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# PORT TAMPA - 1935

By LOUIS FRITZE

My reason for being in Port Tampa in late 1934 and 1935 for a short time was in attempt to ship out in the merchant marine. During the depression shipping was very slow. If one did not have proper papers and did not know anybody in the shipping companies, it was impossible, unless one took the last chance and stowed away on a ship. I had exhausted all avenues. A determination to see Europe was the inspiration to finally stow away successfully which I did, but that is another story.

I roomed at the home of Mrs. Faull on Macotte Street and Ingraham. It was a two story house built in the early part of the century. Alongside was a large cistern for holding rain water. It is gone today but the house still stands.

Mrs. Faull was the wife of a German baker who settled in Port Tampa and had a bakery during the Spanish American War. Mrs. Faull originally came from Savannah, Georgia. Her son, John Faull, was the last town clerk before being annexed by the City of Tampa.

Mrs. Faull was one of the kindest women I have met. I told her of my plans. Although I had enough funds, she refused to take any more money from me as she said I may need it. I could pay it back when I was working. She baked pies every week for her family and always gave me one from the different fruits she used. If a cold spell came along, I would be given another blanket. Her husband was still living at the time but he died shortly after.

I had plenty of time to walk around Port Tampa, visiting the ships that came in.

There were three phosphate elevators on the west side of the channel where during the Spanish War the transports were loaded for the invasion of Cuba. Most of the ships loaded at the most southern elevator which was quite modern for the time. Most of the Lykes ships loaded at Port Tampa as well as those of the old Mallory Lines.

Port Tampa was always active with moving freight cars. One could hear the old switch engines to late at night. These locomotives were originally built for the Russians. At the change of government there, they were adapted for American rails.

At the east end of the channel was a passenger terminal for ships going to Cuba. Special trains brought the tourists from Tampa to meet them. I recall the round trip fare to Cuba as \$19.95. Cabins were extra. They stopped at Key West on the way. When World War II came along, the two ships were taken for transports. Only one survived.

There was only one restaurant in Port Tampa at the end of Commerce St. Since then, it has been moved across the street and is still there. Close by was the largest grocery store - Toffaltis, one of the old families of Port Tampa. There was another one on Kissimmee St. run by Mr. Gordo just down the street from the Masonic Temple.

I was a law abiding citizen but I did get to see the town jail. The constable had taken in a couple of characters who had left a ship and had made some trouble in a bar. They had roomed at Mrs. Faulls. The constable gave them a day to get out of town or stay in jail. They went.

Mrs. Faull knew my background. Her neighbors next door knew friends of mine in St. Petersburg. However, the leery constable took other means to find out about me. After all, I was seen walking around the docks, etc. A car drove up to Mrs. Faull's with the constable in the back seat and two immigration officers. They asked for identification papers and I went back in the house and got my driver's license and birth certificate which I was fortunate to have when I did sail to Europe as a stowaway. I resented one of the officers in his manner and told him so and the other softened the situation. Then I told him that the constable didn't have nerve to question me directly and used them for it. Then he mentioned that he could put me in jail, then I told him he would be sorry if he did as I had plenty of friends in St. Petersburg and Tampa. That quieted him down. After it was all over, Mrs. Faull was indignant that they did not come to her for information.

I thought it was a good idea to get in the good graces of the constable and paid him a visit in his office and the two-man jail. He was gracious and showed me around. That is how I got to see the jail. Port Tampa was always a close knit community and everybody knew one another. It was only outsiders that made trouble which was quickly taken care of. It stayed that way until Port Tampa City was annexed.

I recall a barber shop on Commerce Street. The barber was a Negro. I don't remember any other. I played basketball one night at the high school which is still there.

It was a nice ride into Tampa on the trolley which went along Inter-Bay Blvd. to Ballast Point Park and then along Bay Shore Drive to Rome, Swann, Southern Boulevard etc. to Franklin Street. Bay Shore Blvd. ended at Magnolia.

I recall some beautiful singing at a Negro Church, close by to Mrs. Faull's.

Mrs. Faull told about one of her Negro tenants, a hard working man. He heard someone demanding him to come out of his house. It was night, and not knowing who it was, and seeing the intruder armed, shot the man. It turned out to be some peace officer who had been drinking. The white community was upset and Mrs. Faull smuggled her tenant out of town and got him off to her sister living in Savannah until he was cleared. That was the kind of women Mrs. Faull was.

To close this little history, when I went to New York after my adventures, as there was no work to get in St. Petersburg, to make a living, my first spare money went to Mrs. Faull for my rooming. I visited her with my wife when I settled in Florida for good.