

By Betty Bush

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A Tribute To The Rood Family

The story of the Rood family, who came to Florida in 1914, is outstanding in many ways, and worthy of mention for they, as a group and as individuals, have contributed to the social, spiritual and economic advancement and welfare of the community.

Devotion to God and family, industry and hard work by the entire family under the guidance of a loving mother who stood straight and tall in the face of tragedy that would break a lesser spirit, is the saga of the Roods.

Originally from Wisconsin, Homer Harlow Rood and his wife, Sophia, settled in Philoville, west of Jupiter, where Mr. Rood farmed, and worked in the citrus groves and ferneries to support his growing family.

Mr. Rood was killed in an automobile accident on Center Street and Old Dixie Highway, Jupiter, in 1924, leaving his young widow with eleven children to raise and support. Mrs. Rood and her eldest son, Harlow, continued to run the family business, which was raising ferns at that time. It was necessary for Harlow to drop out of school, for in addition to the fernery, he obtained a mail route from Jupiter to Indiantown, which was a full day's trip by Model T Ford. The other children in the family contributed their help by weeding and watering the plants in the fernery.

Mrs. Sophia Rood obtained extra work as a substitute school teacher, a position she held for more than twenty years. For thirty years, she served as a Sunday School teacher, and played the piano for the church services. To make her contributions to her church, she undertook to clean the church once a week, and this, too, she did for more than twenty years.

The family did not own a car, so Mrs. Rood would walk from her home on County Line Road to Sunday School in the morning, church at night, and to Wednesday night Bible Study. She never missed a service, and was never late until, in later years, her children offered her transportation, and she had to wait for them! The church was located on the site of the First Southern Methodist Church today, across from the Jupiter Town Hall.

The Rood children regularly attended church, but they would purposely wait until later before leaving for the services, knowing the schedule of their neighbors who owned cars, and would often get rides with the Wilkinson's, Judd's or the Jackson families.

One of their favorite forms of amusement as youngsters was climbing a pine tree, while the other remaining on the ground would cut the tree down, and those aloft

would 'ride' the tree down to the ground.

Homer Rood was killed in World War II. The other ten children are still living. Noel is a school teacher in Martin County; Harlow works for Pan American at Cape Kennedy, and Roy owns and operates Rood Landscape Company in Jupiter. Naomi is a registered nurse, and the wife of Dr. James Nieder of Delray Beach; Mildred worked for the U.S. Government for many years, lives in Tampa, and is the wife of Victor B. Yeats; Bernice is the wife of Robert P. Hardison, Lewisburg, Tennessee; Gwendolyn is the wife of James Morello, New York City; Ardis is married to Jay Arnold, and lives in Atlanta, Georgia; Ruth is the wife of the postmaster of Delray Beach, Clifford Baxter, and Margaret is married to William Small, Chief Communications Officer, U.S. Navy, Pensacola, Florida.