



# WALTON RELATIONS & HISTORY

Volume 9, Issue 10

Walton County Heritage Association

Sept 2018

## Editorial Note

By Sam Carnley

An excellent article on her midwife mother, Gladys Delores Milton was authored and submitted for inclusion in "The Heritage of Walton County, Florida," by Maria Milton, when materials were being solicited for the book more than a dozen years ago. The article appears on page 249 of the book. Maria, who has a Bachelor's of Science degree in Biology and originally planned to become a medical doctor, chose instead to follow in her mother's footsteps as a Florida Licensed Midwife, the outcome of which to date, she has delivered some five hundred babies. On 4 September 2018, I visited Maria at the Gladys N. Milton Memorial Library located at 261 Flowersview Road in Paxton. When not occupied in her midwife services, she manages the library. She very graciously gave me a tour of the home and the Milton Memorial Birthing Center of her late mother. Although I am a Walton County native I must confess that I had never heard of Gladys until I recently came across Maria's article in the "Heritage" book. The main reason for my ignorance of this selfless and altruistic woman who was a treasure to our county is that I haven't resided here since I left for college in the fall of 1961 after graduating from Paxton High School. That is the best excuse I can offer although it may seem flimsy in view of the fact that Gladys received considerable publicity across the state and beyond during the time she was under attack by the State of Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services bureaucrats.

(Cont'd page 2)

## Upcoming Reunions

**CROWDER:** The last reported reunion was October 2010 on the 2nd Sunday at the Crowder Cemetery in Mossy Head. No contact info presently available.

**CARNLEY:** The descendants of John and Madonna Golden Carnley will hold their annual reunion beginning at 10 A. M. on Saturday, Oct. 20, 2018 at the Paxton Ag. Center in Paxton, on Highway 331 North.

**DAY:** The last Sunday in October each year, beginning at noon, at the Eucheeana Community Center. Contact Diane Day at 850-892-2343 for info.

**GARRETT:** First Sunday in October at Friendship Church on Highway 83 in DeFuniak Springs. No contact info presently available.

**LIBERTY SCHOOL:** The last reported reunion was 10 October 2009 at Cluster Springs Baptist Church. No contact info presently available.

**PITTS:** The last reported reunion was 31 Oct. 2009 at the Community Center in Portland. For more info contact Hilda Turner at 850-835-1971.

**For a complete listing see the Reunions page at the following link:**

<http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org/genealogy.htm>

### Walton County Heritage Museum

Open Tuesday – Saturday, 1:00 – 4:00 PM  
1140 Circle Drive, De Funiak Springs, FL 32435  
850-951-2127

<http://www.waltoncountyheritage.org/>

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## Editorial Note

Fortunately, not only for her, but for those she served, she won that battle and went on providing her services until age and ill health made it impossible for her to continue. She was an humble and Godly woman who loved not only her own children and grandchildren, but those of the women she served as well. Her legacy resides in the approximately 3,000 babies she delivered during her career, most of whom now have children and grandchildren of their own, thanks to this extraordinary woman. The Walton County Heritage Association "Walton Relations and History" newsletter article for September is about Gladys. My primary sources for the article included the two autobiographies Gladys authored, the first of which was "Why Not Me," and the second, titled "Beyond the Storm." Maria's article in the "Heritage," book and my interview with her on September 4th proved immensely helpful. I am deeply grateful for her assistance and for her gift to me of a copy of her mother's second book.



**Figure 1. Maria Milton.**  
Photo by Sam Carnley,  
9/4/2018.

Sam Carnley  
Editor  
11 September 2018

### **Gladys Nichols Milton** **Walton County Midwife**

By  
Sam Carnley & Maria Milton



**Figure 2. Gladys Milton.**  
Photo by Sam Carnley,  
9/4/2018

Gladys Nichols began life on 26 May 1924, in the back woods community of Caney Creek in north-central Walton County, Florida.<sup>1</sup> She arrived in the shack on Jackson Turpentine Still camp property where her parents lived and worked.<sup>2</sup> On present day road maps of the county, Caney Creek community is located about eight miles south-west of Darlington on State Highway 2 West and, as the crow flies, about four miles north-east of Gordon on Highway 331. Jackson Still, named after the timber and Naval Stores Company who owned the camp where Gladys was born, is on the map, but as the site of fire tower. Caney Creek Baptist Church and Cemetery is located in the area and the grave yard is also known as Jackson Still Cemetery. Whether the church and cemetery were there at the time of Gladys' birth is unknown.

Gladys' parents were Lonnie Nichols and Lillie Mae Anderson. She writes in her autobiography that he was sixteen and she was fourteen when they married.<sup>3</sup> Those ages however, differ with the ages to which they swore on their marriage documents, as does Lonnie's last name. They obtained the license on 16 August 1923 and were married on the 19th.<sup>4</sup> Lonnie gave his last name as Nicholson and his age as 21. Lillie Mae's stated age was 18. They swore to those ages

<sup>1</sup> Maria Milton, "Gladys Delores Milton," *The Heritage of Walton County, Florida*, (Heritage Publishing Consultants, Inc. P. O. Box 67, Clanton, AL 35046, 2006), 249

<sup>2</sup> Wendy Bovard and Gladys Milton, *Why Not Me*, (The Book Publishing Company, Summertown, Tennessee, 1993), 24

<sup>3</sup> Bovard and Milton, 22

<sup>4</sup> "Florida Marriages, 1830-1993," database with images, *FamilySearch*(<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:23C5-KLM : 7 December 2017>), Lonnie Nicholson and Lillie Mae Anderson, 19 Aug 1923; citing Marriage, Walton, Florida, United States, Liberty County Clerk of Courts, Florida; FHL microfilm 1,888,915.

before County Judge, A. R. Campbell and signed their names.<sup>5</sup> Witnesses to the ceremony were Mr. P. W. Wright, Miss S. Walker and C. E. Flowers.<sup>6</sup> On one document, Flowers' name appears to bear the suffix "Rev." but it is unclear whether or not he performed the marriage ceremony.

Following Gladys was James who arrived on 7 May 1926. After him was another daughter born 17 June 1928, but due to poor health she survived only 11 months and 3 days, dying on 19 May 1929 of what Gladys described as Colitis. According to her death certificate, which does not list a cause of death, her full name was Susanna Nicholson and her death occurred in the Dog Wood Grove precinct of Santa Rosa County. It is unknown though, whether she was born there or in Caney Creek. The undertaker was W. H. Moore whose address was Munson, Florida. The place of her burial according to the certificate was Bland Cemetery, where her interment took place on 20 May. Lillie Mae Anderson was the maiden name of her mother and her father was Lonnie Nicholson, born in Florida. The person providing the information was Henry Anderson, brother of the child's mother.<sup>7</sup>

The child's death fractured her family. Lillie Mae fell into grief and despair. Lonnie left under the pretense of going to find a job and never returned to be a real father and husband. Without his support, Lillie Mae and her children were forced to move in with her sister, Maggie and brother-in-law, Travis Lesure.<sup>8</sup>

Maggie and Travis were married on 7 September 1926 in Santa Rosa County by Rev. Thomas Ludlam.<sup>9</sup> As of the 1930 U. S. census of Escambia County, Florida they resided in Pine Barren where Travis, age 22, worked as a laborer in naval stores, another term for doing turpentine work. Others in his household were Maggie, age 24 and Gladys Nichols age 5.<sup>10</sup> Gladys explains that she went to live with her Aunt Maggie and Uncle Travis when her mother could no longer support her children, forcing her to leave them in the care of kin folks. James went with to live with an Uncle Simon.<sup>11</sup> It was near Pine Barren according to Gladys that she began school at the White Lily Baptist Church.<sup>12</sup> Available information about the church states it was built in 1936 for the Black community and was originally called the Barth Church. As that was a year before Gladys left Maggie and Travis, there apparently was an earlier building that doubled as church and school that she attended. In her autobiography Gladys mentions "Bath" (Barth) as the place of her elementary school education. In later years it became known as "Greater White Lily Baptist Church."<sup>13</sup> On current maps, Barth is located on Barth Road a short distance east of U. S. Highway 29 between Pine Barren to the north and Molino to the south. Molino is about 27 miles north of Pensacola on Highway 29.

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<sup>5</sup> "Florida Marriages, 1830-1993," database with images, *FamilySearch*(<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:23C5-KLS> : 7 December 2017), Lonnie Nicholson and Lillie Mae Anderson, 16 Aug 1923; citing Marriage, Walton, Florida, United States, Liberty County Clerk of Courts, Florida; FHL microfilm 1,888,915.

<sup>6</sup> "Florida Marriages, 1830-1993," database with images, *FamilySearch*(<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:23C7-2JW> : 7 December 2017), Lonnie Nicholson and Lillie Mae Anderson, 16 Aug 1923; citing Marriage, Walton, Florida, United States, Liberty County Clerk of Courts, Florida; FHL microfilm 931,224.

<sup>7</sup> "Florida Deaths, 1877-1939," database, *FamilySearch*(<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:FPQR-7MX> : 9 March 2018), Susanna Nicholson, 19 May 1929; citing Santa Rosa, Florida, reference vol 422 cn 8475; FHL microfilm 2,135,292.

<sup>8</sup> Bovard and Milton, 22-23

<sup>9</sup> "Florida Marriages, 1830-1993," database with images, *FamilySearch*(<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:23CQ-VB1> : 7 December 2017), Travis Lesure and Maggie Anderson, 07 Sep 1926; citing Marriage, Santa Rosa, Florida, United States, Liberty County Clerk of Courts, Florida; FHL microfilm 929,771.

<sup>10</sup> "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch*(<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:SR6B-6N2> : accessed 13 September 2018), Travis Lesure, Pine Barren, Escambia, Florida, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 10, sheet 1B, line 88, family 23, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 315; FHL microfilm 2,340,050.

<sup>11</sup> Gladys Milton with Chistine Fulwylie, *Beyond The Storm*, (Boaz Fulwylie Press, Pensacola, Florida, 1997), 15

<sup>12</sup> Milton and Fulwylie, 16

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2465169/white-lily-baptist-church-cemetery>

When the Florida State census was taken in 1935, Travis and Maggie lived in McDavid located in the Precinct of Pine Barren but a few miles north of it on Highway 29. Travis, age 32 still worked as a "turpentine hand" and Maggie, also 32, was a housewife. Gladys, age 10, last name Lesure, was identified as Travis' daughter.<sup>14</sup>

According to Gladys, she lived with Maggie and Travis from age 5 to 12.<sup>15</sup> She was still with them in 1935 in McDavid at age 10, so she apparently left them in 1937 to live with her remarried mother and stepfather on his farm in Paxton.<sup>16</sup>

She identified her stepfather as Fremon Laton and although she wrote that he owned a farm,<sup>17</sup> the only land of record he owned in Walton County was three acres he purchased in the Flowersview community over twenty years later. On 2 February 1961 he entered into an agreement with the owners of the property to buy it for \$300.00 to be paid in installments. The first \$50.00 became payable immediately. Another \$50.00 came due on or before April 6, 1961, followed by \$100.00 on or before April 6, 1962, and the balance of \$100.00 coming due on or before April 6, 1963.

The owners then sold the larger parcel of which the three acres was a part to Joe and Iola Tucker on 10 February 1961. A clause in the warranty deed reads as follows:

(2) an Agreement for Deed entered into on the 2nd day of February, 1961, by and between the grantors herein and Fremon Laton whereby the grantors have agreed to sell to the said Fremon Laton the most northerly 3 acres of the E1/2 of SW1/4 of SE1/4, Section 4, Township 5 North, Range 21 West, Walton County, Florida; the grantors herein specifically assign to the grantees herein all of their rights under said contract and the grantees agree that upon payment by Fremon Laton of the purchase price as set forth in the aforesaid Agreement for Deed in accordance with the terms there of to convey to the said Fremon Laton the most northerly 3 acres of the E 1/2 of SW 1/4 or SE1/4, Section 4, Township 5 North, Range 21 West, Walton County, Florida.

Fremon paid the amounts due in accordance with the agreement and on 22 May 1963 the Tuckers fulfilled their part of the agreement by issuing to him an indenture, or Warranty Deed for the three acres. All the documents relating to the transaction are on file in the deed records at the court house at DeFuniak Springs.<sup>18</sup>

The earliest census record found on which Gladys appears in Fremon's household was the Florida State census of 1945. If she was in his household as of 1940, which she should have been if she went to live with them in 1937, that cannot be determined because the census for that year was not found. The members of Fremon's household in 1945 were himself, age 50, born in Georgia, occupation, farmer; Lillie Mae, age 36, born in Florida, occupation, housewife; Gladys Nickels, age 21, born in Florida, occupation, daughter; and James Nickels, age 19, born in Florida, occupation, U. S. Army.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MNV3-SBP>

<sup>15</sup> Milton and Fulwylie, 16

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 27

<sup>17</sup> Milton and Fulwylie, 27

<sup>18</sup> Walton County Clerk of Court, Official Records, Book and Page, Deed book 183, p 218/219, Deed Book 188, p. 435 and Deed book 172, pages 415-418. [http://clerkofcourts.co.walton.fl.us/public\\_records/official\\_records\\_new.html](http://clerkofcourts.co.walton.fl.us/public_records/official_records_new.html), Downloaded by Sam Carnley 9/13/2018.

<sup>19</sup> "Florida State Census, 1945," database with images, FamilySearch(<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QNW : 9 August 2017>), Freeman Latin, Paxton, Walton, Florida; citing line 23, State Archives, Tallahassee; FHL microfilm 2,425,212.

Not appearing on the census were Gladys' two children she had born out of wedlock. They were Henry Cephus Nichols, born 23 October 1941<sup>20</sup> and Mablelois Nichols, born 6 December 1942.<sup>21</sup> Possibly, they were at the home of another relative when the census taker visited Fremon's home. Gladys' openly writing about the children and the circumstances leading to their births, including the names of their fathers, attests to the strength of her character. In telling the story of her life, she felt the need for total honesty about all aspects of herself and her family. She loved all of her children equally and showed no partiality to any of them, regardless of the circumstances of their birth. In telling their life story, many people omit or gloss over those events they think others might view negatively and by doing so, leave their story incomplete and dishonest. Gladys was not that kind of person.

She was however, a person who valued education. Having completed most of her elementary school requirements at White Lily Church, she started high school after moving to Paxton. But because nearby Paxton High School was then segregated black students in the area were required to ride a bus twenty-five miles to Tivoli in DeFuniak Springs, the only high school for black children in the county.<sup>22</sup> On becoming pregnant she dropped out of school, but only temporarily. Following the birth of her baby she attended adult school and finished earning her diploma.<sup>23</sup> Further evidence of the importance of education to her was that she sent all seven of her children to college while bearing many sacrifices herself to ensure they succeeded. The only ones who failed to graduate were Kent and the twin Eleanor due to their untimely deaths in an automobile accident in 1972.

Gladys married her first husband, J. D. Russell in 1946 but due to incompatibility, they soon divorced.<sup>24</sup> After the divorce, she moved temporarily to Jacksonville, Florida to find work.<sup>25</sup> She stayed with Maggie and Travis who had lived there since 1945 when they appeared on the state census of Duval County as T. W. and Maggie Lesure. Travis' occupation was listed as "Insurance," indicating he had given up turpentine work. Prior to Duval County, they were in Columbia County in 1940 where they appeared on the census of that year. Travis was still working in turpentine at that point. They had moved there from Escambia County shortly after Gladys left them in 1937 to go live with her mother and stepfather.

Huey Milton was Gladys' second husband. She had known him since she first moved to Paxton and married him on 21 October 1947 soon after returning home from Jacksonville.<sup>26</sup> Huey was a lifelong resident of Paxton/Flowersview except for the time he served in the Army during WWII. On 8 January 1943 he purchased from The Gordon Lodge No. 325 of the Masonic Order a small lot in the south-east corner of Section 4, Township 5 North, Range 21 West, located in Flowersview.<sup>27</sup> He built a house there and it is where he and Gladys lived after they married.



**Figure 3. The Flowersview home of Huey and Gladys Milton. Photo by Sam Carnley, 9/4/2018.**

Their first children together were identical twin girls, Eleanor and Elinor, born 30 January 1951. After them came Tyler Kent, born 30 August 1952. Next to arrive was Deborah on 25 May 1954 and

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<sup>20</sup> Milton and Fulwylie, 57-58

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 60

<sup>22</sup> Milton and Fulwlie, 44

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 61

<sup>24</sup> Milton and Fulwylie, 61

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 69

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 72

<sup>27</sup> Walton County Clerk of Court, Official Records, Book and Page, Deed book 72, p 400

[http://clerkofcourts.co.walton.fl.us/public\\_records/official\\_records\\_new.html](http://clerkofcourts.co.walton.fl.us/public_records/official_records_new.html), Downloaded by Sam Carnley 9/13/2018.

last was Maria Lynette, born 26 October 1957. Counting Henry and Mablelois, they totaled 7.



**Figure 4. The Milton Memorial Birthing Center, Flowersview. Photo by Sam Carnley, 9/4/2018**

During the time they were populating their family, Gladys worked at various jobs and Huey did construction work. The year 1959 marked two notable events in Gladys' life. One was the loss of her mother to cancer at the young age of 50 on 12 April. She was laid to rest in the Flowersview Cemetery just around the corner from Gladys' home. The other was to become licensed as a midwife. At that time many of the poorer residents in Walton County did not have easy access to delivery services. And, because of segregation, many Black residents rarely had any choice but to rely upon midwives.<sup>28</sup>

Beginning in 1959 Gladys would deliver a total of approximately 3,000 babies during her forty-four career. Many of them occurred in Walton County, but she also delivered babies in nearby Okaloosa County, Florida and Covington and Geneva counties in Alabama and provided postpartum services for her patients in their homes as well. She also sought additional aid for these women from social programs or donations from churches and civic groups. Then in 1976 pursuant to new State regulations, Gladys established Walton County's first midwifery facility, which eventually became known as the Milton Memorial Birthing Center. The goal of the historical Center was to provide a safe, family-oriented environment for women with low-risk pregnancies who could not afford the cost of hospital care. However, many women who could afford hospital care chose the center because they wanted to experience the natural childbirth delivery that Gladys provided at the center.<sup>29</sup>

Later in the year it was built, the facility, along with the attached Milton home, was destroyed by fire. With the assistance of the community in raising funds and pitching in to help, the home and center were soon rebuilt and the facility was back in operation. Three years later, fire destroyed the home and birthing center a second time, only to be quickly rebuilt and back in operation in the same manner as before.

In 1977, Huey and Gladys learned that Huey's 1943 deed for the property on which their home sat contained errors in both Huey's last name as grantee and the legal description. Taking the matter to court, they obtained a final judgement against Gordon Lodge No. 325 of the Masonic Order, etc. culminating in the correction of Huey's name on the deed

## Thanks to community midwife back at work

FLOWERSVIEW, Fla. (AP) — Residents of this tiny rural community in the Florida Panhandle have pitched in with money and other contributions to put midwife Gladys Milton back in the business of delivering babies.

The state Health and Rehabilitative Services Department closed the 63-year-old woman's clinic nearly 20 months ago, after she had delivered some 1,700 infants over 28 years. The state said the clinic failed to meet ventilation and paperwork regulations.

While Ms. Milton fought the state's red tape, her neighbors raised \$2,000 she needed to make improvements and pay a \$425 licensing and inspection fee.

Other donations included a window air conditioner, which solved the ventilation problem, as well as what she described as the "Cadillac of incubators," two hospital beds and a hand-made rocking chair.

The Eleanor Milton Memorial Midwifery Clinic, attached to Ms. Milton's home in this Walton County community near the Alabama state line, had been temporarily closed after fires in 1976 and 1979. The state then shut down the clinic in September 1985.

It reopened earlier this month as the Milton Memorial Birthing Center, a new name to go along with the new fixtures, license and other improvements.

"I think things will be different now that we're a birthing center," Ms. Milton said. "People will look at us differently."

Ms. Milton, who last year was nominated to the Florida Women's Hall of Fame in Tallahassee and has officially been dubbed a Florida Folk Hero, said the name change, renovations and new equipment may help overcome the lack of respect that midwives get from the medical profession.

"A lot of people think there's one way to do a thing and if you don't do it that way, you're wrong," Ms. Milton said. "But there are a lot of right ways to do a thing. It just depends on who is looking at doing it."

As part of her new image, Ms. Milton also wears a white coat and carries a little black bag. Her license and midwifery certificate hang on the wall, along with a handwritten observation that a baby is God's opinion the world should go on.

Ms. Milton's return comes at a time when expectant mothers in some parts of Florida have been publicly protesting because they cannot find doctors to deliver their babies. Physicians throughout Florida have been giving up the practice of obstetrics because of soaring malpractice insurance rates.

**Figure 5.** Source: Genealogybank.com  
<https://www.genealogybank.com/doc/newspapers/image/v2%3A12A5B295590D2839%40GB3NEWS-1322A5D249706CF2%402446970-1319611F6735DAD2%4013-1319611F6735DAD2%40>  
Date: 1987-06-23 Paper: Mobile Register Page: 14.  
Downloaded by Sam Carnley, 9/16/2018.

<sup>28</sup> Maria Milton, 249

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

incorrectly spelled as Melton to Milton, and correcting the erroneous legal description of the property.<sup>30</sup>

Then in the mid-1980s, the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services threw a seemingly insurmountable barrier into Gladys' path, unjustly accusing her of all manner of violations and ordered the facility closed. But the Bureaucrats soon learned they had underestimated her willingness to fight them and the level of public interest in midwifery. Gladys hired an attorney and challenged the State's action against her. Cheered on by midwifery advocates from around the State and country, she ultimately prevailed and after much foot dragging by State officials, finally received authorization to reopen her facility.

Regarded by many afterwards as a folk hero and pioneer, she was acclaimed for her work on both local and national levels. A Folk Life Production of Walton County, Florida, sponsored by Grit & Grace, Inc. featured a theatrical play that highlighted her fight with Florida to maintain her midwifery status. She also has been featured in several local television news broadcasts and newspaper articles. Other articles about her have appeared in national publications of *US* and *Health* magazines. She was featured on a FX Network morning show. The book *Enduring Women* contains a chapter about her life and career, and two autobiographies, *Why Not Me* and *Beyond the Storm*, have been published. Her notable career as a midwife led to her induction into Florida's Women's Hall of Fame in 1994 and posthumously, into the Okaloosa County Women's Hall of Fame in 2001.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to being a midwife, she was a community activist. She strongly advocated the preservation of history and promotion of literacy. For years she worked toward establishing a library and museum in North Walton County. On the day before her death, though sick but relentless, she petitioned the Walton County Commissioners to make the library a reality. Although she did not live to see it, the library is now open in North Walton County. Located in Flowersview, the library was named the Gladys N. Milton Memorial Library in her honor.<sup>32</sup>

If it had been in her power to do so, she would have gone on delivering her precious babies forever, but age and the stress of fighting the state took a toll on her health, making continuation of her work impossible. Having lost Huey in 1993 she followed him six years later, dying 17 June 1999, and was laid to rest beside him in the Flowersview Cemetery.



**Figure 6. Gladys Milton's headstone, Flowersview Cemetery. Photo by Sam Carnley, 9/4/2018**

Gladys' obituary appeared in newspapers in Florida, Alabama and Georgia. They included the Tampa Tribune, the Lakeland, Florida Ledger, the, Mobile Register, Mobile, Alabama and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution. The Mobile Register version is presented below. The others are about the same except for minor differences:

## Noted Florida midwife Gladys Milton dies<sup>33</sup>

### Noted Florida midwife Gladys Milton dies

<sup>30</sup> Walton County Clerk of Court, Official Records, Book and Page, Deed book 124, p 247

[http://clerkofcourts.co.walton.fl.us/public\\_records/official\\_records\\_new.html](http://clerkofcourts.co.walton.fl.us/public_records/official_records_new.html), Downloaded by Sam Carnley 9/13/2018.

<sup>31</sup> Maria Milton, 249

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> *Mobile Register* () , obit for Noted Florida midwife Gladys Milton dies, GenealogyBank.com (<https://www.genealogybank.com/doc/obituaries/obit/102DDDDA9EBBACF-102DDDDA9EBBACF> : accessed 18 August 2018) Downloaded by Sam Carnley, 9/16/2018.

Mobile Register (AL) - Sunday, June 20, 1999

Noted Florida midwife Gladys Milton dies Associated Press

FLOWERSVIEW, Fla. - Gladys Milton, one of Florida's last and best known "granny" midwives, has died in her home in this Florida Panhandle hamlet where she brought up to 3,000 babies into the world. She was 75.

Ms. Milton, who had suffered from heart problems, died Thursday. She was a key figure in the debate over who could practice midwifery and was inducted into the Florida Women's Hall of Fame in 1994.

She overcame the grief of losing two of her three children to a drunken driver, fires that twice destroyed her birthing center\* and state bureaucrats who tried to put her out of business. She also was an author, writing about her struggles and triumphs in two books.

"If you come to this earth to make a difference, she did her job really well," said Judy Byrne Riley, a member of the Florida Commission on the Status of Women, who had nominated Ms. Milton for the Hall of Fame. "She was really an inspiration to a lot of people."

Florida began requiring midwives to be registered nurses in 1984, except for lay midwives who already were licensed. The Legislature reversed itself in 1992 and again allowed non-nurses with proper training to become midwives.

Ms. Milton began delivering babies 40 years ago because there were no hospitals or doctors in rural northern Walton County. Women from neighboring Okaloosa County and Covington County, Ala., also came to her clinic.

\*After both fires, community members pitched in to help her rebuild, but in 1985 the state tried to shut her down for ventilation and paperwork violations. She got the problems fixed but three years later her license was suspended because of a stillborn baby and allegations she violated regulations by taking patients with high-risk pregnancies. She got her license back after an appeal.<sup>34</sup>

What endeared Gladys to those who knew her was her positive and forgiving view of life in spite of the adversities of not only her childhood but of her adult life. As a child, her environment and experiences were of poverty, desertion, racial discrimination and instability. Yet in later life, she recalled those years with warmth and nostalgia without a hint of bitterness, likely because the bad times were countered by the strong family relationships she writes about. Her social and economic status as a midwife was essentially the same as that of her patients, most of whom were her peers. She seemed totally happy in that world and never expressed the desire to leave it even though she was clearly the intellectual equal of her seven college capable children. Once she found her niche in life, she pursued it conscientiously and courageously, never wavering from it in spite of the challenges she faced. In her autobiographies, she wrote openly and honestly about her life. Her place in history is among those rare saintly souls who found greater happiness in altruism than in materialism.

In contrast to her was Jacqueline Cochran, the subject of an earlier Walton Relations and History newsletter.<sup>35</sup> Like Gladys, Cochran began life in poverty, privation, and instability in the back woods of the Florida

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<sup>34</sup> *Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The ()*, obit for OBITUARIES Gladys Milton, 75, Fla. midwife to 3,000, GenealogyBank.com (<https://www.genealogybank.com/doc/obituaries/obit/0F978E6799B9B2DF-0F978E6799B9B2DF> : accessed 18 August 2018) Downloaded by Sam Carnley, 9/16/2018

<sup>35</sup> Sam Carnley, *Bessie Pittman aka Jacqueline Cochran, Female Aviation Phenomenon*, (Walton Relations & History, Vol. 9, Issue 8, Walton County Heritage Association July 2018) <http://waltoncountyheritage.org/GenSoc/NL2018Jul.pdf>

panhandle. She also faced discrimination although being white it was of class rather than race. But unlike Gladys, she viewed that life with bitterness and her writing about it as an adult was full of recriminations, omissions, fabrications and exaggerations. She wrote of unhappy family relationships, describing her mother as lazy and mean, although other sources disputed that. She wrote of defying and facing down her mother with a piece of stove wood at the age of six. Also at age six, she struck her teacher and ran from the school in defiance of her mother's instruction to stay there. She claimed to be an orphan and knew nothing of her family which was untrue. It is documented that she became pregnant out of wedlock at age fourteen. She married the child's father before giving birth. At age four, the child was accidentally burned to death. Subsequently Cochran's husband divorced her on the grounds of her adultery. Yet, in her autobiography she says nothing about the child, the marriage, the adultery or the divorce as if they never happened. Like Gladys, in her adult life she found her niche and pursued it unwaveringly and with enormous courage, literally at the risk of her life. She set numerous aviation records to become possibly the most famous female aviator of her era, growing wealthy in the process. Her place in history is among those individuals who favored materialism over altruism.

Although she and Gladys had similar childhoods they looked back on them with opposite attitudes. Another commonality was their enormous courage and dedication to their goals and being remembered for their accomplishments. But in telling their life stories, Gladys was open and honest, whereas Cochran was not.

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# Walton County Heritage Association

Membership in the Walton County Heritage Association includes  
Membership in the Museum and Genealogy Society

**2018**

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM as we are updating our records**

## **Membership Benefits:**

### **The Museum Research Center:**

Members get free copies of documents and use of the Genealogy Society computer when Museum is open to the public.

### **The Museum Gift Shop:**

Members receive 10% discounts on books, special publications, postcards, photographs, CDs, DVD's Videos and Gift items.

*Membership is on a calendar year basis. Those paying in November or December will be members during those months as well as the next calendar year..*

**Walton County Heritage Association annual dues:** Single - \$25.00 Family - \$40

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

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