

Father's Day Special
Tribute to Mr. Floyd Owen
By John N. Owen

My memories of Pee Paw begin somewhere around 1960 – walking hand in hand down the train tracks into town, picking blackberries for Mee Maw's cobbler and checking out life. It was Palmer, TN., but it may as well have been the Garden of Eden!

Later, I listened intently as Pee Paw told of my father's exploits on those very same fields, and I daydreamed of how times were in that place in the 1930's and 1940's.

I remember the move to Florida and the sadness of Mee Maw's funeral.

Through the next 25 to 30 years many memories surface: from those big greasy hamburgers wolfed down in Pee Paw's kitchen, to playing catch with him (great fastball for 70), to picking grapefruit, to eating watermelon in his backyard, to dusting and redusting the sanctuary at the First Methodist Church. As Pee Paw explained that there was a certain virtue in doing things right the first time! I remember the holidays, the stories, that goofy laugh that all the grandkids tried to imitate. I remember most, Pee Paw's strong conviction that one must humbly love Christ and in doing so, must express that love in all word and deed and that this seed of love and compassion is planted and nurtured in the family, then spread throughout one's life.

A few months ago my wife, son and I made the trip from our home in Cookeville, TN, to Melbourne- just a quick overnight visit made mostly so Pee Paw could see our young son Dane Isaiah. It was a spiritually profound moment for me as I stood and watched the oldest Owen, my grandfather, hold the youngest Owen, my son. Separated by 90 years, there was a continuity to this scene, the past basking in the light of the future. But this moment had a more pertinent message for the present. It represented what was, is and shall be the most important thing in this life, the love of family! In a letter he wrote to us after our visit, Pee Paw stated: "Johnny, Dane makes 55 in our family...Old Pee Paw has been richly blessed!" Thinking back in this moment of joy and sorrow, and speaking as one of those 55, I can say with assurance... Yes, Pee Paw, however, **WE** were blessed more richly!

Mrs. Sara Swann Shipley, former resident of Palmer, sent this to town historian David Patton, and he ran it as a Father's Day tribute in the June 1994 Grundy Post. "This wonderful tribute transcends time and places and is just as meaningful today as it was when written in 1993," Mr. Patton said.

Mr. Floyd Owen was a longtime boss in the Palmer coalmines and many of you across the country will remember the family. He passed away in 1993 at the age of 95.