

WELCOME TO THE EVERGREEN “UNFORGETTABLE PERSONALITIES” PAGE

Information on “Unforgettable Personalities” from the Evergreen area is welcomed. This is an excellent opportunity to document some of those “special” people whose personality should be remembered.

There are no restrictions on the size of the information, only that it be factual. Entries may be added to the information on any of the “Unforgettable Personalities” below by as many people who wish to write about the person.

Please email your information to Mike@EvergreenLa.org and include your name. If you do not have email access, please have someone else email your letter to me or send it to me by regular mail at 1176 Hwy 361, Evergreen, LA 71333. Please include your name, mailing address and phone number. Thank you for documenting the “Unforgettable Personalities” of the Evergreen area.

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Celestine Mary Armand Descant

This loving mother of 14 children and gracious host to all guests who visited her home was indeed special. Her memorial on this website contains the following statement: “Her love of family was extraordinary and her hospitality to all was with open-arms and an open-heart.”

Her unforgettable life is always on the minds of her many grandchildren and great-grandchildren who remember her with much love and affection. She was not only our grandmother or great grandmother; she was also a mentor and confidant to many of us.

When her husband passed away in November, 1933, (during the great depression) eight of their children were still living at home and were under 18 years of age. As a single parent she continued to provide them with the best home life and loving environment possible. She carried the loss of her son Marvin in World War II in such a manner, that it was often she who comforted her family, especially her daughters, over the loss of their loving brother at such a young age. Marvin’s military page is on the website.

Granny nourished the multitude, yet never asked for assistance from anyone. Although she lived on a small monthly check, she always managed things in such a manner that she provided for her family throughout the month. She served coffee to most adults and real lemonade to children. One of her nightly rituals was to mix bread dough by hand, so it could rise overnight. In this manner, she would be ready to cook “home-made bread” or “longue de boeufs” on short notice the next day. I often wondered why so many people “happened” by at meal times.

Her Sunday and holiday dinners were something to behold, for it was not unusual for her to feed large numbers. As a youngster, I can remember eating in shifts and using more than her large kitchen table for all to eat. Needless to say, she did either all or most of the cooking on her single-oven gas stove. She continued to serve food though the “second helpings” and made certain the kitchen was back in order before joining her visitors.

A woman of deep faith, she declared during a serious illness early in 1978 that she would be with us until All-Saints Day. Although she was in and out of the hospital several times later in the year, she passed away early in the morning of Nov. 1, 1978, All-Saints Day. I wondered then, as I wonder now, “How did she know” and “when did she know it.”

I can recall her praying for religious freedom to be allowed in Russia and wonder why she would pray for a cause beyond her control or influence. It was at these times that she reminded me of the power of prayer. It was

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not unusual for me to stop by her home late in the afternoon during the winter and find her alone, sitting in her rocking chair in front of her fireplace silently praying the rosary with only the light from the fire.

During the spring, summer, and fall, praying was done on her front porch and often spilled over into her front yard as more families arrived. There were always reasons for her to pray – a family member: starting a new job, going to school, building a house, moving to another city, or just having some problems.

As a result of her struggles in life, she knew misfortune could happen to anyone at any time. Granny spoke ill of no one and was concerned about those less-fortunate who had special needs. I remember her sending me on my bicycle to bring plates of food to people, many who were not family members. She always had kind words for others and did not appreciate (she told you so) those who made fun of others.

Granny openly rejoiced in the achievements of family members, but had a way of letting you know that “for those to whom much is given, much is expected.” She thought that good fortune came from hard work and lot of praying and was turned-off by “I” and “Me” people.

She was heavy on “team work” and had the children organized in teams to perform their chores around their home. My mother being one of the oldest was once responsible for the milk team. They were responsible for milking the cows, bringing the milk into the kitchen, getting the cream, making the butter and keeping an abundant supply of milk for the family. My mother thought this was a better team position than the one which cleaned the house or the one responsible for the laundry or clothing. Although my mother lost her ring finger crossing the fence with a bucket of milk, she still preferred this task over the others.

Granny loved to baby-sit for her family and did so even in her last years. Generally, the more children at her home, the merrier...so she and Aunt Lise could spoil us. I am grateful that in the 1970s, she had gradually increased her visiting time with my family and would spend a week with us each year. My older children got to know her in a special way and they looked forward to that week when she stayed with us. Her last several visits were in October, with the understanding that I would return her to Evergreen for All-Saints Day. That was her special day.

No priest ever went hungry while assigned to Church of the Little Flower. A devoted and loyal daily mass attendee, she went home immediately after mass to prepare breakfast for the priest. Often other guests joined them for breakfast, planned or not. About this time, the morning visitors began stopping for their coffee and whatever else she had to offer. These visitors continued to come throughout the day. Her offer for refreshments was usually part of her greeting. Visitors to her home immediately sensed her sincerity in her desire for them to feel welcomed.

Lacking the ability to read and write, she knew the birth date of each child, grandchild, and great grandchild. She could provide the date for

each wedding anniversary in the family. Not only did she know the dates, but she made certain each family member received a gift appropriate for the occasion. Her cooking success was even more difficult to comprehend, as she had no menus, but left all to her memory and experience.

Over the years, her birthday parties (on or around June 18) at her home became so large that they became our Descant Family Reunion. When the numbers increased significantly, the reunions were moved to the park in Evergreen and the Little Flower Church Hall, where the last one was held a few years ago.

Granny's Family Album was written for her 80th birthday in 1971 and Granny's Family Album Part II provided a 10-year update in 1981, although she had passed away. These albums documented her family and the love they have for her.

Honest to a fault, yet diplomatic in her dealings with others, she was the pillar of our family for many decades. She was the most generous, fair-minded, loving person one could know. I have never known of her to put herself ahead of others. Her sacrifices were too numerous to describe in this brief narrative.

Many have been truly blessed for having known her love and now you know why she is one of my "unforgettable personalities." May God Bless Granny.

Peace, Ed Dugas,

Grandson

June 6, 2010

Pelican Footnote: Her birthday on June 18th is a special day for all of her family.

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Dorsey Williams

Early in life, I began to notice this large black man who would come to the Evergreen Post Office and visit with the postmaster. My family had a general merchandise store across the street at a slight angle from the post office, so I was able to witness many of the visitors there throughout the day.

The man's name was Dorsey Williams and his visits usually happened early each morning before the post office opened for business. He usually stayed until after 7:00 A.M. and always beamed with a wonderful smile. He seemed to be on friendly terms with everyone who went to the post office.

When my family moved next door to Mr. Adelmia Galland on the Burns Road, I noticed Dorsey as he drove an Allis–Chalmers tractor for Mr. Hollingshed who had some farm property down the Burns Road.

Later, I had a newspaper job and Dorsey was kind enough to place my heavy bundle of newspapers in the basket of my bicycle and cut the wires holding them once they were in place. He did this for years and graciously accepted my words of appreciation for his assistance.

Over the years, I would get to the post office early in the morning to listen to Dorsey and Mr. Billy West, our usual A.M. post master (His sister, Vee, was the usual P.M. postmaster), discuss life in the Evergreen area, Louisiana, the South, our nation and the world. At times, the arrival of Mr. Normand, who drove the mail truck from Bunkie, was disappointing because my listening ended and the delivery of the newspapers demanded attention. Needless to say, those discussions were usually interesting and enlightening conversation, often sandwiched with periods of silence and reflection.

As I got older I realized that Dorsey and my Uncle Pega (who lived next door to Granny and who worked for Mr. Clay Wright at the time) were close friends and partner “shade-tree” mechanics.

They also worked together for a while at the cotton gin across the street from the Jack St. Romain family residence. People watched in amazement as the two of them would walk bales of cotton from the loading dock into railroad box cars with only a large hook in each hand. At times, once they got a bale in motion, they could move at the pace of a brisk walk.

These two predecessors of the term “odd couple” were physically incompatible. Dorsey weighed in excess of 250 pounds, while Uncle Pega might have weighed 140 pounds. However, as a team, they could move those bales of cotton faster than any other pair of workers around.

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It was easy for them to draw a small crowd of on-lookers whenever the two of them began loading bales of cotton.

Early in our marriage, Marilyn went visit her parents and Granny during the week and had car problems. Learning of her dilemma, Uncle Pega and Dorsey, immediately dropped what they were doing and came to her rescue. They checked the engine, went to Bunkie and purchased a new starter, and installed it. In short order, Marilyn was on her way. While they allowed Marilyn to pay for the starter they would not accept anything but her appreciation for their repair efforts.

As a young member of the James Gang, we used to periodically “borrow” watermelons from Dorsey’s garden. It was usually one watermelon and the borrowing was not on a regular basis. Although he knew of our activity, he never scolded us or told our parents (to my knowledge), but kept it to himself. He understood us a lot better than most folks in Evergreen. For whatever reasons, he never made an issue of it and we discontinued the short-term borrowing practice.

For his many kindnesses to others, his spirit of generosity, and his assistance to many during his life, I am pleased to submit Dorsey Williams as one of my “Unforgettable Personalities” and encourage others whose lives he touched to join me.

Oh yes, about those newspapers...Dorsey continued to assist me until the Sunday before I entered SLI in June, 1958...always with a smile and always with good cheer. What had started as a small enterprise had grown over the years to 150+ Sunday Times Picayune newspapers being sold in the Evergreen area...and he provided assistance to me throughout the years.

His parting words when I left for SLI were to encourage me to make the best of the opportunity and to remember Evergreen.

God Bless Dorsey Williams.

Peace, Ed Dugas
Friend

June 12, 2010

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