

DAN CURRY

My name is Dan Curry. I grew up in the Community of Centerville. Centerville is an unincorporated Community located in the extreme southeast corner of Gwinnett County. I was born June 24, 1949. The Centerville of that day was a far different Centerville of today. I was fortunate to be born in a hospital since most babies born during and prior to World War II were born at home. Back in 1949, you had to travel twenty-five miles from Centerville to a hospital. I was born at Joan Glancy Memorial Hospital in Duluth, GA, the only hospital in Gwinnett. I was delivered by Dr. Fayette Sims our family medical doctor. Back then, we did not have specialists as we do today, one doctor did it all. They were called practicing physicians.

People then as today had goals and dreams, as did my parents. Most folks having grown up during the depression era had a strong work ethic and fully understood the value of the dollar. The dollar of that era had more buying power than the dollar of today.

In the late thirties early forties the south, particularly Atlanta, Georgia began to change from agricultural to industrial, with outlying communities serving as bedroom communities for Atlanta. Hard working men and women coming straight off the farm would seek these steady, hourly wage, weekly paying jobs. People referred to these jobs as "*public jobs*". One such company General Shoe, later to be known as GENESCO, a Tennessee based shoe manufacturing company opened in Lawrenceville, GA. A young man from Centerville J W Mitchell became the personnel manager. Over the next few decades, General Shoe would serve to transition hundreds of men and women from farm life to a new way of life offering steady income with extra money to buy non-essentials.

My parents were no exception, in the early 1940's they made some life changing decisions to leave the farm, move to Centerville, rent a house and get a job at General Shoe. My Mother had grown up here, attended school at the Old Centerville School, and had many friends and family here.

My Mother worked there for the next nine years until she became pregnant with me. After I was born, she never returned to work full time outside the house, except for occasionally filling in as a cook at the lunchroom of the Old Centerville School. My Father on the other hand would work at the shoe company for only eighteen months. Then he moved on to explore other areas of public work.

Centerville as other communities, towns, and cities sent their young men and women to war to fight for freedom. While many were not drafted due to health reasons, family responsibility, or age, however they worked civilian jobs to support the war effort. World War II helped to create "*Car Pools*". Each day men and women would car pool to work at government warehouses at Fort Gilliam in Conley, GA and Fort Mack in Atlanta, GA. Others would car pool to Marietta, GA to work building planes at Bell Aircraft, often

referred to as “*Bell Bomber*” later to become Lockheed. Please remember there were no interstate highway system, mostly single and two lane unpaved roads.

The forties proved to be a busy, changing and productive time in history. As men and women left the farm looking to make their fortunes no doubt their lives changed. For many they could save enough money in just a few years to buy homes even farms for cash. I recently heard that only 1% (one percent) of Americans had a mortgage in 1951. The Highway 124 (Centerville Highway) was graded and paved for the first time in 1951. Around Centerville many of the men who had farmed as an occupation were now slowing down and beginning to retire. By the early fifties most families owned a car. Some had two cars. Many people had savings and checking accounts. In the early fifties not everyone had seen a television. Most at least had heard of television. Rock N Roll, Elvis and Jerry Lee Lewis was still years away Yes, a new way of life had settled into the rural community of Centerville.

In my next article I will tell of life around Centerville in the fifties.