

# Survivor's Notebook

Number 30, Winter 2005 Published for NAPA  
By Hugh Singleton at 6003 Melbourne Ave.,  
Orlando, FL 32835

## CHATTAHOOCHEE WINTER

**O**N COLD MORNINGS before the sun was above the horizon, the field workers would gather outside the mule barn lot to await instructions for the day's work. It was not unusual for a small fire to be built alongside the woodpile where kindling was always found. The smoke from kindling was black, and left traces on my face, particularly under my eyes, so that when I returned to the house, my mother would send me to the wash basin to scrub my face, and while I scrubbed, she would lecture me about my habit of standing where the smoke could cover my face. I knew that lecture by heart, and it never deterred me from standing near the fire and enduring the smoke so that I could hear every word spoken by the jolly workers who loved to poke fun at each other. As the sun was appearing, they bridled the mules and harnessed them to the plows and wagons or rode them to a field where plows had been left the previous day.

As December days passed, the harvest wound down. Cotton had been picked and taken to a gin where the cotton seeds were separated from the lint and stored in a warehouse. The lint was pressed into bales, which usually weighed from 500 to 600 pounds. Bales were stored in another warehouse. Corn was gathered by hand and put on a wagon with raised sides, then taken to cribs in a storage barn. As the chill of winter grew, the stacked peanuts were thrashed and hauled to the nearest peanut warehouse to be sold. The end of harvesting neared, and the voices around the fire each morning became merrier, anticipating days when work in the fields was over until spring.

I was nine years old and I was sorry when the need for that fire near the woodpile ended. The fact is that a way of life was dying right in front of me and both mules and field workers were becoming virtually extinct. I still remember both. #

## IN DEFENSE OF COMPULSIVE COUPON CLIPPERS

By  
Betty Simmons

It began when I was barely old enough to hold on to a pair of blunt scissors and loved cutting old magazines into bits and pieces.

By the time I learned my ABC's, I had become a devotee of cereal box tops. In high school I became addicted to the advertisements in glamour magazines. If I had remembered to send in to every address I would have possessed the longest eye lashes, the best developed bust, the roundest bottom, and the sexiest pink toenails in school, but by the time I got around to mailing orders, I was out of school; my figure failed; my buttocks bulged.

Now, at 65, I've given up the dream of perfection, but not the bargain price. I've become a compulsive coupon clipper. Instead of long eye lashes, I'm willing now to settle for ten cents off a jar of mustard; or two bottles of shampoo for the price of one.

Although my children are grown now, I remember the days when I cleaned house and coupons swirled through the air like colored snow. My younger children, who found a use for everything, gathered them for book marks and play money, but my teenagers, who believed they were much wiser, teased me.

"Mama and her coupons," they'd say, shaking their heads, "Will she ever stop saving those silly pieces of paper?"

My adult children are still trying to reform me, but someday they will stop—when they realize I'm not likely to change. Eventually, I hope they will realize that each individual has an inalienable right to his own special quirks. That it is by these very peculiarities he will be best remembered and most loved.

When I am gone, I hope there will come a time when an unexpected flutter of snow falls from a cluttered cloud long after the winter season has passed. Then I hope my grandchildren will call their little ones outside, point to the sky, and say, "Wave hello to Great Grandma, darlings; I know you can't see her, but she's up there all right, cleaning a cloud." #