Ruth Vandell
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Interviewer: Kathy Hersh
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Location: 9049 S.W. 69th Court, Miami

Q: When you first moved here you drove a car. You always drove?

A: Yes.

Q: And, so Ken was saying the traffic was pretty light on U.S.1?

A: Oh, it was.

Q: Describe the way U.S.1 looked in this area and South?

A: Well, it was only a two lane road, you know, one South and one heading North. And you didn't meet that many cars. There, of course, was a certain time when people were getting out of work at different places or school, you would have little, you know, a few more. But the traffic was very, very light. And we used to walk along U.S.1 and think nothing of it.

Q: Was there a side walk?

A: No, we'd just walk along the side of the road. And, a...there were very few people. It was the house across the street and us and a, well, they fenced down further there. That one house that's up for sale now there on 104th I think it is, over there. When you go round the corner there. It's an old type house, frame house. And, ah, it's really going back a long, long while. So I don't know, but they have it up for sale now. So they no doubt will go in and knock that down, but seems a shame because it is part of the history.

Q: What was the foliage like here?

A: Well, we had a lot of pine trees and just the natural foliage that grows around here. We didn't have all this other. When we moved in here we had

those two trees that are out front -- the malalucca. They were here when we moved into this house. And there was very little else.

Q: What about along U.S. 1, I understand there were banyan trees and things lining the road?

A: Yes there was some, yes. It was definitely country. It's just whatever grew up was here. But it wasn't really planned.

Q: So, over where Dadeland is now...?

A: There were houses. In fact one of the houses that moved out of there, I think they moved two over them, some they knocked down, but there were two they moved, and one of them I know was moved into Coconut Grove. And every time I go by there I see that house and it reminds me of when it was here.

Q: Where did it go in Coconut Grove, do you know?

A: Right -- what is the main road through there?

Q: Ingraham Highway, Main Highway?

A: Main Highway. Main Highway. It...

Q: It's not that little realtors cottage, is it?

A: No, no. But it's close by. It's on the corner

Q: Did you know any of the people that lived on the land over at Dadeland?

A: No. I mean I may have talked to them, you know, said hello, but I really didn't know them. The only people I knew were the ones who were right over here in this section and, ah, Mommy Adams, who's (LAUGHS)...and, ah, then it was...Well, down this road here were still the apartments but there was a house down there. There was a little boy that lived there and he used to come up and we'd play together up here. But, ah...there were very,very few. they were building this house next door.

Q: And who built that?

A: I don't remember who the builder was, couldn't say.

Q: And that was 1949?

A: No, that was probably in, well I would say, '50, '51, something like that that this house was built.

Q: When did you really see a boom start to happen, or a real shift?

A: Well, it was probably around 1960, somewhere in that period that the houses were being built down the road, you know, South of us. Or were further, and, of course, it's continuing now where they have knocked down some and are putting up new ones.

Q: I wonder if air conditioning had something to do with the boom?

A: Oh, I'm sure it did because it was hot here, there was no question. You know, you had all the windows open and fans going and so forth before air conditioning and, ah, when they go going with air conditioning that's when people started moving into the area.

Q: So, your daughters grew up here and they had ponies?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Tell us about that.

A: We had them. In fact one stall is still back there and, ah, we have it for storage now. But we had the two of them, they had the whole property back there. We had some jumps set up and, ah, then as they got more active in showing -- we kept the ponies, we would never part with any of our animals, we'd keep them as long as they'd live -- but then we bought them both thoroughbred horses that we kept out at a stable out off Sunset. And, ah, they used those for the horse shows. We used to pretty well travel around with them, you know. We had the horse trailer and we'd take those horses. but these two back here that we had they were just pets. They were like big dogs.

Q: You were describing one of them coming up to the kitchen door?

A: Yes. We have pictures of them. And, ah, they were our pets, we really liked them. We liked them all. But especially they were the first ones we had. I used to ride horses up in New York. And, ah, so I really enjoyed them as much as the girls did, I think.

Q: So the girls went to Pinecrest Elementary?

A: Yes.

Q: And the Palmetto system?

A: They went to, ah, ah, little private school that we had for a short time. But, ah, over here on a...it was in South Miami. It's no longer there. But they started in school there and then came up here to the elementary school.

Q: And what was that like, then?

A: Very good, it was...I thought by what I could judge from other people that had children in different schools. We had the choice of sending them to that school, here, or over across the highway, there was a public school over there.

Q: Kenwood.

A: Right. And we selected this one. We were happy that we did because it seemed they were getting much, much better education there than the one out West of us. And they stayed there and, of course, later on, college and so forth.

Q: The class sizes back then, what were they like?

A: they weren't that crowded because there weren't that many people here. You know it was adequate for the number of people.

Q: They had...did they have more than one classroom per grade?

A: I believe they did. I am not positive of that but I'm quite sure because there just weren't that many people.

Q: So, in spite of the fact that it was hot, did people spend a lot of time...did the girls play outside a lot?

A: Oh, yes. Yeah. You had the horses that they rode. They probably would do it more in the early morning or in the evening more than in the, you know, middle of the day, but it didn't stop them because when we had the horse shows they rode all day long.

Q: For recreation, they had playmates in the neighborhood?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: Did they have a place where they gathered?

A: Well, very often in our yard.

Q: Because of the ponies, probably.

A: And they had bicycles and used to ride up and down here without any problem. But, ah, I often see people on bikes now and think "hey you're taking chance up here." It's bad enough in the car.

Q: Was this road paved, here, 69th Court?

A: I don't believe it was. Well it wasn't anything like it is now, but, ah, it had, I guess this, well I don't remember whether it was paved or not. We didn't have that kind of traffic.

Q: Nowadays, the big deal is to go to the Shops at Sunset to see movies and play video games. What was the big treat back then, for the girls, what did they want to do?

A: Well, they worked their horses most of the time. And, ah, they get out and play, we would have the net up here, and they, you know, fool around like with tennis rackets and so forth, miniature golf or something of that nature. They were always into sports, which I think is a good thing.

Q: Was there a movie theater nearby?

A: There was that one in South Miami, I believe.

Q: There was a movie house there?

A: It's no longer there. It's...nothing in it now, its the one on the highway, right in South Miami. But that was the only one around here.

Q: And did they ever go to the movies?

A: Oh, occasionally. Not too often. No they weren't into that. They were more into sports.

Q: What kinds of things did you do, were you employed out of the home?

A: Well, when we first moved in here, my mother and father were living here and they took care of the children when they got home from school, and then I got a job in town, and I was working in town. So that was I'd get a bus up here that would take me to South Miami then get off in South Miami, get on another bus that took me into...

Q: Downtown Miami?

A: Right.

Q: And how long did that trip take you?

A: Oh, I used to allow myself an hour.

Q: The bus went up U.S.1?

A: Yes. Uh, huh.

Q: Of course there wasn't I-95 then?

A: No. Oh, no. Far from it. No, it was...and then later on why when I had a car that I would drive in. We moved to a different location, you know, the office, and I drove in.

Q: Where did you work?

A: I worked for an insurance company, right on Flagler Street, to start with, and then it was up Biscayne Boulevard later on, up towards 79th and Biscayne.

Q: When did you...when were you a steward on an airplane?

A: Oh, lets see. I think it was in ‘42.

Q: You worked for TWA?

A: Uh huh. I believe it was ‘42 to ‘46.

Q: So you gave that up when you got married and had children?

A: Right. Well, at that time, you weren’t allowed to be married if you were on the line. And, ah, it was the kind of a job with...well, in fact, when I left there, they met me when we landed at LaGuardia Field with a long petition for me to sign so that when you went out on a trip that was supposed to take you, maybe, four or five days, that was it. You never stayed any longer than that. They’d have to get other people to take over the flight. But when I flew and flew overseas, I got involved with -- it is something I relive mentally all the time because I was gone for I think it was either six or eight weeks -- we flew into Arabia and just all over and we went out and picked up some people that had been working there that, well they had a mental problem from the working all that time and they were really out of it. They had to have somebody with them to oversee them all the time. And we flew them back so they could have...be hospitalized. So there wasn’t normal flying that I did then, it was...as I where you would normally be gone for a week, I was gone maybe six. And I...when they met me, for me to sign this petition, I said “no way, I’m ready to go again. All I need is to come back and get clean clothes and let me go.” So they could have killed me on the spot, it think, because that was when they were trying to form a union to prevent anything like that happening.

Q: And you loved it?

A: Oh, I loved it. Because I loved flying. And very often because of flying on the airline, there were an awful lot of (especially the flight engineers) that had their own planes. So what happened when I’d get back from a trip and

they found out that I flew, they'd let me go in their plane. So I got in quite a bit of flying that way. And that was usually based out of Washington, D.C..

Q: So you had a...you got a pilot's license but not a commercial?

A: Oh, no. No. And Lynn has a...she got her license too.

Q: So you like to be up in the air.

A: She hasn't been flying...I don't know. I guess, well, I wouldn't care for it as much now as I did then because it's too crowded. You know when you go to a little out here whey you have to wait and wait and you get up there in the congestion of all these...I watch the planes fly over here and I think "gee, all...what they have to look out for." But, we didn't have that. But Lynn got her license and, ah, she enjoyed it, but it is too crowded, really, to say it's fun now.

Q: What were some of the school activities back in those days, did they have a carnival, did they do social things?

A: They didn't do anything like they do now. No. They would have a parents day, you know, when parents could come in and get to know the teacher and so forth. but I don't recall that they ever had very much of anything.

Q: Sort of simpler, sounds like.

A: It was a case...well like now they have all different hours that they go to school. It used to be pretty much standard, you know, like nine to three. Something like that.

Q: For elementary,middle and high school?

A: Uh, huh.

Q: So it sounds like it was a pretty stable area, pretty stable...?

A: Oh, I think so. Well, as we said. We never had any worry about locking up anything. You know you were just free to come and go. And. ah, we did that.

Q: It’s centrally located here, so it still has the air of being the best of both worlds. A little bit rural, a little bit...

A: Well, yeah, it certainly has built up. We often say wish it was like it had been, you know, because...well when we first go involved with horses, Mr. Dorr who lived over there where the apartments are, you know, over on a...the highway. Over here, with the lake. He had his ponies over there, and they were the two ponies that we bought from him. We brought them over here. So that our girls used to go over there all the time and they spent a lot of time over there...

Q: Was that Swan Lake?

A: Yes. Yes.

Q: They made a big waterfall area of that rock pit.

A: Well, around that lake there that’s where they used to have a path around there and the girls used to ride there ponies over there.

Q: Did they go swimming in...?

A: No. Oh, they might have walked around in it a little, or something, but no they didn’t go swimming there. No, we used to over, you know. to the beach and, ah, they would go swimming there. Yep, no it was fun

Q: Do you recall any old house where the Swan Lake property is now facing U.S.1?

A: I don’t believe there are any houses there now. I don’t think so.

Q: Because the Carrier Family built there family homestead roughly in the Swan Lake area or just a little further north of that. Because Kendall Drive really didn’t exist then when they first came. I’m trying to an idea of what old buildings are this area that you saw?

A: No, I think there very, very few. There was an old house that was right on the corner over there, but they knocked that down. It’s just, you know, land there, now. And...

Q: You mean the corner of Kendall and 67th Avenue?

A: Yeah,No, I don't think there are any homes that were there then.

Q: Did you daughters ever go to the Serpentarium? That used to be on U.S.1.

A: Oh, yes. And, ah...in fact the daughter of the man that had that Serpentarium and that. They were very friendly and they used to come over here and the girls would go over there. In fact Lynn worked at the Serpentarium, there, for a while, later. Not for long, but she did for a while.

Q: Because when we moved here that was still there?

A: No, she...I don't know, maybe...I don't even think she was there a year.

Q: What was it like when Dadeland was built, was there a general excitement? Oh, a mall, I mean, that was kind of a novelty, wasn't it?

A: Well, yes I think some people were impressed by it, you know. And of course we were out in the sticks, more or less, here. And, ah, we had a very, very convenient but I...I get over there once a year, that's about it.

Q: Did it make and immediate change in the traffic?

A: I think so.Yes, because we had more...you have a lot of trucks going in and out around here, now. And, ah, it did. It increased the traffic and of course increased the number of people here because you have all these apartments that have gone up. And you have commercial buildings over there. So, that's brought in the traffic.

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