ODE TO COACH WIMPY SUTTON

A biographical sketch by Don Mabry

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Favorite Teacher! Favorite Coach! Devoted Family man! The real “Pride of the Beaches”! Local icon John W. Sutton changed lives by encouraging students, colleagues, friends, and acquaintances to be better than they thought they could be. “You hamburger!” yelled Wimpy, as he was known. A bit ironic since involvement with hamburgers earned him his nickname. More on that below! In the past 86 years, Wimpy Sutton touched thousands of lives, mostly by teaching
in his science classrooms but also from teaching in swimming and exercise programs and coaching championship secondary school swim teams.

Writing about such a man is fraught with difficulty. Everyone who knows him has a story based on experience or legend. So do I. He taught me General Science in 1955-56 and was the best teacher I had in twenty-one years of schooling. He also coached me in Ninth Grade basketball in 1956. I left the Beaches; he stayed. Since the year 2000, we have gotten to know each other as adults and enjoyed each other’s company.

Don Mabry, Hazel W. Dalton, Bobbie Sutton, Wimpy Sutton Photo by Diane H. Wingate

This brief sketch is based mostly on Sutton’s own words, his Papa’s Memoirs, a privately printed document written for his family of 2005. Hazel, his sister-in-law Janet MacDonell, and I helped him get done. Other sources are used to flesh out this account.

John Winford Sutton was born December 26, 1926 in Jacksonville, Florida, child of John Leonard Sutton and Ruth Pfeiffer.
John Leonard Sutton was born in 1901 in south Georgia, child of Reverend John A. Sutton (1861-1941) and Jane Paulk Sutton (1867-1945). His parents raised chickens on their farm and the Reverend Sutton preached at Brushy Creek Baptist Church six miles from Ocilla, Georgia. John Leonard graduated from Ocilla High School in 1917. He moved to Jacksonville, Florida to work for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. While working, he went to night school at Jones Business College to learn accounting skills. “He had joined the Life Saving Corps and spent every weekend at the beach hanging around the Life Saving Station and the old Perkins Hotel and Bathhouse” according to his son. He was an excellent swimmer who spent ten years in the American Red Cross Volunteer Life Saving Corps.

Wimpy’s beach lineage traced back to his great grandmother Mary Elizabeth Edwards Birks Perkins, widow of Oscar Perkins. Before the boardwalk was a strip along the beach edge, Mary E. Perkins built a boarding house facing the ocean in 1907. That she operated in a male-dominated society never stopped her, challenging them when necessary and winning. Born in Wisconsin in 1856, she came to Florida in 1880 with her husband, L. S. Birks and son Theodore, born in 1879 in Wisconsin. He died in 1883. She remarried Oscar Perkins a few years later and bore him Anna Perkins on November 12, 1888; he died in 1908. She opened a boarding house on Union Street in Jacksonville to earn an income. In 1900, she lived there with son Theodore, daughter Anna, her mother Anna Douglas, and thirteen boarders (three of whom were professional baseball players).

Mary E. Perkins. Great Grandmother Source: John “Wimpy” Sutton
The Perkins Boarding House expanded into a Bath House as well because visitors to the strand wanted to go into the surf. They needed a place to rent a swim suit and towel and change clothes. Perkins met that need as well as those of people who wanted to eat and/or sleep on the oceanfront. As her business grew, she eventually she added more buildings as seen in this 1924 Sanford Fire insurance map.
Wimpy Sutton’s maternal grandmother was Anna Perkins Pfeiffer and William H. Pfeiffer. The Pfeiffers divorced and Anna married C. A. Pursel. Mary E. Perkins and Anna Pursel, strong women who knew what they were doing, ran the business and expanded it until it was quite large by 1924, consisting of three separate buildings connected by walkways. When the wooden boardwalk burned in October 1933, federal taxpayer monies paid for a concrete replacement. Owners also rebuilt their businesses with concrete. Mary Perkins and Anna Pursel saved their safe and began rebuilding, contracting with Manuel Chao, a friend, to do the work. Before she died on November 19, 1933, she had yielded control of the Perkins Bath House and Hotel to her daughter Anna Perkins Pursel in 1931.
Anna Perkins Pursel (1888-1972)

Perkins Bath House and Rooms, 1930s
Ruth Pfeiffer (born March 12, 1907) went to a Roman Catholic school in St. Augustine but worked in the summer in the family business, learning to handle customer needs with a smile. She was an excellent swimmer who joined the newly-formed Women’s Life Saving Corps in 1925 becoming its captain in 1926. She saved four teenagers from the ocean south of the pier using a Walters Torpedo Buoy.

Ruth Pfeiffer with Walte rs Torpedo Buoy Florida Times Union on September 4th, 1925

Sutton visited the beach and fell in love with Pfeiffer; they married in the First Christian Church on Edgewood Avenue in Jacksonville in 1915. Wimpy was born on December 26, 1926. They lived on Downing Street near Lee High School and not far from the railroad headquarters where his father worked. His brother James A. Sutton was born December 19, 1928. The family spent every weekend and summer at the beach. With both parents being excellent swimmers and spending so much time in the ocean or in a pool, how could he not become a swimmer himself?

Life changed abruptly in 1931 when his parents divorced; he and Jimmy moved to Wilmington, North Carolina in 1937 when their father was transferred. They returned to their mother and the Perkins establishment in Jacksonville Beach for Christmas and during summer vacation. Their father married Frances Davis, a clerk for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. Most of their lives were spent in Wilmington, eventually on Ann Street. They played ball on a vacant lot across the street. He and Jimmy stacked wood for the stove and started the fire in the morning for Nellie P. Davis, their widowed step-grandmother, who helped take care of them. His father took him and his brother by train to see the 1939 New York World’s Fair with a three-day stopover in Washington, DC. His eyes were
opened to a wider world. Better yet for a boy who loved the ocean, he and Jimmy got a large Hawaiian surfboard.

He got his nickname “Wimpy” that same year while work at Joe’s Pee Wee Bar, a hamburger and hot dog joint on the Boardwalk. He ate so many during his opening to closing shift that Joe Hatfield dubbed him Wimpy after the hamburger-devouring chubby character in the Popeye comic strip. Eating many burgers was the only similarity; Sutton has never been fat. In 1941, the Bob and Alice MacDonell family moved to the beach with their two girls Roberta and Ann. Wimpy met Roberta “Bobbie” Sutton, the love of his life, there, only to learn that she was only eleven. He was fourteen and one-half. She lived upstairs in the Fuqua Building across from the Perkins Hotel, both on First Street North. He would see her when he came during the summer and Christmas vacation.
He was expected to work. In the early 1940s as a high school student in Wilmington, Wimpy worked as a soda jerk, a bag boy at the A & P grocery store, and at White’s Ice Cream and Milk Company where he earned thirty-five cents an hour and free ice cream. At the beach, he and Jimmy also had chores to do in the bath house and hotel. In a time when many glass soft drink bottles carried a deposit, they collected and returned them for the deposit.
At New Hanover High School, he played football.

Source: Wimpy Sutton
In the summer of his seventeenth year, 1944, he followed in his parents’ footsteps by becoming a lifeguard in the volunteer corps. He was fortunate in getting a job that summer and the next on the Beach Patrol. It paid $35 a week; the federal minimum wage was 40¢ an hour or $16 for a forty-hour week.

These were momentous years for Sutton. His grandfather Sutton died in 1941 and the Japanese attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor on December 7th, bringing the US into World War II. His future stepfather, Robert Mullin, joined the Marine Corps; in 1943, while home on leave, he met and married his mother. In 1943, he pitched softball on the Thomas Sporting Goods team at Gonzales Park, Wimpy served as volunteer lifeguard at Sandpiper Hotel pool while also working on the Beach Patrol. He burst with pride when his girlfriend won a beauty contest in the summer of 1944.

His grandmother Anna Perkins Pursel retired to Palm Valley after selling the Perkins Hotel and Bath House to Walter “Pete” Dickinson in 1945. After the sale, Robert and Ruth Mullin to her house on North Second Street. Both his grandmother Sutton and his step-grandmother Davis died. In January, 1946, Michael Mullin, his half-brother, was born. Wimpy would teach him at Fletcher. That summer, Bobbie won second place in a beauty contest; their friend Nettinell Mickler won first.
The two lovebirds and their friends hung out on the pier’s pavilion where dancing was the order of the day. One summer, Bobbie taught him to dance to the 1945 tune “Leap Frog” by Les Brown and his band; they would dance for decades. Bobbie made a clock out of that very same record. It wasn’t long before they would be heading to the pier to dance almost every night.

We had a group that included Carrol and Nettinell Mickler, Pam Miller, June McDowell, Bobbie’s sister, Ann, and, of course, the Lifeguards. Later that summer they held a dance contest on the stage of the Beach Theater and Bobbie and I won. This was a good confidence builder so we learned more and more moves. We really thought we had done something. Little did we know at the time that dancing would be a source of eternal enjoyment.

The year 1945 brought an end to this idyllic beach life. He was drafted into the Army in September and, after induction at Fort McPherson, Georgia, was sent to Basic Training at Fort Bragg in North Carolina but the Army had him finish boot camp at Fort McClellan, Alabama. There he became a drill instructor and physical training instructor until discharged in June, 1947. Although he could not have known it, his teaching and coaching career had begun. He returned to the beach he loved.
That summer, like his mother years before him, he rescued people from the surf. Sutton saved eight people from a strong run out during the Fourth of July weekend in 1945. The Life Guard Corps spent a very busy weekend, saving one hundred people from the surf.
Off to the University of Florida September, he wondered how he would do academically. He had received a good education at New Hanover High even though he was more interested in football than academics. Now, he was a military veteran, a man who had been responsible for others. Life was no longer fun and games. The GI Bill provided him with $75 a month, enough for tuition and books, and he had saved $300. He rented a room, studied hard, and joined the Sigma Nu fraternity. His self-discipline paid off. His life was not complete, however, for he missed Bobbie, his beautiful girlfriend who would graduate from Duncan U. Fletcher High School in June, having been named Best Looking Girl in her class. She was more than a pretty face, something Sutton had known for seven years. She was a winner.
On September 10, 1948, he married Roberta MacDonell. They enjoyed a short honeymoon in St. Augustine before moving to a very small apartment in Gainesville so he could finish college. The new Mrs. Sutton worked at the
Southern Bell telephone office, getting there on the back of their Salsbury Scooter. Before he graduated in three years, they would live in two more apartments. They both worked hard so he could earn a college degree.
In sickness and in health.
Bobbie MacDonell Sutton was a steadfast, loving partner and excellent mother of three girls. She was the oldest of the four children of Robert and Alice Riddell MacDonell, both of whom had roots in Scotland, a fact of which they were very proud. She was born May 12, 1930. Her sisters Ann (born 1932), Emily Jean “EJ” (born 1942), and Janet (born 1948) formed a tight bond with her until her death on October 6, 2009. She was the leader.

Bobbie and Wimpy had three daughters between 1951 and 1958. Candace came in July, 1951 after his graduation from Florida and before he began teaching at Fletcher. Karen followed in 1956 and Kathleen in 1958. They made the decision early in their marriage that she would be a stay-at-home mother. It paid off. Wimpy and the girls have done well in life.

Wimpy Sutton knew Fletcher Junior-Senior High School long before student
teaching there in Health under Don Jarrett in 1951.

Don Jarrett

Between graduation and beginning his long Fletcher career, he worked that summer as a policeman for Jacksonville Beach. Frank E. Doggett, principal, hired him to teach 9th grade General Science and, in conjunction with Athletic Director Ish Brant, to coach swimming and work as an assistant football coach. His classroom was #201. Louise DeVane and Elizabeth Nease were the very experienced teachers next door and across the hall who were willing to advise the neophyte. The starting salary was $2,400 for nine months but he also received a coaching supplement.
Thousands of Fletcher students (yes, he taught thousands in the thirty years before he retired in 1981) say that he was an excellent teacher, many the best teacher they ever had. Sutton wanted to get his students emotionally involved in their learning and make it clear what was expected of them but the fact was that he was emotionally engaged, bringing a love of learning to the classroom. Students were
caught up in his excitement and wanted to please him. Class was never boring. He illustrated scientific principles using practical, every day subjects. He taught how an internal combustion engine works. Class members discovered what weather forecasts meant by recoding their own observations and then comparing them to the National Weather Service data. We learned about how air density changes with temperature, thus explaining the direction of ocean breezes according to the relative temperature of the sea and the land mass. He helped students learn the bones of the body by touching the appropriate place while doing a jingle. He and the students were in a running dialogue. He was known to walk on his hands to settle an “academic bet.” He wasn’t easy but he was fair. He liked his students and they knew it.

Sutton teaching General Science, 1955-56
His greatest, most profound impact was as a science teacher. Measuring the impact of a classroom teacher on students both in terms of learning subject matter or how to behave is not easily done, for, unlike coaching there are no win-loss records in games or meets nor statistics kept. Sutton’s students worked in all kinds of occupations; many did extremely well. *The Senator*, the yearbook, was dedicated to him; he gave the Commencement Address in 1982. When they came back to the Beaches for class reunions, they invited Wimpy and Bobby to attend. Well into the 21st century, students sought him out for a visit. He and Bobbie welcomed them into their home. He remembered names.

In the fall of 1951, he helped with the football team but he changed Fletcher sports forever when he took over the boys’ swimming team in the late winter of 1952. The team was a minor sport with few participants.
The Senator, 1948

He understood that he couldn’t build a program without giving incentives to team

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members. Practicing in cold weather in the Atlantic Beach Hotel pool and being little more than the runner-up to the private Bolles School would not inspire the hard work to be champions. So, as he tells the story, he approached Ish Brant, the athletic director and football coach, with the proposition that his swimmers would be awarded the regular, full-sized letter, the F, just like football, basketball, and baseball players with the words “State Champs” if they won the state Class A championship. Brant agreed, probably thinking it would never come to pass. He underestimated Sutton’s ability to motivate students. He told the eight team members that practicing hard would lead to a Fletcher letter with State Champs on it, that it was a matter of desire and effort. His team of mostly eighth, ninth, and tenth graders believed him, endured the cold water (“That Water’s Not Cold!”), and started winning. The team would win 20 conference championships in a row and, as he said, “had started a dual meet record which lasted for 169 meets. They also won 15 consecutive county and district championships.” They defeated much larger high schools.
His teams quickly reached the pinnacle of success at the state level. They were runner-up to Bolles in the state meet in 1954. Bolles had dominated Class A high school boys’ swimming. In 1955, Sutton’s team became the Class A State Champion, the first state championship team Fletcher had ever had. The “F” letters with State Champs appeared; Brant kept his word. Support for the team and for swimming increased, encouraging others to swim for Sutton or to see swimming as a positive thing. The Beaches Jaycees selected him as Young Man of the Year. Then they did it again in 1956!

1952 boys’ swim team

BOYS’ SWIMMING

First row: Ross Bremer, Roddy Baker, Mike Marvin, Bob Clarke.
Second row: Jack Markham, Skipper Barrett, Coach Sutton, Sonny Ekholm, Howard Hendryx.
1955 Boys' Swim Team First Row: Larry Marvin, Tony Veal, George Bull, Martin Henderson, Jeff Hallett
1956 Boys Swim team **Front Row:** Tom Frazer, Bobby Federici, Douglas Hall, Freddy Marquis, Scott Campbell, George Bull, Jon Goodling. **Second Row:** Jot Carpenter, Jon Alexander, Mike Shearon, Albert Alexander, Bill Jobes, Dekle Cobb, Sammy Stewart, Jeff Hallett. **Third Row:** Coach Sutton, Martin Henderson, Dale Pettigrew, George Blackwell, Tony Veal, Pugie Seay, Gray Rawls, Jack Brandies, Bill Bull, Terry Youngblood.

Success with his team helped Sutton earn extra income. A certified American Red Cross instructor, he started teaching swimming and lifesaving throughout the county in 1952. A year later, he taught private swimming lessons in the mornings and worked for the Beaches Aquatic Club in the afternoon. After his team won the state championship, he took over the BAC and would remain its manager until 1976. Running a summer swimming program enabled him to accomplish several objectives—improving the health of Beaches residents by the exercise regime of swimming, teaching lifesaving technique, providing a safe source of fun, and building cadres of male and female competitive swimmers. The BAC grew and the Beaches Aquatic Center Pool in Atlantic Beach was dedicated April 7, 1963.

His teams continued to be successful but, more important, he developed individual talent who competed at the collegiate and above levels. Ken Walsh, the future Olympian entered Sutton’s program in 1958 as a ninth grader. He won at Fletcher where he was an All-America and at Michigan State where he also was an All-American and held the 100 yard freestyle world record. At the Mexico City Olympics in 1968, he won two Gold Medals and one Silver Medal.
To thank Sutton, the BAC and parents of swimmers gave him a retirement banquet and a check large enough to take his family in vacation to California.

The impact of Sutton on the lives of his swimmers was demonstrated by the Trans-Generational Swim Teams Reunion on May 9, 2010. Male and female swimmers gathered the Selva Marina Country Club in Atlantic Beach to honor him. His family came. People spoke; he responded. The organizers had decorated the room with banners of his typical motivational slogans.
My Grandmother Swims
Faster Than You

Get Off the Wall
YOU HAMBURGER
Sutton’s life has been more than being an outstanding teacher and coach; he was devoted to his family, church, friends and fishing.

When he moved back to the beach after college in 1951, he joined the newly-formed First Christian Church of the Beaches then on Second Avenue North. He
had been raised in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) by his father. At age 29 in 1955, he became a Deacon. It was that year that his church decided to have a live manger scene, borrowing a donkey from the Jacksonville Zoo and a cow from Skinner’s Dairy. The animals stayed at the Sutton’s house at night—and brayed! Patience was a virtue. Of course he served his church on recruitment efforts, committees, youth fellowship activities including giving dance lessons, and building efforts. The church outgrew its original home and built a new one on Seagate Avenue in Neptune Beach. He was ordained an Elder at 49.

The young couple lived in a garage apartment on Third Avenue North until he bought their house at 736 4th Ave North, Jacksonville Beach in 1955. His family grew; salary increases came; and he earned extra income as he could. In time, the house was expanded and the lawn manicured.
With his characteristic energy, he groomed the lawn, making it a showcase. A sister-in-law gave him this sign, only partly in jest.
Fishing was his hobby, his avocation. He had fished before that day in September, 1951 when he went tarpon fishing with Doggett and Jarrett but deep sea fishing was so enjoyable that he decided to get his own boat and pursue it in earnest. He would call this and subsequent boats “Candy” after his eldest daughter. Family and friends and students joined him on fishing trips. The boats got bigger. In November, 1986, he passed the exam for a Captain’s license which allowed him to charge up to and including six customers for fishing trips.
If one looks closely at the right side of this photo of the last “Candy” boat, one can see a sign that says Christmas Tree Lot. This is a remnant of another famous effort of Sutton, the Coaches Christmas Tree lot which he and Jarrett started in 1954 by selling trees selling Christmas Trees on the corner of Third Street North and Second Avenue North. Eventually, they moved it to a lot next to the Homestead Restaurant on Beach Boulevard. Coach Jack Taylor joined the enterprise in the 1960s. Steve Jarrett took his father’s place after he died. In the last years, Sutton and family ran the lot themselves.
Family health problems and deaths challenged the Sutton family in these years. Bobbie suffered the first of many bouts with cancer. In April, 1958, Bobbie had two thyroid surgeries while she was pregnant with Kathleen Ann Sutton, who was delivered on November 6, 1958. A few weeks later she went to Oak Ridge, Tennessee for evaluation and treatment. Surgery was necessary in January, 1959 to remove cancerous cells in her neck, followed by five years of checkups. The Jacksonville Beach Women’s Club honored Bobbie as their “Mother of the Year.” Sutton’s stepmother Frances developed esophageal cancer the summer of 1962 and died in September, 1963. His maternal grandmother Anna Pursel died at her home in Palm Valley on September 18, 1972 at the age of 82. His father died on September 3, 1974 in Tarpon Springs where he had started his own business after retiring from the railroad. He was 73. He would outlive them all in large part because he was physically active and wise about nutrition.
He and Jack Taylor began writing about Fletcher sports for the *Beaches Leader* newspaper in 1964 with Wimpy writing “The Fisherman Leader” column for the paper. In the ‘60s and ‘70s, he also broadcast on fishing on Saturday mornings over WJNJ radio station in Atlantic Beach.

The community honored him on the evening of August 22, 1974 at the Sea Turtle Restaurant in Atlantic Beach. Ocean State Bank erected four billboards inviting people to attend. They did. Local luminaries spoke praise and ribbed him. Contributing to his community was his nature. He began a Health Fair; he staged a Swim-A-Thon and raised $20,000 for the swimming program; he improved community health with an extensive exercise program at Fletcher Junior High School, Fletcher Senior, Mayport Middle School, and the Beaches Aquatic Club which lasted twenty years.

He practiced what he preached about hard work and improving one’s knowledge, he went to the University of North Florida for two years at night and earned a Masters of Education degree in 1976.

Honors came. On June 10, 1977, he was inducted into the Jacksonville Sports Hall of Fame. Below is a clipping from *Papa’s Memoirs*.  

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During his career he was also selected as Teacher of the Year and also as Coach of the Year. In June, 1982, he gave the Fletcher commencement address in the Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Coliseum, having been asked by Fletcher.
principal and the faculty. Years later, on May 18, 2001, Fletcher High School honored him at a ceremony naming its pool the John “Wimpy” Swimming Pool.

Even after retiring as a teacher and coach in the Duval County School system in 1982, he sought to improve the educational quality of his county. After retiring from the school system, he won the District 2 seat on the Duval County School Board by an overwhelming majority. During his term, he sought to empower teachers, stress academics, and restore neighborhood schools. During the four year term, he spoke at the National School Board Association meeting in San Francisco.

One term was enough; he preferred focusing on the beach community where he and his family had spent so much of their lives. He became a member of the School Advisory Committee. At first, he chaired it for Fletcher but his duties expanded to all the beach schools.

When he decided not to run for school board again, he went to work with his friends and fishing buddies, Eddie Irvin, Stan Smith, and Bob Martin. They had started Ryan’s Family Steak Houses of Florida and he became Assistant to the President staying with Ryan’s for decades.

In the spring of 1984, Sutton and local businessmen and school officials laid the foundation for the Beaches Educational Foundation to raise money to provide college scholarships to deserving beach students. By 2005, it was able to award a $4,000 scholarship and sometimes another scholarship. The Foundation is robust, guided by persons dedicated to making the beaches a better place.
History

The Beaches Educational Foundation began as the shared idea of local businessmen and educators. The concept was to develop a nonprofit foundation that would be able to provide financial assistance to academically capable students in the Beaches high schools who, because of financial difficulties, might not otherwise be able to attend college. In the spring of 1984, this group began to meet informally to explore the formation of such an organization for the purposes of accomplishing this mission. Included in this group of educators were Coach Jack Taylor, Dr. Jim Ragans and Coach John "Wimpy" Sutton. Businessmen and professionals who were involved in the early planning stages were Mr. & Mrs. Robert Fowler and Fletcher graduates Robert Parrish, Raymond Wingate and Kurt Simpson.

After many hours of meetings, the one central theme that continued to permeate all discussions was that the Beaches communities have and should continue to "take care of their own." The group immediately recognized the need to include the entire community if this ambitious undertaking was to succeed. This new nonprofit organization emerged and immediately gathered support from virtually every walk of life: from businessmen, educators, professionals, parents, students and the PTSA’s of the Beaches schools.
In the summer of 1986, they took up dancing again and joined the Jacksonville Beach Bop Association and later Florida Boppers Incorporated. They were great dancers. We danced twice a week somewhere. In 1992, he and Bobbie were inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Florida Bopper, Inc. in 1992 and the National Boppers Hall of Fame. In July, 1995 they danced several exhibitions. The first was on the second night while cruising the Mississippi River on the *Memphis Belle*. Bobbie was an innovative dancer and Wimpy’s athleticism enabled him to learn her new steps immediately. It was that night in the *Memphis Belle* that the started doing the move they called “the slinky”. They danced and danced including at Fletcher class reunions. In the summer of 1997, they were honored as “Living Legends of Dance” in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Bobbie knew her stuff and Wimpy knew she did. After all, she had taught him.
Bobbie MacDonell Sutton was not only the love of his life but a person, talented in her own right, made so many things possible for her husband, three daughters, and grandchildren. Their daughters did well in school; married; bore children; and remained emotionally close. The Suttons have been a strong family unit and Bobbie had much to do with that. She had her own interests as well. She and a friend organized the “Sandy Crafters” so that beach residents could show off and sell their handiwork, their crafts. The Sertoma Club gave her its “Service to Mankind” award in 1983. She had another bout with cancer in 1993, this time in her reproductive system, and again in 1998 in her breasts. Neither conquered her. She went to Scotland to visit family sites with her sister Janet and daughters Candy and Kathleen in April 1999 after having surgery the previous October. She began counseling other cancer survivors locally and nationally. Unfortunately, she lost her last bout with cancer in 2009 and died on October 6th at age 79, a loss not only for her family but many, many others.
2005 Photo by Hazel Wern Dalton
Wimpy Sutton is a man of action, a man who doesn’t sit and wait but who uses his energy and intelligence to help improve his world. He was an incredibly good science teacher; thousands are beholden to him. He was a superb swimming coach. He taught many to swim or to exercise. He was an active churchman. Fish feared him. His children, in-laws, grandchildren, and great grandchildren did not. Family has meant the world to him and he gave them something special, *Papa’s Memoirs*.

He had been writing this work by hand for his family and told me about it in 2004 during one of my research visits to the Jacksonville Beaches. He, Harley Henry, Ron and Diane Wingate, and I met at Hazel Wern Dalton’s house in Palm Valley in September, 2004 for an extended visit, much of which I taped. We had a great time engaging in nostalgia. From that event, Hazel and I agreed to help him with his manuscript. Eventually, Hazel took photographs in front of the Wingate house.
on the oceanfront in Neptune Beach. Janet MacDonell helped. Some of us went with him to a printer in Jacksonville Beach to make arrangements to get it published for his family. That was 2005. He was kind enough to include photos of the three of us.

Sometime after he published *Papa's Memoirs*, I asked him what he liked most about living at the beach. He responded:
Being raised, playing, and teaching, coaching in the same community for 78 years is truly a blessing I could never have imagined.

We know that the blessing continues to be ours—the thousands who came in contact with this man.

APPENDIX

Bobbie Sutton’s Chicken Casserole (2008)

1 cup raw rice (Uncle Ben's)
1 medium onion, chopped
1 can green beans (drained)
1 can water chestnuts (chopped & drained)
1 cup shredded cheese (sharp)
3/4 can cream of celery soup
Mayonnaise (about the same amount as the soup)
Pimientos (optional)
Cooked chicken (I buy a rotisserie chicken from the store. Already cooked)

Put the rice on to cook. Sautee the chopped onions and remove the meat from the chicken. Drain the beans and water chestnuts.
You can do all of this at the same time.
When rice is cooked add it to the casserole dish with the other ingredients.
Then add the soup and mayonnaise and mix together. Add a little salt & pepper.
Bake in oven 20-25 minutes at 350 degrees.

Remove and enjoy...

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