

## RELIGIOUS LIFE IN WINTER BEACH

The First Baptist Church of Winter Beach was alive and doing well during the years that I lived in the community. Was the church wealthy? No, not in the terms of having a great number of wealthy members but it was very rich in the number of people who worked hard, gave what they could and were loyal to the church.

For many years, we worshiped in a wooden structure with hard wood floors. There was a large room, an auditorium you would call it today and four rooms to the east of the auditorium which were used for Sunday School classes. We grew so much that wire was strung, very much like that we used for hanging out our washing, and curtains were put on them and they were used for partitions. At one time, there was a class for junior aged children in the choir.

I am sure that Janet Walker Anderson remembers the church well because that is where she and Marion Anderson were married.

There were people attending the church that were loyal, dependable and gave freely of their time and talents. One such lady was Mrs. Bertha Mae Woods. She had been postmistress for many years and her husband, Mr. Sylvester was in charge of the depot. Their jobs were stable and I think they worked under the Civil Service of the government. Nevertheless, they were one of few couples that had a steady, dependable income. They worked hard at their jobs in the postal service and she worked just as hard at church.

Mrs. Bertha Mae played the piano and she was the only one for a long time who could fill that position. She taught Sunday School, prayed often for the needs of the congregation and I think she was Supt. of the Sunday School one time. Mr. Sylvester was a deacon and he use to irritate me by poking fun at Mrs. Bertha Mae. I am sure he meant no harm by doing so, but it struck me as being disrespectful.

One of the Sunday School teachers for children between the ages of nine and twelve was Mr. Fred Mc Ewan. He was an older man and loved teaching. I don't think that he had any formal teaching education but he knew how to teach. At that time, the Southern Baptist Convention sold large pictures that went along with the very well composed Sunday School quarterlies. Mr. Mc Ewan would purchase a set of these prints each quarter and the one illustrating the lesson for that Sunday was posted on the wall. He asked who would like to tell the Sunday School Story first. We all wanted to tell the story and after we had finished, there may have been eight or nine children who told the story, he asked us to vote on who told the story best. Then he wrote number 1 on the bottom margin of the print and the winner's name was listed. Then he went to number 2 and down the list until everyone who had told he story had his/her name on the bottom of the picture.

At the end of the quarter there were twelve beautiful prints on the wall with names at the bottom of each. He counted to see who had been number one the most times during the quarter. That person could select any of the prints where his/her name had appeared first.

Every pupil who had participated in the telling of the stories received a print. Should there be prints left over, the process began again until all the prints were given out. Discipline problems with his class. No, indeed not. We were all too eager to tell the story and we listened intently and tried to do our best.

Mr. Mc Ewan lived with his wife Mrs. Martha in a two-story house west of Winter Beach in the edge of a grove. Taking care of the grove was his only job and he must have made out well because each year, he and Mrs. Mc Ewan would board the train and head for Boone, North Carolina. He loved Boone and its people. The couple spent the summer in a boarding house in Boone.

Loving Boone so much he began talking some of the locals in the community in coming to Winter Beach to visit. Mr. and Mrs. Edminston who owned a motel in Boone were one of the first families to come down and buy property. They built a very substantial one-bedroom house that was most comfortable and began spending their winters here. They were very active in the church and would often attend church functions which were held for the young people.

Other families began to move down for the season. One of my favorites was Dr. and Mrs. Canine. He had begun a bible college in Hendersonville, N.C. and drove from Boone to the college regularly. So intent was he on making sure the pupils were well grounded in religious matters he did a great deal of teaching and would often not go home for several days at a time.

In short, people named the colony, the North Carolina Colony. I still remember when Mr. Mc Ewan was called upon to pray one Sunday morning. He enjoyed praying aloud and was in no hurry to end his conversation with God. His prayer went something like this: "Oh God, we pray for our friends in North Carolina. Lord, they are having a rough winter. Our Father, this is the coldest winter that they have had in years if you remember that." We all smiled because I think God did remember the climatic situations well.

Daddy, Russell Hurst, was Supt. of Sunday School for a long time. He took the job seriously and was diligent. He always worked to make sure the classes had teachers who were willing to prepare and be loyal in attendance and were prepared to teach.

The church continued to grow and the congregation decided to build a larger church. There was adequate acreage on the property for the church to be built behind the church we were using.

Remember, the people attending for the most part were working individuals and did not have a lot of money. They were intent on building a new church. Materials such as lumber, blocks, nails, were purchased as the funds came in. On Saturday there would be a number of men who would work on the building. Daddy, D.C. Walker, Alfred Hamilton, Marion Hamilton, Charlie Anderson, Mr. Sylvester Woods and others worked hard all day long and the building began to take form. We were so pleased and I pleaded for us to install air conditioning but we were not able to convince the population to do so. About a year after the church was completed air

conditioning was added. In the building were several rooms for Sunday School. The church grew and several Sunday School rooms were built.

The musical program was handled by Mr. Andrew Woods for many years. Ramona Ammons and her family had moved into the community and she played an accordion and began to play the piano upon occasion. Mrs. Woods continued to play most of the time. Betty Jane and I had begun taking piano lessons and it was not too long that we were able to play the piano also. We were able to purchase an organ. It was not elaborate or fancy but it made such a difference in our musical program.

Mr. Andy Woods and his wife Mrs. Rochelle Woods moved downtown Vero Beach where they built a house. Mrs. Woods had taught school in Winter Beach for approximately forty years.

Alfred Hamilton who had married Ramona Ammons in June 1951 was in charge of leading the choir. He and Ramona lived near the church and they were very active in doing what they could to make the church function.

I had been secretary for the Sunday School for several years and would be leaving that job to become Supt. of Sunday School. I talked Leah Holmes into working with me as Secretary for several weeks and after that time she was in charge of the secretarial duties. She held that position for many years.

Janet Walker Anderson was the church clerk and did the bookkeeping. I remember so well when someone would want to purchase something that the church could not afford, that she would, very politely and professionally ask, "Where will the money come from for this purchase." I am sure that some people had not thought the situation through but Janet had. She kept the church on limited but firm financial ground for many years.

There are others who played a vital part in our church and they will be introduced later.

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