

Ellen Green Remembered



Hillsborough Remembers

Evelyn Flagler-Shank

by Priscilla Lakus

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Once again, we're going to try to record this interview with Ms. Evelyn Flagler-Shank. Ms. Shank has already gone through this interview once, and for some reason, this machine is not working properly. But we're going to try it one more time and see if it goes better. Ms. Shank was a very good friend of the late Ms. Ellen Green, who lived in Port Tampa for many, many years. She was a civil rights activist, and Ms. Evelyn knew her as a very close friend.

Priscilla Lakus (PL): *So my first question to Ms. Shank is: How did you get to meet Ms. Green, and when did you meet her?*

Evelyn Flagler-Shank (ES): *My mother and Ms. Green, Aunt Ellen, was very good friends. So she was there when I was born, and I've known her all my life. She's been a very--. She has played a very, very important part of my life. Her children and myself- we grew up together. In--. Aunt Ellen was a--, such a great achiever and a positive role model: mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and friend. But most of all, she was a sincere, godly woman. And I loved her so very, very much.*

PL: *Well, on the other interview that we did [Chuckle] that didn't get recorded, you talked a little bit about her being a very good friend of yours, as you've just mentioned, but that also you would go to her home and cook for her, and she would come to your house and cook for you. I mean, you would cook at your house, and then when she got older, you would take the food to her house. Do you have a little story that, that you can remember about those times?*

ES: *Yes. Aunt Ellen was always, as I said, a part of the family. And my husband and I would prepare food and invite her over for dinner. And when her son was in town, we would invite he, his wife, and the daughter over for dinner.*

And as she grew older and couldn't come up our steps, we would just prepare the food and take to her. And one day, she said, "What have I done to deserve all of this?" I said, "Aunt Ellen, you have been so loving and kind to others; now it is coming back to you."

So after the passing of my husband, I continued to prepare meals for her, take it over to her home. And we would sit down and laugh and talk. And she'd always talk about her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

And most of all, she would talk about the Lord, and His goodness and mercy, and how He had brought her to the point of where she was through the years, because she solely depended on the Lord. And it just brought joy to my heart to sit and talk with her.

PL: One of the other things that I wanted to mention is that Ms. Green was an activist, a civil rights activist. And you told us at the other interviewing session that you weren't living in the Tampa Bay area during the '60s much. And Ms. Green, from all that I've been able to understand about her, was not a person who talked much about her accomplishments, as far as those areas were concerned. Can you give us a little more insight into that?

ES: Well, little that I do know is that I had--, have a couple of sons, and that my youngest son was part of the integration to the school that is in this particular area. Because when I grew up, I had to pass that school, catch a bus, go across town to another school. But Aunt Ellen played such a active role out here in this particular area that the younger son integrated the school in this particular area. And that meant so much to us. And to think back, you never would hear her talk about what she did. And I did not realize how much she did do until this particular time.

PL: Yeah, that's what I've heard- that she was not a person to, to talk about her accomplishments, that she just did things.

ES: Right.

PL: () people just found out about them after the fact.

ES: Yes. Yes.

PL: So I can tell by your face that you are just so thrilled just even thinking about her.

ES: Yes.

PL: She had to have been a tremendous lady.

ES: I mean, she was that indeed. And she always stressed the importance of education. And as I think back, she would have the teenagers over to her home for fun and food to reward them for doing so well in school. And we really, really enjoyed that. Oh, she was so special. She was a special lady.

PL: Well, thank you. And if you have any other remarks--. I think at the other taping, you'd mentioned something about something that you had written for Ms. Green after her passing. You want to share that with us again?

ES: Well, Aunt Ellen was one of my favorite people. And when she went to be with the Lord--. I always liked this favorite scripture: O, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever. And that was part of what I wanted to contribute to her in her passing.

And something else I forgot to say: [Laughter] she helped plan my first marriage, and gave me a blue hat to go with my wedding dress, which was blue. And I can just, I can just visualize it right now. And most of all, I still have my little blue hat after all those years.

And I just thank God for Aunt Ellen. And I can't say it enough: that she was a special, special lady. Such a godly, godly woman.

PL: I thank you so much for coming today and for sharing all these thoughts with us. And I hope this little recorder has caught all of this this time. If not, I'm going to be a very unhappy person. [Laughter]

ES: And I want to--. I want to say I loved her dearly. I love her daughter. Her daughter and I are like sisters. And her son. And her daughter's daughters are my godchildren. And we just all love each other so very much.

PL: (). Still live in the same neighborhood?

ES: And we still--. After all these years, we still live in the same neighborhood. In fact, I'm living in the property that I grew up on. And her daughter is still on the opposite side, right across the streets from her mom home. She's still living there, too. And it just--. I'm just so thrilled. It just bring joy and tears to my eyes to have been a part of Aunt Ellen's life, and still a part of her children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren's lives. Thank you.

PL: Thank you again for coming. And again, I hope we've captured this whole story on tape this time. Thank you again.

[EPILOGUE, RECORDED SEPARATELY, FOLLOWS]

ES: I forgot to tell another little story, but it's sort of sad. As I mentioned before, that I always prepared Aunt Ellen's meals. And I had prepared her favorite meal the day before she passed, which was steamed cabbage, carrots, fried fish filets, and broccoli corn bread. She wasn't able to eat all of it, but at least she knew that I was still loving and thinking of her at the end.

I thank God for allowing me to be a blessing to an outstanding woman as Aunt Ellen. May her memories live on forever, in the name of Jesus. Thank you.

PL: That was a wonderful story to end the tape. Thank you very much again.

[END OF INTERVIEW]