

Tom Remembers Big Jim



Tom Sr. wrote...

Big Jim was a black man. He came to us when I was about four and a half years old from another state. We had a small house out some distance from our house and that's where Jim lived. He had his meals with us, but he did not eat at our big table. Jim ate at a little corner table in our big dining room and that bothered me quite a lot when there was so much room left at the big table.

Jim was a big man, approximately 26 years old at that time, about six feet four inches tall, weighing about 220 pounds with big broad shoulders, thick chest, big hands with long fingers perfect for holding a football. Jim grew up in Florida very close to the beach where he learned to swim and fish. He was very good at both. He had a good personality and he would look you in the eyes while talking to you. You could hardly call Big Jim's complexion black. It was more like bronze.

Miss Maude once made the remark about how Big Issac, Big Jim and me all had the same bronze complexion. I never knew just why. Maybe part of it was from being in the sun, wind and cold so much, for all three of us were outside practically all the time farming, swimming and cutting wood and taking care of all the livestock.

I suppose Big Jim was my hero for he helped me so much. He just about taught me how to do most everything on the farm and so much about life. Big Jim was a very impressive man and walked tall and straight like Big Issac. I know that if Big Jim had come along later in life, say in the 1970's, he would have been a college graduate and an NFL football player, All Pro. Big Jim had a good mind, was fast on his feet, smart, quick to learn, but he could neither read nor write. What a waste and a shame. Neither could Aunt Hattie nor Uncle Gus read or write.

When I was about five and a half year old I was getting to be quite a big boy and Big Jim let me help him do a lot of things, like going down to the pasture and driving the cows up to the barn to get ready for milking. Big Issac tried to keep at least four milk cows all the

tine. Aunt Hattie always helped Big Jim with the milking and I could help get the feed in the stalls. The reason Big Issac wanted to milk four cows at all times was to have plenty of milk for all of his people and some milk and butter to sell at all times to buy something that we could not grow on the farm.

Big Jim always had us doing something. There were some white and some black boys who lived on the east side of our home, some older than myself. He would have some of us wrestling, boxing without gloves, running, walking, or working. He said that was very good for us. Looking back, it seems like Big Jim always had us playing before he had us working, and he always had work for us to do. That big guy with the big friendly smile conned us into working.

I suppose most all of us kids wanted to grow up and be men like Big Iasac and Big Jim.

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