

Ben Marlow: A Legacy of Kindness Steeped in Pluff Mud and Salt Water

by Leslie Moore

Living in the small community of Pawleys Island for so many years means I know most people who've lived here for any length of time – even if we just exchange a wave and a hello as we pass each other in the aisles of the grocery store. But some families' roots go back much farther, leaving a lasting impact on each generation. The Marlows are one of those families.

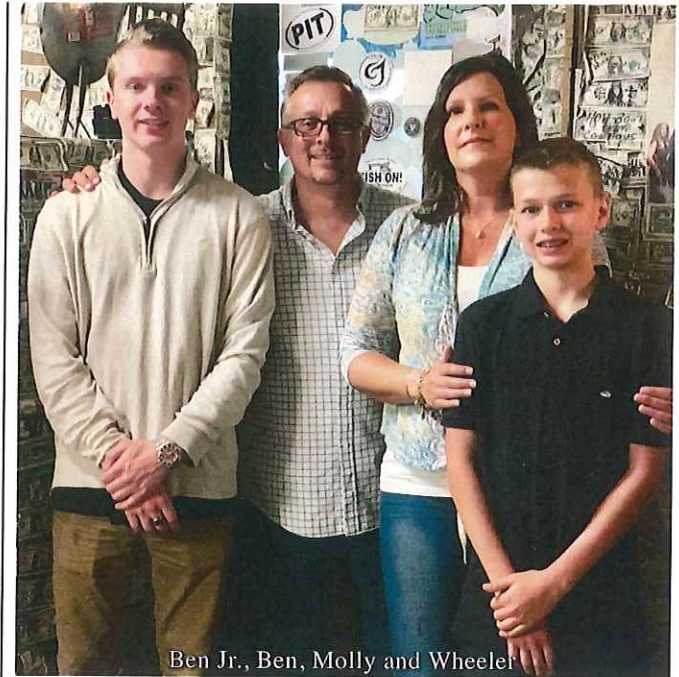
Ben Marlow, has lived in Pawleys Island all of his life, except for a brief period in Mt. Pleasant, and his college years at USC in Columbia. "It's home," he said when I asked if he ever wanted to live anywhere else. The creek front home Ben shares with his wife, Molly, and two sons, Ben, Jr. (17) and Wheeler (13), once belonged to his grandfather, Boyd Marlow, Sr. "As corny as it sounds, Molly and I love the smell of low tide and pluff mud. It smells like home."

"When I got to college, law enforcement was the only thing that interested me," Ben began when I asked him about his 27 year career. "My primary employment is with Georgetown County Sheriff's Office as the Internal Affairs Inspector. This July will mark 27 years in law enforcement. For a variety of reasons the last few years have been difficult times for law enforcement across the country. Although South Carolina law enforcement officers can retire after 25 years, I am pleased with the direction Sheriff Lane Cribb and Chief Deputy Carter Weaver are taking the Sheriff's Office and am proud to remain a part of it."

Ben and Molly also own Pawleys Kayaks, a business that rents kayaks, paddle boards, canoes and even crab traps to visitors. "Currently we have about 200 leisure watercraft. It's very rewarding helping people enjoy the beauty of Pawleys Island." In the summer, Ben, Molly and the boys are working seven days a week, sometimes until late at night. "Molly and the boys do 90% of it. It's not uncommon for us to be out at 9pm on Friday and Saturday nights during the summer picking up equipment from beach houses. I tell my boys we have to harvest the crop while it's in season," Ben said this with a laugh as I commiserated with him about his long hours.

Ben's mother, Frances, still lives in his family home, but his dad, Tony, died in 2002. Working at the Pawleys Pavilion was one of Tony's jobs as a young man. This led to the chance meeting of Ben's parents back when the Pavilion was THE place for young people to gather in the summer months.

"My grandparents, Boyd L. Marlow, Sr. and Lucienne Marlow were founders of the Pawleys Island Presbyterian Church," Ben remembered



Ben Jr., Ben, Molly and Wheeler

when I asked him to tell me more about the legacy of the Marlows. "And, after serving the Pawleys Island community for several decades as a founder and board member of Midway Fire Department, the Midway Fire Department at True Blue was named in honor of my grandfather when it was constructed." Ben went to tell me his grandfather also served in the Army and participated in the North African Campaign during World War II.

Boaters on our rivers depend on red and green navigational beacons to guide them through the sometimes treacherous waters at night. Before modern technology streamlined their operation, Boyd, Sr. also worked as the last Civilian lamplighter of the U.S. Coastguard, maintaining these beacons on local waterways from Little River to South Island. "One of my earliest memories of going out on the river was a trip with my grandfather to replace wiring and batteries in the beacons." Ben laughed and continued, "It's also the first time I remember eating peanuts in the little bottles of Coke that we would get at my great uncle, Frank Marlow's store."

Most reading this have heard of, or most likely visited, Frank's in Pawleys Island, a restaurant with a well deserved reputation of excellence. I asked Ben about his family connection. "I'm not sure how long my family has been in the area, but my great-great-great-grandfather John Wesley Marlow and three of his brothers, the youngest being 16, enlisted in the 7th Regiment of the S.C. Calvary out of Georgetown. John Wesley was detached to the Waccamaw Neck Area. One of his twelve children, Christopher Columbus Marlow was the father of my great grandfather



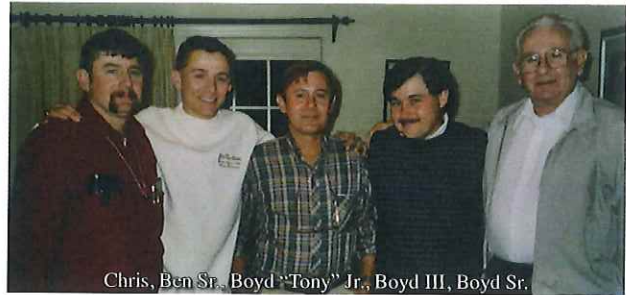
Lucienne and Boyd Marlow, Sr.



Boyd, Jr., Lucienne & Boyd Marlow, Sr.



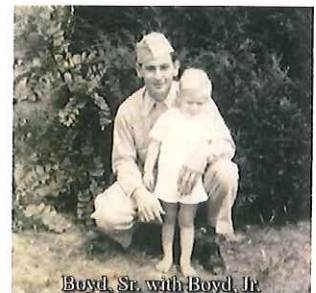
Harry Marlow



Chris, Ben Sr., Boyd "Tony" Jr., Boyd III, Boyd Sr.



Boyd, Sr. with Boyd, Jr. & Chris



Boyd, Sr. with Boyd, Jr.

Judge Harry Lee Marlow, Sr. He was a magistrate and merchant in Pawleys Island and opened Marlow's Supermarket near the North Causeway. It was later run by one of his sons, Frank Marlow and is now Frank's Restaurant owned by Salters McClary."

Ben and his dad, Tony, were very close and even after so many years, the loss still hurts. We reminisced a little, and Ben shared how his dad's legacy of honesty and kindness still impacts the way he lives his life. "Dad took over my grandfather's plumbing business, B.L. Marlow Plumbing, and it remained in operation until he died. I remember one Easter Sunday I was hanging around with Dad in his shop, and he got a call from the owners of a beach house on the island. They were opening their home for the summer, and a pipe had burst under the house." Ben shook his head and laughed as he continued. "It was an emergency, it was Sunday and a holiday. We went to the house and Dad fixed the problem in 10 minutes. The owners of the house weren't home, and I asked him how much he was going to charge them, thinking it would be quite a bit. He told me, 'I'm not charging them anything. I was at the shop anyway, and it was an easy fix. And as long as I live, they'll never call another plumber.' That was just how my dad was – and I've never heard anyone say a bad word about him."

As we finished up our interview, Ben shared another family story that tells so much about the legacy of the Marlows. "A friend of mine, Dan Grate, lives on Grate Rd. here in Pawleys and is in the firewood business. I cut down a few pine trees on my property and didn't want to waste the wood, so I decided to split the logs and use them in my burn barrel and

fire pit. I went by Dan's house to ask if I could bring the wood to his house and use his splitter. Dan told me to take the splitter home and use it as long as I needed it. When I took it back, I tried to pay Dan and he absolutely refused! He told me he would never take any money from a Marlow. When he was a child, my Uncle Frank would give credit in the store to locals. Dan remembered walking with his mom to the store and getting groceries, even though it was hard carrying them back home. Uncle Frank knew they were walking, so he told them not to worry, he'd drop off the groceries at their home when he closed the store. Dan never forgot the kindness Uncle Frank showed to his family and many others."

The Marlow tradition of kindness and hospitality continues with Ben and Molly's huge 4th of July party every year. With help from the community, this special couple has live music and an incredible fireworks show that is one of the highlights of the year for locals.

They also enjoy downtime at a local's favorite hangout, the PIT (Pawleys Island Tavern), which has live music most nights of the week. Ben shared they once went to Myrtle Beach during the off-season for a "stay-cation." Four nighttime establishments told them if they wanted a year-round live music scene the best bet was Pawleys Island. "We laughed off our lapse in judgment and the next week made sure we rode our beach cruisers the short distance to the PIT. Sometimes you just need a reminder of how fun, diverse, eclectic and arrogantly shabby Pawleys Island can be."

If you'd like to meet Ben and Molly, stop by the PIT – and maybe I'll be there too, listening to another great story about life in my favorite small town.