

CASEY AND LUCILLE JONES

# Just Call Them 'The Walkers'

BY SUSAN USHER

After service one Sunday noon at Sabbath Home Baptist Church, the preacher turned to introduce the couple to a friend. "These are the Walkers," he said.

"No, we're the Joneses," the two interjected. It was the kind of honest mistake anyone could have made, they acknowledged later, because in the Holden Beach area, Casey and Lucille Jones have earned a reputation as "the walkers."

"Anyone who has lived around here for anytime knows who they are," said Johnny Craig, whose family operates two causeway businesses near the Joneses' home on Fulford Avenue. "There are days when I wouldn't even go running that they're out walking."

When they first moved here in 1975, offers of rides came frequently from passing motorists. But in the past five or six years, said Lucille, "We've only had one offer. They know who we are now."

Lucille and Casey (whose real name of Kenneth A. friends wouldn't recognize) can be seen most any morning setting out at the break of day, heading south over the Holden Beach Bridge or north to a subdivision behind the church. They're not fad walkers, with special outfits and shoes, but practical walkers. In fact, Lucille said she picks up sneakers for "\$3.95 or whatever's cheapest" at a discount store.

"They last as long as the others," she added.

One year the two logged 1,700 miles in their almost-daily walks. Their goal is at least six miles a day; often they do better. And they've got distances to routine destinations down pat.

"From here to opposite Brown's Landing is exactly three miles, one hour there and one hour back," noted Casey. "From here to the pier it's 2.7 miles; it's three miles to Lion's Paw."

Much of their walking takes them past the "No Pedestrian" signs on the high-rise Holden Beach Bridge.

"We had been told they would have a pedestrian walkway," she said, but in the end there wasn't one. That hasn't stopped the Joneses.

Accompanied by a grandchild, they were among the first to cross the new bridge on foot.

"We've crossed it since it opened and will until they pick us up for it," said Lucille. "We walk just as close to the side as we can."

They walk in good weather and bad, moving steadily at about three miles per hour.

"Some walk faster. She does sometimes, by cracky,"

said Casey. "And I just let her go."

As a result, motorists see Lucille striding along ahead of Casey, who follows at a less bold pace.

"We enjoy it; we do it because we want to," said Casey, noting, however, that they don't do as much walking as they once did, what with sharing time with their grandchildren.

They've been walking for nearly 20 years.

Casey took up the habit about the time he retired from the Fruit Growers Express Co. in Baltimore, Md., in 1970. At the end of each work day, he would trek the five miles from home to Kessick Hospital, where Lucille was dining room supervisor for several years, and drive back with her.

Even then, however, Casey was no stranger to walking. A Moore County native, he earned his nickname in Lakeland, Fla., while working as a brakeman for Atlantic Coastline Railroad. It stuck, following him up the rails along the Eastern Seaboard to Maryland's eastern shore and then Baltimore, where he headed the Express Co.'s mechanical department, which prepared and conditioned rail cars for banana loading. He walked a line of cars sometimes up to a mile in length, listing their numbers. In 42 years he never missed a day's work on account of sickness.

Even now, at ages 75 and 82 respectively, Casey and Lucille are healthy and vigorous.

"I attribute our health to staying busy and walking," Lucille said.

Along with playing canasta and visiting with friends, the two keep busy tending a garden that annually fills their freezer with vegetables. They also tend the yards of five neighbors and the beach cottage owned by a son, Kenneth, who lives in New York. Another son, Don, lives in Wilmington.

It was because of some of those friends that the Joneses ended up at Holden Beach. After Casey's retirement they spent four years in Wilmington, near his family. But in 1975 the Joneses bought the Fulford Avenue lot and built their own tidy brick cottage—across the street from the seasonal home of longtime Baltimore friends Joseph and Mary Spence. They moved in October 1975 and have no desire to ever relocate again.

Now, said Lucille, "I live just exactly as I want to."

"There is no where I can think of I would want to move away from here for. This is the best place to live I can think of."



STAFF PHOTO BY SUSAN USHER

CASEY AND LUCILLE JONES are a familiar and welcome sight in the Holden Beach area. Here they're off on one of the morning hikes from the causeway to

the island that have earned them the moniker, "the walkers."

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