John M. Carrier, Jr.
Tape: 12.24.00.2
Starts: 1:48:08

Q: What is your earliest memory of coming to this house?

A: Well, I guess probably my earliest memories was probably six, seven, somewhere around in there, maybe earlier, but the time that I do remember, that I can really relate to is when I was six or seven years old. We came down to visit my aunt and uncle once a month on a Sunday. Usually was a Sunday because they were around and my father wasn't working and we were out of school. And then in the summer I used to come down when I was older. I came down and stayed. That was after I got over being homesick, so I could be away for like a week. But, I would stay a week or sometimes two weeks, and I would take the Greyhound Bus down from where we lived on fifty-first street. We came down second avenue and I would get on the bus there and come down here to sixty-seventh and get off. There was like a little wooden bridge at the time. And get off there. Then my aunt and uncle would pick me up and bring me to the house here. And I thought I was going on a real vacation, to me. Pack my little bag and everything I brought for a week and especially my tooth brush and things like that, you know. My mother, I can always remember saying, "now you have enough clean underwear. Aunt Mary won't have to wash for you." A couple of little pair of shorts and some shoes to run around here with, because hardly we ever wore shirts in the summer and that's when I came. And I stayed here, like I said, a week or sometimes two weeks, depending on how late I came in the summer, or earlier I came in the summer. If I came in June or July then I would stay like two weeks. If I came in August, then I would go back in a week. It had to be whatever was convenient for them when they wouldn't be doing anything.

Q: And what did you do? How did you spend your days?

A: Well, just playing around in the yard here. Then they would take me to South Miami to to feed store, the OK Feed Store, and they would take me different places up there and to the drug store. There was a drug store, I think it was on Sunset. And we would go there -- a small little drug store, and we'd have an ice cream soda there. But mostly just stayed out here and played around in the yard. It was beautiful then, you know, and as kids

we had to make our own things to play with. We didn't have all these games that they have today and all the things. We didn't even have two of what they have today. So, you, more or less, made to yourself, create things, and we became very creative because of that. We used to play store and stuff at home, but down here, when I was here by myself, I enjoyed being out here in the garden because he beautiful gardens and he was always home at the time when I would come down. I don't think he was then at the time, or if he was he was home most of the time. Maybe it was his vacation too. But he had horses, a couple of horses, he didn't have a lot, he had a couple of cows, and he had chickens and I would go and get the eggs in the mornings from the chicken yard. It was all fenced off back in here and there was an outside well with a pump and we thought that was fascinating because at home we still had running water. There was an outhouse back here in the back. And that wasn't so fascinating. But it was there.

Q: So for a little boy coming from the city you were really coming to the country?

A: Oh, yeah. we called this the country then, when we came from what we called Uptown. We didn't call that Miami or the city, we came from Uptown and we were going down to the country. So I just amused myself. My aunt would fix me breakfast in the morning and then lunch -- we a;ways had lunch -- and then some kind of a dinner that she would fix and it was very economical the way she cooked and the way fixed. There weren't big meals. It was just enough to hold you over to the next meal. You know. You didn't stuff yourself. So I enjoyed coming down here for a week. And when we used to come down during the winter time -- like if we came on a Sunday to visit -- that was entirely different because we mostly stayed in the house and we played in there. But, we would go outside because that sort of boring in there a lot, so we would come outside and walk around. He had a Catley Guava back here and I used to...They were little round, small little guavas. I used to pick those and eat like ten or twelve of those, 'cause I loved them. Then he had other guava trees that were great. They were like guavas, and pink guavas, and he had some -- I remember there was a loquat tree, which I loved, and that only bloomed like in November, I think, had the little plums on it (whatever they were called). Yeah, they were loquat plums -- you hardly see any around now, today. And that tree was back over in there. So I used to go back there, and -- especially when it was in bloom, come down and, boy -- they turn...they're green before

they're ripe and then they're a deepish, yellowish-orange color when they're ripe. And then,of course, he had the kumquat tree and the cherry trees and the cherry hedge and...So, we were...we just eating the whole time we were here because we didn't have all that where we lived, you know, so we thought this was wonderful coming down here.

Q: Was that reflected in the cooking? Did your aunt make lots of pies?

A: Oh yeah. She made...she cooked, backed a lot of pies and she made jelly form the cherries, and she made jelly from the plums and she made 'em from the guava, she made the guava jelly and the Catley guava. She had white guavas and she made jelly from the pink and the white guavas and she did a lot of guava skins -- the peelings. Canned those. She did a lot of canning and her own vegetables because this was all...he grew tomatoes back in here. And so she would can tomatoes and we'd have fresh tomatoes and we'd have bell peppers and we had strawberries and we had -- I think he had raspberries too, from what I can remember, the raspberries.

Q: Sounds pretty healthy.

A: Yeah. So we had a lot of...

Q: You mentioned that you went swimming in a rock pit. Can you describe that to us?

A: The rock pit was back through here. We had to go through the lot, back in there. And there was a street back there -- another rock street. And the rock pit was probably, I would say, northwest corner over here. And not to far. It's on the other property. Probably three blocks or four blocks down.

Q: Swan Lake, it's called now.

A: Yes, it's Swan Lake now. Well there was a rock pit there -- a huge rock pit. And we used to go in that. I don't think it was legal, but we used to go in there and tip ourselves in the water anyway. Because I always used to bring my swim trunks when I came down here. And we would go to the rock pit. And then I think it was closed up for a while later on in years. I think they closed the rock pit. But it's still there, I understand. I don't know what they've done to it, I haven't ever seen it in recent years.

Q: You said that when you got off the Greyhound Bus there was a little bridge across...was that Snapper Creek?

A: Yeah, across the Snapper Creek.

Q: Describe what the area looked like then.

A: When I got off the bus? Well, my uncle's house was one part of the land over there on 67th avenue which I don't know if it's still called 67th there or not, might be 67th court or something. But his house right off to the highway, and where the Dairy Queen is up there on the corner, he had a gas station. It was Atlantic Gas station in those days, which is now mobile. And he had a workshop in there and he repaired cars and my Uncle Joe also had a little place that he let him use to repair radios, 'cause my Uncle Joe repaired radios. And, when I got off the bus I would see my Uncle Wilfred's house there. And he had beautiful palms in the yard and around the palms he always had begonias planted there. And I remember they would pick me up there, but you could see the gas station and the house there. It was a little wooden house with awnings to keep the sun out, because the sun used to come in there in the afternoon. And, ah, of course in those days there wasn't any Dadeland or anything. There weren't even any houses down around here when I would come down here. This house over here, wasn't here. That was built later on in years. There just weren't any houses. This was the only house here. Even across the street on 67th, there,there weren't any homes over there. Nothing. It's something that should be preserved and kept because it's really...I don't know, it does something to you inside, when you think about it, because its memories that have...good memories that you have. Today everything is crime and this and that and the other thing, and we didn't have that. we didn't grow up with that. we never locked out doors. Even when I came down here, they never locked the door. So, that's what I remember getting off the bus there was my uncle's house and the gas station. Then, of course, they met me there. There wasn't hardly any traffic on US1 then. You could park right alongside US1 and nobody gave you a ticket or said "you can't park here," or there weren't any signs "no parking."
Q: And Ludlum was rock. Crushed gravel?

A: Yes, it was dirt and gravel when we first came down here, when I was little. It was gravel and dirt. And of course this driveway, it was similar to this but more dirt than the gravel. And then, eventually, it was paved.

Q: So, your Uncle Carl was the chief foreman at Fairchild Tropical Gardens.

A: Right.

Q: Did he talk about his work there. Did he reflect it in his...?

A: Oh, yes. He loved plants and flowers. That was his whole thing. And he loved working at Fairchild's because he saw these beautiful, rare plants and trees and things, and that's what he did. He had a lot of trees up in front there that he got from Fairchild's. And some of these back here. and of course he had different varieties of palms. And he knew all the names which I don't know today. I love plants and flowers, I was like he was, but even though we were only related through marriage I had the same idea of plants and flowers that he does. And up until this day I still love them. I live in a condominium now in Boca Raton, and I'm surrounded on my balcony with plants and flowers because that's what I love. And I don't really like living in a condominium. And eventually I will have a house again and a yard. I don't care if I have just a two foot garden, if I have something I can dig in. But, that's the way he was and he loved all the plants and various flowers and rare things. He liked rare things. And most of the plants and things he got from Fairchild was rare. But he had a lot of...he used to like to farm, and his tomato plants and his peppers, bell peppers, and all those, he raised right back in here. In this property right here. And so, you know when you're little you some how inherit the whole feeling of what to do because I saw him...worked out here with him when I would come down and spend the week with him. If he was out in the yard I was right behind him.

Q: You described walking through grassy paths with flowers. Can you point that out, or show us, tell us about that?

A: There were paths up through here, in that acre next to the acre here where the house is. And he had ferns and plants all along the path there and you could walk all around in there and then, of course, it got like a jungle again after...so far. But, it was still part of the property of the house

here, you know. And the same way the front was. The front was so different because he had more flowers in the front, and ferns. Well, the ferns are still there, but there different than the way he had some of them, you know. And where that fence is, in the front, this who side of the fence was all grass. I think it was Oyja (Sp?) Grass, from what I can remember. And that he had...I mean, he just landscaped beautifully. And he did it all himself. So it's a lot overgrown there, and some of those trees...I don't remember some of those trees being in there. I know the big oaks were there and there a lot of pine trees down here then. hundreds and hundreds of pine trees and they're all gone. There were so many there in the front, but they're all...they're not there. Just like back in here. There were hundreds of pine trees back in here, but you don't see it today.

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