

Clifford Reeves & Evelyn Reeves Mauldin

By: Laurie Searle • January 2005

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Clifford and Evelyn were born in Rico, GA, and grew up on their parent's farm about a mile south of Providence Baptist Church.

Their father was Mannie Clifford Reeves Sr., a carpenter and dairy farmer, who married Estelle Rose Blissitt on December 19, 1909. Mannie and Estelle were active members and leaders at Providence and lived to celebrate their sixty-third wedding anniversary.

Growing up on a rural dairy farm in the early 1900s meant a lot of hard work for Clifford, Evelyn, and their brother Julian. In addition to helping with the farming chores of milking cows and tending the garden, they also chopped fire wood, cleaned the fireplace, and kept the oil lamps cleaned and filled—common chores before electricity came to the area in 1939. They also walked everywhere—to church, to school, to Smith's store—since their parents didn't get their first car until 1917.

"We really enjoyed going to church, though it was a bit different back when we were kids," Evelyn said. "The church was just one main building, with a coal house and an outhouse out back. It didn't have any Sunday school rooms or a nursery. Mothers used to bring a pillow to church to lay their babies on during services. And singing was really big. Sometimes it seemed like we would have singing all day long."

Some of the services were different too, according to Clifford. Revivals used to run for two-weeks, with two services each day. In between services, the preacher ate dinner with different members of the church family and spent the afternoon visiting.

When Clifford and Evelyn weren't working the farm or going to church, they attended Rico Elementary School, which was located in the large house next door to where Mary Kate Floyd now lives on Rico Road. Evelyn then went on to attend Palmetto High School and Clifford went on to attend Old Campbell High School, a few years later.

After high school, Evelyn did office work in Atlanta. She stayed at a boarding house in the city during the week and came home to Rico on the weekends. During that time, she met Graydon Maulden and they were married in 1947. Graydon worked for



Fulton County in a machine shop and Evelyn worked in the finance department at the Salvation Army. They continued to live in Atlanta for the next 16 years but came home to Rico on the weekends to visit family and attend Providence.

In 1963, Evelyn and Graydon moved back to Rico in a home they built across the street from where Evelyn grew up. They continued to serve at Providence and held many positions over the years: Graydon served as Sunday school teacher and superintendent; Evelyn served as Sunday school teacher for 50 years, treasurer for 11 years, church clerk, president of the Women's Mission Society, and "any other job they needed help with."

One of Evelyn's fondest memories at Providence was early on before the church had Sunday school classrooms. "We had a group of children but no place to teach them," she recalls. "I wound up holding Sunday school in our little church library, which was located in a cubby hole behind the pastor's office. It was really sweet."

Evelyn and Graydon enjoyed 25 years of marriage before he passed away in 1971. Today Evelyn is still active at Providence and is honored as our oldest member. We also believe she is the oldest resident living in the Rico community.

Clifford took a different path after graduating from high school. In 1936 he joined the Coast Guard and

was assigned to the USS Dorothea L. Dix transport ship in Panama City, FL. Next he was assigned to Base 6 in Fort Lauderdale, FL, and after that he was assigned to Fort Trumbull, CT, where he received pharmacy training and met Virginia Catherine Recker, his future wife.

Clifford's next assignment was in Fort Lauderdale, FL, serving on the American Seaman, a special training ship. He and Virginia decided to marry so she came down to Florida. "When we wanted to get married, I had to get permission for a special liberty to leave the ship," he recalls. The couple married in 1941 and lived in several locations during Clifford's three tours of duty. Clifford served during WWII and remembers being at sea the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. He received a medical discharge after about nine years of service.

The couple moved back to Rico for a few years to help Clifford's father with the farm, but by 1957 they were on their way back to Florida, where they stayed until Virginia retired in 1974.

"I remember the day Virginia retired, he said. "We sold the house, rented a U-Haul and had everything packed in one day. The next morning we were bound for Rico when every light on the dash board turned red. We were lucky that they had another truck in Griffin, so we unloaded everything and loaded it in the new truck. We made it home to Rico the same day and never left again."

Clifford and Virginia moved into the same house Clifford was raised in and started attending Providence again, where they were both active members and leaders. The couple enjoyed 47 happy years together before Virginia passed away.

One of Clifford's fondest memories of attending Providence was of his baptism(s). "The first time I was baptized, I was just a kid," he recalls. We used to have a cement pool across the street behind where the lodge is today. We'd fill that pool with water from Pole Branch, the little creek that runs across Whiteside Road. It was real special being baptized outside in that pool. The second time I was baptized was just a few years ago, inside of the

church this time. I used to joke that the first time didn't take."

Today, Clifford still attends Providence when he can and stays active in the church through home visitations. On a recent visit, he shared a good old fashioned *fish story*.

"One time two younger boys wanted to go fishing so I told them to get some catalpa worms off a tree for bait. They messed around and only got a few but we headed out anyway. We got to the (Chattahoochee) river and it was full, bank to bank, boiling in mud. We set out a line and wound up catching 67 fish! No telling what we would have caught if we hadn't run out of bait."

The next day Evelyn invited me to look at some scrapbooks, so I eagerly rushed over to see if I could find any photos of the 67 fish. I didn't see any fish, but I did find a great photo of Clifford and Evelyn.



Clifford Reeves: April 21, 1915 ~ March 7, 2006
Evelyn Reeves Mauldin: Sept. 24, 1910 ~ March 29, 2005