

YARNS FROM YOULANDA'S YOUTH

In addition to being my friend, Youlanda Caudle is my history teacher. Teacher Youlanda led Stephanie Tucker, Thomas Tucker, and me on a field trip today to significant places from her childhood. Join us on the recap this beautiful, fun Indian summer day!



WHEN YOULANDA WAS A CHILD, BLACKS HAD TO PLACE ORDERS AND GET THEIR FOOD AT THE BACK OF THE RESTAURANT.

Youlanda attended the Greenbrier Primitive Baptist church as a child, where her father still is a member. After services her family would go to the Greenbrier Restaurant for their famous hushpuppies (deep-fried cornbread bites) and deep-fried catfish or pork barbecue. When she was a young child, her family was not allowed in the restaurant because they were Negroes. They would place their order at the back door of the restaurant, and the food was delivered to them there also. Youlanda was born in 1965. The Civil Rights Act was passed in late 1964. Blacks were still banned from this restaurant in the early 1970's. Youlanda can also remember going to the Huntsville Public Library and having to drink from a separate water fountain in the early 1970's too.



YOULANDA, STEPHANIE, AND THOMAS ENJOYING LUNCH - 40 years ago they would have been refused service in this restaurant because of their race.

Thankfully everyone is welcome at the Greenbrier Restaurant in 2013!



The next stop on our journey was the private cemetery of Youlanda's maternal ancestors....the RAGLUND FAMILY CEMETERY. A white farmer donated the land to her ancestors so they could have a nice burial place. Only Raglund Family descendants can be buried here.



The gravesite of the first preacher at a local Primitive Baptist Church...so far there have been only two preachers at this church. Notice the wife of the first preacher, Reverend Willie Ed Owes, is still alive. She is 107 years old!



The gravesite of Youlanda's maternal grandparents.



The cemetery overlooks the cotton fields where Yolanda’s ancestors worked hard picking cotton.



Yolanda’s childhood farm home. (Her nephews are currently moving in.)

Youlanda lived here with her parents and eleven siblings. When I asked where everyone slept, she laughed and said, “Everywhere and we were squished together....sometimes we even had cousins sleeping over too!”





This is the land Youlanda's father farmed. Due to her father's disability, he can no longer farm. The land is currently rented to another farmer, and he planted soybeans on the acreage this year.



Stephanie, Thomas and me got excited to see her aunt's clothesline because we had not seen one in a long time! Youlanda's aunts, uncles, and cousins lived all around her. Family gatherings were a frequent occurrence during Yolanda's childhood. I met her aunt today who was a very kind, warm person.



When Youlanda was growing up, this was a huge weeping willow tree providing blissful shade during the hot Alabama summers. (The tree was hit by lightning and is no longer as big as it was in Youlanda’s youth.) “This is where all the action took place when I was a little girl...we shucked peas and prepared fruit and vegetables for canning under the welcoming shade of this tree.”



The old tractor Youlanda’s father used to farm the land.



This is where Youlanda swam with the water moccasins when she was a child.



The Lovebirds – Thomas and Stephanie Tucker along banks of the Tennessee River.

The distance from Youlanda's family farm to the Tennessee River is about two miles. Youlanda and her siblings would WALK to the river in the BLAZING HOT Alabama summer sun to swim. She learned how to swim by the "Sink or Swim" method. Her siblings told her to swim. She did so or else she would have drowned. Water moccasins were guests during their beach excursions too. Whereas I would have screamed and ran back home at the first sight of a snake (much less a venomous water moccasin), it was a normal occurrence to them. No need to fret!

Youlanda's favorite day of the year growing up was the Fourth of July. "On the Fourth of July, we ate fresh corn on the cob, dripping with butter, from our garden. Juicy watermelons were also consumed. We had a picnic along the river and went out on boats. We got to watch the fireworks along the river. We had fun with my relatives. It was a very happy time."

THANK YOU YOULANDA, FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART, FOR SHARING THE PRICELESS MEMORIES OF YOUR CHILDHOOD AS THE DAUGHTER OF A BLACK FARMER!