



ABOVE: Hugh Tatum of Tate. (Photo: G. Reid)

Hugh Tatum: Thrift Store's Official Greeter -by Gerald Reid

Hugh Tatum was born 88 years ago in Pickens County near Bethany Church between Tate and Waleska. His father was a farmer and carpenter who lived to be 103 years old, which probably explains why Hugh Tatum is so youthful at his age. He has been married to the former Mary White for 62 years. They moved into their present house at Tate in 1948 and have lived in the same house ever since.

"What week?" joked Tatum, when asked where he worked. He worked at Georgia Marble Company for seven years and worked as a Depot Agent at Station H for the U. S. Corp of Engineers. He spent 29 years at St. Regis Paper Company. How he thought he would not get the job is a story worth hearing.

Tatum was recommended to John Groover at St. Regis by John Dent. Tatum was told he needed to call Sterlin Ruark to get the job. Tatum recalls Ruark telling him, 'You be at my house at eight o'clock tonight.' This would be the interview for

the job. Ruark lived in Decatur. At the first of the interview, Tatum searched for the words to break the ice and noticed Ruark had a beagle sitting there and said, "That's a good looking rabbit dog you got there" to which Ruark replied, "That's a [darn] good one!" They talked until 10:30 that evening about rabbit hunting.

Tatum returned home and before he went into the house, he went to the lot where he kept his fourteen hunting dogs and told them, "There's a

"There's a city dog coming here in the morning. You dogs show him up if you can. My life depends on this." He then proceeded into the house where his wife, Mary, greeted him and asked him how the interview went.

"Well, good," he said. "All we talked about was rabbit hunting, and if there's anything I know, it's rabbit hunting."

The next morning, Ruark brought his dog that was so good. They went rabbit hunting at Sharp Mountain Creek where Tatum's dogs were used to running Cane Cutter rabbits. "You've seen a Cane Cutter rabbit, ain't you?" asked Tatum. He described them as being two or three times the size of a Cottontail. It was time to hunt and Tatum got ready to let his fourteen dogs ply their trade as they sought the large rabbit. After looking at the fourteen dogs, the city dog

climbed up on a pine stump and, according to Tatum, said, "This is too much for me."

The dog never did run, and it wasn't long until Tatum's dogs were back with a Cane

Cutter right in front of them. At this point, the city dog "drew up on that pine stump and said, 'that rabbit's too big for me.'" After the hunt was over, Ruark and his dog left. "I didn't hear nothing for three months," said Tatum. "I said, well I lost that job," thinking that his dogs hunting too well had cost him the opportunity at St. Regis. Eventually, Tatum was hired and remained there for 29 years.

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For nearly a quarter century, Hugh Tatum was a familiar sight in the parades of Jasper along with Moses, an ox, pulling his wagon. He bought the ox from Ray Watson in 1979. He first named him "Watson". Moses was in his first parade in 1980.

Tatum kept the ox at his home in Tate. There are springs there and it had become grown up with vegetation. He described it as being like a swamp in the area where Watson grazed. Tatum had to cut his way in. "I clipped from the outside in, and I wound up in the middle of that swamp," explained Tatum. He could crawl out in the sticky mud, but eyed Watson a short distance away. "I finally talked him over to me," Tatum recalls. "I worked around and got a hold of his tail, and he pulled me out." He said that since Watson pulled him out of the wilderness, he would change his name to Moses.

Last year was the first time Tatum hadn't rode in the parade and a tradition in Jasper ended. Suffering from Macular Degeneration, his vision has gotten to the point where he would have to have someone drive for him. He decided he needed to stop. "It ain't fun like it used to be," said Tatum.

Today, you'll find Hugh Tatum twice a week at the Thrift Store in Jasper. He serves as the official greeter and is usually in his rocking chair marked with his name. He continues to delight the many people that cross his path.



Musical Groups Trivia

See if you can come up with the name of the musical group that these musicians were in.

1. Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Brian Jones
2. Randy Owen, Teddy Gentry, Jeff Cook, Mark Herndon
3. Harold Reid, Don Reid, Jimmy Fortune, Phil Balsley
4. Martin Cook, Archie Watkins, Mike Holcomb, Myron Cook, Matt Dibler, Melton Campbell, Jack Laws

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