

## The Only Republican

A few years ago, a friend who lives on Whiteside Rd. asked me if I knew how the road got its name. I told him that Mr. George Whiteside used to live in the area. His home (no longer standing) was on Garrett's Ferry Rd. about a quarter mile from its intersection with Whiteside Rd. I assumed that the Whitesides were an old, historical Rico family, and that the road took its name from their long ownership of land in that area.

I was wrong. It turns out that Mr. Whiteside was a relatively new comer to the Rico community. Recently, while scanning old photos to be used for a Rico historical presentation, I came across an interesting item saved by Evelyn Mauldin years ago. It was an obituary article published in the Atlanta Journal or Constitution on Aug. 31, 1960 about Mr. George Whiteside.

To summarize the article, Mr. Whiteside moved to the Rico community in the early 1930's, buying several hundred acres of timberland, after retirement from a career in the automotive industry. He was a founder of the Packard Motor Co. and before that was a production manager for the E. R. Thomas automobile company. The article goes on to state that "He planned the famous 1908 *Thomas Flyer* that won the race with five other cars from New York to Paris." Let that last line sink in for a while. 1908. New York to Paris. In a car.

The Thomas Flyer was the only American car in the race, which began from Times Square, New York City February 12, 1908 and spanned across 22,000 miles, taking 169 days. For a detailed account of the race you can do a Google search on "Thomas Flyer." Basically, the race was from New York to San Francisco, to Yokohama by ship, across Japan then by ship again to Russia, across Russia and Europe to Paris. From information on the Internet, the originally proposed route had the racers going to Alaska, intending to cross the Bearing Strait while it was frozen over, to get to Russia. This route evidently proved impossible.

Evidently, Mr. Whiteside retained considerable national fame. As recounted by Kenny Smith, the 1950s television program, "I've Got a Secret", wanted Mr. Whiteside to be a guest on the show. He refused because of a fear of flying, offering to go only if they guaranteed him a plane "with all Rolls-Royce engines."

During his life in Rico, Mr. Whiteside became a very respected member of the community, as evidenced by Evelyn choosing to save the obituary article. This respect came despite one major difference between himself and every other member of the community. I remember John Smith, whenever speaking of Mr. Whiteside, would always mention that he "was the only Republican in Rico". How times change.

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