

## **My Parents: Willie E. Page and Nancy Ann Page – Democratic Heroes**

In November of 1940 after the paper ballots had been counted locally, I remember my father laughing and saying to my mother: "123 ballots were cast in our precinct. FOUR PEOPLE voted for Willkie, and I know who cast two of them." He meant a farming couple near us who also raised chickens. Dad was a skilled carpenter and later helped build the Camp Lejeune and Cherry Point bases, then became post carpenter at Cherry Point during World War II. When the post commander complained to Dad about being unable to get fresh eggs, my father began delivering thirty to forty dozen fresh eggs every Monday morning from the neighboring farmer to the post commander's secretary, who kept the customer list. The price was never more than forty cents a dozen during the entire war. Dad paid the neighbor the local market price, then added five cents a dozen for his own expenses. When someone later told Dad he could have "made a lot of money" for his efforts, he answered: "Yes, and I know some who did, but it's wrong to try to get rich off people's need for food."

Those memories revealed much to me about my father's social and political values. He did not go to church or talk about religion, but he had strong sense of right and wrong that we all fully understood. My mother frequently told us children that "You should always treat someone else the way you would want to be treated if you were in their shoes." Both parents were known for their sympathy and support for what they sometimes called "the underdog" in any situation.

The 1956 election showed their views on education when my father stated his opposition to the Pearsall Plan, which was presented as a way to control integration of our state public school system. His reason: "I can't vote for anything that could lead to closing the public schools; they're the only chance my children have." That same year when the county ballot contained four bond issues, including one for schools and one for the public library, Dad said he would only vote for the school bond issue, stating his disapproval of the debts being incurred by the county. My mother's sudden emphatic reply: "Old Man, this time I'm voting against you. That public library has been as much help to our children as the public schools, and I'm voting for that bond issue too." Dad made no reply. My older sister Lila and I turned our heads to hide our grins because it was rare for Mom to confront Dad so decisively, and we could not recall ever hearing her shut him up so emphatically.

He lived another ten years to the age of sixty-seven, often boasting to neighbors about his nine children, who by then were all adults. During the 1980's years after my father's death, my mother added her own quiet comment on the political controversy over abortion: "A woman has to make that decision for herself; no one else can make it for her." To her nine children, she had very definitely earned the right to have the last word on that subject too.

Submitted by W. E. Page, Jr. June 1, 2007