

Memories of my dad

My dad passed away on October 4 at his home near Warner Robins, Georgia. I was very thankful to be with him at that time. He was 83.

My father lived a full life. He was born in Carbur, Florida – a town that my dad said does not exist today. It was near Perry in Taylor County. There may still be a small sign designating the town and it may still show up on local maps. But it was a logging community with a movie theater, post office, general store, etc. These entire logging communities (towns) would relocate when the timber was gone. They'd move to an area where there were trees to be logged. Sometimes as many as several thousand people would move.

One such community was named Scanlon near Steinhatchee, also in Taylor County. I spent a good bit of time as a boy in Steinhatchee – on the river fishing, in the woods, etc. My family and I would travel to Taylor County on our annual trip to attend what was called the Scanlon reunion in the middle of the woods. We would always have fresh fried mullet, cheese grits and swamp cabbage. All prepared and cooked camping style. It was great. It seemed like a family reunion. And in a way it was. But there were no relatives that attended. These were people that lived and worked in the old logging community.

My grandfather Williams was what would have been called a Steal Gang Forman with these communities. He and his crew would build the train tracks and operate the steam engine to get into the wooded areas to cut the timber and haul it out to sawmills. My dad helped fuel and operate the steam engine before he went into the Army.

My dad served in the Army in the Pacific Theater during World War II. He could operate a tank, a steam engine, a combine... It seemed to me he could do anything. He and his generation were influenced by the Great Depression, fought in a World War and experienced/influenced tremendous changes in their world.

My father and his two brothers could literally survive nicely with no modern conveniences or amenities. They grew up in the 'old' Florida. They knew how to survive on the river, the gulf, and the woods of North Florida. My dad's side of the family is now into the seventh generation in Florida.

We've all benefited from the sacrifices and life experiences of the World War II generation. As they leave us we are losing an invaluable, independent, can do resource. They are greatly missed.

Larry Williams, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Okaloosa County, October 8, 2009