

**Tom Mitchell**  
**Tape: 3.07.01**  
**Starts: 1:00:00**

Interviewer: Kathy Hersh  
Recorded: 3/07/01

Q: Mr. Mitchell, what is your earliest childhood memory of living in this area? Something that really stood out and impressed you and was your earliest memory?

A: Well, the house that we lived in was in my dad's cow pasture. And he built a new house. And a...I remember moving out of the old house to the new house. And that was about 1923.

Q: And what was so memorable about that occasion?

A: I stepped on a board that had a nail in it. It stuck through my foot.

Q: What happened then? What did they do?

A: Well, they soaked it in chlorozine, some of the cow medicine that they used.

Q: There was no doctor to call?

A: There was a doctor lived in Perrine, the same doctor that delivered me. But a...her name was Dr. Freeman. Mary Freeman. And a...that was too far to go. They just soaked it and...I can remember soaking it every night in a solution of that carozine...chlorozine. But a...

Q: And that was used as veterinary medicine?

A: It was medicine they used on cows when they got injured, also. Same type. But it worked.

Q: And how old were you?

A: I was four.

Q: Four years old. And you remember that very clearly.?

A: Yeah.

Q: So tell us. You were born...When you were born and the circumstances of your birth?

A: Well, my dad had started a dairy and the fence was...that was used for the dairy went out...went around the house that I was born in. And that house was located, what would now be, just about 75th Avenue and about 11th Street, southwest. And I was born January 5, 1919. My dad told me it was a real cold night that they...In the house that they were living in, they had to stuff papers in some of the cracks to keep cold from coming in, in the floor, and...and said it was raining and it was 36 degrees. Being a farmer they also had row crops at that time, tomatoes, mostly tomatoes, and they kept up with the temperatures and the weather pretty...pretty close.

Q: How did they know about the weather and changes? How did they get their information?

A: Just...just from being here, being through it, I guess, and past experiences. 'Cause they'd been here -- at that time they'd been here almost twenty years.

Q: Tell us about your Great Grandmother, the first member of your family to come to this area?

A: My Great Grandmother came here to set up a homestead, I guess they called it, to...and the purpose...one purpose for her to come here was for her health. And a, she built a house and planted trees that were supplied, I believe, by the Perrine family nurseries, and to comply with the Perrine Land Grant, so they could get their land for...I guess they got it free. 'Cause my folks always said that she got it on a homestead, but I found out later it was to comply with the Perrine Land Grant. And a...her health improved with the local climate and a...

Q: She knew the Perrine family?

A: Yeah.

Q: Were they down here, at this time?

A: Yes, I think they were. Yes.

Q: Did she have contact, or interaction, with them?

A: I think so, yes. And a...she probably got a lot of assistance from them.

Q: You said that she was rather elderly...?

A: Yes, she was in her 60's and a...she a...she was an enterprising old gal.

Q: So what was her journey have been like, coming down here, and what would she have done along the way?

A: They came by boat. And a...she stopped in...the boat stopped in Jacksonville and she ordered a load of lumber to build the house she was going to build when she got down here, and had it delivered to Cutler. And Cutler was a pretty good...pretty lively settlement at that time. The railroad had not come in to Miami yet. It came later in the year. She had the lumber delivered to Cutler because the railroad was not...and had it brought from Jacksonville by boat because the railroad had not come into Miami yet.

Q: So her lumber would have come in at the Deering Estate at that...?

A: At the area of the Deering Estate, yeah. Just right...right about where 168th Street would enter the bay if it...because we used to go down there and go swimming when I was a kid. There was a dock and at the end of the dock there was a big wide tee and we...I remember jumping off of that tee in the water and...There was a diving board there. My dad dove off the diving board. I was like a little kid. then: five, six, seven years old. And a...and a...Talking about that dock, in 1929 -- '28 or 29' -- they tore it down and built a concrete, a...dock there and paved the inside of it, like a road, and you could drive all the way out to the end of it. And it was that way for years and years and years. Some of the storms kind of washed the road part of it out, the inside of the concrete, and I don't know what it's like. The county's blocked it off so nobody can go there anymore.

Q: Now, did you know your Great Grandmother?

A: No. No, she died about 1912, I think. And a...No I never knew her. I knew...I knew a cemetery where she was buried because my older brother told me when we were delivering milk on the milk route from our dairy. He drove the truck, I run the bottles of milk to different people's houses. I did that weekends and summertimes.

Q: So the dairy, was it a pretty big operation>

A: Yeah, it was a good size operation for those days because it had about 180 cattle -- all registered Jersey cattle. Maybe four or five of them were not registered. It was a real high class herd of cattle. It took blue ribbons and grand champion prizes in Florida -- Dade County Fairs and Florida fairs and southeastern state fairs. They had all those cows. We had a prize bull that took Grand Champion of Southeastern States in New Orleans, one time.

Q: So this dairy, then, was near where Killian Road is today?

A: Yeah. It would run up...The Dairy property would run from U.S.1 along the north side of what's now Killian Road almost to 67th Avenue and it was a quarter of a mile wide. It run over to what later became Brown's Airport. Brown's Airport property was...bordered our dairy property. And a...

Q: How far to the South did it extend?

A: Killian Road was the border.

Q: How far north, then?

A: About a quarter of a mile.

Q: And it was just east on U.S.1 ?

A: Yeah, it bordered. You know where the, ah, park is there. Where the rock pit is. Well that, I think the dairy property wrapped around that and it went up north where the Toyota place is. That was...I think that was part of the dairy property.

Q: So, you were...You had Snapper Creek running through the property?

A: No. Snapper Creek's farther north. It's up north of Kendall Drive...There is a canal there now.

Q: Was that there, then?

A: No. No, that was built in the...I'd say since 1950.

Q: No you say the rock pit wrapped around? I mean the farm wrapped around the rock pit.

A: The rock pit's in the corner of Killian and U.S.1.

Q: That's the Kendall Wayside Park?

A: Yeah.

Q: Now that rock pit was there, when?

A: When they put U.S.1 Highway down. They used rock out of that to build the highway.

Q: Okay. But the rock pit existed before the highway was built.

A: Yeah, that's where they got the rock to build the highway.

Q: Oh, because we heard that the rock pit was created when they built U.S.1. So it predates U.S.1?

A: Well, they dug the rock out of there and built the highway. Used it to build the highway. So, it's the same. One, one...at the same time.

Q: Okay, but before the highway was...?

A: And the next rock pit, there was one at Rockdale, and then there was one right here in Perrine, and there's others on down the highway. Every so often they...they'd dig a new rock pit to get rock to build the road.

Q: So, they may have quarried that area to build whatever U.S.1 was at the time?

A: Uh huh.

Q: Before it was paved.

A: Yeah.

Q: Because the rock pit was there when you family made the dairy farm around it.

A: Let's see. Yeah, yeah, the road was...it was a rock road first because I remember my brother telling me that he could remember when it was a rock road. When U.S. 1 was a gravel road. And, that's where they got the rock to build...to make that gravel road. And that was...and he was born in 1910. So, it was after 1910 that U.S.1 was...The railroad come down first. Then the highway was...U.S.1 was built after the railroad. And the railroad come through Perrine -- I think it was about nineteen hundred and four or five.

Q: Now, my understanding is that there was a lot of speculation about where the railroad would go?

A: Yeah.

Q: People were disappointed when it went so far west?

A: Yeah, they wanted it to go out further West and go out...go across the Florida Bay from Cape Sable.

Q: So the people in the Perrine land grant area, in Cutler, didn't fair too well after the railroad was built. Is that right?

A: No. No, after the railroad was built everybody moved out of Cutler to Perrine. Almost everybody.

Q: So, that was kind of the end of Cutler, then?

A: Yeah, And the Deerings came in around 1910, I think, twelve, something like that, and bought the whole bay front and posted it.

Q; The Deerings?

A: Yeah. And people raised so much Caine about it they finally did dig a little...a little channel. The government dug a channel into where the Deering Estate is...

Q: People got aggravated because they didn't have access to the bay then?

A: Yeah.

Q: So somebody then had to cut a channel...?

A: Well, they dug a little channel from the previous...from the big channel that was dug by the government. I don't know when that was dug, but I know it was dug by the government because I...my folks says "Deerings come in and blocked off Cutler and the railroad come through, so they didn't need the Cutler as a port to ship out the tomatoes, and, anymore, because they ship them by rail. And every...and my wife's grandfather moved his store to...to Perrine that he bought about 1900. He bought a half interest in a store in Perr...in, ah, Cutler about 1900. And after the railroad come through the Cutler people moved the store, they moved the post office, they moved...school house. My aunts and uncles went to school at Cutler.

Q: So, everybody just picked up lock, stock and barrel and moved over to the railroad?

A: Yeah, Cutler just sit there and kind of just stayed the same.

Q: Did it become a kind of a ghost town?

A: Somewhat, yes.

Q: Did you go over there and play?

A: Not very much. All that happened before my time. I was born in 1919. And a...

Q: You must have had to do a lot of work on a dairy farm.

A: Yeah, I did...I did...rinsed the bottles, delivered the milk and another job I had was churn the buttermilk. Churn the butter and the buttermilk.

Q: So, you must have known where everybody lived that you delivered the milk?

A: Yeah. from...we used to deliver milk to Perrine. We had a few customers in Cutler, Coconut Grove all the way up to just this side of 8th Street -- our milk route went up that far.

Q: And this was by horse and...?

A: No. They had a Dodge truck.

Q: Until when were you delivering milk?

A: Until about 1929.

Q: That's a few years, then.

A: We were in business about twelve or thirteen years and he finally lost the dairy on a boom debt.

Q; You want to explain that?

A: Well during the boom put the...used the dairy for collateral to borrow money to make a down payment on some land up north Dade County, somewhere, up near Eureka (?) Drive I think it was he was...My dad was buying a...gonna buy a big grove up there -- a hundred and fifty acre grapefruit grove. And a...when the boom -- we always called it when the boom busted, why he lost that, then has a dairy...dairy hung with a mortgage. And a...the dairy just didn't make enough money to pay off the whole...they wanted...The bank went bust, in the hands of receivers and the receivers foreclosed on it and sold it on the front Courthouse steps to Dante Fascell's dad and Dante Fascell's uncle. Do you know Dante Fascell? And I think they bought it on credit. (LAUGHS) So, to satisfy that mortgage they didn't get enough out of the Fascells and the Bofanas to a...to pay off the mortgage but that's the way they did it.

Q: And what happened to the Mitchell family then.

A: We moved off the dairy in just about 1929 and moved on Killian Road to right near what's now 97th Avenue. There was a house that was built there for the managers of a rock crush operation that was about a half mile South of there, but nobody was living in the house and a man that lived in Kendall was in charge of it, named Charlie Smoke, and he told my dad that we could live there for free. And we lived there from about 1929 to about 1938 and he told my dad, he says, "the owners are gonna want you to start paying rent of eight dollars a months. And a...my dad couldn't pay it so we we moved out of that house into the house that my great grandmother had built, over on...down Mitchell Road. And it was some hard times. We went through some real tough times. You couldn't pay eight dollars a month rent for a house. So we moved into that house and lived there free until...Let's see, 1940...before the war. About 1940. And then my dad and mom moved into an apartment. And a...

Q: They gave up farming?

A: Yep. Gave it a...he had worked a little a...three or four years in the Post Office, in nineteen five, six and seven. The Miami Post Office started street delivery in nineteen five and they had three carriers to carry the whole city of Miami...with bicycles. He was one of the three. And there was Claude Brown, Joe Cheatham, and my dad, Frank Mitchell. And a...they started that. He started in street delivery and he worked, I think two or three years, at...a couple of years at that and that's about the time that he got married and then he quit that and started farming with one of his brothers, Richard. And a...they came...he came down in this area near where brandpa's place was and I guess he was...they were living, he and mom were living there. And a...with grandpa because...they had six hundred acres of tomatoes planted in nineteen hundred and nine and they had...they owned that six hundred acres and a freeze come and wiped them out and they had mortgaged that land to the fertilizer company and said if a crop fails, why you get the six hundred acres of land. They mortgaged it to the...I think it was Wilson-Tilmer (?) Fertilizer Company that got the 600 acres of land and they lost everything they had put into it and the land. And a...

Q: That was your grandfather?

A: That was my father.

Q: Your father?

A: Yep, My father and my uncle -- his brother.

Q: So, a lot of hard luck?

A: Yeah. And that brother and another brother -- my Uncle Bill -- bought a store in Kendall from John Hensen I think right after that. Because they operated a store in Kendall. There was two stores in Kendall.

Q: And that was the little settlement around 100th Street and close to U.S. 1?

A Yeah. West of U.S. 1.

Q: Seventy-seventh or 79th Avenue?

A: Yeah...

Q: Where the Dice House is now?

A: No, it would be West of the Dice...Yeah. It would be West of the railroad. And a...It was Mitchell Brothers Mercantile Company. And the operated that, I think the Post Office was in there, and a...they operated that...Then they...Uncle Dick and Uncle Bill built a big packing house on the railroad and kept growing tomatoes, packing them in that packing house. And a...

Q: Did you ever work in the tomato fields?

A: Me? Uh huh. I did everything in tomato fields that needed to be done from planting the seed in the seed bed, planting the plants out of the seed bed, fertilizing, hoeing them where they needed to be hoed, and a...plowing them where they needed to be plowed, fertilized them, picked them, sprayed them. We used to spray them with arsenic of lead, blue stone, lime, and a...that was it.

Q: You said arsenic?

A: Yeah.

Q: That's pretty poisonous, isn't it?

A: Didn't bother us. Used to take a handful of arsenic and a...two hands full of arsenic out of a bag and stir it in a barrel and spray. Arsenic of lead.

Q: With your bare hands?

A: Yeah. (LAUGHS)

Q: So, sounds like a hard life, but you must have had some recreation in there?

A: Yeah. We went fishing and hunting at times.

Q: What was the fishing and hunting like around here?

A: Good. We went...mostly went to the Everglades or to where the park is.

Q: Which park?

A: Everglades. Everglades National...down West of Homestead. we used to go down that way deer hunting.

Q: What kind of game?

A: Deer. That's all we hunted down there was deer. And when they built the Trail out...we started going out there. And we hunted deer and turkey out there.

Q: And you used it for food?

A: Yeah. Oh yeah we ate...we ate everything that we harvested. I heard my dad and uncle talking about chasing a deer over near 67th Avenue about 100th Street. Said they got after a deer in there one time and they never got him, but said they think somebody else got him, but they didn't get it. But a...there was never very many of them East here when my family came here.

Q: There were?

A: There was not very many.

Q: Not very many. They had gone out to the Everglades.

A: The Indians kept them cleaned out pretty good.

Q: Did you ever see any Indians?

A: Oh yeah. Yeah. Used to see Indians all over the place in Miami, out the trail, and...

Q: Miccosoukis?

A: We always called them Seminoles. I never knew there were Miccosoukis until probably the last thirty or forty years, I heard about some of them being Miccosoukis. Some of them Seminoles. But a...

Q: Were they friendly?

A: Yeah. The a...the, ah, store that my wife's grandfather had at Cutler, the Indians used to come in on Saturday with their canoes, come up the finger glades to near where there is a bridge on Cutler Road. Used to come up with their canoes to that area and a...trade at the store. They'd bring in meat and hides and...I don't know if they brought whiskey then or if they bought it after they got here, but they said the chief would sleep on the porch of the store on Saturday night to make sure that none of the...the, ah, braves or common Indians stayed down where their canoes were and got drunk and raised Cain. They said he'd sleep on the porch of the store to make sure none of them come up there and bother the White people.

Q: And this was a story that you heard tell of?

A: Yeah. Yeah, I heard my wife's mother talk about how the Indians used to sleep on the porch of the store. They lived in the store, upstairs.

Q: So there didn't seem to be any antagonism?

A: No. No, all of that was over with. I remember my dad said one time he hired a Indian for a guide to go hunting and a...He said he got out there in the woods and got to wandering around and -- I don't remember what his name was -- but he says...Told the Indian, he says, "I think you're lost." And

a..."Me no lost. Camp lost." (LAUGHS) They said they finally found the camp where they were camping.

Q: So they used to make camps out there in the Everglades for hunting?

A: Yeah.

Q: What was it like? Did you ever go to any of these?

A: I...let me just...a blanket and a mosquito bar. That's all. And a...sleep under the mosquito bar and roll up in a blanket inside the mosquito bar. Mosquito bar is a...like a little tent made out of cloth. And originally they made some of them out of cheese cloth, but a...My family started making them out of unbleached muslin because it was sand fly proof and also in...using it in the winter time helped keep you a little bit warm.

**Tape: 3.07.02**

**Starts: 2:00:00**

Q: (Your wife,) Did she ever go hunting with you?

A: A couple of times. She wasn't a hunter, and she went a few times with us fishing. She wasn't a fisher...person either.

Q: So, you made these tents out of muslin?

A: Yeah.

Q: And you just pitched them like a regular tent?

A: Yeah. They had four sides and then there was a top. The top it was...they were made square or oblong. We used...we got to where we were making them six feet square and six feet high. And you'd tie the corners about four and a half feet off the ground so you had plenty to pull

under you to keep the mosquitoes from getting under edges of it. And a...you could push it out and you had room that you didn't lay up against the side of it so the mosquitoes would bite you through the cloth. And a...that was the only protection we had and if it rained, why it just come right through.

Q: The mosquitoes were that bad?

A: Yeah. Oh yeah. You could put your hand up on the a...cloth and leave it there a while. Then take your hand away and there'd be the shape of your hand there in the mosquitoes that were gathered there to try to bite you through it.

Q: So what about a fire, a fire didn't...?

A: Oh yeah. We built...we built a fire to keep warm with but we didn't...didn't use it to sleep...to keep us warm while we were sleeping?

Q: You couldn't build a fire in the mosquito bar?

A: No. No. No.

Q: We heard from Jack Hinman that sometimes cattle would die from having...?

A: From mosquitoes.

Q: ...inhaled mosquitoes into their lungs?

A: Yeah, um...We originally thought they were, you know, sucking the blood out of them and killing them, but found out...found out that they died from a...breathing them in their lungs. Get their lungs stopped up.

Q: Now, did you have this problem on the dairy farm?

A: Yeah, um hum. We lost some cows. And we lost some mules we used in the farming.

Q: From the same thing?

A: Yeah. And...we had a real bad spell of mosquitoes in 1928. 1932 we had a real bad spell. And I think that was the last real bad spell of them that we had.

Q: When did they start spraying?

A: Right after the war I think. After World War Two. They started spraying with DDT, I think.

Q: So, to get back to 1929 when the boom busted and the Depression came. What was it like here for you then -- did you really feel it?

A: Yes we did. We had to start all over again. Had no money. Did have one vehicle. I don't know, I think my dad got one vehicle in my brother's name so it wouldn't go with the dairy. And we had one vehicle, it was a truck. And a...we used that, and we farmed peppers, egg plant, squash, tomatoes, and a...we were also we're planting a grove. We were trying to buy a piece of land from Model (?) Land Company, but never paid anything on it but we planned to...to plant a grove on it...I mean we did plant some grove on it -- some avocados and some...that was the main thing we were trying to plant. We did plant. And a...but we never made any payments on it and it rocked along for about ten or twelve years. 1940 we were farming tomatoes, cucumbers, squash. We got flooded out twice. Froze out once and flooded out again, all in one season. And they were so far in debt that couldn't get anymore credit and my dad knew the congressman, Pat Canon, and he went to see him about getting a job back in the Post Office again. And he went...Pat Canon got him back in the Post Office. They wasn't supposed to take anybody back in that old but being a friend of the congressman, he pulled some strings to get him...get him his job back in the Post Office. And he working in the Post Office until he died. In about '51, I think, he died.

Q: And what did you decide to do?

A: I was working in electrical work...and they were using the money I was making to farm with, in the electrical work. And a...got my journeyman's qualifications and the war came along and i went to the Charleston, South Carolina, worked in the ship yards as an electrician and finally they drafted me, in '44. 1944 they drafted me and I went in service. I was in service for two years. Come back after the war. I ended up in the paratroops in the service and went to the Philippines and Japan. Got out of service about...in

'40...late 1946. I was in a little over two years. And a...I went...I got back in electrical work and worked in that until about 1974. Seventy-three is the last work I did. And I been retired out of electrical work ever since then. Got into mangoes. The family had a mango operation. We were producing about 85 percent of the commercial mangoes grown in the continental United States -- the family was.

Q: Where was that, right around in here?

A: We had groves from a hundred and...just north of a 112th...well...up in...we have some groves up in Kendall that we were operating using...operating on partnership with landowners and some of them we were leasing and some of it my brother had five acres on 112th Street. Over on 67th Avenue where my dad had seven and a half acres. That was where were made our headquarters after my dad died, and we had our packing house there and...we had groves all the way down to 312th Street, Southwest. 207th Avenue, I think it was. But altogether we were operating on 350 acres. And a...

Q: So it was a joint family operation?

A: Yeah. Yeah, it was a...a sub-chapter S corporation and it was six or seven of us were share holders. And a...it was...we were shipping (CALCULATES) I'll see if I can...We were shipping about...as high as 5 carloads of mangoes a day -- semi-trailer loads, a day.

Q: And where did you ship them to?

A: All over the country. To...some of them went to Canada, some of them went to...guess some of them even went to Vancouver and Seattle and Baltimore, New York, Boston, New Orleans, Atlanta, Chicago, Cincinnati...

Q: Did you hire people to do the picking?

A: Yes, sometimes we had a 140...140 employees.

Q: During the picking season? And you didn't have to worry about freezing or...

A: Yeah. Yeah. We ended up getting all of the groves that we control we ended up with irrigation on them to protect them from freezing. You mentioned a while ago whether its not as cold now, or colder now. In nineteen hundred and nine it got so cold that it split the bark on citrus trees, so...and that was cold. And a...we had a freeze in '28, '32, '34, '50, '56, '58 we had a pretty cold one. In '77 we had a cold one. '89 we had a cold one. So I don't...I don't think its any colder now than...than it...it...

Q: So what do you think about all the changes you see around here?

A: There still changing. There not going to quite. A...they think they're gonna...these environmentalists think they are going to stop the world now that they're here. Made all these changes for them to get here, now they think there gonna to stop the world. They ain't gonna do it. It ain't gonna happen. There's too...too much attraction.

Q: You still go hunting?

A: Yeah. Yeah, we got two trips lined up. One of them in a...we have three of them lined up. We go one lined up in Estell (Sp?), South Carolina. One in Georgetown, South Carolina. Got one in South Dakota. Another one in Montana's next year.

Q: But you go hunting here?

A: And a...we still have that camp in the Everglades, but the Park Service -- we're in the middle of the Big Cypress Preserve -- and the Park Service harasses us so much and there's not much game out there, and if we go out there it's more just for an outing than it is to...to really hunt anymore because the a...they've got restrictions so...so many restrictions that...and they're harassing you all the time so you're not able to really hunt like...They're always, you know, wherever you are they come around and bother you. And bother the game. And a...if we go out we just go out for an outing or recreation.

Q: When you drive up U.S.1 , North, and you drive by Kendall Wayside Park, what kind of feelings go through...?

A: Kendall Wayside Park...

Q: You know, the rock pit where your family farm used to be?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you feel any nostalgia?

A: Yeah. I just...I just think about, sometimes my sister and I used to go out and catch fish and put them in there, and then we'd get a real dry spell and it would dry up and they'd die. But a...sometimes water stayed in it pretty long and those survived. Just one of the things we used to do when we were kids.

Q: Were you one of the boys that went with Jack Hinman into the woods and made ice cream? He said they'd go beg a block of ice from the icehouse and they'd borrow from the kitchen some sugar and milk and eggs and they'd go off in the woods where they had a little shack they'd built and they'd make ice cream.

A: I wasn't in that crowd, but we had our own deal. We had a little quart ice cream freezer, me and my friends would a get...We'd skim off some of the cream off the top of the ten gallon cans of milk in the ice box and make it with pure cream and make vanilla ice cream. We never put any eggs in it. And we'd make vanilla and sometimes we'd take a can of peaches and put the peaches in it and we got hold of any mangoes we'd put mangoes in it and make it. And a...that was...that was one of the things that we'd do weekends or night or something...some night. My friend would sleep in the barn sometimes and a...we'd make ice cream and we'd stay in the...I'd go get momma's...some of momma's fruit out of the canned fruit off the shelf and take it and put it in the...We had a quart freezer and put some fruit in it -- apricots, sometimes we put some, I think she had some canned blackberries. And a...did that a few times.

Q: Did you ever know the Carriers?

A: Yeah. Wilfred? Uh huh. He had the station in South Miami and then he had one where the Dairy Queen is. And he lived not far from there, I think. Yeah. I knew the Carriers. Knew the Dices. Knew everybody in Kendall. Knew the Mathesons before they moved. Killians came in and bought my uncle's store that they had. And you know they talk about him being an old

timer, you know, here. And a...us folks says, well he was a new comer.  
(LAUGHS)

Q: You all were the real old timers?

A: We were some of them. Yeah, and a...we've seen a lot of changes. They keep building these buildings and how they gonna fill them up. Even during the...during the Depression, like in the early to mid-thirtys. Well from nineteen...I'd say from '29 to about '35 or '36 it was tough and there was a lot of vacant properties. "Don't worry, they'll fill up. They'll eventually fill up." And they did. About 1935 they started building houses again.

Q: So you had a lot of electrical work once you got into it?

A: Yeah. That's about the time I started. I started in it, I was getting ten dollars a week -- 25 cents an hour. And that was a union job. And a...

Q: So it wasn't bad wages for the time?

A: Nope. I was bringing...I was bringing ten...ten dollars home and I'd get to keep two dollars and give the rest of it to my dad to buy groceries and...and run the farm -- buy fertilizer and seed and stuff to do whatever needed on the farm. Some labor.

Q: Sounds like your family...

A: Labor was a dollar a day for farm labor.

Q: Back in 1935?

A: Uh huh.

Q: Sounds like your family was pretty tight?

A: We were. We were bad...we were poor...we were poor. It didn't bother...seem to bother us a whole lot but...

Q: You stayed together?

A: Yeah, yeah. In a...I know in 1932 a buy was living in a house about a half a mile from us and he went up to Lake Worth because he was gonna...I don't know what he was going to do at Lake Worth, but he moved and he had about a half acre patch of sweet potatoes and he told my dad he could have them. And I think we would have starved if it wouldn't have been for that patch of sweet potatoes. (LAUGHS) We had...ate sweet potatoes for breakfast. We ate sweet potatoes for dinner and sweet potatoes for supper and we had them candied, fried, raw, every...boiled, mixed them with...in a...even made sweet potato pie, sweet potato pudding, everything sweet potatoes. And then take a bushel of sweet potatoes and go to the store and trade it for 50 cents worth of groceries. And then either Dan Killian or Homer Stang and they'd jack the price up on whatever we was buying and trade it for the sweet potatoes. So it would take two or three bushels and get some coffee, maybe some smoked bacon and some grits, rice, and white bacon. Smoke bacon I think was normally seven cents a pound. They put the price up to ten cents and a...salt bacon was a...five cents a pound. Four or five cents a pound. They'd put it up to about six on a trade. Anybody come in with cash it was four or five cents, (LAUGHS) but what are you gonna do? We made out. We had chickens and had our own eggs and we ate a lot of chickens. Ducks, we had some ducks and we ate a lot of ducks. I didn't...got to...I didn't like duck eggs very much, they were strong but we ate them. And a...trying...trying to get along and I'd go hunting in the woods for rabbit and quail and doves and...Just walk out from the house and go. I made shoes out of a piece of inner tube because I didn't have shows to wear through the...through the rocks and the through the woods -- it was all rocky. And a...

Q: Did other children do that too?

A: Pretty much.

Q: So everybody was poor?

A: Yeah. Yeah. And I'd a...I had to walk from 97th Avenue to U.S.1 to catch the school bus. And I would carry my shoes to the bus stop, then put them on after I got to the bus stop. Keep from wearing my shoes out. And when we get off the bus take them off. Walk home, walk down the road bare footed. Keep from wearing my shoes out. It was hard times, I'm telling... (LAUGHS) I don't know what the rest of the world did but we survived, but I'll tell you it was a struggle.

Q: You probably have pretty tough feet?

A: Yeah. When I got...I even went bare footed 'til pretty near...a lot until I got married. I was 22 when I got married. 1941 I got married. We'd go to Halloween parties at the schools. You know they'd have them. Put on a pair of overalls and old blue shirt and go bare footed to the Halloween party.

Q: Well, I think we have to wind up. We'd like to know: you went in the Glades as a young man and you've been out there older. What are the changes that are most striking to you?

A: Out in the Glades? I think there's more game out there now than there was when I was a kid...when we used to hunt. The Indians kept it pretty well cleaned out.

Q: Really?

A: Yeah.

Q: So there's more game now?

A: Yeah, I think there is. And there's hogs out there now and there was not hogs up until about '40's. (REFERRING TO A FROG-SHAPED SENSOR AT THE FRONT OF HIS HOUSE THAT SOUNDED) A car went by. Made a shadow or something, made the frog go.

Q: So, what about birds?

A: I'll tell you I think there is just about as many bird out there now as there was. The plume...plume bird people pretty well cleaned them out about 1900. And a...but they came back after that. Now, the Cape Sable area -- you know down in the...way Southwest. There used to be a world of ducks. There's no ducks down there any more. They made...the Park people come in and made canals and ruined the duck feed, I guess, that was there. Made it so the duck feed didn't grow. Fish are real scarce down there now. And a...used to be a world of fish down there. And a...my wife's grandfather was a plume hunter. And about nineteen hundred when they were talking about making it illegal he quite and moved to Cutler and bought a half interest in the store. And a...in his plume bird hunting he was friendly with

the Indians. Real friendly with them. And they showed him where there was a rookery that nobody had ever been there, except Indians. And they showed my wife's grandfather how to get to that place and it's called Cuthbert Lake and Cuthbert rookery. And a...he was the first White man into that lake and he had a bonanza of getting plume birds for a couple of years and then some of the other plume hunters followed him in there and found out where he was going...how he was getting in there. And they wiped them out. and that's about the time he moved to Cutler. He quit and moved to Cutler. And a...quit the plume business.

Q: Did you ever meet Marjorie Stoneman Douglas?

A: I have talked to her several times, yes.

Q: What did you think about what she was trying to do?

A: She was trying to stop the world and she couldn't. You're not gonna stop it. This deal there doing in the Everglades now. I doubt if its gonna work.

Q: You mean the reengineering to get...?

A: Yeah, this eight billion dollar project there starting. Trying to start. I don't think it's gonna work. The...they talk about shortage of water. There is no shortage of water if it would not have...if they would not have run it all into the ocean. If they...if they didn't run all into the ocean there'd be plenty of water. Of course there'd be a lot of people flooded too. But a...there's a...

Q: So, when you got here, the canal system was put in after, or were there a few canals here then?

A: Snapper Creek Canal was in. I think that was about the only one. They built the Tamiami Canal in the '20's. 'Cause I remember when they were building it and I remember going out there and...You...you couldn't go all the way across. You could only go out...you could go out to just past the forty mile bend. Well, where Pine Crest is now. And then they come back and started and run it the rest of the way, I think, in the late 20's. Or the later 20's...was...probably wasn't the late '20's, probably the mid-'20's.

Q: Did you ever hear mention a mention of the name Pinecrest in the old days?

A: Yeah.

Q: For this area?

A: No. No. There was a town at the end of the...where the...Pine Crest now. On the trail. On the loop road.

Q: But this area here, was there any reference to Pinecrest, other than the elementary school.

A: That's all I know of.

Q: Okay. We were wondering how it got its name. I think its from the school.

A: Probably from the school. there used to be a sawmill on 100th St. No, not 100th St...102nd Street I think it is. It was half-way between Red Road and Ludlum Road, and before that there was one on what's now Ludlum Road at 112...what's now 112th Street. But it was before 112th Street was there. Because when I was a little kid there was a sawdust pile there and we used to play in it and then one time it caught on fire and that thing burned for, I don't know, a couple of years. It finally burned it all up.

Q: It was a big pile?

A: Yeah, it was like, if I remember right, about ten feet high and thirty feet...thirty or forty feet across.

Q: So, there was a lot of lumbering that went on in the area?

A: Yeah. Yeah, they cut all the timber.

Q: The pine, Dade County Pine?

A: Yeah, yeah. And a...

Q: So I guess there were no sawmills down here when your great grandmother had come or she wouldn't have had to order her wood from Jacksonville?

A: I don't think there was. I don't think there was.

Q: Do you have any mementos or old photographs we could show on camera?

A: I possibly do have some pictures.

Q: I wanted to tell you about my grandfather. He got down here in 1904. He recovered from his asthma, he lived for 36 years. Hoping to live six months when he got here. He lived for 36 years -- died at the age of 84.

A: So you knew him well?

Q: Yeah. He says I can't praise this climate enough for people with asthma...bronchial asthma. He...I heard him say that a lot of times. And a...my grandmother had diabetes. They found it...out about it about 1925 or '26 and she lived 'til 1940. He died one day and she died the next day. He died the 29th day of February, 1940 and she died the first day of March. And a...I heard both of them say they didn't want to live after the other one was gone. Both of them said, you know, they didn't live after...they'd been married...END OF TAPE

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