes” had not been heard of! At 10:40 A.M. Paw had to have the mail sack hung before the 10:40 train passed. The mail sack was hung on a pole and as the train went by it would snatch the bag from the pole. As the train went by another mail sack was thrown out which many times landed in the ditch from which Paw would retrieve. Then we would walk back to the Post Office delivering the U.S. Mail. The original building which was a small wood structure was replaced on the same site. It is a mason block building which still remains today but is no longer the Winter Beach Post Office to the dismay of many postal customers. I can proudly say three generations of my family served the Postal Service, Bertha Mae Woods grandmother, Betty Jane Woods Dukes mother, and Barbara Faye Dukes Estes, being my “baby sister.”

Oh, the memory of Mr. Sapp’s Grocery. Winter Beach was just a small town but was loved by all who visited or lived there. Another one of my dear memories was getting to walk with my Paw to Mr. Sapp’s. It was most of the time to pick up an item that was forgotten from the grocery store visit in Vero. Mr. Sapp’s was a small store which sold condiments, staples, tobacco and rolling paper, coolers which had meat and cheese that had to be sliced, weighted then wrapped in white paper and sealed with a piece of masking tape. No pre-packaging there! Then your items were placed in a bag, not plastic but a brown paper bag. The best part of the whole store was the shelves behind the counter that held all the candy and boxes of bubble gum. Oh, what a child’s delight! The store itself was the front part of my Granddaddy’s car garage. The back door of the store was an entry to the garage where wood cases upon cases of a variety of soda’s was stored. It was so interesting to see all those red, orange, purple and brown bottles of soda. They were so neat to look at but life threatening to the behind if touched.

My sister and I were sitting on “ready” should Paw pop the question “Do you girls want to walk with me to Mr. Sapp’s?” Of course, the answer was never “No!” So, to Mr. Sapp’s we would go. Upon arriving at the store Paw would let us girls pick out our flavor of soda and a candy bar. Carolyn would get a purple, grape soda and a candy bar and I liked the “Nehi” Strawberry soda’s and R.C. Cola with a moon pie! Paw would get a Tom’s Peanut Bar and a R.C. Cola. We would finish our treats in Mr. Sapp’s before we would walk back home as not to let Maw know of our Mr. Sapp’s visit.

I have many fond memories of Winter Beach and another one is of “Nanny.” She was Josie Dukes also of Winter Beach, but at times when she would upset my Granddaddy Luther Dukes, she became Johanna! It wasn’t very often to say the least but when Granddaddy did call Nanny “Johanna” all of us grand kids would look for higher ground because we knew granddaddy was upset. Nanny was known to many as “Nanny Dukes.” I imagine she got that name from the mummies and daddy’s whose little ones she kept in the church nursery. Nanny’s yard always looked like a floral bouquet. Needless to say she had a green thumb. If you gave her a name for the job in the church today, it definitely would be a “Floral Director.” For as long as I can remember she did the flower arrangements for the Baptist Church in Winter Beach. On Saturday afternoons she would walk through her flower beds picking out the flowers she planned to use in the bouquet for Sunday Church Services. Nanny would gently cut each flower with precision as not to bruise the piece before it would be placed in the work of art “The Alter Bouquet.” The bucket she would use to put the flowers in had just the right amount of water as not to over load her journey to the church with the cut blossoms she had chosen, but making sure she had enough for the vase she had picked out. I say this because my Nanny was a petite lady and she had 3 blocks to carry her bucket of flowers. Arriving at the church she would gather her tools and begin arranging each flower for her arrangement. As she worked with the flowers, she would step back to eye what she had done moving one stem for another until she had a finished product, I called her Master Piece. She then would gently pour the water in the vase giving the bouquet a sufficient amount of water before leaving for our journey back home. Gathering up the clippings and the bucket we would leave the church and walk our way back home. That was my “Nanny.”