

Willie Marcor
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Interviewer: Edward Woodward

Willie Marcor was born October 19, 1937 in Dunedin. She lived with her mother and father in Miami, but returned to Dunedin with her mother in the late 1940s when her family split. She was unsure about why her family moved to Dunedin in the early 1900s from Reddick, Florida, but speculated that it was for work or to buy land to build a house. Marcor identified a two-story gray house on Douglas Avenue - near her own - as her family's from the early 1900s. The house was rolled to its site on cross ties or by similar means, she said. Until about five years ago, a family member had continually lived in the house.

Before Douglas Avenue was paved, it had worn trenches. Marcor recalled a trick that her Uncle Edward Jones performed with his car when he stopped to visit his brother, who was her grandfather. "He could get out of the car here and the car would go home by itself. Because he had (gone) down and turned into that yard so many timesthe car would roll down and go right to the house and stop."

Marcor recalled meeting her great-grandfather at the two-story house to eat the sugar left over from his coffee.. "I remember him drinking coffee when I was a little girl, I would run down there every morning, because when he finished drinking his coffee, it had sugar in the bottom, and they didn't drink coffee out of a cup, they drank coffee out of a bowl."

The house Marcor grew up in burned in 1990, and sat on the same lot as her current house. She and her mother lived with her maternal grandparents Charlie and Delia Hart. They had indoor plumbing and water when other neighbors didn't, which surprised Marcor, who recalled outhouses in the neighborhood. "I don't know how we were so fortunate to have that because I felt like we (were) just as poor as anybody else, or we lived on the same level as anybody else."

Marcor talked about her grandfather's bountiful garden, a source of food for their extended family. He had orange, grapefruit, tangerine, avocado, pear, papaya, peach, mango, calamander and pecan trees. He grew sweet potatoes, various greens, corn, peas, watermelon, beans, okra and kale. Family members helped care for the garden. "At different times ... they would be out there hoeing or cleaning up the yard and nobody had to tell them that because this was a part of their food." Neighbors shared the food, too. "You could trust people in your yard, trust them in your house, too, at that time," said Marcor. "That's the kind of grandfather I had, okay, the kind of people I had."

Neighbors had gardens and animals as well, Marcor recalled. She talked about Samuel St. Clair, who had pig and hog pens, and a garden that stretched from his back yard to Highland Avenue. Another neighbor had a cow that he milked.

Marcor described other neighborhood surroundings. Her aunt and uncle's soda shop was a popular gathering spot for hamburgers, nickel cone ice cream, a Coca-Cola or a Nehi.

A passing train was daily entertainment. “It was exciting to watch the train go by every day and wave to the people on the train. They didn’t know us from Adam house cat and we didn’t know them, but it was just the idea of seeing new people riding up and down the train.”

The Douglas Avenue neighborhood had several churches. Marcor’s grandmother Delia Hart founded the Church of Living God in the 1940s. On Saturday’s Delia Hart sold boiled peanuts and sweet potato pies in the neighborhood to offset church expenses. In 1985 Bethel AME honored the lives of Charlie Hart and his brother Norman. The program from the event recounts Charlie Hart’s experience caddying for President William McKinley at the Belleview Biltmore golf course. According to the story, McKinley offered to hire Hart, but he declined, citing his close-knit family as reason for not leaving. Marcor recalled her grandfather, who made \$.50 a round caddying, describing his work: “My shoulders would be so sore when I got home,’ he said. ‘But I could feed my family.’ That was his thing, ‘I could feed my family when I got home.’ He would always re-iterate that.”

Marcor’s grandfather, who cleaned public buildings and yards, was also an avid reader, she recalled. He regularly read newspapers, from the New York Times to the Clearwater Sun, and finished the Compton Encyclopedia collection that an employer gave him back. Marcor recalled asking her grandfather why he read the encyclopedia. “He said, ‘Well, this teaches me because I only went through Ned and the first reader,’” Marcor said. “He was self-taught ... I had to ask him questions about school and he could answer them for me.”

Marcor, who graduated from Pinellas High School, spent 25 years of her adulthood away from Dunedin. She married her childhood sweetheart and moved to Michigan: her husband was stationed at Selfridge Air Force Base. In later years, she moved to New York City and worked in the Bronx as an office manager and supervisor for Merritt Farms (Track 3 and 15). Marcor first visited New York in the early 1950s (Track 14). She traveled by train to visit her aunt and uncle. She recalled being awed by the cityscape seen from atop a tall building. But just as indelible was her Aunt Mildred Hart’s advice: “When ladies get up in the morning they put their stockings on, and they put their girdle on and that starts their day.”

Marcor returned to Dunedin in 1986 to help her sick mother care for her sick grandfather (Track 3). Since then she has been active in Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church and as a volunteer for the city of Dunedin (Track 16). But her latest project involves family (Track 15). Marcor pointed to a folded white tent leaning against a backyard tree. She wants to have a large family party with food and music where she can “sit there and just see all the people and enjoy them,” she said. “You know the only time you see everybody (is) when they come to a funeral or one day for a wedding ... I would like to see them in a different light other than just a funeral.