



“This may have been the only photo of Chief Nicholson that his daughter owned.”

## The Things We Would Ask

My husband and I have always been inexplicably drawn to Eustis. Over the last decade of Florida living, we’ve visited the small lakeside town many times. Of course, we figured this was because of the delightful Bay Street Players Historic State Theatre, the wonderful restaurants, and the magnificent views along Lake Eustis. What other reasons did we need?

We found a much greater connection, however, when we were recently going through old photographs that my mother-in-law gave to my husband, Tony, just prior to her death. An old black-and-white photo showed a police officer standing proudly in front of a Eustis squad car. Written on the back were the words, “Your grandfather, Harvey L. Nicholson, Chief of Police, 1955.”

Tony only vaguely remembers his maternal grandfather because the Nicholsons divorced during an era when that sort of thing wasn’t talked about very much. And apparently Chief Nicholson wasn’t invited to family get-togethers the way today’s blended families are. As far as we know, this may have been the only photo of Chief Nicholson that his daughter owned. Tony recalls that his grandfather was with the Georgia Highway Patrol when he was killed in an on-duty automobile accident in 1961.

With few clues, we decided to learn what we could about Grandfather Nicholson’s life in Eustis. We first visited the Eustis Historical Museum in the Clifford House and then the Eustis Police Department where we met Officer Misti Mohrenne, who handles community relations. This kind and gracious young officer just happened to be headed

to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C., and she offered to find out if the former Eustis police chief might be listed there.

And he was—along with two other Lake County law enforcement officers, Chris Daniels and Wayne Koestor, also killed on duty. Misti took the time to etch Harvey Nicholson’s name from the monument for my husband and for a historical display that the police department is putting together.



Harvey Nicholson, Eustis, 1955

People like Misti are the other reasons we love Eustis. They will do anything for you, even if they don’t know you. You may walk in as a stranger,

but you will leave as a friend.

We still have so many questions about Grandfather Nicholson. What brought him more than 500 miles from his Georgia home? How long did he live in Eustis? Did he have a second family? And did he ever wish he could teach his grandsons how to fish in Lake Eustis or Lake Griffin? We’ll probably never know the answers.

If you are a grandparent, write down your memories and your family history—even if it’s not the most perfect. You never know who may come looking for you someday. It could be a grandson or granddaughter who would have liked to have known you better. ●●●

Happy reading,

Mary Ann

.....  
Mary Ann DeSantis  
lives in The Villages. Read  
more of her writings at  
maryanndesantis.com  
.....