

## I LIKED IT BETTER 40 YEARS AGO

Just back from the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Oh, it is beautiful, and lots of money flowing.

But, let's go back forty years ago. It was even more beautiful. There was peace, contentment and a little money--no one seemed then to want money. My first trip there was way back forty some years ago. My mother took all six children there one winter.

We stayed near town, (town was only one block long) in a three story frame, lovely family hotel. One dollar per day, family style, plenty of colored help in white coats, lovely yard, right on the beach. It was called the New Beach Hotel. (Now there is a sea wall, a wide beach road, wide enough for about four cars.)

Those beautiful trees that used to be there on the beach are gone. There used to be street cars that ran on the beach--close to the water. The road was narrow. Some times when it rained the tracks were flooded (But that was all right)--no one cared.

The water edge was beautiful. Sea shells were washed up every day. But try and find some now on the beach. They are man made beaches.

The trees were loaded with moss. Now, the only moss I saw was on Oak Street in Biloxi.

Yes, it is still beautiful along the coast, but not like it was then. Life was quiet, restful and a paradise. Now it is hustle, bustle--cars, cars, cars. You are afraid to cross the beach road.

Yes, it's progress all right, but there is more in life than that.

Years later, my husband, little boy and I went back there because there was a Veteran's Hospital there, and my husband was shell shocked and gassed in the First World War, and we had to live cheap and quiet for him.

We rented a pretty, small unfurnished house on the beach for \$8.00 per month. We bought unpainted furniture, it was cheap then, My husband painted it, all ivory, and it looked so pretty.

Five dollars bought everything I needed for the kitchen. The windows all around were casement windows. We could not afford curtains and shades both, so, poor people have poor ways, I went to the basement of a department store, paid twenty-five cents per yard for cotton sateen--dark brown--and made tailored curtains, put them on rods--at night pulled them together, pushed them back in the day time. We bought grass rugs for the floor. It looked like a dream. We went to the store with \$5.00 and filled up our pantry: bananas were ten cents a stalk; a ten pound hen for one dollar, friers, twenty-five cents. Coca Cola? I never heard of one--everyone made fruit drinks by the gallon and cream by the freezer.

Each evening, about four o'clock, you would always smell the best food. Somehow the wind made it blow our way. Sometimes it was home-made pralines, sometimes cup cakes.

## I LIKED IT BETTER 40 YEARS AGO (cont.)

We only received fifty-six dollars'per month from the government, but that was all right. We were happy, life was sweet. What more could you ask?

In front of our house the road, then a strip about a hundred feet wide, then the beach. There was an old man that we let use one corner. He had two work benches, and he would come each day under the beautiful trees and build wooden skiffs. Now they cost two dollars per hour just to rent. He sold them for two dollars each. Everyone had a skiff. He also made beautiful fish nets. His hair was white and fine. He made a beautiful picture out there on the beach quietly working away and whistling low.

Yes, we sold the place one day (we bought it, like rent) to a party. Now there is a large hotel on the ground where we spent so many happy hours together years ago.

Times change everything, but the Gulf Coast will never be as beautiful as it was forty years ago. That was God made beauty, now it is man made beauty.

I could live any place now, and would give all I own if I could live over those years once again on the Gulf Coast with my son and my husband whom I have lost.