

**DESSIE PRESCOTT EXUDES HONESTY AND ENDEARING SOUTHERN  
CHARM  
02/29/00**

Last week my readers were introduced to a unique and fascinating lady. She is Dessie Smith Prescott, 93 year-old widow of the late Howard Prescott. The Prescotts had a summer home on Little Moose Lake and I became acquainted with them in the late 60s. A relationship that began on a professional basis soon turned into a long-lasting personal one.

Shortly after Howard's death in 1987, Dessie returned to her native Florida. This past November she was inducted into the Florida Woman's Hall of Fame. Newspaper accounts of the event describe her as a 93 year-old who demonstrates the same unbridled zest for life shown through all her previous years. This news came as no surprise to me, even though a lot of water has gone over the dam since we last met.

My initial piece dealt primarily with the period before we became friends. It was gleaned from several publications and accounts from Dessie and her late husband. What follows is based strictly on my personal observations and experiences.

Mrs. Prescott's almost total devotion to hunting and fishing coupled with her refreshingly honest openness and Southern charm endeared her to me. My introduction came early in our friendship by way of a dinner invitation that became the first of many.

We were invited guests of the Prescott's along with several other local acquaintances. It was a trend that demonstrated their commitment to becoming true members of the community. More amiable, jovial or sincere hosts you will never find.

Fish or game was the usual fare, sprinkled with down-home Southern side dishes, thanks to Mrs. Prescott's heritage and years of experience operating a hunting, fishing and guiding operation in Florida. I personally had hardly any exposure to this type of cooking and I soon became a fan.

Nowhere did this become more evident along with their generosity than in the spring of '71. Wife Nancy and I (four children, my mother and dad, as well as two dogs), along with two other Old Forge couples spent a week as their guests in Florida at Mrs. Prescott's hunting camp.

We were entertained royally with fishing and quail hunting. Every evening it was ham hocks and black-eyed peas with corn bread or game and pleasant conversation and plenty of laughs. The morning we departed we had the best treat of all – quail and biscuits with orange blossom honey.

Mrs. Prescott is one of the most independent and outspoken people I have ever known. Her honesty in that respect I have always admired. She displayed a little of it on our quail hunt in Florida in an exchange with Mr. Prescott. I have to smile every time I think of it today after all these years.

He made a comment on how high and far a rattlesnake was able to strike. She immediately advised him his assumption was wrong, and asked where he got his information. When he replied, "The book," she quickly and effectively terminated the discussion with the terse reply, "Well your book's wrong."

I had a memorable pheasant hunt with her and Floyd Farmer up at Snowtop Shooting Preserve one fall. She had called ahead and had 10 birds distributed in our assigned area. The birds had to be paid for whether you harvested them or not. Any others you were lucky enough to get were a bonus.

We had a well-broke dog that really knew his business and had no trouble finding birds. The birds would flush and I would let her or Floyd shoot while I followed the bird with my gun. If they both missed, I quickly dropped the bird before it got out of range. After about the sixth bird she dryly and wryly remarked, "It's a good thing we brought old meatboy along with us."

One thing that was not pointed out in many accounts of her accomplishments up to her induction into the Florida Woman's Hall of Fame was her business acumen. It was always something I was aware of and it was enough to put most men to shame. Knowing she and Floyd were getting on in years, I am sure she brought a little insurance along to see that we got the birds she paid for. After seeing me shoot quail, I think she hedged her bet a little and she was right as we came home with two bonus birds.

To make a long story short, my admiration for the State of Florida has reached a new threshold. They could not have picked a better candidate for their Women's Hall of Fame. I am proud of her.

**Note:** The Old Forge Library has a new book I urge everyone to read. I plan to do a future article on it just before area summer residents return. The Old Forge Hardware has copies, too. The book would be a timely gift for camp owners and a copy should be in every camp for guests to read. It's titled *Bear Attacks*.