

MY OWN STORY

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SINCE I HAVE BEEN A RESIDENT OF THE RUSKIN AREA FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS, I MUST INJECT MYSELF INTO THIS NARRATIVE. ANOTHER REASON FOR IT IS THAT MY PEOPLE HAVE LIVED IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY FOR MORE THAN A HUNDRED YEARS.

MY GRANDFATHER WAS AN ENGLISH SAILOR WHO RAN AWAY TO SEA IN HIS EARLY YOUTH. THE FAMILY DOSSIER SHOWS THAT HE WAS A SON OF AN ENGLISH NOBLEMAN. HOWEVER, THE STORY GOES THAT HE RENOUNCED ALL CLAIM TO HIS ANCESTRAL INHERITANCE AND NEVER RETURNED TO ENGLAND. SO MUCH FOR THAT.

HE EVIDENTLY SPENT MUCH OF HIS TIME TRADING BETWEEN KEY WEST AND TAMPA. AT ONE TIME HE OWNED A SMALL SCHOONER AND HAULED SUCH THINGS AS EGGS, CHICKENS AND OTHER PRODUCTS OF THE ISLAND TO THE MAINLAND AND RETURNED WITH PRODUCE AND FRUIT. COURT HOUSE RECORDS SHOW THAT HE PAID TAXES IN HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY IN 1861; ON WHAT PROPERTY, I HAVE NO IDEA. I DO KNOW THAT HE ONCE OWNED ABOUT 50 ACRES OF LAND AT THE INTERSECTION OF STATE HIGHWAY #60 AND U. S. #301, ABOUT WHERE HERMAN'S SAUSAGE PLANT NOW STANDS.

HE EVIDENTLY LIVED IN KEY WEST AT THIS TIME, FOR MY FATHER WAS BORN THERE IN 1861. THERE WERE OTHER CHILDREN, TWO MORE BOYS AND TWO GIRLS.

IN THE EARLY 1870'S HE SETTLED ON A PLACE ON THE ALAFIA RIVER NOW KNOWN AS THE CALDWELL PLACE. THERE WERE ABOUT 64 ACRES OF THIS PROPERTY AND GRANDFATHER BUILT A HOUSE ON THE RIVER BANK. JIM ANDREWS TOLD ME HE REMEMBERED THE HOUSE STOOD ON HIGH PILLARS AT THE WATER'S EDGE. HERE IS WHERE HE LIVED FOR SEVERAL YEARS. MY AUNT ALICE, ONE OF THE DAUGHTERS TOLD ME THAT SHE REMEMBERED THE PLACE AS A CHILD, AND THAT HE THEN HAD A SMALL SAIL BOAT AND FREQUENTLY MADE TRIPS DOWN THE COAST.

IN THE LATE 1880'S OR EARLY '90'S HE TURNED UP IN TAMPA OPERATING AN OYSTER HOUSE AT THE FOOT OF WASHINGTON ST. THE OLD FELLER SURE GOT AROUND.

THERE WAS A LARGE OYSTER BAR RIGHT IN THE MOUTH OF THE RIVER, JUST BELOW THE PLATT STREET BRIDGE AND FOR MILES AROUND THE BAYSHORE. HERE THEY, HE AND MY FATHER, GATHERED THE HUGE FAT SHELLFISH FROM THE BARS, WHICH WERE IN ABOUT SIX OR EIGHT FEET OF PURE, CLEAR WATER, UNPOLLUTED BY THE WASTES OF CIVILIZATION, AND TRANSPORTED THEM TO THE LITTLE OYSTER HOUSE, WHERE THEY KEPT THEM IN THE RIVER IN A PEN UNTIL

THEY WERE NEEDED. THEY WERE SOLD TO SALOONS AND TO THE LOCAL TRADE. WHILE PA OPENED AND SOLD OYSTERS, GRANDPA MIXED AND SOLD COOL DRINKS. BY THIS TIME, THERE WAS AN ICE FACTORY IN TAMPA. GRANDPA MADE THE SYRUP FOR THE COOLING BEVERAGES AND CREATED SEVERAL FLAVORS WHICH HE MIXED WITH WATER, SORT OF LIKE COOL-AID. LATER ON, MILK-SHAKE WAS TO BECOME THE POPULAR DRINK AROUND THE DRUG STORES.

AGAIN, I AM INDEBTED TO UNCLE JIM ANDREWS FOR THE COOL DRINK STORY. HE TOLD ME THAT, AT FIRST, CRACKED ICE WAS USED, BUT LATER SOME GENIUS CAME UP WITH AN ICE SHAVER WHICH PRODUCED A PULVERIZED ICE, THERE-BY MAKING THE DRINK MORE PALATABLE. I REMEMBER SEEING SOME OF THESE ICE SHAVERS IN MY YOUTH, WHEN MY OWN DAD USED TO SELL COOL DRINKS AT THE COUNTRY PICNICS.

UNCLE ISAAC BRANDON, A PIONEER OF THE BRANDON AREA ALSO USED TO TELL ME OF SOME OF THE ESCAPADES OF GOOD OLD GRANDAD.

D. B. MCKAY, IN HIS NEWSPAPER SERIES, MENTIONS CAPT. JIM HARDING. MCKAY CALLED HIM CAPT. JIM. I AM PRETTY SURE HIS NAME WAS BILL OR WILLIAM. MCKAY REMARKED THAT THE OLD MAN WAS FULL OF FUNNY STORIES, SOME OF THEM ON THE, QUOTE "RISQUE" SIDE. ALL DESCRIBED HIM AS A TALL MAN WITH A LONG WHITE BEARD. GRANDPAPPY LIVED TO A FAIRLY RIPE OLD AGE, AND WAS GATHERED TO HIS ENGLISH ANCESTORS IN 1898; THE YEAR I MADE MY ADVENT INTO THIS VALE OF TEARS.

MY FATHER MARRIED MYRTIE WILDER IN 1886 OR 87. SHE WAS THE DAUGHTER OF A DOUGHTY OLD REBEL SOLDIER FROM THE STATE OF ALABAMA, WHO FOUGHT WITH GENERAL FORREST THROUGHOUT THE CIVIL WAR. HE NEVER RECEIVED A WOUND AND OFTEN SAID THE ONLY MAN HE REMEMBERED KILLING WAS A BIG NEGRO, WHO WAS STANDING ON A STUMP AND WAS TOO GOOD A TARGET TO MISS. THE REASON GRANDPA WILDER NEVER GOT WOUNDED WAS PROBABLY BECAUSE HE WAS ONLY ABOUT FIVE AND A HALF FEET TALL AND WEIGHED ABOUT 100 POUNDS SOAKING WET. THAT HE DID NOT LACK FOR BRAVERY, I AM CERTAIN, FOR HE ONCE WAS NAGGED INTO, ALMOST, A FIST FIGHT WITH OLD UNCLE ROB SUMMERALLS, WHEN THE BOTH OF THEM WERE ABOUT 70 YEARS OLD.

SOME OF THE YOUNGER BOYS WOULD SLIP AROUND AND TELL EACH ONE OF THEM THAT THE OTHER SAID SOMETHING ABOUT HIM. THEY STOPPED THE FIGHT JUST AS THE OLD FELLOWS STARTED TO BOW UP AT ~~ONE~~ ONE ANOTHER. UNCLE ROB WAS ALSO ABOUT 5 1/2 FEET TALL AND JUST AS MUCH A ROOSTER AS WAS GRANDPA.

GRANDPA WILDER HOMESTEADED A PLACE ABOUT TEN MILES FROM DOWNTOWN TAMPA, ONE MILE WEST OF BRANDON ON THE WILDER POND. ROAD #60 GOES RIGHT BY THE PROPERTY. HE GAVE PA AND MAMA AN ACRE OF LAND RIGHT NEAR THE POND, BUT NEGLECTED TO MAKE A DEED. WHEN THE PLACE WAS SOLD, THE ACRE WENT WITH IT AND PA HAD TO FIND ANOTHER PLACE. IT WAS ON THIS ACRE THAT I WAS BORN, NOT IN A LOG HOUSE, BUT A SMALL ONE ROOM BOX TYPE STRUCTURE SUCH AS BUILT IN THOSE DAYS, WHEN SAW-MILLS BEGAN TO CROP UP AROUND THE COUNTRY.

IN 1900, PA BOUGHT FROM ED LEGATE, TWENTY ACRES OF LAND ABOUT A QUARTER OF A MILE SOUTHWEST OF THE WILDER PLACE. THE LAND STRADDLED A BAYHEAD, WITH ABOUT FIVE ACRES OF LAND ON THE WEST SIDE JUST HIGH ENOUGH TO BUILD ANOTHER FRAME HOUSE OF TWO ROOMS, WITH TWO SHED ROOMS ADDED TO THE BACK SIDE. HE CUT TIMBER AND HAULED IT TO PERCY COE'S SAW-MILL, WHERE PERCY SAWED IT INTO ROUGH BOARDS AND FRAMING. PA BUILT THE HOUSE, BOX STYLE, THAT IS, THE SIDING WAS NAILED TO A PLATE, TOP AND BOTTOM AND THE WHOLE THING WAS RAISED, WHEN THE FOUR SIDES WERE NAILED TOGETHER, THEY FORMED THE WALLS. THE FLOOR WAS ALSO ROUGH PINE BOARDS. WINDOWS WERE MADE FROM THE SAME MATERIAL AND WERE HUNG WITH STRAP HINGES. WHEN THE HOUSE WAS SHUT UP, IT WAS PRETTY DARK INSIDE. IT HAD TO BE SHUT UP AT DARK TO KEEP OUT THE HORDES OF MOSQUITOES. THERE WERE NO SCREENS AND NO SANITARY FACILITIES EXCEPT FOR THE OLD TWO-HOLER WHICH STOOD UNCOMFORTABLY CLOSE TO THE HOUSE. FLIES WERE SO NUMEROUS THAT IT WAS NO TROUBLE TO SCOOP A HANDFUL FROM THE KITCHEN TABLE ANY TIME. WATER WAS OBTAINED BY DIGGING AN OPEN WELL WHICH OVERFLOWED DURING THE RAINY SEASON. THE WELL STOOD ABOUT TEN FEET FROM THE KITCHEN DOOR AND PROBABLY RECEIVED MOST OF THE DISHWATER WHICH WAS THROWN OUT THE DOOR. THREE OF THE CHILDREN HAD TYPHOID FEVER, INCLUDING ME, AND PA WAS FINALLY PERSUADED TO DIG THE WELL FARTHER AWAY, AND THE TWO-HOLER WAS MOVED TO A SAFER DISTANCE. I MIGHT ADD THAT ALL THE CHILDREN SURVIVED THE TYPHOID, DUE TO THE TIMELY EFFORTS OF DR. HAMLIN WHO WAS THEN ONE OF THE FEW DOCTORS IN TAMPA.

MY BELOVED MOTHER PASSED AWAY IN 1903 FROM AN ATTACK OF ACUTE APPENDICITIS, WHICH TODAY IS CURED IN A MATTER OF DAYS WITH A SIMPLE OPERATION. SHE LEFT A LITTLE BOY 5 MONTHS OLD AS WELL AS SIX OTHER CHILDREN, ALL BOYS EXCEPT ONE. MY SISTER WAS 13 YEARS OLD AND HAD TO ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A LARGE FAMILY. FORTUNATELY PA WAS AN EXCELLENT COOK, HAVING RUN A RESTAURANT IN TAMPA FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS. THE BABY WAS TAKEN TO THE HOME OF A NEIGHBOR LADY WHO HAD A

SON ABOUT HIS AGE. SHE NURSED HIM AT HER BREAST FOR SOME TIME. A NEIGHBOR WOMAN USED TO COME DOWN AND COOK AND BATHE THE CHILDREN AND HELP WITH THE WASHING. SISTER BRAVELY TOOK UP THE MANY DUTIES OF RUNNING A LARGE HOUSEHOLD AND PA AND THE OLDER BOYS WORKED WHEREVER THEY COULD, FOR THE GOING WAGE, ONE DOLLAR A DAY. WE HAD A FEW ACRES HIGH ENOUGH TO PLANT SOME VEGETABLES ON, AND RAISED SOME STOCK, AND MANAGED TO HAVE FRESH MILK MOST OF THE TIME. IN THE SPRING AND EARLY SUMMER, WE HAD FRESH VEGETABLES AND IN THE FALL WOULD DIG AND BANK SWEET POTATOES. CANE SYRUP COULD BE BOUGHT FOR 40 CENTS A GALLON. FLOUR WAS \$4.00 A BARREL. LARD WAS \$2.00 A 50 POUND CAN. OTHER NECESSITIES WERE CHEAP SO WE MANAGED.

IN 1909, PA MARRIED A WIDOW WITH FOUR CHILDREN OF HER OWN, HOWEVER, ONLY ONE OF THEM WAS SMALL. THE OTHERS WERE ON THEIR OWN, BUT SOME OF THEM STAYED AT HOME PERIODICALLY. THE SMALL BOY WAS ABOUT MY OWN AGE AND HE AND I GOT ALONG REASONABLY WELL EXCEPT FOR A FIGHT OR TWO.

IN THE SPRING OF 1910, PA CAME DOWN WITH WHAT WE CALLED CARBUNCLES, VERY PAINFUL BOILS WHICH PROVED TO BE INCURABLE. HE SUFFERED INTENSE AGONY FOR MANY WEEKS AND DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF THE GOOD DR. MCLAWS, PASSED AWAY IN JUNE OF 1910, OF A TUMOR INSIDE HIS BODY, FOR WHICH THERE WAS NO COMPETENT SURGERY AVAILABLE AT THAT TIME. IN MODERN TIMES, A FEW SHOTS OF PENICILLIN PROBABLY WOULD HAVE GOTTEN HIM ON HIS FEET IN A FEW WEEKS. HE WAS ONLY 48 AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH.

STEP-MOTHER CARRIED ON AS BEST SHE COULD, POOR SOUL, BUT SHE COULDN'T HOLD THE FAMILY TOGETHER. I WAS ONLY 12 AT THE TIME, WITH NO ONE TO GUIDE ME, AND AT ABOUT 14 DECIDED I HAD ALL THE EDUCATION I NEEDED, SO I QUIT SCHOOL, IN SPITE OF THE WISE COUNCIL OF A DEAR OLD TEACHER, WHO TOLD ME SHE WOULD TEACH ME AS LONG AS I WANTED TO GO TO SCHOOL, EVEN THOUGH I HAD COMPLETED MY EIGHTH GRADE AND SHE WAS UNDER NO FURTHER OBLIGATION TO DO SO.

SHE ONLY HAD 45 PUPILS IN A ONE ROOM SCHOOL HOUSE WITH EIGHT GRADES TO TRY AND EDUCATE; AND SHE DID A MARVELOUS JOB, TOO. SHE WAS A GREAT WOMAN AND HAD, AT ONE TIME FOR A PUPIL, THE GREAT GENERAL VANFLEET, WHEN HE WAS AT A BARTOW ACADEMY.

IT WAS THERE, AT THE FIRST WIFE. NEEDLESS TO SAY YEARS AND TWO BOYS. WE WERE I FOUND MYSELF A FRUIT TRAMP CITY, IN THE SPRING OF 1927. MENTIONED HERE IN THE FUTURE SOUTH OF RUSKIN BY THAT NAME. ROAD #674 EAST OF RUSKIN WILL

IT WAS HERE I MET AND RECENTLY BEEN WIDOWED BY THE BROWN, WHO WAS A MEMBER OF A TWO SMALL BOYS, WHOM I RAISE AND HER FATHER OPERATED THE COUNTY IN 1906 AND HAS BORNE MARRIED AND RAISING FAMILIES AS IT WAS THEN KNOWN IN 1915 SHIPPED FROM THIS AREA. MOR I CAME TO SUN CITY, I FISHED PRODUCE TO THE TAMPA MARKETS TRADE, PACKING TOMATOES FOR

AS PUSS WHITE USED TO OUR KITCHEN'." THE EARLY PA MULLET FISH SO WE TRIED TO C MONEY, SO THE TASK OF MAKING SOME TIMES I PEDDLED WATERME BEGAN TO SHOW UP. THEN IT I SHUT DOWN. BESIDES THEY ONI US RATHER HAVE A GO AT THE I MORE. A FISHERMAN'S LIFE I HAVE A BOSS BREATHING DOWN IS A DISEASE WHICH IS HARD FISHERMEN AND A FELLOWSHIP IT GETS INTO YOUR BLOOD. Y MEN.

LONG NIGHTS OF RUNNI COULD NOT BE SOLD, OUT OF T SOLD EITHER; COMING IN AT D NETS, AND SPREADING THEM ON KILLING JOB. WHY WE DID IT,

THE ONLY HIGH SCHOOL IN THE C NOW JEFFERSON HIGH IN TAMPA. I BELI SCHOOL AT PLANT CITY FOR TEACHER TRA I HAD ANOTHER WELL KNOWN EDUCATOR FO ROBINSON, JUST MARRIED TO THE LADY W PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER AT THE BRANDON THE OLD BUILDING WAS STILL STANDING A WELL-KNOWN STRAWBERRY BUYER IN PLAI A SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER. I VERY WELL SAT THREE OR FOUR SEATS AHEAD OF ME AHEAD OF ME. HIS PARENTS WERE ABLE I BELIEVE HE WORKED HIS WAY THROUGH BECOME A VALUABLE CITIZEN TO HIS COMI

I THINK, WITH A LITTLE MORE DI OBTAIN MORE EDUCATION, BUT IT IS PRE BOY WHO HAS NO PARENTAL SUPERVISION PORTATION, THAT HIGHER EDUCATION IS I WAS PERSUADED BY SOME KIND CHRISTI IMPORTANT, SO I ACCEPTED CHRIST AND OF METHODIST DENOMINATION. THE FACT WHOM I WORSHIPPED SECRETLY MAY HAVE I DECISION. HOWEVER, ALTHOUGH I DID NO CHURCH TO THE LETTER, I HAVE NEVER RI A CHRISTIAN. THIS LITTLE GIRL OF WHI DEVOTION AT THE WAVE OF HER HAND, ALI COULD PLAY THEPIANO AND HAD A BEAUTIF TIMES WONDER WHERE SHE IS. THAT EARL ME THAT THERE WAS FAITH, HOPE AND CHA I DID NOT PRACTICE THESE VIRTUES, THE STEAD IN MY DECLINING YEARS.

WHEN I WAS NINETEEN, A SIX MON YORK STATE GAVE ME SOME ADDITIONAL EC SO WHEN I RETURNED TO FLORIDA, I WENT CITRUS PLANT, A JOB IN WHICH I HAD HA I PACKED GRAPE FRUIT IN A WOODEN BOX, PIECE OF TISSUE PAPER, NINE HOURS A I IN GOOD HARD CURRENCY.

BUT, AS I SAID BEFORE, IT GETS INTO YOUR BLOOD. IN THE OLD DAYS NETS WERE MADE FROM LINEN TWINE, AND REQUIRED FREQUENT LIMING AND DRYING; OTHERWISE THE SLIME FROM THE FISH AND OTHER MATTER COULD ROT THEM IN SHORT ORDER. THEY ALSO HAD TO BE DRIED REGULARLY, DAILY IN FACT, SINCE LYING IN THE HOT SUN, WET, WOULD ALSO CAUSE THEM TO WEAKEN, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT HOLD THE MULLET.

CRABS WERE THE WORST ENEMY OF A GILL-NET FISHERMAN. THEY WOULD GET TANGLED IN THE DELICATE WEBBING AND IN TRYING TO ESCAPE WOULD EAT OUT LARGE PORTIONS OF THE WEBBING, REQUIRING LONG HOURS OF STANDING ON THE DRYING RACKS, PATCHING THE HOLES THEY MADE. THIS JOB WAS USUALLY DONE IN THE AFTERNOON, AFTER YOU HAD HAD ONLY TWO OR THREE HOURS SLEEP, YOU HAD TO GET THE NET PATCHED, GET IT BACK ON THE SKIFF, AND BE READY TO GO AT SUNDOWN. AFTER A WEEK OF SUCH ACTIVITY AS THIS, IS IT ANY WONDER THAT BUDDIE BUZBEE SAID, ONE MORNING, AFTER A PARTICULARLY HARD NIGHT IN WHICH WE COULD NOT SEEM TO FIND ANY FISH, THAT WHEN HE GOT HOME, IF DELL DIDN'T HAVE BREAKFAST READY, HE WAS GOING TO RAISE HELL, AND IF SHE DID, HE WASN'T GOING TO EAT A DAMN THING.

PAYDAY RARELY PRODUCED MORE THAN A FEW DOLLARS, WHICH HAD TO BUY GAS, GROCERIES AND OTHER NECESSITIES. MOST EVERYONE RENTED OR SQUATTED IN ONE OF THE ABANDONED MILL QUARTER HOUSES. SOME, LIKE UNCLE BRASKIE BUZBEE, LIVED ON ONE OF THE MANY ISLANDS OR KEYS, AS THEY ARE CALLED. HE ONCE HAD A SMALL HOUSE ON PARADISE KEY, WHERE HE BROUGHT UP A GOOD PART OF HIS FAMILY. WHEN THE CHILDREN REACHED SCHOOL AGE, HE MOVED TO THE MAINLAND. SINCE THE INVENTION OF NYLON AND POLYETHELENE, NETS ARE MADE OF NYLON AND MOST OF THE ROPE IS MADE OF THE PRACTICALLY INDESTRUCTIBLE, POLYETHELENE. IT IS IMPERVIOUS TO THE SALT WATER AND LASTS UNTIL IT SIMPLY WEARS OUT. NYLON NETTING IS MUCH THE SAME WAY, EXCEPT THAT CRABS EAT IT JUST AS BAD AS LINEN, AND IT REQUIRES JUST AS MUCH MENDING, IF YOU WANT TO FISH IT MORE THAN ONE SEASON. OTHERWISE, YOU JUST LEAVE THE NET ON YOUR SKIFF, SINCE IT DOES NOT NEED DRYING OR LIMING. NOWADAYS, MOST FISHERMEN PUT THE NEW NET ON THE SKIFF AND NEVER TAKE IT OFF UNTIL TIME TO PUT IN A LARGER SIZE MESH. AS THE SEASON GROWS OLDER AND THE MULLET GROW LARGER, UNTIL THEY BEGIN TO SPAWN, NETS HAVE TO HAVE A LARGER SIZE MESH. WITH THE FIRST SOUTHWESTER, USUALLY IN LATE NOVEMBER OR EARLY DECEMBER, THEY DEPART THE LOCAL AREA FOR THE SPAWNING GROUNDS, SOUTHWARD IN THE GULF. THEY SEEM TO MIGRATE SOUTHWARD AS THE COLD WEATHER

APPROACHES. SOUTH OF THE SARASOTA AREA THEY ARE CAUGHT AS LATE AS MARCH, STILL FULL OF ROE.

IT IS WHEN THEY REACH THESE AREAS THAT THEY FORM TREMENDOUS SCHOOLS AND LAY IN THE DEEP WATER, IN THE PASSES UNTIL A NOR-WESTER BLOWS IN. WHEN THIS HAPPENS, THE SEINE CREWS CAN GET AT THEM AS THEY LEAVE THE PASSES. THIS IS WHERE THE 100,000 POUND OR MORE CATCHES ARE MADE. MULLET ARE VERY PROLIFIC AND CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES SAY THAT MILLIONS MORE POUNDS COULD BE PRODUCED WITHOUT DEPLETING THE SUPPLY. MORE MODERN METHODS ARE NEEDED, HOWEVER, AND WILL BE ADOPTED AS THE DEMAND FOR MORE SEAFOOD AND A WAY IS FOUND TO PROCESS THIS PARTICULAR TYPE OF FISH. AT THIS WRITING, EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE BY A LARGE PROCESSING CORPORATION TO FIND A WAY TO PROCESS AND MARKET MULLET. THEIR OILY CHARACTERISTIC HAS HERETOFORE MADE IT HARD TO FREEZE OR PROCESS THEM SUCCESSFULLY.

IT WAS IN 1939, THAT I OWNED MY FIRST HOME AT SUN CITY. MY WIFE'S BROTHER, JIMMIE STEPHENS, HAD TRADED ME A FIVE ACRE BLOCK FOR SOME LAND MY WIFE OWNED IN MANATEE COUNTY. THIS PLACE WAS JUST TO THE 6800 SOUTHWEST OF THE SUN CITY POSTOFFICE, ABOUT A MILE NEAR THE HIGHWAY AND CLOSE TO HOG SWAMP. WE BUILT A PLAIN BUT, TO US, COMFORTABLE CYPRESS BOX HOUSE, THAT HAD REAL GLASS WINDOWS AND SCREENS. HERE WE LIVED, WHILE OUR CHILDREN WENT TO SUN CITY SCHOOL AND TO WIMAUMA HIGH SCHOOL, WHERE ALL FIVE OF THEM GRADUATED. IN 1946, I BOUGHT, WITH THE HELP OF MY SONS, A TEN ACRE TRACT ON THE NORTH SIDE OF HIGHWAY #41, ON THE BEND OF THE OLD ROAD, NEAR THE OLD SUN CITY DEPOT. IN 1949, I BORROWED MONEY AND BUILT A SMALL FILLING STATION. AT THE END OF FIVE YEARS, I SOLD THIS PROPERTY AND BUILT A SMALL HOUSE, WHICH I LATER SOLD, ON THE LOWER HALF OF THE ORIGINAL TEN ACRES. AT THIS TIME I MOVED TO RUSKIN, WHERE I BUILT A SMALL HOUSE ON THE CORNER OF 7TH ST., S. W. AND 16TH AVE.; SOLD IT AND BUILT AND SOLD ANOTHER ON THE SAME LOCATION. FROM THERE I MOVED TO THE AGRICULTUREAL PARK, WHERE I HAVE SINCE LIVED, AS A CUSTODIAN.

IN 1962, I APPROACHED THE EDITOR OF THE, THEN, RUSKIN SUN CITY NEWS, AND ASKED HIM IF HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A FISHING COLUMN FOR THE PAPER. HE SAID I COULD TRY IT. I DID, AND HE SEEMED TO LIKE IT, AND THE READERS BEGAN TO TALK ABOUT IT, SO THAT IS HOW I GOT INTO THE NEWSPAPER BUSINESS.

THE EDITOR, ED STUNTZ, ENCOURAGED ME TO CONTINUE AND AT THE SAME TIME, GENTLY AND WITHOUT BEING OBVIOUS, LED ME TO SHORTEN AND MAKE MORE READABLE, MY MATERIAL. HE NEVER WAS CRITICAL, NEVER HARSH, AND ALWAYS SAID I WAS A GOOD REPORTER. ANY SUCCESS I MIGHT HAVE, OR

EVER WILL HAVE, ONLY INCREASES MY ADMIRATION FOR AND OBLIGATION TO HIM.

I HAD LONG TOYED WITH THE IDEA OF A HISTORICAL SERIES ABOUT THE RUSKIN AND SOUTH COUNTY AREA, AND HAVING A WIDE ACQUAINTANCE WITH ALL SEGMENTS OF THE SOCIETY, WHICH GO TO MAKE UP THE POPULATION OF THIS PLACE, I THOUGHT I MIGHT BE, IN SOME MEASURE, CAPABLE OF SETTING DOWN, FOR POSTERITY, SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS AND MODE OF LIVING OF THE EARLY SETTLERS, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO DID NOT ARRIVE UNTIL LATER.

SINCE THE COMMUNITY CONTAINS A WIDE VARIETY OF CULTURES IT SHOULD PROVIDE SOME INTERESTING READING. WE RECENTLY TALKED TO ONE NATIVE WHO HAD NEVER BEEN OUT OF THE STATE. THERE ARE HERE, PEOPLE WHO HAVE SPENT THEIR ENTIRE LIVES IN THE AREA. MANY NEWCOMERS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD; SOME WELL-TO-DO, MANY RETIRED, MANY FIELD WORKERS FROM THE GEORGIA AND ALABAMA CORN AND COTTON FIELDS, HAVE MADE THIS HAPPY LAND, THEIR HOME. SOME OF THE MORE AMBITIOUS HAVE MADE FORTUNES FROM THE LANDS SO COUNTIFULLY ENDOWED BY NATURE. HARDLY ANYONE WHO LIVES HERE FOR A YEAR, EVER WANT TO LEAVE.
