

## View from the Porch

by Melba Fay Foretich Gutierrez

April 1988

The recent *Sun Herald* article on the Foretich house (Apr. 17, 1988) brought back many memories and a re-evaluation of growing up in small-town Biloxi.

Our family moved to this working class neighborhood on South Delauney Street in 1934. Our house was located two blocks from Howard I Elementary School and the post office. We were walking distance to my Daddy's job in Ohr's Machine Shop, grocery stores, bakeries, restaurants, church, three movie theaters, Woolworth and Kress dime stores, dress shops, Biloxi Community Pier and Park, our dentist, doctor & etc.

It was the middle of the Depression. On this small plot of land, we had pecan trees, a vegetable garden, flowers and chickens. It was fun to pick butter beans and okra and pick up pecans. My favorite was collecting the eggs. I loved those Plymouth Rock hens. If I felt blue, I would sit in the henhouse and hold them. When one was missing, I would not eat our Sunday chicken dinner.

My younger sister and I spent a lot of time on the front porch cutting out paper dolls from old catalogs and reading library books.

South Delauney Street had a lot of activity. The milkman delivered the milk (in glass bottles), the fresh vegetable truck would stop. Men with strings of fish for sale would pass. The ice cream vendor would pass every day on Water Street (½ block away). He would ring a bell. If we had a nickel and were fast enough, we enjoyed an ice cream. As we sat on the porch, the *Daily Herald* boy tossed the paper to us.

Across the street was a grassy vacant lot—that was our ballpark until a tent skating rink moved there. Later, the rink moved ½ block to the shell pile on the beach. The view from our porch then became a miniature golf course.

As time passed we outgrew paper dolls. They were replaced with Monopoly and "Kick the Tin Can." We sat on the porch and watched the boys go by on their bicycles. Often, they would stop and chat. If the group was large enough, we played "Kick the Tin

Can." The neighbors did not mind when we hid in their yards—they all had children.

My favorite time on the porch was in the summer about noon when the Pan American Clipper (½ block away) would play popular music over a loud speaker before it left for Ship Island.

The back porch had a view of the "tourist cottages"—an alley away. Northerners liked our warmer climate and enjoyed fishing. They were nice to the many young people in the neighborhood.

The back porch was fun, too. We always had cats—we loved them and their kittens. My sister and I would take an old thin curtain, go to the beach and seine for minnows to feed our cats.

Beggars would come to the back porch. Mama always gave them leftovers or at least a baloney sandwich and lemonade.

This front porch view became a dramatic scene September 19, 1947. The family watched trees break and power lines fall, but decided we would not evacuate during this hurricane. About 8:30 A.M., we witnessed several gigantic waves. They crashed through a beach restaurant. The next wave crashed over the Greyhound Bus station on the north side of Highway 90 (½ block away). A huge oil tank washed up Delauney. We panicked! We left 134 Delauney Street and walked to the post office building, which is now the Biloxi City Hall. Our house was barely spared from the Gulf waters in 1947. (It was not that fortunate when Hurricane Camille hit in 1969, flooding the house with several feet of water.)

It is amazing that I lived in this house 18 years and never had a key. Our home was never locked in those days.

Today South Delauney Street is quiet. The house was moved, but the view from the porch is delightful—the new Town Green.