

Williamsons' Life Said Partnership In Faith

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like to think we have that now."

On that first "boom day," ocean-front lots sold for \$750. Those on the second row were \$500 and on the third row \$250. However, many of the optimistic new owners turned in their lots almost one year later when tragedy struck the young resort in the form of Hurricane Hazel.

All homes were lost but two which floated to the back of the island. Included in the lives lost were those of Williamson's sister, her husband, and their young son. A surviving daughter, Sonja, came to live with her aunt and uncle.

When Hurricane Hazel struck, Odell and Virginia had recently gone into business at Shallotte Hardware with his sister and her husband. After their deaths, Virginia managed the hardware store for several years.

She remembered, "Sonja and LaDane were in school, and I would take DeCarol to the store with me. There was a porch on the back. He spent hours with a hammer driving hundreds of nails into that old wood porch."

Meanwhile her husband was busy on Ocean Isle, the name they then had given the island. Gore sold out after the hurricane and bought Sunset Beach, so Williamson began rebuilding. He purchased a bulldozer and began planting myrtle bushes

from the woods to strengthen the remaining dunes.

A ferry still brought visitors to the east end, but when a bridge came in 1957, it was located at the middle of the island. There it remained until replaced last November by the new Odell Williamson Bridge.

Beginning in 1963, Williamson spent three more terms in the state legislature. During that time his family built their permanent home on the only high dune left standing and uncovered by the ocean after Hurricane Hazel.

Well-planned progress took place during the following years on the island's 3000 acres. About 90 per cent of that area is still primarily natural. During the years of growth, Virginia kept busy in the bookkeeping and management end of things, served as mayor of Ocean Isle for a number of years and added to her family. Granddaughter Marnie came to stay in 1973. After the Vietnam War, in which DeCarol fought, a Vietnamese family was sponsored and brought to the island. Both parents and children, who eventually numbered about thirty, spent many hours in the Williamson home.

Philanthropic endeavors have figured largely in plans begun decades ago. For 15 years the Williamsons have sponsored an annual oratorical contest with scholar-

ships to county high school seniors. They endow a scholarship fund at Campbell University, provided a dining room for the Cape Fear Council Boy Scout retreat, Camp Bowers,

near Elizabethtown, and have been active members of Camp United Methodist Church for over 40 years.

Virginia summed up those years simply, "It was always the three-way

partnership," she said. "I give to God the glory and honor for all the happenings in our life. People are never lucky. They should just count their blessings."

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