

# Askew

From 1

"Back then there was love for each other. We would borrow and then pay it back," he said.

People raised in their gardens most of what they ate.

"All a farmer would need to buy was flour and sugar. They raised everything else, including hogs, chickens, geese, ducks and turkeys. Now, everyone just goes to Walmart," he added.

Even as a child Askew realized the value of hard work.

"When I was a boy, after we would plow my father's crop, we would go out and people would hire us," he continued.

"And we worked. Early in the morning we would catch the man's mules and plow in the fields all day until it was dark. When night came, he'd pay us 50 cents," he said.

"That was a day's work - 50 cents!" he repeated.

"You would work all day long. It is like the old saying, 'You work from can't to can't,'" he said.

"You can't see in the morning and you can't see at night," he explained.

He said that 50 cents was much like \$10 or \$15 is today.

"Back then you could buy a whole lot with that. A dozen eggs was 12 cents, things were just cheap. Money went a long ways. You could take 25 cents and make a meal. You could buy 15 cents worth of cheese, 5 cents worth of crackers and a 5-cent pop. But now 25 cents won't even pay the tax on the bill," he observed.

Askew was born in 1917, the same year as John F. Kennedy. Woodrow Wilson was president. The cost of a postage stamp was 2 cents.

He was born in a two-room, wooden house and still lives on the same 50-acre farm his grandfather purchased decades before. "I've been here all my life," he said.

The farm is in Bertie County, near the community of Powellville, with an Ahoskie address.

Askew's father grew up farming, and Askew and his two brothers and two sisters farmed it as well. "I'm the last one. All of them are gone but me. I thank the Lord I am still here," he added.

Askew's own children helped him farm until they were old enough to leave home.

His oldest daughter, Fletcher Mae, admits she left just so she would not have to farm anymore.

"I moved to Maryland as soon as I graduated," she said. The other daughters followed as soon as they could and the two sons joined the U.S. Air Force.

In 1947, when Askew was 30, he built and operated a gas station and country store right next to his home.

Two years later he married the love of his life, Allie V. Simons.

His store, L.T. Askew



DEBORAH GRIFFIN / Bertie Ledger-Advance

A peaceful life - though also a hardworking one - has led Littleton Askew to 100 years of age.

was lighted with new-to-the-times neon lights. His name was literally in lights, as were a Mayola and a Pepsi Cola sign.

"I had lights all the way around it - blue and red. At nighttime, lighted up, it just stood out," he reminisced.

"I had plenty of customers. I treated everybody right. I loved everybody - both white and black. I had both for customers.

"They thought a lot of me because I treated everybody right. My parents raised me to treat everybody right because God made us all and God loves us all.

"Therefore you treat everybody right and that's what I did," he said. "They loved me and I loved them.

"I would trust everybody. I didn't know how to say no to anybody. I trusted them, money or no money. Some paid me and some didn't - but I didn't argue with them. I just kept right on going - because all of it belongs to God. He gave me the strength and gave to me so I could help people," he continued.

"That is what our Sunday School class was about today, to help the poor. That is what I tried to do.

"Folks aren't [always] going to treat you right, but you still have to love them. Some treated me wrong, but I still loved them," he said.

He would close his store on Sundays, but if Askew was spotted sitting out on his porch, it was not unusual for someone to stop by and ask if he could open up the store and let their family get ice cream.

Askew always tried to be accommodating.

"Anything you wanted, I had it - farm equipment, groceries, all kinds of meat, all kinds of nails, hardware, plows and sweets. I had some of everything," he said. "If he didn't have it, he said he would get it," said his second oldest daughter, Ethel.

He even had a person stop by that went all the way to Ahoskie looking for a column to go around a chimney flue and couldn't find it.

Askew went to the

back of the store and brought out a piece of metal. He asked, "Is this what you want?"

It was exactly what he was looking for.

But after a while found the store to be all consuming.

"I worked day and night and didn't have any time for myself," he said.

"I love to fish and hunt and when I had the store, I had to cut all that out. I didn't hire anybody to help me in there," he said.

He closed the store in 1962, about the time his children were old enough to help out on the farm.

"I was renting [the farm] out to start with," he said.

His children could work as farm hands just as he had growing up.

"I had some help, so I went to farming," he said.

"Then I could go back to fishing and hunting," he joked.

Askew raised peanuts, corn, tobacco, cotton and soybeans with the help of his two boys, Littleton Jr. and Lionel, and his two oldest girls, Fletcher Mae and Ethel.

"Baby girl, [Belinda] didn't come along until later," said Ethel.

The love of farming did not settle into his children's bones.

"I had had enough of farming," said Ethel. "I had always said when I get old enough to get out of here I am gone."

"I graduated in '71 and I left in '71," said Fletcher Mae.

But all three girls, retired from their careers, have returned to the farm to live.

Sisters Ethel and Fletcher Mae live in a home behind the home where they grew up, which their Daddy built, and where he still lives.

His youngest daughter Belinda lives with him and helps care for him. His two sons live not too far away in Newport News, VA.

"It was our upbringing that kept us straight," said Lionel.

Their mother passed away in 1989 after battling cancer.

"She was very caring," said Lionel. "Just like Dad."

Askew was married to her for 40 years be-

fore she died, and he never remarried.

Askew has attended Piney Wood Chapel Missionary Baptist from as far back as he can remember.

"When we were children, Sunday morning came and you were going to Sunday School and you were going to church," he said. "I've been going my whole life.

"Train up a child in the way they should go and when they are old, they will not depart from it," quoted Askew from the book of Proverbs. "Not one us have ever been in any trouble," he added.

Askew was the church Sunday School Treasurer for over half his life. He was also the church treasurer for several years, served as a Trustee and was on several committees. He has taught Sunday School for more years than he can count.

"I taught all my children," he said.

He is still a very active participant in Sunday School and church, even at 100 years old.

In the 1960's Askew worked at the W. H. Basnight tobacco warehouse.

"I had a time with the folks there. That was when everything was all tore up and shook up," he said speaking of the Civil Rights Movement.

"When the man gave me the job he told me I had to hire both black and white folks," he said. "But - I treated everybody right - so I had them all mixed up. Because I am black they were not expecting a black man to tell them what to do," he said. Because he is so nice, he had several people come apologize to him for their attitudes.

"I'm colorblind. I don't see color," he said. "A person in my eyesight is a person. I don't care who you are - you are a person. I had some come by and apologize to me. I told them it's all right, I still love you," he added.

"God was on my side because I put him first. I would pray 'Lord help me do what you want me to do, not what L. T. wants to do,'" he said. "Lead me in the right way."

"This life is a war-

path. If you don't watch yourself - the Devil knows his job - and he knows how to carry out his job. And he will catch you at your weakest point - and when he gets you at that weak point, he will pull you in," he said.

Referring to the biblical Job, Askew quoted scripture again and said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

"I try to live to treat everybody right. Even if they treat me wrong," emphasized Askew.

When Askew was growing up he had to walk about a mile to school to the Piney Wood Chapel Elementary School, a Rosenwald\* school.

He went to school everyday - no matter the weather.

"If it thundered or lighteninged a little bit or if the weather man said it was going to snow a little bit - there weren't no rain days, no snow days, no sleet days," he said. "You went to school every day. I don't care how much it rained, how much it snowed. We walked in the snow. If they had to, they would hook up the mule and cart and carry you to school. The bus was the mule and cart and your own two feet.

"The teacher would cook on the potbellied stove and we had to go out in the woods and cut our own wood and

make our own fire in the schoolhouse," he said.

There were four classrooms with three grades in each class and a big auditorium.

He considers himself a Jack-of-all trades, having done carpentry, plumbing and electrical work throughout his life. He has also had several jobs, many where he managed people.

"The main thing is treating everybody right. That is my mantra. Treat everybody right, regardless of who they are. We are supposed to love people from the bottom of our heart," he said.

"God blesses me on the other hand. I have received the blessings," he said.

Some of those blessings have come in the form of grandchildren, great grandchildren and great great grandchildren - 41 to be exact.

"He takes care of me," he continued. "A lot of people come to me and say I have wisdom. It's not me. It's the Master," he said.

Although he doesn't get around like he used to, Askew still is living a full life.

"The Lord has blessed me to do what I do and I do it for His sake - not mine," he concluded.

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\* *Rosenwald Schools were built between 1917 and 1932 specifically for underserved, rural African American children across the south.*

*In the 1910s, Chicago philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and Co., became aware of the sad state of education among African Americans in the rural South.*

*His response was establishment of a fund that provided architectural plans and matching grants that helped build more than 5,300 schools from Maryland to Texas between the late 1910s and 1932.*

*North Carolina had more than 800 projects, more than any other state.*

*When integration became the law, Rosenwald schools became obsolete and many were torn down.*

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Serving Northeastern North Carolina Since 1962

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## Notice of Public Hearing CADA Housing Choice Voucher Program PHA Plan

A Public Hearing has been scheduled for April 10, 2018 at 6:00 pm at the CADA Administration Office, 120 Sessoms Drive, Rich Square, North Carolina to review the current Housing Choice Voucher Program PHA Plan. Choanoke Area Development Association, Inc. of NC. (CADA) is the Public Housing Agency for the Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) in Bertie and Hertford Counties. This document is available for public review from February 22, 2018 until April 7, 2018 at the following locations:

CADA Office Community Service Centers (8:30 am to 5:00 pm)

CADA Administration Office	120 Sessoms Dr. Rich Square, NC
Hertford County CADA Office	105 N. Academy St. Bldg. B-Ahoskie NC
Bertie NC Works	128 E. Granville St., Windsor, NC

Written comments must be received by April 10, 2018 at CADA Housing Choice Voucher Program  
Post Office box 530, Rich Square, NC 27869, Attn: Venus Spruill, President

CADA is an equal opportunity agency and employer  
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