

CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: **NELSON BAILEY**
INTERVIEWER: **LAUREN GRIFFITHS**
PLACE: **WEST PALM BEACH, FLORIDA**
DATE: **JANUARY 31, 2014**

L= Lauren Griffiths
N = Nelson Bailey

L: Hi, my name is Lauren Griffiths. I'm here today on Friday, January 31, 2014 with the retired Judge Nelson Bailey. We are here today at the South Florida Fairgrounds in West Palm Beach, Florida and we're going to talk a little bit about Mr. Bailey's history. Alright, so my first question for you is where were you born and in what year?

N: I was born in the German village in Columbus, Ohio in 1943.

L: Alright. And where did you go to school?

N: Well we moved to Florida when I was about six years old. I grew up – elementary, middle school, high school – in a little town, Tavares, Florida, county seat of Lake County.

L: Okay. And when you were growing up there, what were your first memories?

N: I don't know what my first memories are. I got a lot of good memories.

L: Okay. So a lot of them were good, were there any striking memories?

N: Yeah. Kinda ties in to what I got involved in later. I remember when I was a kid, we heard that there was a black lawyer that was going to be in the courthouse downtown. Well my parents, most people in town, never seen a black lawyer. I remember my dad used to – when we were going downtown go a little bit out of his way to drive past the courthouse in the hope that maybe we would see this black lawyer. And we did one day. I was with my mom and dad and I was probably middle school age, would've been about 1950, I guess, maybe elementary school. Anyways, we saw the black lawyer coming out of the courthouse and I can remember as a child asking my folks what his name was and they told me. And his first name was so odd, I remember thinking 'he'll never make it as a lawyer. Number one he's black, and number two he's got a hard to pronounce, really odd first name.' His first name was Thurgood, and his last name was Marshall. He later became a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

L: Wow. So were there any other relationships, any other people that you knew that were black, in your community?

N: Other than the maid we had at the house, no. That was the old south days. It was different. And then the Civil Rights Movement got rolling in the sixties when I was in college at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Also, the Vietnam War protests blossomed while I was in law school at Florida State University. I was in the charter class, the first class they had there when they started the law school.

L: Okay, and when you were young, who were some of the oldest people that you grew up around? Neighbors, relatives?

N: Yeah. There were two sisters that lived in a house in Tavares. The Burleigh sisters. One of them had been married, her husband had been killed in World War Two her last name was Vaughn. They lived into the nineties and they were members of our church, the old Congregational Church in Taveres – I grew up in the Congregational Church. My parents were Congregationalists, which later became the United Church of Christ. But I remember sitting with her and – Ms. Vaughn – and she telling me about when she was up in, I guess, Virginia Beach, Virginia and she sat on the beach and read Mark Twain. I know when I was real young, like four or six, there was an old guy that sat in a rocking chair on the front porch and he never spoke to me, but he was a veteran of the Civil War.

L: Wow. Did he tell you any interesting stories?

N: Nope. He never spoke. He just sat there with that far-away look in his eye and there was a sword hanging – he had a grandson or great-grandson my age that's why I was there. He had a sword hanging over the fire place and of course it had a rust spot on it and to his grandson and me, we were sure that that was blood.

L: Yeah. So you said you grew up in the church.

N: Yeah.

L: What role did that have throughout your young years?

N: A very, very prominent role. The Congregational Church was the leader in the Civil Rights Movement. When I graduated from law school in '69, I – over a period of years in the seventies and eighties – I served on three different national boards of the church. Had a very minor role in posting the bonds for the Wilmington Ten, which is – anybody who knows their Civil Rights knows what that is. And then I served on the commission for social action for the United Church of Christ, this is a national commission. And I occupied the same seat on that that a young, black minister at our church had occupied prior to me – a couple terms prior to me. And he had resigned from the ministry and resigned from the commission to go back to Georgia and get involved in politics. His name was Andrew Young. And when I was on the commission for social action, I – on occasion when we had our meetings, we'd room with the minister from Chicago, black minister who everybody was treating like he was some kind of miracle worker because he'd taken a church in Chicago – one of the old, big, downtown churches when it was predominantly a white community there – and turned it into a congregation of over a

thousand people. It's now one of the black churches in the United Church of Christ. I thought he was a bit egotistical and in some ways racist. He later proved that when he almost cost Barack Obama the national election; his name was Jeremiah Wright. The United Church of Christ has been very intimately involved in Civil Rights issues, justice issues.

L: Okay. Wow. So, who did you admire most when you were growing up?

N: My father. Simple, plain, hardworking man. A beekeeper, commercial honey producer his whole adult life. Which is very fortunate for me because as a child, I would travel with him. We didn't own land, but he had his bee yards, places where you locate your bee hives, on citrus groves, ranches, farms all over central Florida from coast to coast. He also had beehives on Cape Canaveral – which I guess they now call Cape Kennedy. I can remember one time working bees with him out there in the woods on the Cape and there was some guy working cattle some distance from us and I saw him pull up with his pickup truck with his horse standing in the back of the pickup truck, not in the trailer. Gets off, works the cows, has the horse jump back in the back of the pickup truck – he had wooden sides on it – and drive off. The same time watching a rocket go off over his face.

L: So is that why you all moved from Ohio to Florida? Was for the –

N: Was for the – When I was born, my dad was doing honey production in both Florida and Ohio, seasonal. You know, the weather kind of closes down Ohio. And my mom stayed in Ohio and I was born up there. And we were in both states until I was about six years old and then we permanently moved down here, to Tavares, Florida.

L: Alright. And can you tell me a little bit about your mother?

N: Not a whole lot. Well her last name was Kirkpatrick, which you would assume that she was Irish. But when she died – I mean her mother died – my mother got all the paperwork and she discovered that he father had died like two years before she was born, so that raised some issues.

L: Yeah

N: And she had no living [relatives] – her mother died in '46 when I was three years old. That's where we inherited the house in the German village there and lived in it for a while, until I was six. But she had no living relatives that she knew of. So that side of the family is kind of blank. But everything was pretty much oriented around my father's family, up in northeast Ohio.

L: And did you ever hear stories about how your mother and father met?

N: I don't recall. I know they met in college at Ohio State University.

L: Were you an only child? Or did you have any siblings?

N: I had two younger brothers. Have two younger brothers.

L: What were some of your best and worst memories growing up?

N: I don't know. I'd have to mull that one over overnight to come up with an answer, I think. I enjoyed growing up in Florida, I enjoyed – my dad's been exploring a lot of backcountry Florida, the people of backcountry Florida. That's probably what got me interested. We always wanted to have horses, my wife and I after we were married. We met at – as a matter of fact, it was at a Christmas season church conference we went to where we met. Both grew up in the Congregational Church and we've been married now forty-six years and known each other longer than that. And I started out – graduated from law school, I started out in Florida Department of Agriculture in Tallahassee for about nine months, and then there was an opening in the Florida Attorney General's office. So I went to that in Tallahassee, criminal law division. Basically, handled criminal appeals and any other matters where the state was responding in a criminal case witness in a state or federal court. I worked in the Attorney General's office about four years and having done undergraduate for four years and law school for three years and Department of Agriculture and Attorney General's office for a couple years in Tallahassee, I thought that I'd had enough of Tallahassee. And I made what probably was the mistake of my life, I decided I'd transfer out of Tallahassee. There was an opening in the branch office of the Attorney General's in West Palm Beach and in 1971 I came to West Palm Beach. In 1972, I left the Attorney General's office and went into private practice. There was a black lawyer [Randall Brown] who was in the public defender's office and we were, you know butting heads and writing briefs, literary contest and arguing in court against each other. We developed a great deal of respect for each other and he left the public defender's office about the same time I left the Attorney General's office and we decided to become 50/50 law partners. We flipped a coin for the name of the firm, would it be Brown and Bailey or Bailey and Brown? I won the coin toss and it was Bailey & Brown. And we found out when the newspaper showed up as soon as we opened the office, we found out that we were the first 50/50 black/white law partnership in the history of the state of Florida. It was a different time. Some of the big law firms were beginning to think about bringing in black associates, but they watched us like hawks, real close, before they finally broke that barrier in West Palm Beach. But we did a criminal defense practice, strictly criminal cases. And Randall and I had a lot of fun. There was a story I tell about the first case Randall has. This is the storyteller's version, it's not accurate history. Randall loved it when I told this story. In those days when you went into private practice after leaving attorney general, state attorney's office, attorney general's office, public defenders, probably anything else, if you wanted to do criminal cases, you'd go introduce yourself to all the judges in the county and let them know that you were available for court appointed cases. And all of them would send you a court appointed case right away and it would help you get started, pay your bills, you know? And so we did that, we went around, introduced ourselves to all the judges – that we were in private practice now. And so then we sat in the office and waited for that first letter to come. Eventually you'll get a letter that'll say, you know, the state of Florida versus Joe

Blow or whatever and it'll tell you that he'd been charged with burglary, robbery, or whatever and give you a court date. That's all the information you got, you didn't get what the case was about. The first letter came and it was addressed to Randall Brown, my law partner, who was black and he opened it and he looked at it and said 'Nelson, you're going to handle this case.' I said 'No I'm not, you're the one that's appointed besides, all you have is the name of the defender and what the charge is, how would you know you don't want to do the case?' He said 'Yeah, but the name of the defender is Bubba Ray Smith and the charge is stealing a horse.' I said 'No Randall, you got to handle it.' Needless to say, in those days – that would have been what? '72, '73 – Bubba Ray Smith was not at all happy about having a black lawyer but he had no choice in the matter. Finally, the case went to trial and somehow Randall Brown convinced that jury that that man did not steal that horse; at least they couldn't prove it beyond a reasonable doubt. And after the jury announced the verdict, we were still sitting there in the courtroom and the defendant and the lawyers were sitting at the table and the defendant, loud enough for the jury and everybody else can hear him, says 'Lawyer Brown, can I ask you a question?' And Randall turned around and looked at me in the back of the courtroom and I knew what he was thinking was 'did you hear that, he called me Lawyer.' I just smiled but Randall says 'Yeah, yes, sure you can ask me whatever you want.' Loud enough that the judge and the jury can hear it he says to Randall 'Does this mean I can keep the horse?' But we had some good times together. We had fun tweaking the nerves of society, basically. And time changed and then in 1977 my wife and I adopted our son, the only child we have, he's now 37 years old and he was a biracial child, is a biracial child and in '77 was not at all common. But both adopting Travis and starting the black/white law firm, we had some more intimate than normal contacts with issues relating to race and it was an education for both Randall and me. We dealt with white racism and we also dealt with black racism in Florida. The most amazing thing was how little of it we had to deal with. The legal community, general community, and even when we adopted a biracial child our friends and district. None of the issues and problems we thought we were going to have, were much at all. There were some but not enough to interfere with your life or where you were going. My son, Travis is married now; he has three children, we have three grandkids: a twelve year old boy, a nine year old girl, and a now five year old boy. And his wife is a Cuban-American so her mother, her grandmother, and her great-grandmother were all alive and all their former husbands and all their relatives, all got together for every Christmas and every major holiday here in West Palm Beach. Early on before Travis and Jackie moved to Georgia, we had a lot of contact, family gatherings with Jackie's family. It was interesting. We learned about Cuban food and Cuban entertainment, Cuban drinks.

L: Alright. You said that you're biggest regret was leaving Tallahassee.

N: I suspect. I'm not really sure. You know, you never know what'd happen if you'd stay.

L: What do you think would have happened?

N: I don't know. I'd probably end up involved in state politics. When I left, I was in the Attorney General's office and I was the – one of my assignments was the governor's extradition lawyer – or pardons lawyer. Basic to the beginning officer when they put somebody in prison were asking for a pardon, out of prison were asking for a pardon. And then I handled extradition matters for either sending people to another state or just doing the paperwork that goes to the governor's office on a warrant out of state or getting someone from another state back into Florida on a warrant for their arrest. Well I ended up having great contact with the governor's office even after I came down here. Particularly when I became a judge; Lawton Chiles, who I had a great deal of respect for and he was an old sort of Cracker and a rancher – he appointed me to the bench when one of the judges retired and then of course I'd come up for election and got elected each time until I turned seventy. Under the Florida Constitution you have to – you can't run again once you turn seventy. So, that was a year ago – a little bit over a year ago.

L: What were some of the most memorable things that happened throughout your career?

N: Well, I got to argue cases at every level of the state and federal court system including briefing cases in the U.S. Supreme Court and arguing cases in the U.S. Supreme Court. That's something that very few lawyers get to do. And I had a lot of cases at Florida Supreme Court over the years. I did a lot of appeals when I was in private practice law and criminal cases. I handled, I don't know how many, twenty or thirty capital cases when I was in private practice. Almost all of them by court appointment – which means I didn't make enough money to pay my bills. But those were interesting cases. I only had one client out of all those that got the death sentence and he's still fighting that on appeals, federal appeals and what have you.

L: And what initially got you interested in Florida History?

N: When I was very young, like middle school age, I got a three volume set of Bruce Catton's books on the Civil War and it just got me interested in the Civil War and history. Then when I went to college, I majored in political science which was the study of government, but I minored in economics and American History. And then the biggest turn for me was in 1989. I learned about the Florida Cracker Trail ride – a group of about a hundred folks, we get together once a year and ride on horseback or in wagons or rope mules clear across the state of Florida from coast to coast. They start in Bradenton on the Gulf Coast and ride for six days, twenty to twenty-five miles a day and on the last day you arrive in Fort Pierce on the Atlantic Coast. They camp on cattle ranches as they ride across the state. And we learned about that ride, we had horses, we lived in Loxahatchee, Florida in Palm Beach County. Our barn is outside our bedroom window. My wife and I thought "Gee, what a neat idea to say 'I rode my horse clear across the state of Florida.'" So in 1989, we joined that ride – it was the second year they were doing that ride. The first year, I'd fallen and busted some bones so I was in no condition to ride – actually I should say I was bucked off, I didn't fall off. But in any event, on that first ride something happened that really changed my whole perspective on Florida, basically changed the course of my life. There was an old man that I rode next to who was a fourth generation Florida rancher, Florida cowman as they properly call that. His name was

[Frank Lester] “Judge” Platt. He wasn’t even five foot tall – would have been a great jockey. But he was old and he was in his seventies – I thought that was old then, I’m in my seventies now and it doesn’t seem that old. He rode a little horse he called Charlie, he rode a quarter horse. And I rode next to him and the thing that impressed me the most – he was telling me the story of a cattle drive from Central Florida north to the Florida-Georgia border. And he told me the story with as much harshness and detail as the ride had occurred six weeks ago or six months ago. He told me about men on the drive by name and incidents with the cattle during the days and tricks the guys would play on each other in camp at night. Only he was telling me the story of a cattle drive that supplied beef to Florida troops during the Civil War in the 1860s – a drive that his great-uncle had headed and that’s why he knew of the story. But as you could imagine sitting on a horse, riding next to him, I had a feeling at one point that went right down to my bones, I could feel it just riding my horse, back into history. And needless to say, I stuck to him like glue for the rest of that ride. Let’s see – what was he? – I think he was seventy-two that year. I ended up riding that ride next to that old man for ten years; he celebrated his eighty-second birthday on the ride, if I remember right. And then a few months after that he died of stomach cancer. I just have a deep fascination with Florida history, particularly the story of the horse and cow in Florida from then. And I, of course, got into quite a few other ranchers around the state, picked them for stories and I did some reading and became friends with Patrick Smith, author of “A Land Remembered” who passed away a few days ago, the twenty-sixth [of January 2014]. The Wednesday before Patrick passed away, I had a delightful visit with him; I’m so fortunate and grateful that I did that. We’d appear at events together, I’d do my Florida history presentation, he would talk about his book, “A Land Remembered.” Have you read that?

L: Yes.

N: Okay. Well you know what I’m talking about.

L: I do.

N: I’ll tell you a secret.

L: Yeah?

N: He’s dead now, I don’t think he’ll get mad. Every single incident in that book is a real incident out of somebody’s life. It takes place in the location that he said at the period, in exactly the way he described which is pretty much the way the people who experienced it described it. Every incident in the book – of course he took it from many, many people and put it in three generations of one family to paint the picture of Florida – vividly paint the picture of Florida throughout the 1850s to the 1960s. But there was one incident that his wife suggested to him (and he had to put it in the book) that wasn’t out of somebody’s real life. How recently have you read the book?

L: It’s been a little while.

N: Do you remember it pretty vividly?

L: Yeah.

N: Remember when they sold the baby birds in Palm Beach? Yeah. I'll miss Patrick. He was a good friend and a great inspiration – between him and Judge Platt – those are the two people that most inspired me and my interest in Florida History. After that first cross state riding in '89, I had already been doing horse show events in the horse ring here at the South Florida Fair (which is why we've got all this noise in the background, we're at the fair which is near the airport). After riding with Judge Platt across the state that first time, I thought "Gee, this would be a good, neat thing to do at the horse tent at the South Florida Fair – sit on my horse in the ring there and tell stories of the horses and cattle and the history of Florida." And so I did that – put it together and did it for a few years here in the horse ring, not many, and then I started to get invitations to do it at schools and places like that. Eventually I ended up doing it like a second occupation which I still do – which is to travel around the state—lots of times it's on ranch or the Florida Humanities Council or some library or some museum or some cultural organization and they'll use that money to hire me to come do my history presentation. For a number of years I did it from horseback – that horse is the same one that I rode across the state in 1989 – that horse did the across-state-ride eighteen years in a row, something that was supposed to be a onetime event. We still have him, he's thirty-one years old and he's gray and retired – same as me – but still in good health. But anyway, I was, for many years, doing my history presentation from horseback – state parks, federal parks, and different events around. I did a lot of them inside, but now I don't do any more of them from horseback. Not from that horse, but from other horses I've had two different Florida Cracker horses, the original ones, stock the Spanish horses here in Florida. And as I was going to say, I've had more than my fair share of broken bones over the years – broken back, a portion of my shoulder is missing, pressurized wrist, cracked ribs – other than that it's been a great experience. We still have our horses.

L: What was one of the most memorable storytelling experiences you had?

N: That's probably about twenty-five or thirty years ago. The boy scouts here in Palm Beach County were having a big camping event in one of the parks here where they were out in the woods, out of sight and out of contact with virtually everybody. And the head guy for the boy scouts in this county set it up with me and the other Boy Scout leaders didn't even know it was going to occur. And one of the nights they had their big, big bonfire like the size of this room (we're in a cow camp by the way while we're doing this). The head scout leader gets up and starts telling them about how you know, in the old days they didn't have phones and all that stuff and whenever you rode up to somebody's house day or night or if you rode up to somebody's campfire at night, you would always yell from a safe distance "Hello the house" or "Hello the camp." He explained that's so that you wouldn't get shot when you ride in and the guys could say who you were. And as he's explaining this from out in the dark I yell "Hello the camp" and he responds and I come riding in and I'm on horseback, I'm dressed 1800s-style. And what we had set up was I was one-hundred years behind them – I was in the 18-

whatever year it was and they were in the 19-whatever year it was. And then that scout leader and I—and I'm sitting on my horse the whole time—we have a conversation trying to figure things out so we could finally figure out what was wrong because I'm looking through a herd of cattle and these guys are camping a hundred years later. And then I did my presentation to the kids from that time period so anything that was more recent history, I didn't know about it. I also didn't understand these uniforms these kids were wearing—ask them about them, thought it was some military thing or something, you know? It worked like magic and – shoot – for years since and just not long ago, a few months back, I was in the Publix grocery store and some guy who looked to me to be middle-aged walks up and he's one of the kids, you know they all remember it. And that was a special one. I've had several really, really neat experiences. One of the great joys back when I—when my horse and I were still functioning—was I'd get invited to events and some of these ranches where the state is wandering around in Florida and I'd have permission to ride the ranch because normally people couldn't but I could come in on my horse because I was part of the program. Another really wonderful experience we had – my wife's brother and family lived in Leesburg, Virginia. And several years ago, we took our horses and went up to Leesburg. Her sister-in-law has a horse – she stables it somewhere, she doesn't have the property – so we had a place to stable our horses when we got there. One day we went to Manasses Battlefield – and I told you I was interested in Civil War history from way back. And it was a Saturday and we rode the battlefield and I was a little bit disappointed because you were confined to the horse trails and the markings if you're on foot are alright but the markings for back between the battlefield for horseback were not all that helpful. Some of the places I knew, Henry House Hill and things like that. We stopped by the – I don't know what you call it – tourist center or whatever before we left and there was a poster on the wall that said the next day the American Quarter Horse Society was doing a tour of the battlefield, bring your horse for twenty-five dollars. So we went back the next day, each of us with our horse and our twenty-five dollars and some guy who had retired from the military who lived in Manasses and he was a full-time cavalry reenactor on horseback with all the equipment, uniform and everything as an officer took a group of, I don't know, maybe fifteen or twenty of us out in the field and for half an hour he taught us the commands they used in the cavalry for traveling single-file, double-file, four in a row, lining up for a charge and all that and the real commands. Then we toured the battlefield for probably a couple hours, most of it in a gallop, I was amazed. At the end of it there was a special event we did not have to stay on the horse trail. We got to spread our horses out in a long line, charge up Henry House Hill. It was—if you know the history of it, it was just a wonderful experience and the horses performed beautifully and I had the old McClellan saddle that you see on the rack right there behind you which is the Civil War-period saddle. That one's amended as an officer would be allowed to amend his saddle. What a neat experience. We had some wonderful experiences with that horse.

L: Sounds like it. What is one of your favorite stories to tell about Florida history?

N: That'd be hard to say. Maybe the story of the cattle drive and how I learned about it from Judge Platt. By the way, Judge Platt was not a judge. He was in his eighties when he died and he was still called a judge from practically the day he was born. When he

was a baby somebody said “that baby is solemn as a judge” and the name stuck for the rest of his life. But that story and I like telling the story of the beginning of Florida just as a reminder to people, you know? I mean it really irritates the hell out of me if people move here from New York, New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio, Puerto Rico, Cuba, anywhere else and then they say that Florida has no history, you know, everything’s new around here. What the hell are you talking about? I ask them if they know the oldest town in America is and most everybody knows it’s St. Augustine. And I point out to them that was established or settled 1565 and it’s been occupied as a city every day since. And Ponce de Leon brought horses and cows to Florida in 1521 and we’ve had them every day since. The Spanish descent horses and now the Florida Cracker cow and Florida Cracker horses. By gene testing—are the ways to—the descendents of that original Spanish stock in Florida. I’ve had both record cattle and record horses. But I point out to them, you realize that’s the century before the Jamestown colony was established in 1607 and the pilgrims landed in 1620. When they landed we had Pensacola, we had St. Augustine, we had men and women on horseback raising open range cattle, we had the American cowboy alive and performing right here in Florida when the pilgrims landed. Of course our American cowboys spoke Spanish because this was Spanish Florida. In my presentations, I emphasize that we were Spanish before any other state, longer than any other state, our heritage was married with very much Spanish, the name of our state, the name of our oldest town, it was the Spanish who brought sugar cane here, citrus here, cattle here, horses here, it was the Spanish who gave us our name. I like to say that practically everything but Mickey Mouse is part of our Spanish heritage. And I like to tell the story of how, in my opinion, the Spanish even anticipated Mickey Mouse. You know in fifteen or sixteen-hundreds when they wanted to do a chart of the coastline of the state, you had to sail along the coastline and take your bearing by the moon and the stars or by the sun, put your dots on the map and when you’re finished, you connect the dots and you got your coastal chart. And I’d point out to them that in the 1600s, the Spanish sailed along the south end of what’s now Palm Beach County, and there’s a little—that horse is getting upset because of the music, we are at the fairgrounds unfortunately. Where was I?

L: They were sailing down the coast—

N: They sailed along the coast, put the dots on the map and when they connected the dots, this is what happened – they chuckled and said it looks like a cartoon character of a rat biting at the ocean. And I tell people they gave the place a very unpleasant name, they called it Rat Mouth. And I say can you imagine someone taking pride and saying “oh I live in Rat Mouth” and then of course I ask if the people in the audience speak Spanish and know how you pronounce it and they do, pronounce it Boca Raton. So as I say, they anticipated Mickey Mouse. Plus there are people in Boca Raton right now who are probably trying to come up with a different version of what it means and how it got that name but that’s their problem.

L: Yeah. Alright. So some of your closest friends as you were growing up—or currently, it was Judge Platt and Patrick Smith.

N: Yeah, they were friends that inspired me and my seniors. I've got friends—seems to be that most of my friends are professional photographers or writers. I never—never had a lot of friends in the legal profession other than Randall Brown and a couple judge friends of mine. There's so many judges in Palm Beach County, I can walk in the courthouse and there's judges who I've never met before. I tended to avoid the legal community for eyes outside of work. And the horse community has been a big part of—that yellow roof here that's where—of course we're looking at. I've known her thirty, forty years, forty years probably. Well a lot of our friends came out of the horse community. The cross-state ride – some of our closest friends are people we know from that ride and the Osceola County wagon train and trail ride. Usually those two rides were back-to-back or within a week of each other and for eighteen years we did the Cracker Trail ride, for more than eighteen years we did the Osceola County ride which is one where you camp on a big ranch and you ride off-road everyday either half day or all day – that's a better ride for seeing and experiencing backcountry Florida. The Cracker Trail ride, in the days we did it, it was a better ride for experiencing people who were part of that history, it's a bunch of cowmen who put that ride together originally. On the first ride in '89, about a hundred of us, and the way we'd do it is you'd camp overnight the first night in a ranch over there in Bradenton and in the morning you'd get on your horse and you'd ride – most of it was alongside the highway, some of it was on farms and state land – but you would ride east for half a day, stop at a ranch and we had a mobile cook crew that'd meet us there, they'd have lunch ready for us and we'd eat our lunch—tie up your horse, eat your lunch, and then you'd get on a bus, go back to where you'd started out in the morning, get your rig – your truck and your trailer – drive it to the next night's location, get back on the bus, go back to where your horses are and ride the second half of the day. Clear across the state of Florida, your horse is never back in the trailer but you've got your rig with you. And nobody had any of these big motor homes in those days, there were no cell phones, didn't ride through the woods and have to listen to somebody yacking on the damn phone – irritates the hell out of me, I won't go on a lot of rides now because I can't stand it, I mean I'm out here to experience old Florida, get off your damn cell phone will you? Or the kiddies that ride with their radio hanging on the saddle like they can't experience the real world unless it's got background music like on TV. But anyway, in that first year at lunch time, they didn't have buses; they put us in stock trailers. And we're in the back of this big long stock trailer and you got forty or fifty people in one stock trailer standing – you couldn't fall down if you wanted to, you're packed in so tight. That was my introduction to Judge Platt. He played the harp, the mouth harp otherwise known as the harmonica – old crackers talked about playing the harp. He was good at it. We were packed in the stock trailer and I didn't know him yet, he's down at the other end of the trailer. He gets his harmonica out and he does the sound of a train whistle and it sounded—drifted it back there like it was just in from down the road. It sounded so real—oh my god, we're all going to die, we're packed in this trailer and there's a train coming, you know? He did that every year after that. New riders he'd kind of—it wasn't long after that that he actually hired buses to drive us back and forth. For a while we used old school buses that belonged to the Department of Corrections. That was an experience. You could watch the road down under your feet as you went along. One time we were going back to camp in one of those old school buses that belonged to the Department of Corrections for prisoners and the headlights went out

so all of us were driving down the road with our lights out the windows, the side windows all of us flashlights shining.

L: And you said that the first year there were about a hundred people?

N: Yeah.

L: How has it expanded since then?

N: I couldn't even tell you. I'd guess they've got a couple hundred or more on it now. I don't know what they've got. It's a big crowd. I don't do the ride any more but I usually get invited to do my history presentation the first night of the ride at one of the big ranches up there on the other side of the state – Duck Smith's ranch or Carlton Ranch, I don't remember what they call it, everybody calls it the Carlton Ranch. But what was the question? How has it changed? Yeah. It's changed the same way Florida has changed. If you are here to the way of life it's not a good thing. If you're here to make money it's wonderful. But we're here for life not the money. You go to it and it looks like more than half the people have big motor homes and they don't all eat together like we used to, they have the food but they got their own kitchens, they got their own satellite dishes and they're sitting there watching television thinking that they're experiencing the real Florida. And they don't socialize as much on the ride because at night they aren't compelled to be there together and eat and take care of each other and everything else. And they got a nice hot shower. We did that cross-state ride for a week. There was one city park we'd stop at that had showers so we got at least one shower in the ride across the state. People kept their distance. A lot of them had a home or friends along the route so they left for a few hours, have a good meal and a hot shower. They play that music next door and this horse gets upset like that. Horses—that's natural in horses. A lot of people don't realize, you know horses can hear if there's a herd off in the distance and you can't even see it, he'll feel the thunder, the vibration of their running in his feet, his instinct is he has to move in time with it, it's part of their herd instinct. If you get loud music that has a drum beat that's anything like the beat of a horse's hooves, any horse by instinct will dance to it because they got to move at the same speed as the herd's moving which happens to be the drums—they can feel it in their feet. And if they start one of those drum beats, this horse will start dancing. If you're on it, people will think it's well trained, look that horse is moving in time to the music, wow. If you're not on it, they think the horse is going crazy which is about what's happening here. I don't know what music group that is but typical fair planning, we've got the cow camp here and we used to bring Cracker cattle in the tent behind us but they put right next to the cow camp this big tent with loud, loud professional music can't handle cattle here and it's not every horse you can bring in that'll handle this either. We get too commercial too big and too damn loud to tolerate horses and cattle in native Florida anymore.

L: Yeah. What's one of the biggest changes you've seen since you grew up in Florida and today?

N: Just development. Disappearance of the woods. There's a lot more still out there than the public realizes, that's why it's there, public doesn't realize it. We've had a number of ranches that are over a hundred thousand acres, I worked cows on a couple of them. We've got one ranch, the Deseret Ranch that belongs to the Mormon Church that's over 350,000 acres. People drive right through it when they go up the Florida Turnpike. But they're big into cattle production. There are people don't think of cattle when they think of Florida and drive right through all that country and they get down here you tell them that we're big in cattle production—oh, really? I didn't know that. Oh course if we were Texas, we wouldn't have all that vegetation, you could see the cows a half mile away as you drive down the road. And they'd be expecting you to see it. Of course if they move to Texas they are wearing boots and a cowboy hat in six months; they move to Florida and they're still New Yorkers twenty years later or fifty years later. The diversity of our population—there's some good things about it. People that move to a land and don't try to understand the history and the stories that go with that land are missing something in life and they're dishonoring the place that they move to. Sorry, I don't have anything to talk about.

L: I think you've answered all my questions. So, I think we're good.

N: Alright.

L: Alright. Well, thank you very much.