

Every day is mother's day

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Wilborn family knows meaning of long, happy life

Thanks to Susie Neckles, the Rev. Isaac Wilborn Jr. and Reverdy Wilborn of Hilton Head Island for sharing stories about their mother, who turned 103 in June.

Marie Waymer Wilborn of Elloree reared 11 children, then started college and a teaching career at age 43 after being a full-time homemaker and preacher's wife for 20 years. At the same time, she earned a master's degree, and jokes that she has done everything in her church except preach.



"If she can do it at 103, what's your excuse," Susie often asks young people.

There was no time for excuses on the farm where Mrs. Wilborn was reared. Her father bought virgin land that had to be cleared, with stumps pulled from the Lowcountry soil, where all his children and eventually their spouses would help hoe cotton, pick cotton, pick vegetables, gin cotton, lay brick, run sawmills, build houses — "whatever it took," Isaac says.

But despite all that work, Mrs. Wilborn has a sister who's 108. And of the five girls in her family, all but one lived to be at least 100, and that one made it 99 years and eight months.

"So I'm reaching middle age now," Isaac laughs. He's 76.

"My mother has been an inspiration all of my life," Reverdy says. "She's admired not only by our family but by all people who know her."



Marie Waymer Wilborn at age 90.



Photos special to the Packet

Marie Waymer Wilborn, seated in center, with eight of her surviving children and one grandson at a family reunion in Atlanta in August 2005. From left, seated are daughters Nancy, Ethel, Mattie and Susie. Standing, Reverdy, grandson Albert, Isaac, Wesley and Joel.