

My Memories of Winter Beach by Faye Dukes Estes

My earliest memories are coming up from Riviera Beach for weekends and holidays to visit my Ma and Pa Woods and Family and Nanny and Granddaddy Dukes Family. We would always stay at Nanny and Granddaddy's as they had plenty of room for us all. I remember staying in the bedroom next to Nanny and Granddaddy as it was a single bed. I still remember sinking into the feather bed and laying my tired head on the feather pillow and falling fast asleep as the breeze from the outdoor air hit the table fan on the dresser. I would always wake to Nanny preparing a full course breakfast meal. I loved both of my Grandparents biscuits and there was a distinct difference in them. Nanny's biscuits were flatter with flaky layers of butter that just melted in your mouth. She always had bacon or patted out sausage with fresh eggs from the chicken yard. After breakfast I would venture out into her Secret Garden. I can describe every square foot of her garden as I explored it all. Nanny had a green thumb and always had seasonal flowers blooming down the front sidewalk coming from Old Dixie Highway. I loved walking around the edge of the brick coy pond as if I was in a balancing act. She had it covered with a chicken wire Gazebo to keep her coy safe from cats, raccoon, and birds. I would then make my way around to the North side of the garden to swing which hung from a very tall oak tree.

When I grew tired of swinging I would make my way to the chicken yard. She had every imaginable fruit tree growing there. Grapefruit, Navel, Tangerine, Persimmon, and Fig just to name a few. I remember the chicken house vividly. It had a wood door with medal screen to keep animals out. On the other 3 sides it had windows with wood shutters that could be let down in the night to keep the hens and eggs safe from varmints. After having a snack of citrus or persimmon what ever was ripe for the eating I would check to see if there were eggs to be collected. After the first time of taking eggs I should not have taken as they were baby chick eggs not eating eggs I quickly learned the difference. When Saps was still open I remember going over and getting a 10oz Cocoa cola and a bag of peanuts. I don't know very many children that enjoyed putting their bag of nuts into the cocoa cola and drinking and eating them at the same time but I sure did enjoy it, down to retrieving that last nut! Sometimes I would forgo the nuts and cocoa cola and have a RC cola and a moon pie instead. I was so blessed growing up to experience such unusual food experiences for my age and for that time period. My Grandmother would spend most of her time on Saturdays in the kitchen baking pies, cakes, and preparing Saturday night dinner. Nanny's Saturday night dinner was usually a rotation of fried chicken, chicken and dumplings, or chicken and rice. Sometimes daddy would go cast net fishing and we would have a fish fry and I loved nannies hush puppies. He would also go out and get fresh oysters from the Indian river and nanny would make an oyster bisque that was to die for. I still remember going with my dad one time cast net fishing. We were walking along the riverbank off of jungle trail and there was a man Grove hedge that we were walking around and there was a bird nest in it, the mother bird came out and attacked daddy and me to no end, so we hurriedly moved along and found another spot to cast net fish. It was a ritual from the earliest times of visiting until we moved to Winter Beach and until the day both had passed we had Saturday night dinner with all the Dukes, McCuller and sometimes invited friends. I

could go into Nanny's kitchen and always find a home baked, from scratch, piece of cake, pie, or cookies. What a treat!

Later in the mid afternoons I would help Nanny gather her flower buckets and we would go out in the yard to cut greens for her Sunday Flower arrangements for church the next day. Some times she would use what flowers she had growing in her garden and sometimes she would get her flowers from Mrs. Whitfield. So I would go with her to the church and help her with doing the Altar flowers. I so enjoyed her taking the time with me and I know she enjoyed having my company.

Now Granddaddy is another story. I don't ever remember him stepping a foot in the kitchen. But I do remember him helping Nanny out in the garden and helping out at Sapp's store. He had a big chair he always sat in next to the window and the fireplace. I also remember him sitting on the swing on the front porch and having me sit next to him. He had trained the squalls to come sit on his knee and he would hand feed them peanuts in the shell. After Carolyn had gotten bit by a squirrel and had to go thru the rabies shot series he never allowed me to feed them by hand.

He had nick names for all the grandchildren. I don't know the story or why he named us but here it is. Elaine was the oldest and her name was Duddle, sue was Stinky, Jack was Man, and Johnny the youngest of the McCullers side was Bur John. Daisy was Dee, Carolyn was also Duddle, and I the youngest of them me was called Tinky.

Behind the old Sapps grocery, where they stored the extra soda's and etc. Daddy had a garage. There was always something to explore in the garage and as soon as someone would find me they would call me out so I'd move to another location in Nanny's Secret Garden. Nanny's house was 2 stories and had 6 bedrooms. My Dads bedroom had a big heavy Iron bed frame and a dresser that had all of his items from childhood he kept to things from the war. I would carefully, of corse with permission, go thru it all! The best item of all was a photo box of pictures! It had a Photo binocular that you put a photo in and it looked so 3-D and real. I could entertain myself for hours in his room. I still remember the first time I went through his dresser, the bottom draw yet another find! It had his uniform cap and his parachute! Daddy was a paratrooper and the first time I saw his parachute being very young and not knowing at all what it was. I started pulling and it just kept billowing out of the drawer and finally it was spilled out all over the floor of his bedroom! I thought to myself this would make a great tent so I spread it over his bedroom and down to the floor, crawled inside and feel fast asleep inside like a cocoon. After exploring every inch of Daddy's room I would put everything back in place hoping no one would notice it had been tapered with. The next day I would make my way down to the Doll bedroom. I called it the Dll Bedroom because it had a dresser that had doll after doll's in it! I would take each one out and lay them on the bed and just look at them and their clothing and hats. Now for some reason I did get in trouble for playing with those dolls! To this day I never understood why I could not play with those dolls and who they belonged too.

The next day I went into Aunt Helen's bedroom. The Hat boxes just lined a wall shelf from one end of the bedroom to the other! I would carefully take each one out and put it on my head and look at myself in the mirror for adjustments and parade around the room as though I was in a parade! Oh my what fun I had going from a pill box hat to a wide brim floral garden hat ladened with flowers! Some how I was quiet enough and

would put them all back like before and was never scolded for playing with the beautiful hats!