

Jean Hawkins-Tanner

I visited with Jim Hawkins the other day and we talked about his childhood and mainly his mother. He told me his parents were divorced and that his mother, he and his two brothers, Jeff and Jack, lived in Dog Town located north of Manilla and they attended Manilla Elementary School. She was able to buy a big house located in Arlington from Fritz Patterson in 1959 and they moved to Arlington. The front room of the house had a separate entrance and Jean was able to convert the room into a beauty shop. She operated the beauty shop in that location for the next ten years. The shop was open on Tuesday through Saturday. In order to help support her family, Jean also was a waitress at the Bluebird Restaurant located in Morristown. She worked there on weekends and Mondays.

Jim was in the sixth grade when they moved. He shared with me that his mother would go to the Arlington Grocery Store once a week for groceries and that she always bought a six pack of cokes. She would allow each one of her three sons two bottles of coke and it had to last them the entire week. They were allowed to drink them anytime they wanted during the week but once they were gone, there was no more coke to drink until the next week.

Jean owned a 1953 Pontiac and Jim remembers one time they were driving from Manilla to Arlington and crossed the covered bridge. It had rained and there was water across the road on the other side of the bridge. When Jean drove through the water, it came up to the doors and the engine started to sputter. He thought they were going to get stranded in the middle. Fortunately, the car engine did not stop and they were able to make it through the water. However, when she reached the next road where she had to stop, the brakes were wet and did not work very well. It was a scary moment but she was able to avoid an accident.

When Jim was a little older, he would go out and start the car for her when it was cold outside. Sometimes it was so cold the battery barely turned the engine to get it started. Jim decided to use a trouble light to heat the engine on those cold mornings. He would put blankets over the hood to keep the heat in and it really helped him get the car started. He was using his mechanical ingenuity even at that age.

Even though Jean was working a lot of hours in the beauty shop and as a waitress, she would sometimes take time to take her three sons and a couple of their friends to the state park on weekends. These were really great times for the family and Jim has fond memories of these trips. Even their friends would tell Jean how much they enjoyed these trips several years later when they were older.

Divorces were not as common back then as they are now. There was not much publicity about being a single parent. However, a single parent then had as much difficulty in making a living and taking care of the family as they do now. Most of her time was spent on working, cleaning, cooking, washing clothes, grocery shopping, and everything else that needs to be done around a house and family. There was not much time for recreation. But yet, she managed to take her sons and their friends on trips to the state parks on some weekends. In my opinion, she was a pioneer in being a single parent and she did a very good job at it. She added a lot of value to the community.

Information submitted by Jim Hawkins
Story submitted by Larry Martin

Go to the page named Memory Lane Photo Gallery to see a picture of Jean.