



A woman of discipline still enjoys life at 94

With gifts and family, a St. Ann woman looks back

By: Jovel Johnson

"It feels good. I feel alright". That's Florence Fletcher telling the North Coast Times how she felt about reaching an important milestone. She celebrated her 94th birthday on March 4, 2004. Surrounded by family and friends in Exchange, St Ann, she was a woman at peace.

Miss Fletcher hails from Wakesfield, St. Catherine and moved to St. Ann with the assistance of her niece, Veronica Bailey, as she was all alone in Wakesfield. She is currently living with Miss Bailey. One of seven children, she had a normal and fulfilling childhood. She spoke of the strictness her mother, Jane Fletcher, and father, Augustus Fletcher had towards them. When it came to discipline and education, they did not play around. Both parents made sure all their children got the education they needed.

Mother Fletcher would help the children with school-work. "Children use to hide from school, but I couldn't do it. My mother was very strict. People use to say that she was miserable, but we didn't always get flogging, she just spoke to us rough."

The household was strictly Christian and Miss Fletcher was always active in church. She attended the Buxton Baptist Church which was in the vicinity of the Buxton Elementary School. From school, she would go to choir practice, on to officer meetings, then back to school again. She was baptized in 1926, and admits to falling back in 1932. She eventually went back into the church in 1951. Miss Fletcher now attends the Bonham Spring Church of



Florence Fletcher

God. With the help of her nephew, Vincent Fletcher, she reminisces about the happenings in her childhood. Mother, father and children use to work the fields planting and harvesting crops like coffee, pimento, annatto, among other things. "We weren't poor, because we grew our own food. We didn't have to struggle. To help, my father use to ride mule or horse to carry people's loads to the Spanish Town market. My mother use to do domestic work". Miss Fletcher got her own donkey at about age 50.

She spoke about the chores she use to have, like carrying water. "I use to carry water from my house to Springvale. That was four miles, and we use to climb a lot of rocks. I use to carry the water in a bucket or goudi (calabash) on my head. If the bucket should drop and water throw out. I would turn back if it's not too far. If it was too far, I would have to go home with the empty bucket and that would mean quarreling from my mother".

Miss Fletcher left school at the age of 14 and went on to learning sewing from Miss Cindy, a woman in the community. Sewing then became her profession. Her father died in 1937, sixty-seven years ago, followed by her mother in 1944. Fortunately, by then, she was able to help herself. At that time she was still in St. Catherine.

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IN MEMORY OF

Benjamin Eleazer Wallace
'Mass Ben' or 'Uncle Ben'

Of Ocho Rios & Walkerswood, St Ann
A longstanding member of the Methodist Church
Who passed on February 23, 2004
And was laid to rest Saturday, March 6, 2004
at Walkerswood Methodist Church Cemetery.

He was born August 3, 1903.

WE WHO SO LOVE HIM AND MISS HIM WISH TO THANK ALL
THOSE WHO SUPPORTED US OR EXPRESSED CONDOLENCE
IN OUR PERIOD OF BEREAVEMENT.

From the children: Avis Hoilett (nee Wallace); Glen
Wallace; Delsey Wallace; Hilda Rennie (nee Wallace);
Ferdinand Wallace; Dorothy Wallace; Roma Daire (nee
Wallace); Seymour (Jim) Wallace; Audrey Wallace, all
multi-skilled and professionals, a host of nieces,
nephews, other relatives and friends here and abroad.

life at 94

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Miss Fletcher with family

Miss Fletcher gave birth to Miss Williams in 1932 and Miss Smith in 1940. She raised them the same way her parents raised her. She passed on her skill of sewing to both her daughters, but one excelled. They both went to England where one died. Her remaining daughter still lives in England. Between her two children, she has nine grandchildren and also more than five great-grandchildren.

THEN AND NOW

When asked about the difference in discipline of today's youth and the youth of yesteryear, she says, "The behaviour was good. We couldn't disrespect our parents. Now, it is different. The children are disrespectful to their parents. They just want to please themselves". She went on about the fashion. "We couldn't wear short clothes. We had to look presentable. Nowadays, the girls are going out naked and the boys wear their pants below their waist, way below the waist. I can't do that now!"

Miss Fletcher boasted about the presents she got for her birthday. They included money, wine, an assortment of soaps, and cake. She totally enjoyed her gifts. She is still very much active in the house, but says she is not looking forward to her 100th birthday. "What if you live to see it?" she was asked.

"Unnu would a haffi sun me!"

She moves around the house quite well and takes frequent walks to the gate with the help of her walking stick. She is still very much into reading, which is one of the things she does in her past time. However, her eye sight is not as it use to be and she uses glasses to aid her. Reading her bible is her frequent hobby, along with sleeping, and beware, starting a conversation with her could lead to her outdoing you. She talks a lot.

Miss Florence Fletcher still has a strong appetite and loves her food. "Anytime my appetite gone, me gone!"

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