

SHELL POINT

O. L. WILLIAMS BOUGHT THE OYSTER FACTORY FROM BEN BOODY ABOUT 1903 ACCORDING TO NORTON, O.L.'S SON. HE ALSO BOUGHT ALONG WITH IT THE OTHER MOUNT AND CONSIDERABLE FARM LAND NEAR CEDAR GROVE. LEON DENSON RAN THE FACTORY FOR SOME YEARS AFTER WILLIAMS CAME INTO POSSESSION OF IT. WILLIAMS OPERATED THE PLANT TILL ABOUT 1915 WHEN IT FOLDED UP DUE TO ECONOMIC CONDITIONS. ACCORDING TO MOST RESIDENTS OF THE AREA, THERE WERE STILL PLENTY OF OYSTERS ALL OVER THE PLACE. THE SELNERS HAD AN EXCELLENT BAR IN FRONT OF THEIR PLACE AND THERE WERE OTHER BARS IN THE RIVER AND ON THE OUTSIDE KEYS. WHEN I CAME TO THIS COUNTRY, THERE WAS A GOOD OYSTER BAR AT THE ORIGINAL SITE OF THE CANNING OPERATIONS, JUST BELOW SHELL POINT DOCK. IT IS NO MORE NOW, DUE TO OVER-FISHING. DREDGNGING AND SAND DUE TO FRESHETS AND EROSION HAVE JUST ABOUT DESTROYED ALL THE OYSTERS IN THE RIVER. THE EXISTING BARS HAVE BEEN PICKED CLEAN BY THE POPULATION WHICH HAS INCREASED MANY TIMES SINCE THE OLD DAYS.

BACK TO WILLIAMS. NORTON, HIS SON, TOLD ME THAT HE HAD AT ONE TIME SEVERAL BIG TURPENTINE OPERATIONS OVER THE STATE, AND ONE IN ALABAMA. HE HAD INTERESTS AT OR NEAR WAUCHULA AND BOWLING GREEN NEAR FORT MEADE. HE ONCE BROUGHT \$50,000 FROM BOWLING GREEN TO TAMPA IN A HORSE AND BUGGY, CAMPING ALONG THE ROAD AT NIGHT. HE WOULD HIDE THE MONEY NEARBY, AND SLEEP TILL DAYLIGHT WITH NO THOUGHT OF ROBBERS. A TAMPA BANK STAYED OPNE ON SUNDAY MORNING TO RECEIVE THE MONEY!

WILLIAMS OPERATED A TURPENTINE STILL ABOUT WHERE THE WIMAUMA ROAD CROSSES THE INLET, A MILE OR SO EAST OF RUSKIN. THIS CREEK WAS THEN KNOWN AS MARSH BRANCH, AND THE CAMP WAS KNOWN AS SIBERIA. THIS WAS BEFORE RUSKIN EXISTED. WILLIAMS CONTRACTED WITH THE STATEX PRISON SYSTEM FOR CONVICT LABOR WITH WHICH TO OPERATE THE CAMP. THIS WAS A COMMON PRACTICE AMONG SAWMILL AND TURPENTINE OPERATORS. THE TURPENTINE WOODS WAS JUST ABOUT FARMED OUT WHEN THE MILLERS AND DICKMANS CAME INTO THE AREA.

WILLIAMS TRIED FARMING AND ALSO OPERATED A BOAT OR TWO BUT NEITHER OF THESE VENTURES PAID OFF.

ABOUT THE TIME WILLIAMS BOUGHT SHELL POINT, HE SOLD THE TURPENTINE OPERATI

AT SIBERIA AND GAVE HIS ATTENTION TO THE OYSTER FACTORY AND TO HIS HARDEE COUNTY INTERESTS. HE CLOSED THE OYSTER FACTORY IN 1915 AND SOLD THE PROPERTY IN 1918 TO HENRY BREWSTER, AFTER WHOM BREWSTER SCHOOL IS NAMED. BREWSTER SOLD THE PLACE TO RUPERT THOMAS, WHO OPERATED IT AS A FISH CAMP AND RESORT AREA FOR SEVERAL YEARS. FOR SOME TIME AFTER THOMAS OWNED THE PLACE, A MAN NAMED TURLEY RAN IT AS A FISH CAMP. HE RENTED BOATS AND SOLD FIDDLERS TO TOURISTS. THERE WERE NOT MANY TOURISTS HERE AT THAT TIME, HOWEVER TURLEY ;MANAGED TO MAKE A LIVING HERE FOR MANY YEARS. HE WAS A STRONG WILLED OLD FELLOW AND WHEN THE NET FISHERMEN RAN THEIR NETS NEAR HIS CAMP HE WOULD COME DOWN ON THE DOCK WITH A SHOTGUN AND THREATEN THEM. HE USED TO CATCH FIDDLERS AND TAKE THEM OUT TO THE SHEEPHEAD HOLE WHERE HE WOULD BAIT UP THE FISH SO THAT CUSTOMERS COULD HAVE GOOD FISHING. ONE TIME, HENRY SELNER WAS VISITING THE OLD MAN, AND TURLEY WENT INTO THE HOUSE AND CAME OUT WITH A SET OF FALSE TEETH WHICH HE OFFERED TO HENRY WITH THE REMARK THAT SINCE THEY WOULD NOT FIT HIM, HENRY MIGHT BE ABLE TO USE THEM. OF COURSE, HENRY HASTILY DECLINED THE OFFER EXPLAINING THAT HE HAD HAD NO TEETH FOR SO LONG THAT HE COULD BITE ANYTHING HE WANTED TO WITH HIS GUMS. HE COULD TOO.

THOMAS, THROUGH THE YEARS, LEASED THE PLACE TO VARIOUS PEOPLE BUT NO ONE SEEMED TO BE ABLE TO OPERATED IT SUCCESSFULLY. FRANK BARRET AND HIS CHARMING LITTLE WIFE RAN IT FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS AND SEEMED TO HAVE CONSIDERABLE LUCK WITH IT TILL DOMESTIC TROUBLES CAUSED A FAMILY BREAKUP AND SHE SOLD IT TO ROY FOX WHO OWNED IT AT THIS WRITING.

WILLIAMS LOST A CONSIDERABLE PORTION OF HIS WEALTH AS A RESULT OF SOME BAD INVESTMENTS, AFTER HIS SECOND MARRIAGE TO A WOMAN AT WAUGHULA. AT HIS DEATH, SHE INHERITED A CONSIDERABLE PORTION OF THE ESTATE. SOME YEARS LATER SHE WAS MURDERED IN HER WAUGHULA HOME BY A HIRED MAN.

WILLIAMS DIED IN 1935. HE HAD SEVERAL CHILDREN BY HIS FIRST WIFE WHO DIED EARLY. OF THE THREE SONS AND A DAUGHTER THERE IS ONLY ONE SON SURVIVING. AT THIS WRITING, NORTON WILLIAMS, THE SURVIVING SON, LIVES ON PART OF THE ORIGINAL SELNER PROPERTY WHICH HE BOUGHT FROM BUD KNIGHT WHO AS WE TOLD YOU MARRIED GRABDMA SELNER'S GRAND-DAUGHTER EDNA DESHONG.

THERE ARE MANY TALES EXTANT CONCERNING THE PAST LIVES OF THESE PIONEERS WHO CAME TO THIS AREA ON THE SOUTH BANK OF THE LITTLE MANATEE TO MAKE THEIR HOMES WHEN THE COUNTRY WAS WILD AND COMFORTS OF LIFE AS WE KNOW IT WERE FEW. SOME SAY THEY WERE, MANY OF THEM, FUGITIVES FROM THE LAW, AND ESCAPED CRIMINALS, AND WOULD, WHEN A NEW SETTLER OR A STRANGER CAME INTO THE COUNTRY "FLY UP THE CREEK". WE HAVE FOUND NO EVIDENCE THAT ANY PART OF THIS IS TRUE.

FOR THE MOST PART, THE CAME HERE BECAUSE THE COUNTRY WAS NEW AND PROMISED A GOOD LIFE FOR ANYONE WILLING TO PUT UP WITH A FEW INCONVENIENCES FOR THE SAKE OF INDEPENDENCE. SOME, OF COURSE, WERE OF THE ITCHY FOOT VARIETY, AS IN ALL SOCIETIES, AND SOME WERE NE'ER-DO-WELLS WHO COULDN'T LIVE IN ANY PLACE LONG. ALMOST ALL WERE POOR IN WORLDS GOODS AND DID NOT CARE FOR RICHES. ALL THEY WANTED OUT OF LIFE WAS TO BE LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES, TO LIVE AS THEY PLEASED. THEY RESISTED CHANGE AND RESENTED OUTSIDERS COMING INTO THE COUNTRY, BECAUSE THE OUTSIDERS USUALLY TRIED TO EXPLOIT THEM. THEY WERE A CLOSE KNOT COMMUNITY AND WERE ALWAYS READY TO HELP ONE ANOTHER WITH THE SICK OR A FENCE BUILDING JOB OR ANY CHORE THAT NEEDED DOING. THEY BURIED THEIR OWN DEAD, BROUGHT THEIR OWN BABIES INTO THE WORLD, NURSED AND DOCTORED THEIR SICK, ALL AS ONE FAMILY.

THEY DID NOT WANT OUTSIDERS COMING IN AND UPSETTING THEIR RELAXED, EASY WAY OF LIFE. THEY RARELY WORE SHOES OR COATS. THEY MADE HATS FROM THE LEAVES OF THE PALM TREES AND ATE THE TENDER BUDS FROM THE SAME TREES. THEY NEEDED NO OUTSIDE HELP. THEIR AGED LIVED WITH THE CHILDREN TILL DEATH TOOK THEM AWAY. THEIR EARTHLY PLEASURES WERE FEW AND THEIR SOCIAL ACTIVITIES WERE SIMPLE. A CANE GRINDING OR CANDY PULLING IN THE FALL OF THE YEAR USUALLY BROUGHT THEM TOGETHER FOR A DANCE AND SOCIAL EVENING. ON SUNDAY THEY WENT TO PREACHING IN THE SCHOOL HOUSE. THEIR YOUTH LOVED AND MARRIED IN THEIR OWN NEIGHBORHOOD. SOMETIMES THEY GOT TOGETHER FOR A PICNIC. MOST OF THE TIME THE WOMEN WOULD JUST GO TO ONE ANOTHERS HOMES TO JUST "SPEND THE DAY". WHILE THEY WERE THERE, THEY WOULD HELP TO PUT IN A QUILT, WHICH HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY SEWED TOGETHER BY THE HOUSEWIFE FROM SCRAPS SAVED FROM THE DRESS MATERIAL BOUGHT IN TOWN AND BROUGHT DOWN ON THE BOAT.

WHEN A STRANGER MOVED INTO THE COMMUNITY HE WAS LOOKED UPON WITH SUSPICION UNTIL HE SHOWED BY HIS ACTIONS THAT HE INTENDED TO BECOME A RESPECTED MEMBER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD. HE WAS TREATED POLITELY AT ALL TIMES AND THE NEIGHBO WOMEN WOULD CALL ON THE NEWCOMER WITH A POT OF GREENS OR A POUND OF BUTTER AND MAKE THEM WELCOME. IT WOULD HOWEVER, BE A LONG TIME BEFORE THE NEW FAMILY WOULD BE FULLY ACCEPTED INTO THE SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INTO THE COUNCILS OF THE MEN OF THE COMMUNITY. HE HAD TO EARN THE RIGHT TO BELONG, AND SOMETIMES THAT ACCEPTANCE WAS A LONG TIME COMING.

THIS IS THE REASON THAT, TILL THIS DAY, THESE PEOPLE ARE HARD TO GET ACQUAINTED WITH, AND ONE SOMETIMES WONDERS IF HE WILL EVER BE ACEPTED AS A PART OF THE COMMUNITY. IF YOU WEREN'T AN OLD TIME, YOU DIDN'T BELONG. IT STILL TAKES A LONG TIME TO BECOME AN OLDTIMER. SOME NEVER DO.

THE OLD REBEL FIRES STILL SMOLDER IN MANY A BREAST AND MANY OF THE OLDER ONES LOOK ON THE "YANKEE" AS AN INVADER, AND HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN HIM. LONG REMEMBERED PERSECUTIONS OF THE CARPETBAGGERS WHO INFILTRATED THE SOUTH AFTER THE CIVIL WAR WHEN THE STATE LEGISLATURES WERE COMPOSED ~~XXXXXX~~ LARGELY OF THESE PEOPLE, AND FORMER SLAVES WHO COULD NOT READ OR WRITE, WERE GIVEN PLACES OF RESPONSIBILITY AND SUPERVISION OVER THE WHITE MAN STILL FAINTLY EXIST IN THE HEARTS OF MANY. THIS WAS A TRAGIC TIME IN THE HISTORY OF OUR BELOVED NATION, AND THE DEEP WOUNDS HAVE NEVER ENTIRELY HEALED.

HOWEVER, IN LATER YEARS MANY NEW PEOPLE CAME INTO THE AREA AND MANY OF THEM WERE ANXIOUS TO BE A PART OF THE ECONOMY, AND MANY OF THEM HAVE. THEY BROUGHT NEW MONEY AND NEW IDEAS IN AND APPLIED BOTH. AS A RESULT THE COMMUNITY STARTED TO GROW AND ATTRACT MORE PEOPLE, ALTHOUGH THE ORIGINAL SETTLEMENT SOUTH OF THE RIVER HAS PRETTY MUCH REMAINED AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING. IT IS STILL THINLY SETTLED AND HAS BEEN SLOW TO DEVELOP. THERE ARE MAYBE TWO DOZEN HOMES, OF MODERN CONSTRUCTION, ALONG THE RIVER, BUT THERE IS MUCH UNDEVELOPED ACREAGE WHICH IS STILL OWNED BY THE DESCENDANTS OF THE EARLY FAMILIES. THE RIVER FRONT PROPERTY HAS BECOME VERY VALUABLE, SINCE ALMOST EVERYONE COMING TO THE AREA WANTS WATERFRONT HOMES. MUCH OF THE BACK COUNTRY WHERE DEER, TURKEY AND WILD LIFE ONCE ABOUNDED IS FARM LAND AND AS SUCH IS FABULOUSLY PRODUCTIVE.

ALONG ABOUT 1912 THERE WERE SEVERAL FAMILIES MOVED TO THE RIVER FROM THE EASTERN PART OF THE COUNTY, AND FROM SOME OF THE NORTHERN CITIES. THESE WERE THE SWEENEYS, THE STEELES, THE HANSONS, HALLS AND McROBERTS, ALONG WITH THE CASTILLO'S AND THE GILLETTEES. THESE ALL SETTLED ON THE RIVER BETWEEN THE SELNER PLACE/^{AND}THE HIGHWAY.

LOUIS HALL CAME TO THE RIVER IN 1910 FROM TAMPA. FOR A TIME HE LIVED AT COCKROACH BAY. LATER HE BOUGHT A PLACE JUST EAST OF THE SELNER PLACE AND LIVED THERE TILL HE BUILT A HOME NEAR WHERE THE GOAT ISLAND BRIDGE IS. HERE HE ENGAGED IN COMMERCIAL FISHING ON A LARGE SCALE, OWNING AND OPERATING A LARGE STOPNET GEAR AS DID SEVERAL OF THE OLD TIMERS ALONG THE BAY. HE ALSO PLANTED AND HARVESTED OYSTERS FOR MANY YEARS. MOST OF THE FISHING WAS DONE IN THOSE DAYS BY LARGE STOPNET CREWS. HE WAS A HARD WORKER AND DID NOT SPARE THE MEN, BUT FED THEM WELL AND TREATED THEM FAIRLY. HE EXPECTED HARD WORK AND LOYALTY, AND HE GOT IT. HE WAS A GRUFF TALKING MAN, A TOUGH LOOKING MAN, BUT UNDERNEATH THE RUGGED BREAST THERE BEAT A HEART OF GOLD. HE HAD THE MOST EXPRESSIVE FACE OF ANY MAN I EVER KNEW. FROM A STERN, FORBIDDING FROWN, IT COULD SWIFTLY CHANGE INTO THE GENTLEST SMILE, REVEALING A SOFTNESS OF CHARACTER, FEW MEN WERE PRIVILEGED TO SEE. I KNEW HIM WELL AND CONSIDERED HIM A FRIEND.

HE WAS PROMINENTLY IDENTIFIED WITH POLITICS AND OFTEN HAD A LOYAL FOLLOWING AMONG THE FISHERMEN AND HIS NEIGHBORS. HE HAD CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL POWER AT ONE TIME, AND FREQUENTLY CARRIED HIS CANDIDATE TO VICTORY IN LOCAL ELECTIONS.

IN LATER YEARS PEOPLE BECAME CONSERVATION CONSCIOUS, AND THE STOP NETTING WAS OUTLAWED. AS TO THE WISDOM OF THIS MOVE THERE HAS IN RECENT YEARS DEVELOPED SOME DOUBT, SINCE DURING ALL THE YEARS OF THE STOPNETTING MULLET REMAINED PLENTIFUL. THE CONTROVERSY AS TO THE METHODS OF TAKING FISH STILL RAGES IN THE SPORTS CAMPS, AND THE STATE OF TEXAS HAS OUTLAWED ALL TYPES OF NET FISHING IN THE ESTUARIES AND BAYS.

WE HAVE LEARNED A LITTLE MORE ABOUT FRED SELNER AND HIS ACTIVITIES AT GULF CITY. HE WAS GIVEN SOME OF THE SELNER ACREAGE BUT TO OUR KNOWLEDGE NEVER FARMED THE PLACE. HE MUST HAVE GONE TO TAMPA WHEN HE WAS YOUNG. THERE HE BECAME A MACHINIST AND WORKED FOR A MACHINE REPAIR FIRM ALL HIS ADULT LIFE. HE WAS MARRIED TO A LADY WHOM WE KNEW AS VIOLA. HOW LONG, I DO NOT KNOW ALTHOUGH THEY APPARENTLY HAD NO OFFSPRING. VIOLA APPARENTLY GOT PART OF HIS PROPERTY WHEN THEY WERE DIVORCED, AS SHE LIVED THERE WITH HER SECOND HUSBAND WHEN WE CAME TO THE AREA IN 1930. SHE HAD BY THEN MARRIED CHARLIE HOMAN WHO WORKED AT THE SUN CITY CRETE MILL. HER PLACE WAS JUST WEST OF THE SELNER/^{HOME}PLACE ON THE RIVER. IT IS NOW THE PROPERTY OF HENRY WILLIS WHO ALSO OWNS THE ORIGINAL SELNER HOME PLACE AS WELL NEXT TO THE HOMAN PLACE. WILLIS OWNS ANOTHER TWENTY ACRES WHICH WAS KNOWN AS THE ROGERS PLACE. WILLIS BOUGHT THE ROGERS PLACE FROM GEORGE BENJAMIN.

GEORGE BENJAMIN WAS A MEMBER OF A ONCE PROMINENT TAMPA FAMILY AND HAD A HOME ON GADSDEN POINT AT THE PRESENT SITE OF MACDILL FIELD. I BELIEVE HIS FOLKS ONCE OWNED MOST OF THE LAND WHERE THE BIG AIR BASE IS NOW.

GEORGE USED TO COMMUTE BETWEEN THE ROGERS PLACE AND HIS PLACE AT GADSDEN. HE LIVED AT THE OLD ROGERS PLACE AND POMPANO FISHED DURING THE WEEK AND WENT HOME ON SATURDAY. HIS WIFE IS SAID TO HAVE REFUSED TO LIVE ON THE RIVER IN THE OLD TIN-ROOFED BOX HOUSE, SO GEORGE HAD TO STAY THERE ALONE OR WITH A HELPER WHOM HE HIRED TO HELP RUN THE POMPANO NET. HE HAD AN OLD 28 FOOT LAUNCH WHICH HE KEPT IN IMMACULATE CONDITION AND RAN ABOUT 700 YARDS OF POMPANO NET. POMPANO FISHING IS FOR THE MAN WHO HAS ADEQUATE INCOME TO KEEP HIM GOING, WHILE HE LOOKS FOR POMPANO. HE FISHES AT NIGHT, AND FINDS THE ELUSIVE FISH WITH THE AID OF A STRONG SPOT LIGHT WHICH HE SWINGS BACK AND FORTH OVER THE WATER, CAUSING THE FISH TO "SKIP". WHEN THEY SKIP HE TURNS BACK AND STRIKES THE AREA WHERE THEY WERE SEEN. THE FISH BRING HIGH PRICES AND A HUNDRED POUNDS WAS CONSIDERED A GOOD NIGHTS CATCH. I REMEMBER ONCE WHEN SOME OF THE MULLET BOYS CAME IN AND TOLD GEORGE THEY SAW A SCHOOL OF POMPANO OFF MANGROVE POINT. GEORGE HURRIED OUT THERE AND FOUND THE FISH WHERE THE MAN SAID. HE CAUGHT 1100 POUNDS AT THAT TIME. I NEVER REMEMBER HIM MAKING SUCH A CATCH AGAIN. GEORGE

COULD EAT MORE THAN ANY MAN I EVER KNEW. WHEN HE AND CLIFF WHATLEY WERE BATCHING ON THE RIVER, I WENT OVER THERE ONE MORNING WHILE THEY WERE COOKING BREAKFAST. CLIFF HAD TWELVE BIG PLATE-SIZED PANCAKES STACKED UP ON A PLANTE AND WAS STACKING ANOTHER DOZEN ON AN ADDITIONAL PLANTE. GEORGE TOLD HIM TO PUT SOME MORE CAKES ON THE FIRE SO I COULD HAVE BREAKFAST WITH THEM. I DECLINED AND THEY PROCEEDED TO DEVOUR, ALONG WITH SEVERAL CUPS OF STRONG BLACK COFFEE AND A PINT OR SO OF SYRUP, ALL THE CAKES ON THE TABLE.

GEORGE COULDN'T MULLET FISH WORTH A CENT. HE WANTED TO STAY A MILE OUT IN THE BAY WHILE LOOKING FOR MULLET, WHICH AS EVERY ONE KNOWS, SELDOM EVER GOES BEYOND THE REEFS. IF HE DID GET CLOSE TO THE BEACH, HE WOULD GROUND THE LAUNCH ON EVERY SAND BAR ON THE SHORE. HE LIKED MULLET TO EAT AND WHEN HE SAW A MULLET FISHERMAN, HE WOULD STOP HIM AND TAKE FOUR OR FIVE BIG RED ROE MULLET WHICH HE WOULD DRESS AND BRY. HE WOULD EAT ALL OF THEM ALONG WITH THE USUAL GRITS, HOT BISCUIT AND COFFEE. HE WAS AN EXCELLENT COOK AND COULD MAKE A MULLET STEW THAT WAS OUT OF THIS WORLD. HE ALSO USED TO CATCH LITTLE DIAMOND BACK TURTLES AND MAKE A STEW FROM THEM. BOY WAS THAT GOOD!

I ONCE WENT ON A FISHING TRIP WITH HIM AND A CREW COMPOSED OF HIMSELF, CLIFF WHATLEY, CHARLIE JAHNS AND GEORGE CASTILLO. HE HAD MET AND LURED TO HIS CAMP A HOLLANDER WHO HAD A BIG CABIN BOAT, AND LITTLE ELSE. THE BOAT HOWEVER HAD A BIG ICE BOX AND PLENTY OF ROOM, SO WE LOADED HER UP WITH ICE, GROCERIES AND GAS WHICH FRANK BALL SOLD US ON THE STRENGTH OF OUR ABILITY TO CATCH FISH AND HEADED ACROSS THE BAY TO PAPYS BAYOU, WHERE, ACCORDING TO GEORGE, THE MULLET WERE CROWDING EACH OTHER OUT OF THE WATER. THEY WERE PRETTY THICK AND WE DID RIGHT WELL. THE HOLLANDER KNEW ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ABOUT RUNNING A NEW SO WE GOT VERY LITTLE HELP FROM HIM, EXCEPT THE USE OF HIS BOAT.

WHEN GEORGE WENT FISHING, HE BELIEVED IN BEING PREPARED. HE CARRIED 20 OR 30 GALLONS OF GASOLINE AND PLENTY OF GRUB. THESE COMMODITIES HE BOUGHT FROM FRANK BALL WHO RAN THE FISH AND A WELL STOCKED GROCERY. WHEN GEORGE WOULD STRETCH HIS CREDIT ALMOST TO THE BREAKING POINT, HE AND FRANK WOULD GO ROUND AND ROUND WITH GEORGE ALWAYS WINNING A LITTLE MORE CREDIT. ONE TIME WHEN THEIR RELATIONS WERE PARRICID

STRAINED, GEORGE SENT CLIFF UP FOR GAS. HE RARELY WENT TO THE STORE HIMSELF. WHEN CLIFF ASKED GEORGE HOW MUCH GAS TO GET, GEORGE SAID "HELL, ALL HE'LL LET YOU HAVE" GEORGE FINALLY HAD TO QUIT FISHING DUE TO THE SCARCITY OF POMPANO AND THE DETERIORATION OF HIS GEAR, WHICH FRANK BALL WOULD NOT REPLACE. HE THEN TURNED TO FARMING, AND SURPRISINGLY ENOUGH WAS A HUGE SUCCESS FOR SEVERAL YEARS. HE HAD TWO OR THREE GOOD YEARS GROWING TOMATOES AND AT ONE TIME HAD TWO OR THREE MEN WORKING AND A GOOD SET OF FARM TOOLS. HE BUILT A NICE NEW HOUSE AND I BELIEVE HIS WIFE CAME DOWN TO LIVE WITH HIM. IN THE FISH CAMPS GEORGE WAS ALWAYS THE CENTER OF A GROUP, TELLING RISQUE STORIES OF WHICH HE HAD AN INEXHAUSTABLE SUPPLY.

HE WAS A GOOD COMPANION AND A KIND AND GENEROUS MAN. ONE MORNING HE STARTED TO WALK OUT ON HIS DOCK TO GO CASTNETTING FOR A MESS OF MULLET. HE NEVER MADE IT. A HEART ATTACK ENDED HIS LIFE ON THE SPOT.

HE HAD A BROTHER, BUD, WHO WAS KILLED IN AN AUTO ACCIDENT, ON THE FIRST SHARP CURVE ON THE GULF CITY ROAD. ANOTHER BROTHER JERRY LIVED AT SUNSET PARK AND FOR MANY YEARS RAN A GILLNET CREW IN THE VICINITY OF PORT TAMPA.