

Byron Nelson

I was born and raised in Tampa Florida, and really haven't gone very far in this life. I managed to move about 20 miles east to Plant City after I realized that Tampa traffic had outgrown me. Currently I drive about 6 miles to work and as of a few years ago, I now have one traffic light to contend with in my commute (one too many). Apparently I didn't go too far to find a wife either. I knew my wife, Marsha's family before either of us started elementary school and we



were engaged before she graduated from high school. Shortly after high school we were married and have spent the past forty five years working our way through life together, raising three great kids and six grandchildren. That sounds like such a long time when I say it, but as I recall I was only six and she was five when we got married so I'm really not all that old.

Two years after we were married I earned my bachelor's degree in Zoology from the University of South Florida. I was attending USF when both the USEPA and OSHA were created (no, they haven't been around forever). The environmental movement was in full swing and I really wanted to do my part so I got a job at the City of St. Petersburg's Environmental Affairs Department. My first job was looking for and eliminating smoking vehicles on the streets of St. Petersburg. The City immediately sent me to smoke school and I have maintained my smoke school certification ever since. I believe I have the distinction of being the longest running smoke opacity reader in America. I will be soon be certifying at my 88th smoke school. I got a fellowship to go back to school at UF where, on my second day I received my first daughter, Iris, and after my last day I received my MS in Environmental Engineering Sciences, with daughter no. 2, Holly, soon due. Busy year. After another year with the City I went to work for Conservation Consultants, Inc. where I was responsible for a stack testing and noise monitoring program. A few years later I started my own company with financial backing from my mom, became a CIH and have run a small (about 10 people) environmental testing and industrial hygiene consulting company for the past 35 years. My wife has been by my side the entire time. In the early years she typed up reports, often until the wee hours of the morning, now she handles all of the money, when and if, we have money. With her by my side, not succeeding was never an option. Daughter Iris and son Travis are both there as well.

Anytime I am around workers and have an opportunity to educate them, I try to never miss the chance to discuss the hazards around them and what they can do to protect themselves, in addition to what their employers may or may not do. Since being in the HSE field my main motto has always been and will continue to be that "people should not go to work to die".

In my personal life I have always had the same interests since I was a young boy: girls, boats and playing guitars. I took care of my first interest early on as described in paragraph one. I built my first boat when I was in junior high school. It was a seven foot wooden rowboat with a removable axle and wheels on the transom so I could pull it by hand to the nearby lake to have water wars (by sinking the other guy's boat) with my buddies who lived on the lake. I used to fish with my dad in his small boats and take overnight trips with him around Tampa Bay and Florida's west coast. Later in life I worked my way up to bigger boats, got my USCG master captain's license for vessels up to 50 tons and now sometimes take small groups on excursions down the Florida coast or to the Caribbean. My youngest daughter, Holly and I have taken trips around Florida, across Florida and up the Atlantic coast all the way to the Erie Canal. We'll continue that trip across the Great Lakes, down the Mississippi and back to Florida in the near future. Now we routinely venture to the Bahamas in relatively small boats (23 feet or less) where we have made many Bahamian friends from the northern Abacos all the way down to the southern end of the Exumas.



I learned to play guitar at the age of fourteen. In high school I played in a rock and roll band. In those days the quality of your band was judged by the size of your amplifiers. The logic was, the bigger the amps and the greater the volume, the better the band. Unfortunately, decades of wearing hearing protection didn't get rid of the clanging bells in my head caused by a short period of unprotected loud music. In 1996 I met a fellow who played mandolin and we started a bluegrass band, Down Home Sounds, which was very active for about fifteen

years. For a few years it has been on a back burner but, if I ever figure out how to (semi)retire I would like to play music professionally in a very small group.

One other thing I have enjoyed doing throughout my life is writing poetry. It is more than just for enjoyment, I can't really stop. Words just pop into my head and I write them down. I have much poetry that I have written that I should assemble and publish, if only for my descendants. At the risk of making this too long I am attaching one poem I wrote a few years ago that describes my life on the water.

Thanks for listening.

Byron

GROWING UP ON TAMPA BAY

By Byron E. Nelson

When I was just a little lad
Of three or four I'd say
I took my first trip with my dad
Out into Tampa Bay.

When I say that I was three or four
It's months not years I say
For I got my very first sea legs
On the waters of the bay.

Teetering and a tottering
In a boat on swelling waves
My little legs soon learned to walk
In a boat on Tampa Bay.

My family would search the bay
For crabs or shrimp or fish
We didn't care which ones we caught
Each made a tasty dish.

Some days we'd fish, some days we'd crab
Or look for treasures afloat
But other days we'd simply chase
A pirate laden boat.

As a teenage boy my dad and I
Would take long trips together
Across the bay and then beyond
In calm or stormy weather.

Beneath the towering Skyway Bridge
Then on to Anna Maria
Or maybe on to Longboat Key
Those trips were my panacea.

Sometimes we'd venture farther south
To Sarasota and beyond
It didn't matter where we went
My mem'ries, all are fond.

Sometimes we'd sleep right on the boat
Neath stars up in the sky
Our time together on the sea
Was a treasure money can't buy.

Sometimes we slept on islands
Inside a small pup tent
Fresh mullet cooked on a Coleman stove
My life was quite content.

I didn't really realize
How much I loved the bay,
Until I didn't have it
The year I went away.

For one long year I was gone
From the waters of the bay
I gained a little daughter
But my father passed away.

So I tried to teach my children
To appreciate the sea
And I guess it must have worked because
They turned out much like me.

Now when I take my loved ones out
I have few reservations
Of going much farther than the bay
To exotic destinations.

And when my adventures take me
To places far away
I have a child or grandchild
By my side as my first mate.

When the new grandkids are little ones
Of three or four I'd say
They take their first trip out into
The waters of the bay.

Teetering and a tottering
In a boat on swelling waves
Their little legs soon learn to walk
In a boat on Tampa Bay.

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