



TIES that Bind

Island descendants reunite to celebrate

Many long-time islanders will proudly tell you that they were here when Hilton Head still had a swing bridge or when there was only one Starbucks. Few, though, can trace their family roots on the island back to the 19th century. In that, the descendants of Benjamin White, Sr. are unique in our little island home. Unique in that the more you learn about their family, the more you learn about the island they still call home.

Benjamin White was born April 6, 1881 in the Stoney Community of the island. Historic records are sketchy at best, but the family has been able to identify at least two generations prior to him that called Hilton Head home. White quickly made a name for himself, putting together one of the largest farms on the island.

Two of his sons, David and Charles White, continue to call the island home, living where else but on the one slice of Hilton Head still set aside to honor the patriarch of their family, Ben White Drive.

Both sons grew up on the island, and will happily tell of the old times. Charles will tell you of the many crops they used to grow on the spot he still calls home, and how they would create unique teepees to keep produce fresh through the winter. David will tell of his daily pre-bridge com-

mute to high school in Bluffton, a trip that included a ferry to Jenkins Island, a charter to Buckingham, and a bus from there to M.C. Riley.

In late July the entire family gathered on Hilton Head, with 78 of them filling Jarvis Park with laughter, memories, music and great food. The descendants of Benjamin White, Sr. came from all over, representing 10 states from as far away as California and Arizona. One highlight of the reunion was an enormous family tree that stretched across several walls of David's home. The tree, complete with photos for each member, allowed relatives to find themselves in the fabric of this one-of-a-kind family.

Ben White, Sr. once claimed that Hilton Head would one day become the "Garden of Eden of the South" and worked hard to ensure that his descendants would meet the changes. He passed away in 1955 before Hilton Head's modern age, but one would like to think he'd be pleased with the spectacular growth and success of both his island and his family.

— Barry Kaufman



Top: Ben White, Sr.'s descendants. Above: (l-r) Sons David, Napoleon and Charles White

PHOTOS COURTESY WHITE FAMILY

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