

Written In Stone

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Jerusalem Number 2 Baptist Church Cemetery ~ Part II

The one and only time I ever skipped school with some classmates; we got caught by the principal. As seniors at EHS, we headed to Willie Rogers' BBQ on the Owassa Road. We thought we could sneak back into school the same way we'd sneaked out; however, Mr. John Floyd was ready for us! The four of us, headed to the office, and paddled! How humiliating! We laughed about it years later at a class reunion, especially when folks would mention the best barbeque in town! In my book, it was and still is some of the best bbq you'd ever tasted. We thought it was worth the paddling for the meal we enjoyed. I also think Mr. Rogers probably knew we were skipping and him believing in education so strongly, we wondered how we were caught so quickly.

It might be my imagination and all, but every time I take a ride out past the old site of Willie's place, there's a scent of smoke in the air, and it takes me back to days spent in front of the take-out shelf, and the aroma of his cooking. I like to think that Mr. Rogers and his family who are buried at Jerusalem No. 2 Baptist Church Cemetery would feel that the tang of the smoke is still there, along with the memories.

Willie Rogers' Barbeque was founded in 1937, spreading his fame far and wide, with his delicious pork and chicken plates, piled high with potato salad, baked beans, and other goodies. Students spread his name, as well as their parents, businessmen and women who needed a quick lunch, or a meal catered. Well before it was a norm, Mr. Rogers' catered meals and parties, for everyone.

Willie D. Rogers was born October 1, 1903, married for the first time to Velma Lee Square who bore his son, Hosea. Later, he remarried Rachel Ann Jones in 1963, and his survivors at the time of his death included Hosea Rogers; four grandchildren, four step-children; 16 step-grandchildren; 2 step-great grandchildren; a sister and other relatives. He died February 23, 1978, on my birthday; and it was a sad occasion indeed for all of us in this county, as we all mourned his passing for the joy and delight in cooking good food was gone forevermore. His wife, Rachel Ann Jones Rogers was born January 2, 1914 to Rev. Will Jones and Amanda Franklin Jones, and died February 9, 1997 at age 83. For the many men and women buried at Jerusalem No. 2 Baptist Church Cemetery, it's the dash in between that spells out whom they were, what they believed in and the legacy they left to all of us.

For more information on a current burial listing, check the Archives of the Evergreen-Conecuh County Public Library at 119 Cemetery Avenue.