

My name is Josie Mae Crump Kirkland. I am one of five sisters born and raised on Marco Island. They are Virginia, Mildred, Ruth Ann and Barbara. My father, Richard Mason Crump, came to Marco in the 1930's working for the Atlantic Coast Railroad. He was the bridge tender. He was originally from Virginia. He met my mother, Olive Mae Nash, and soon after they were married. She always called him "Crump". Mama was born on Marco in 1911 to J. Harrison Nash and Josephine Mae Weeks. Daddy was a very brave man because he was 59 years old and mama was 25. They proceeded to have five daughters, the last being born in 1945 making him 72 years old! We originally lived in the railroad house which you had to get to by boat. I remember the house had four rooms, a center fireplace, and an old crank phone that was for railroad business only. I remember my sister Mickey and I had two goats while living there. Mama would row us over to Marco by boat, and she would tie us to the seat so we wouldn't fall overboard. When my older sister, Virginia, started school, we moved to Marco.

Mama and three of her girls.



What a time we had growing up on Marco. It truly brings back lots of memories. There wasn't much on Marco at that time except the Church of God, Mollies Bar, a store we called Grit's (G&G Mercantile) and some old houses. When mama got tired of living in one, she would just find an empty one and move us in it. We never had any electricity. We had to use a kerosene lamp and stove. I hated it when one of us girls would have a date and that old kerosene lamp would be sitting in the window, so I worked babysitting and saved the money to help have our house wired for electricity. We attended the Church of God whenever the doors were open. We never called anybody Mr. or Mrs. - they were Sister and Brother. It seemed like Grit's Store was so far away. I remember us girls trying to carry things home. Some things would get eaten and some things would be left by the side of the road, too heavy to make the trip home. Mama never

knew what she was going to end up with. We would roam the Island during the day, playing. Sometimes when we got home mama would whip us if she found out we had floated across the river to play, or gone somewhere we weren't suppose to. We were forbidden to go anywhere near Mollies Bar. We learned at a young age that back then, when somebody said they were going to go home and get their knife or gun, and come back and kill you, you better run – because they meant it.

Mama and daddy sure had a time trying to keep up with five girls. We were very poor, but very proud, especially me. I remember someone taking our picture. I didn't have any shoes, so I put a piece of paper over my feet. I didn't want anyone seeing that picture to know that I was barefooted. Maybe that is why I buy so many shoes! When I was nine years old, I had a terrible accident. I fell out of a tree and received a horrible puncture wound. I was bleeding to death. We didn't have a car, so someone ran to the other side of the Island to get someone to take me to the hospital. I believe it was Mrs. Barfield that took me and mama. I was in the hospital for eight days. I remember people standing around me in a circle and praying for me to get better. I recuperated for two months with my half brother Percy and his wife who had a boarding house in Ft. Myers. All those prayers worked because I made a full recovery.



Me in the middle with paper over my feet!

I lived on Marco until I married Harrison Benjamin Kirkland in 1957. He packed all of us up and moved us to Naples. He loved my Mama as much as us girls did and always did as much as he could for her and Daddy. I have vivid memories of Hurricane Donna in 1960. Harry, his parents (Reese and Emma Kirkland), his brother Otis, me (eight months pregnant), and two kids spent the storm in an old State Road Department panel truck after the roof came off our house. It has taken me decades to get over my fear of bad weather. Soon after, in 1961, Daddy died at the age of 88. He is buried in the old Marco Cemetery. Mama died in 1974 and is buried at Naples Memorial Gardens. Harry died in 1987 and is buried at the old Kirkland Cemetery on Shell Island Road. After my accident, I was told that I would never be able to have children, but I have had three - Vera Christine, Tina Lynn and Tony Costella. They all live in Naples. I have four grandchildren - Richard Burrese, Raymond Burrese, Billy Kirkland and Danny Kirkland. Richard, Tina's son, died in Iraq on January 19, 2008. All of us girls - Josie, Ginny, Mickey, Ruthie and Bobby - still live in Naples. We have all remained very close and all of our children and grandchildren are very close. All but three of our children and grandchildren live in Naples. It is not unusual for 50 or 60 people to show up for a cookout! My upbringing on Marco has helped shape me and make me the person I am today and I will always cherish the memories of this special place.