

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN & PHELOMONE GOODLY--FEB 2005

Who are my people? Son of Martin and Phielomone Goodly; paternal grandson of Togeal and Elizabeth Goodly; maternal grandson of Olivier and Armoza Victorian; paternal great grandson of Martel “Doo-Doo” and Alberta “Bat” Cezar; maternal great-grandson of Odecio and Philomene Gradney.

I. Martel Cezar raised horses and cattle for others. He was very confident in his capabilities. Many observed how he could fill his pipe with tobacco while the horse was jumping, almost as if he were sitting comfortably on the sofa.

He hired his grandchildren and adults to assist him. The grandchildren were paid a nickel, which would buy a handful of coconut candy, or the payment was being able to listen to his radio on Saturday night.

Doo-Doo would tame “break” wild horses and sell them. If a horse was too wild, he would ride the horse a few times, and then give the horse to his grandchild to finish breaking it. If the horse threw you, he made you get back on it. “Get back on it!”, he would demand. **It was a lesson in learning how to overcome your fears.**

II. The father of Olivier Victorian died when he was a teenager, leaving him to assist his mother in the raising of his siblings. One of his siblings was two years old when her father died and she addressed Olivier by “Daddy.”

Olivier’s salary as a teenager was \$.25 a day. Later, his salary increased to \$.50 a day. His tasks consisted of milking cows, spreading fertilizer, bringing in firewood, working in the fields, cutting and cleaning rice by hand. He believed in hard work and saving some of what you earned. “Keep some of what you make. Learn to save. A nickel goes a long way,” he would say.

He and his wife, Armoza, **instructed the engaged on how to raise children.** “A newly planted tree,” they would say, “has two braces so that the tree can grow straight. In the same way, your child will need both of you. Just as a tree can bend when it is young, it is important to teach your child right from wrong while the child is young. Once the child is grown up, it is too late to begin teaching. The tree will not bend.”

Olivier died with five hundred acres of land and two water wells. He employed six to seven men, black and white, and his wife fed the employees every day.

Armoza remained a widow for several years, remarrying once. (This writer lived with her for nine months up to her death.) She battled Parkinson's disease, but she never gave up. She would attend as many Zydeco dances as possible. At Christmas, she would have Zydeco music, "Santa Claus," and **the gift of the brown paper bag**. All it contained was an apple, an orange, and piece of peppermint candy. Yet, of all the gifts this writer has ever received, it is the one present that I have cherished the most.

III. {UPBRINGING}

The community was not rich with possessions. Toys consisted of marbles or homemade items, such as the lid of a syrup can nailed to a broomstick, which was rolled on the ground. Everybody was the same. Many didn't know they were poor because the neighbors had little more than we had. The community, however, was rich with love. No one went hungry. In fact, every Saturday someone in the neighborhood butchered an animal and shared the meat with the community (This writer remembers bringing such packages to neighbors. **We learned at an early age the importance of sharing.**). Furthermore, if there was a death, or especially when both parents died, another relative took the children and raised them as their own, no questions asked.

My parents, when they were children, would put out a shirt or a shoe for Christmas. The following morning there would appear one piece of fruit. That was your gift. **It taught you to appreciate what you had rather than focus upon what you did not have.**

IV. Martin and Phielomone married in 1952. They rented from my paternal grandmother twenty-five acres of land. They purchased the property after her death in 1971.

Few items were bought from the store. Their garden consisted of blackeye peas, corn, okra, onions. These were canned and stored away. The milk came straight from the cow, was boiled, and consumed right away. (In their parents' day, milk was lowered into a well in order to keep it cool.) Water was provided by a pump outside. Meat came from butchering hogs and slaughtering chickens, ducks, and sheep. Meat was salted, smoked, and stored in jars. Food was not wasted.

There were no restrooms in their home. At night they used a pot de la chambre, often referred to as “slop jar,” and during the day they used an outhouse. Rags served as tissue. There was no Charmin.

Medicine consisted of roots. There was a certain weed used for sores on children. There was a weed for the flu. These were boiled. For rashes you bathed in the water in which the weed had been boiled. A tea was made with nutmeg and whiskey was given for the flu, colds, and a sore throat. “Sassifida” was given for cholic and diarrhea.

In 1968, they moved to where they are today. Initially, they did not have electricity. Coal oil lamps were used to read. There were no flashlights. A few years later, they received electricity.

Martin’s salary was \$6 a day after marriage. He worked as a farmer twelve to fourteen hours a day. In 1962 he began driving a school bus. In the late 70s he joined the sheriff’s department on an as needed basis. In 1982 he stopped driving the bus and became a full-time deputy.

Phielomone worked as a seamstress for \$1.25 per dress. (Her relatives rarely paid for services.) She worked fourteen to sixteen hours a day, but not on Sunday. She made the clothes for all seven children. Clothing was handed down from one child to the other. Clothing was washed with rain water by placing buckets on the side of the house. Woodrow washed and ironed clothes in order to assist her.

We learned how to appreciate what we had and how to make it with less.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MOMMA (LAURA) RUBIT--FEB 2005

How did you and Dad pass on the legacy of values and the faith to your children?

“We loved and respected each other. God was the center of our lives in the family. We prayed the family rosary daily with the children. We taught the children by word and action. We taught them how to love, obey, and respect, especially priests, teachers, the elderly, relatives, and neighbors.

We taught our children their prayers and Catechism at home. We took our children to confession every Saturday and Mass on Sunday. We walked a mile to church on weekdays and rode in the buggy on Sundays. Sometimes we went to Mass on weekdays to teach the children how to act in church.

Dad and I loved and respected each other. We agreed on how to raise the children. We taught our children to tell the truth, less consequences if they told the truth. If the teacher punished you at school, there was another punishment when the child got home. All adults looked out for the children and corrected them if they were out of order. This created a sense of security.

All of my children were taught to share the work at home and in the field. We didn't pay our children to share family responsibility.

Dating took place in the living room only. Youngsters were not left alone. Parents were at home. Boys came to the girl's home early, and left by 9:00 P.M.

Children got permission from both parents before going out. Young girls were taught and expected to carry themselves like ladies and to be modest. Boys were expected to respect girls. Dads went to dances with their daughters.”

For Fun:

“We had family picnics under the trees at grandparents' homes with cookies and kool-aid. We sang, danced, told jokes, and enjoyed one another. The children played ball, jumped rope, or played with homemade toys. We had no TV or radio. We had music by Uncle Joe and his banjo. He knew how to entertain the family.

On Christmas Day, after Mass and before dinner, we shared cake, homemade cookies, and special meat with grandparents, uncles, and aunts in the neighborhood. They shared with us. Your dish always came back with something good.

Each child got one toy and fruit in his stocking. Each child was wished ‘Merry Christmas,’ and received a hug from the relatives.

A special tradition that is still carried on in our family, that started with our grandfather, then to my husband, and on to me is my grandfather gathering all the children in the family and praying a special but different prayer over each child on New Year’s Day. That was touching and a special moment. Today, I pray over and bless my children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

THANK GOD FOR MY FAMILY! GOD IS GOOD!”