

BR 012

Interviewee: Ralph Wilson Cellon, Sr.

Interviewer: Sudye Cauthen

Date: June 4, 1988

SC: This is Sudye Cauthen at Hague, Florida, on June 4, 1988, talking with Ralph Cellon Sr. Mr. Cellon, would you please give me your full, complete name?

RC: I am Ralph Wilson Cellon Sr.

SC: And what year were you born?

RC: December 19, 1910.

SC: Where were you born?

RC: At Antioch Community.

SC: Where, in relation to present day Antioch Baptist Church, was your home?

RC: About a mile and a half southwest of Antioch Church.

SC: Who was your father? His complete name?

RC: My father was Scarborough DaCosta Cellon.

SC: Do you know his birth date?

RC: September the 29<sup>th</sup>, 1882.

SC: And his death date?

RC: June something, 1934.

SC: Where was he born—Dacosta?

RC: He was born in the house that my grandfather Cellon built when he homesteaded out there in that area.

SC: Was that grandfather the first of the Cellons to be in that area?

RC: No, no...

SC: What would you like to tell me about that branch of the family? We can come back to your mother. Tell me about your father's family, as far back as you would like to go.

RC: My great-grandfather came here from France with an aunt of his and they docked in St. Augustine and she headed for Tallahassee by carriage. My great-grandfather was twelve years old at that time and when they got up here around Monticello [Florida], something or other happened that my great-grandfather got separated from this lady, which was his aunt. She was naturally older, as to what age, I don't know. But he never saw her again. He, a Frenchman in the country for the first time, wondered what on earth that he would do, so he started thinking about going back home.

SC: That's understandable.

RC: He wandered into Monticello, and with no money and nothing to eat, he followed the scent of break baking and wound up at a bakery in Monticello. He stayed there for that while until he decided to move on.

SC: Could he speak English?

RC: No

SC: How'd he get by without English?

RC: Motion signs, I reckon, and such as that.

SC: Was he still a single man when he decided to move on?

RC: Oh yes, because he was a young buck of a boy twelve years old and just a few days had expired since he last saw his aunt. He thinks that she was murdered by

the Indians because she was quite wealthy and she carried lots of jewelry, and such as that. He thinks she was murdered by the Indians.

SC: What was this great-grandfather's name?

RC: I couldn't tell you. Johnny something or other. John Alexander.

SC: John Alexander Cellon. Do you have any idea what part of France he came from?

RC: Metz, France.

SC: Thank you. Well, what happened when he left the area where the bakery was?

RC: He drifted down here in this community, which I just described, as to when I was born, and he homesteaded a piece of land where Sidney Rogers now lives.

SC: About what year was that?

RC: I couldn't answer that.

SC: Did he get a grant to that land from the land grant office?

RC: The dates of that I don't know, but anyway, he owned the land for his lifetime.

SC: What happened after he got to the Antioch Area?

RC: He set up a household and . . . eventually got married and reared a family.

SC: Do you know who he married?

RC: A lady by the name of Sparkman.

SC: John Alexander married a Sparkman? What was her first name?

RC: Could be Missinare.

SC: Tell me about Missinare and John Alexander's family and what they did out there.

RC: I don't know a whole lot about them except that they raised a family of boys and in that bunch of boys was one that was named Frank . . . and he married this lady Scarborough from Lake City. And, as I said, he homesteaded out there and then he raised a family out there of one boy and two girls and that boy was Scarborough DaCosta Cellon, which was my father. And when he grew up . . . got married, he moved across the field a few ways and homesteaded a piece of land there—he and his wife, which was Mayme Hague. Mayme J. Hague. And in that group of children, I come along.

SC: Who were the other children in your family, your brothers and sisters?

RC: My oldest brother was Willie . . . Mondell, Lindley, Roy, myself Ralph, and Alfred, and a sister, Mayme Louise.

SC: Was that seven children in all?

RC: Yes, ma'am, and they raised that group of roughnecks to maturity. Except for one. Alfred died when he was four years old.

SC: Of what?

RC: Well, [laughter] the doctors at that time didn't know, but I think that he either had leukemia or encephalitis.

SC: Let me ask you something about your mother.

RC: My mother was Mayme Jane Hague.

SC: Birth date?

RC: August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1884.

SC: Who were her parents?

RC: Her parents was William Campbell Hague, and her mother was . . . I don't know . . . Margaret Cox.

SC: Where was she born? I mean where was your mother born? Mayme Jane?

RC: At the vicinity of Hague.

SC: It wasn't named Hague at that time, was it?

RC: Yes, it was.

SC: It was? Wasn't it named for Archelas Hague?

RC: When the railroad company wanted to build a railroad through this area, my great-grandfather, Archelas Hague, gave them the right-of-way for several miles if they would build a depot at the community. And the railroad agreed to build that depot and to name it "Hague," and that the Hague heirs would have full control and say-so of what happened to that depot, and they honored that obligation to the last heir. That depot was originally built on the south side of the railroad tracks which is now presently known as Hague but does not have a depot at this time because in years past, the Cellons requested that the move the depot across the railroad track to the north side of the railroad and expand it for packing-house purposes. Up until that, along in that time, everybody was receiving their goods over railroad. Well, the community got their orders, got their supplies, at the depot. Came in by train. And we had good service here for all the while.

SC: And so the depot was there and the place was called "Hague," before your mother was born? Is that correct?

RC: Yes, it was.

SC: Okay, let me ask you one question about Achelas. Someone told me the other day that there's a tombstone for him over here in the Hague Cemetery but that, in fact, his body is buried somewhere at Turkey Greek.

RC: That is not so. He is buried in the Hague Cemetery where the monument stands as of today.

SC: Mr. Cellon, let me go back—or let me let you go back—you were just about to describe the interesting kind of environment that a family in the Antioch Area would grow up in when you were a little boy. What was the Antioch Area like from your earliest memory?

RC: Well, I reckon the earliest memories that I have vividly in my mind, I was a young chap and my daddy bought me a billy goat to play with.

SC: How'd you play with him?

RC: Anyway I wanted to—ride him, drive him, lead him, or just look at him. Originally, my daddy built a cart for me and kept those carts in repair and the harness for the goat, and I hitched him up just like my daddy hitched up his mule and horses.

SC: Now was this goat yours, not the other children's? Just yours?

RC: This goat was mine.

SC: What was—

RC: And later, my daddy . . . for Christmas, gave me a very elaborate wagon that absolutely resembled the grown men's wagons. And I drove that goat to that wagon and that was at the age in my life when, prior to that time, I had very vivid descriptions of Christmas. But at that time when I was about twelve years old, I got this wagon for Christmas, Elmer Strickland told me that this wagon had been

at Mr. Joe Kite's house for quite some time and Santy Clause didn't bring that wagon. And my daddy bought the wagon for me. I didn't believe that and it made me mad.

SC: That was kind of disturbing . . .

RC: Very much so, because I believed in Christmas just like I believed in Christ.

SC: Did you ask your daddy about Mr. Kite?

RC: I did.

SC: What did he say?

RC: Well, Mr. and Mrs. Kite—Joe and Ella Kite—were very close friends of my father's and mother's and they lived down the road a few miles from us. It's later in life that I've learned to—Mr. Kite was just doing Papa a favor by keeping the wagon until Christmas.

SC: What did the wagon look like?

RC: As I said before, just [a] typical farm wagon.

SC: Would you describe it for me, because I never saw one?

RC: Well, darling, if you've never seen a horse and wagon, you've missed part of your life.

SC: Well, I have ridden in a wagon behind a horse, but my memory might not be as vivid as yours because it wasn't my goat and my wagon . . .

RC: [Laughter]

SC: So I would like to know what you remember of the detail. Did the goat have a harness?

RC: The goat had a very sophisticated harness which would resemble any man's harness for his horse or mule pulling a wagon.

SC: What kind of detail was on the harness?

RC: Well, the only thing I can say is, it was just built or leather and naturally it didn't have a collar. He had a neck yoke and pulled by this neck yoke, traces going back to the doubletree, singletree, and a pair of "shaves," and naturally the wagon had four wheels to it and a cute little body. You could haul anything you wanted to in it.

SC: How many people could sit in it?

RC: Oh, strictly according to the size of them, but I've had eight or ten children in there and this goat would pull them. This goat was very much of a man.

SC: Did he have a bit in his mouth?

RC: Yes, he did.

SC: How did you get him used to that?

RC: [Laughter] If you'd been played with as much as he was, you'd learn anything just for pure—to, to [laughter] not be bothered no more.

SC: What is your first memory of the goat? Were you surprised? What did you think?

RC: Oh, for God's sake, there's not enough words in the alphabet to explain that.

SC: Did you know you were gonna get him for Christmas?

RC: No, I didn't.

SC: You didn't ask for him?

RC: Prior to this goat, I had one other goat, but he was of no size comparison to this one in looks and size and everything.

SC: What was the goat's name?

RC: Billy.

SC: Now this is the big goat?

RC: This is the main goat I'm talking about.

SC: The main goat. Billy. Did you get a wagon with him when you got him?

RC: No, I did not.

SC: What'd you do with him? Oh, you rode him and you . . .

RC: Yes.

SC: And you got the wagon after you got the goat.

RC: After Papa got me the goat, well, then he rigged me up a set of harness and he built me this cart. It was just a two-wheeled cart at that time, which the old timers in this area was using to go to church in. Dump carts. Two wheel.

SC: Did any of the other children have a goat?

RC: No ma'am, they didn't.

SC: Why do you reckon you had a goat? Were you just that hard to entertain that he had to do something special for you?

RC: No, along in that time I had a slight facial paralysis and Dr. Jim Bishop, who was the doctor in Alachua, treated me and when I got in better condition, well then, Papa got me this first goat that was, I'll say, a lesser quality than Billy was.

SC: How long did Billy last?

RC: Along the same time, Dr. Jim Bishop had a boy by the name of Duvall and he and I were about the same age, and Dr. Bishop had bought him a donkey to play with. And Duvall had gotten tired of the donkey, because the donkey was too

stubborn for some people to handle, and Dr. Bishop asked Papa could he give me the donkey and naturally, Papa accepted the donkey just to get him off Dr. Bishop's hands because he had more room out here than Dr. Bishop did in Alachua.

SC: So you had the responsibility of the donkey and the goat?

RC: I could hitch them up double and go out there in the woods and drag in a log or just do anything I wanted to.

SC: Were the other children jealous?

RC: No, because they were older than I was and they had more important things on their minds.

SC: What about your little sister?

RC: She wasn't here then.

SC: Was she born a long time after you?

RC: It was eight years between me and my brother, Alfred, and then she was two years behind that, so I am ten years older than she is.

SC: So she was too tiny to ride the goat?

RC: Right, right. And Alfred never did get big enough to really enjoy the goat. Of course I hauled him in the wagon for a million miles and swung him for centuries because after Mama **had my sister** I was babysitting for him.

SC: How'd you swing him?

RC: I ain't said nothing about [laughter] swinging.

SC: You said you hauled him for a million miles in the wagon and swung him for centuries.

RC: When my mother would get him ready for his morning nap, she would put him in the swing and she would call me and I had to sit in the swing in front of him to keep him from falling out of the swing and so the quicker that I could get him asleep [laughter], the quicker I could go back and play.

SC: [Laughter]

RC: . . . so I just swung the hell out of him.

[Laughter]

SC: What was the biggest adventure you ever had with the billy goat?

RC: Really and truly, nothing of any importance other than I wasn't afraid to take that goat and go anywhere I wanted to because the goat was a very good animal. I have driven him with a sack of corn going to the grist mill—which was Mr. Bill Dampler, which lived about a mile and half from us—and I would go over there with the corn. Mr. Dampler would take the corn and grind the corn into grits, put it back in my wagon, and I'd head home. That was a weekly chore that I had to do.

SC: You were contributing to the household in that way.

RC: Very much so, all that I could, because my daddy had a scuffling hard time. Daddy and Mother had a scuffling hard time to raise children . . . in the woods . . . on a small farm. I think they did a good job. I'm patting the others on the back, not me, because I don't need no patting.

SC: When you say they had a "scuffling hard time," what are you thinking of?

RC: At that day and again, they had to think a whole lots more than **the** present generation, because if a person needs a toothpick now, they can run to the store, whether it's five miles or whether it's ten miles or whatever, to get this box of

toothpicks. But back in them days, you had to whittle a peg to [laughter] pick your teeth until the next trip to the store, which was about a weekly affair going to LaCrosse, which was three miles from home in a horse and wagon, or a horse and buggy, or a horse and surrey, and they never made that trip until they needed to and they would buy a week's supply. And I don't ever remember of not coming to the table and finding a full meal on the table, prepared by my mother three times a day, seven days a week. And if you gals don't think that's a problem, well, you try it sometime.

SC: Were most of the foods you ate grown on your farm here?

RC: Everything that was possible, but see, you had to buy flour and sugar and black pepper and salt and matches . . . items like that . . .

SC: What was your home like? How was it built?

RC: It was a box-type house with a hall through the center of it and the kitchen and dining room was gotten to by a little porch a short ways from the main body of the house. Now that was strictly for precaution, because most fires started in the kitchen and they would try to cut it off before it got to the main house.

SC: Did you have a fireplace in the main house?

RC: We had one fireplace that was a wonderful fireplace, but you burned on one side and froze on the other because this box house was one-by-twelve boards with a batten on the outside to cover the cracks. And no ceiling. And it was just drafty. The floor was of the same lumber. But they did the best they could, and they did a wonderful job and I don't have nothing but high praise for both of them.

SC: Is the old house still standing?

RC: No, it's not.

SC: When you were little, did you ever go to my daddy's house? It sounds like that house is built very much like the house you were born in.

RC: A strictly duplication of the two houses. Yes, I was at Mr. George Cauthen's a many a time because we boys grew up with all of his boys and we just had a frolicking good time, many days together.

SC: My daddy used to tell me that he had a goat, but now I wonder if he just played with your goat.

RC: No. He had his own goat. I didn't take my goat to his house.

SC: Oh, did you ever play with his goat?

RC: Yeah.

SC: Did he have a name for it?

RC: I don't remember the name now. I'm sure he had a name for it, but I don't remember the name of it now.

SC: My daddy was five years older than you.

RC: Right.

SC: You and [my father's brother] Willie must have been close in age.

RC: Right. Willie, your Uncle Willie, is between me and my brother, Roy, in age.

SC: Who did you play with then you went there?

RC: With Willie.

SC: And what did you and Willie do?

RC: Anything. You name it, we did it.

SC: Did you have little chickens? Did Uncle Willie have some chickens one time?

RC: Oh yeah [laughter], oh yeah.

SC: What was he doing with those chickens?

RC: I don't remember the details on that. The first thing that I really remember about Willie was one of these says we was over there and he had a new horse to show us. His daddy had gone off and bought him a little blue, roan mare. It wasn't a Shetland pony, but it wasn't a full-grown horse. But she was a doll. He played with her and rode her and just enjoyed her.

SC: How old do you think he was then?

RC: Oh, we was long **about** ten, twelve, fourteen, fifteen years old.

SC: Do you remember my aunt, Nadine, the girl in that family?

RC: Yes, I do. She was about the same age as my sister.

SC: Did she and your sister play together? Was their house very far from yours?

RC: It was about five miles . . . six miles through the woods.

SC: That was a good ways. You said the Kites lived out there, and Mr. Dampler had a grist mill. And George Cauthen. What other families do you remember there when you were growing up?

RC: Oh, golly. Well, right across the road from us was George Chesser and he and his wife, which was a sister of my granddaddy's. His name was Celie and they raised a big family of boys and girls on this small farm that they owned there. And, just back—a little ways back there behind—was a family by the name of Thomas, "Bo" Thomas, which is pretty close. Which is between where we lived and where my great grandfather originally settled. Which is now on a paved road going from—I don't recall the number of it—but it's going from 327 to 121.

SC: Mr. Cellon, what do you remember about the interior of that house?

RC: Wait a minute now.

SC: Oh, you're gonna tell me something about the road?

RC: No, there's a whole lots more people that I remember very . . . vividly.

SC: Good. Who were they?

RC: On which is it now, Hwy 121, which was nothing but a main road from Gainesville to Lacrosse, Worthington Springs, Lake Butler, and what have you. Mr. Kite lived on that road. First Mr. Bill Dampler, which is now the country store. And then further towards Gainesville was Mr. Joe Kite, and close by was George Dampler and Mr. John Stickland—Mr. "Sign" Stickland. And Mr. Belton Conley. Now that brings you back to the intersection of a road there which come directly from Hague east to 121.

SC: Did most—

RC: Now wait.

SC: Good, go ahead. Tell me.

RC: Mr. Conley moved to South Florida, and Parrish bought that place and his son, J.F. lives close by there now. Back on the other road leading off at the country store towards Monteocha, which was a main road for the generations, was the Dampler Family. And then the Rogers, and there was a guy by the name of Parker. Owned the farm where John Parrish lives now. And then you go on out there a ways and you come to a guy by the name of Boyd. And Mr. Frank Cauthen, right down the road there a little ways, which we've already talked about, and a brother of his, Johnny Cauthen. North of that, well, then you come

into the Thomases and it's so many of them until I wouldn't attempt to name them. But dropping back up the road which I referred to as this main traveled road—goes out toward Monteochea, was Wade Thomas. And the Kirbys. Then you went into the Waldo area and people out there, and the main person I remember of that area was a guy by name of Claude Sparkman that owned the turpentine still and all that pertaining to it and later he sold that to a fellow by the name of Mize. Mr. Mize is buried in a cemetery north of Fairbanks in a pine grove thicket which he planted, had planted, and such as that, for his burial ground. And the Eddys over there. But then come back to where I lived, and go toward LaCrosse. There was a family—Joe Harris—that lived at the corner there where you turn to Antioch Church now. The house don't stand no more. Tom Harris was one of Mr. Joe Harris' boys that settled there. Further on up behind the church was a fellow by the name of Feagle. He was a sawmill man and if he could find any hay wire, he would keep his operation going.

SC: Field?

RC: Feagle. F E A G L E. Buoie Feagle. Now, further on out there was the Casons, Metz, and Alger. Then you're running into that Thomas neighborhood. But we'll come back to 121 and head towards Alachua, towards LaCrosse. Was a guy lived in that area, Jeff Parker, and a guy by the name of Bill Harris, but he was a young man. He was age of my father.

SC: This is toward Hainesworth?

RC: No, this is towards LaCrosse.

SC: Oh.

RC: John Stokes, and then we enter into the community of LaCrosse and my remembrance of LaCrosse. I've already mentioned this guy Walter Parker. He run a store in LaCrosse, originally he run a cotton gin in LaCrosse. And a man, Henry Parker, which ran a big store.

SC: Where was the store, Mr. Cellon?

RC: There is a building there now, which is just north of the post office. Some lady lives there now. But that store is no more operating.

SC: Where was the cotton gin?

RC: The cotton gin was further on up the street, which was a dirt road, but then there was several little stores, there in LaCrosse, but none of the importance of Mr. Parker's.

SC: I want to ask you something about the countryside. When you described these families and named them, in your mind you were going up and down roads. You said that the house you grew up in, your family's first house, and the house my daddy grew up in, George Cauthen's house, were very much alike. What about all those other families? Were their houses similar?

RC: Various kinds. Some were better and some were not as good.

SC: For instance . . .

RC: Mr. John Strickland had a very modern-day house of that time, very elaborate house. No, I wouldn't say there was any real standout houses, but there was, according to that day and time, there was a lot of good houses. There's lots of people that lived in log houses. I have seen multitudes of people go to Antioch Church riding mules, riding horses, driving mules to carts, even driving oxen to

carts and those people that drove those oxens to cart, they farmed with those oxens because that's the best that they could afford at that time and in specific, a man by the name **of** McKinney was one of those men—which was a fine man but he . . . There's another family I left off of there, Mr. Breeden, that lived in that area out there. And I didn't mention the school as I was passing by there.

SC: What was the name of the school?

RC: Antioch School.

SC: Where was it located?

RC: It is just south of the Antioch Road, leaving 121. It's on 121 in a big cluster of pines there, and it's lived in now as a house.

SC: The building's still there, Antioch School?

RC: No, it's been torn down and remodeled into a house.

SC: Is that where you went to school?

RC: Yes, it is.

SC: Was it a one-room school?

RC: No, it was a two room school and we had to the eighth grade. All of the young ones up to fourth grade stayed in one room. From the fourth grade up through the eighth stayed in another room. The children that went to that school walked.

SC: From home.

RC: From their homes, which was as far away as Mr. John Strickland or Mr. Thomas' or Rogers', back over in there—and would gather up everybody along the way before they got to the church. Before they got to the school, well, you had your school walking that road getting to the school.

SC: So they were all together.

RC: And the same thing applied coming from the other end because everybody just congregated there, the nearest way to the school because they was all walking. They all carried their lunch—and they didn't call it lunch, they called it dinner—in anything in the world that would hold groceries. And it was mostly grits and ham, and meat, biscuits, beans . . . of that nature. And at noontime we'd all get out there in the playground and spread our dinner and dig a hole in the ground and line it with paper and pour syrup in there and sop our biscuit out that hole of syrup. And we had a good time and enjoyed it. But, you couldn't get a kid to do that today.

SC: Why did they dig the hole and line it with paper and pour the syrup in it?

RC: They didn't want to pour the syrup in their bucket or their basket, or such as that.

SC: Why didn't they just pour it on their biscuit?

RC: Oh, you'd waste too much thataway. You didn't waste nothing in them days.

SC: So you dug a hole and lined the hole with paper.

RC: Right.

SC: What kind of paper?

RC: Any kind of paper you had.

SC: And then who supplied the syrup?

RC: You brought it from home.

SC: Oh. It must have been a little hole, wasn't it?

RC: Oh, yes! It was just a little cup-size hole. But . . . then you asked who supplied the syrup. Now in them days, we didn't have no gimmies. It all come from Papa and Mama.

SC: What kind of bucket did you carry your food in?

RC: Any kinda bucket, from a lard bucket to a store-bought dinner pail. Or even the girls had beautiful baskets, so on and so forth.

SC: Did your little sister have a beautiful basket?

RC: At that time, I'm not talking about my sister. Them school days was before my sister, and by the time she came along going to school, Antioch School had been discontinued. As was Rose Hill School, back on there towards the Cauthens, and those kids were being bused to the school at LaCrosse.

SC: Now before you leave Antioch School, let me ask you, who do you remember walking along the road with on the way to Antioch School?

RC: [laughter] Well, the families of those older people that I've already spoken about living there. All of their families, and in detail.

SC: Did you have a special friend?

RC: All of us was friends and enemies because we fought going to school, and we fought after we got to school, and we fought on the way home from school.

SC: My goodness. Did you have a special enemy?

RC: No particular one, but if he wanted to fight, we'd fight.

SC: How did you fight in those days?

RC: With your fists.

SC: Did you ever get hurt badly?

RC: Oh, no. No, the others would stop it before it got that stages but you just had a plain, clear fist fight. No sticks, or no knives, or no guns, or no nothing. We were humans.

SC: Do you ever remember anybody getting real mad, especially, or getting hurt?

RC: Well the Thomases were just absolutely antagonistic to the Cellon boys, and course they had their sides, and the different groups that would favor each family, but there was one of them boys . . . that was fighting all the time: Cellons and Tomas, or the Cellons and the Damplers, or the Cellons and Dawsons. I haven't mentioned Dawson before, but they were just ordinary kids' arguments and fights.

SC: Was Connie Dawson in your age group?

RC: Connie Dawson. I don't know anything about him. Now he wasn't involved in any of my carrying-on. The Dawson family that I'm thinking about is a widow lady that had two boys. She moved in the country and married a fellow by name of Fowler, which **she** lived with. No, next-door neighbors to us. But both of those boys . . . are dead now.

SC: Mr. Cellon, how many children went to Antioch School? How large were all the combined grades?

RC: I would say from 50 to 75.

SC: My goodness that's a lot.

RC: Yes, ma'am.

SC: That's a lot of children.

RC: And two teachers taught them.

SC: Who were those teachers?

RC: We had different teachers different years, but two teachers that I remember very vividly was Love girls; they was from Trenton. And one of eventually wound up to be Kim Rogers' wife. Then we had Reba. Oh, we had some good teachers and I wouldn't try to name them, because I really and truly didn't elaborate on that.

SC: When you left Antioch School, then, did you start at LaCrosse School?

RC: Yes, ma'am.

SC: Do you remember the first day at LaCrosse School?

RC: Yes, ma'am.

SC: What was it like?

RC: Just a new kid in the neighborhood is what it amounted to. But I didn't go to LaCrosse School but about one year. Long in those days there was a time here that all of the schools in the country didn't operation, from pure money standpoint. And that's what brought about this consolidation. I went there one year and then I was bused to Alachua School, and then I finished my high school education at Alachua.

SC: So you finished twelfth grade at Alachua?

RC: That's correct. In 1928.

SC: Do you remember what grade you went to at . . . LaCrosse?

RC: I went there in the—finishing out the eighth grade. I went to Alachua in the ninth grade.

SC: Who were some of your teachers in Alachua?

RC: Miss Dew, and Miss Peacock, and an agricultural teacher by the name of Bryan, and another by the name of Williams, and oh, Mrs. Worthington and her husband was principal of the school, M.O. Worthington at that time.

SC: Was that Miss Zell or Miss Bernie [Dew]?

RC: Both of them, but I'm speaking about Miss Bernice. She was a lovely lady.

SC: What do you remember about her?

RC: Anything that's good, I remember it, because she didn't do anything bad.

SC: She was real thin, wasn't she?

RC: She was a very thin lady, but her sister, Zell, was big as all outdoors.

SC: They looked like twins, but one was real thin, and one was real big.

RC: No, I wouldn't say they looked anything alike.

SC: No?

RC: Miss Zell changed her looks a whole lot. Miss Bernice didn't make any change, because if she'd made a change, well, she'd have blown away.

SC: [Laughter] Mr. Cellon, let me go back to your Antioch School and your Antioch Church. Were there other churches besides Antioch Church, or did most people go to church at Antioch First Baptist?

RC: In LaCrosse, there was a Methodist Church, and there was a Baptist Church, and we were christened and baptized as Methodists, but we spent more time in the Baptist Church than we did in the Methodist Church. We only had services at the Methodist Church once a month, and we went there for Sunday School each Sunday morning, and then we went to Antioch Church. I'm wrong there. We went to Sunday School once a month, and the other three Sundays we went to church

at Antioch, and they had their Sunday School in the afternoon. Church services in the morning. And as I described we kids walking to school, you would just see that many modes of transportation going to church from these different routes.

SC: Did they bring food and just stay all day, go to church in the morning, and then all eat together, and then go to Sunday School?

RC: No, because that ain't the way that they did it. They had dinner on the grounds several times a year, but then normally, when the service was over—which had been prearranged by the families involved—you would find five or six following a certain man home, and they was all gonna eat and have dinner with him. And then another group going another way and another group.

SC: Did they all go and eat and then come back for Sunday School?

RC: Yes.

SC: And did they eat—

RC: Not all of them. But all of the younguns did, and some of the elderly.

SC: Do you remember being at Sunday School at Antioch?

RC: Very vividly, and I remember very vividly attending church there because when Mama got us ready to go to church, we went to the bathroom—which was out in the woods, or out in the outside toilet, or around the smokehouse, or somewhere or another. And we got a glass of water, and we got a dipper of water out the water bucket, and we got something to eat. And when we got to the church house, Mama lined all us boys up on the seat in front of she and Papa. And we stayed there like statues. And we didn't cry and beg for something to eat, and

squirm around and got to go to the bathroom, and such as that. We sat there like statues.

SC: Do you remember a time when somebody didn't sit there like a statue?

RC: Not in my family.

SC: Who do you remember misbehaving? Did you misbehave?

RC: I would [laughter] slip over and pinch Roy on the leg, something [laughter] like that.

SC: How did Roy like that?

RC: He couldn't do much about it [laughter] because he couldn't hit. He would return the pinch, or something like that. We, you know, just pulled every prank that we could get by with, but Mama didn't let us get by with nothing.

SC: You had to do something for your boredom while the preacher was preaching.

RC: No, we paid attention to the preacher.

SC: Who was the preacher?

RC: Different ones. Oh, I remember guy by name of Norris and guy by name of Bug.

SC: What do you remember about Preacher Norris?

RC: He was a big-winded preacher. He could preach until sundown in the evening if somebody didn't pull his coattail.

SC: Did they pass the collection plate each Sunday?

RC: [Laughter] Well, **the** Gertrude, **my wife**, says that she says that the Baptists don't hold closed communion now, but back in those days the Baptists at Antioch used closed communion.

SC: What is that?

RC: When they take communion service, the deacons of that church passed the wine and bread only to Baptist people, and they made a very specific effort to keep it out of the reach of Mama and Papa because they thought they might steal some of it. But, when they passed the collection plate . . .

SC: [Laughter]

RC: . . . which was a different time, they rubbed the chin of both of them with the collection plate, hoping they'd put something in. Which they did. But that was all right. We was visiting in the Baptist Church, and they had their rules and regulations and . . . I married a Baptist girl and she's just as good a Baptist as I am a Methodist. And I'm still a Methodist, but when our child—when we got married, we decided we was going to church somewhere. So, we went to the Baptist Church at Hague. We got married in [19]32 and we moved here to Hague in [19]35 and at that time, this church was not open . . . My wife and two or three other ladies . . . they started it. My wife and two or three other ladies of this community got this church open and held services, and from that day to this, this church has always had services, some of it twice a month. And now it's full time, or each Sunday. But we decided that we would come to Hague Baptist Church because I am a firm believer that a community that doesn't have a church and doesn't have a school, is a very poor community. And we lost our school by this consolidation, and the Methodist Church in LaCrosse was closed, and our membership [was] moved to Alachua Methodist Church. But I didn't see any reason for us to drive from here to Alachua when I was a Methodist and she was a Baptist, and she was a better Baptist than I was a Methodist. So we stayed

here and when our child came along, well then, he went with us to church, and naturally he became a Baptist, which was agreeable with me. And I'm real proud of the activities that he takes with his church now.

SC: Now you and Mrs. Cellon moved here in 1932?

RC: No . . .

SC: 1935.

RC: We moved to Hague in 1935.

SC: Now that was not this piece of property here, but a house further toward Gainesville, right? Where was the first house that you live in the Hague area?

RC: We lived in a house across the railroad tracks, north of the railroad tracks, which belonged to McColskey Brothers Turpentine Operation, which was operating in Hague under the supervision of Mr. S.F. Hardee.

SC: Why did you move over here?

RC: I hooked up with my brother, Lindley, in operation.

SC: What kind of work was Lindley doing?

RC: He was farming.

SC: What kind of crops?

RC: All truck crops and . . . general crops.

SC: What were your responsibilities?

RC: At that time, I had anything, anything. Oh, I've seen the time that I'd hitch up sixteen mules, and they'd be out of the lot before sunrise, and the men that followed those mules, all of our labor, they was here before sunrise. And they all walked.

SC: This was about 1935. Did you raise tobacco over here?

RC: No. We never raised tobacco because we was too lazy for tobacco. There was some tobacco raised in this area, but we raised Irish Potatoes, cucumbers, beans, eggplants, sweet potatoes, corn, peanuts, and peppers.

SC: Were they packed and shipped from the Hague Depot?

RC: Right.

SC: That was in the [19]30s.

RC: Right. Right.

SC: What do you remember most about the [19]30s?

RC: We got married in [19]32 and we took our honeymoon to Lake City, and we spent the night in the Powell Hotel in Lake City. That was on Sunday. It was the day of Gertrude's Baccalaureate sermon. We came home on Monday morning and she graduated on Monday night, and it was colder than a well digger's butt. And when I got home from that trip, I had ten cents.

SC: What you do with all your money?

RC: Hell, I didn't have nothing to spend to start with . . . the reason we didn't go no further than Lake City.

SC: Did they call Lake City "Alligator"?

RC: No, they called it Lake City. It was Alligator Pond there, was all that I remember.

SC: Near Lake City?

RC: Yes.

SC: How'd you get to Lake City?

RC: A dirt road leading out of Alachua going to High Springs and on through Columbia County into Lake City.

SC: What kind of conveyance did you use?

RC: For the conditions of 1932, I'll have to explain it this way: I got out of high school in [19]28 and I went to farming with my daddy, and I made a pot of money that year. An when Papa settled with me, he says, now Ralph, this is your part of the crop. I wanna give you some good advice. He says, you have done wonderful this year. We have done good. But now you not gone do this good every year. Now you better put some of this aside for those years that we don't do too good. So, I, like every young man in the community that could afford one, and so on, so forth, I had to have me an automobile. So I go to Alachua to Enneis Motor Company and I buy the best, most expensive Ford automobile that Ford made at that time, and that was a Ford Sport **Cabriolet** Coupe with a rumble seat in back, and all of the ornaments and such that would go with it. And that total package cost me \$724.

SC: Um-hm.

RC: Now that was the top of the line, but you could have bought a Ford automobile for \$500 then. But, anyway, I drove that car and I didn't take my daddy's advice because I **spreed** around and had a good time and such as that, and then I traded automobiles when I decided to get married, and I didn't want to put my bride in an old, wore out, ragged, beat-up car. So, I trade4d automobiles, but I had to trade in Trenton for the best price. And I bought a 1932 two-door sedan from Tate Motor Company in Trenton.

SC: How come Enneis couldn't match their price?

RC: Darling, I don't know. That was horsetraders' business in all of that days.

SC: Enneis hadn't been in Alachua very long then.

RC: I won't say how long Mr. Ennis had been in Alachua, but Mr. Enneis was very nice to me. I don't have any complaints about that trade. The only thing about it was that I couldn't pay for this car. To Mr. Tate, or to Mr. Enneis, or to anybody that I'd traded with. I bought it on time and I gave him two notes for it. One note due in July, and another note in September, because that would correspond to the dates of my crops that I thought I was **gone** be able handle very nicely.

SC: Um-hm.

RC: But then . . . it didn't work out thataway. So when this first note came due, I went to Mr. Tate and told him that I couldn't pay him. He was in as tight a circumstances as I was, and everybody else in this area, because that was just before the real Depression.

SC: Um-hm.

RC: He said, well, Ralph, the only way that I can extend is I'll have to have a little bit more collateral. He didn't have nothing as collateral then, except the car. He says, you think you'll be able to pay me in September? I says, yes sir. Working on faith. I gave him a chattel mortgage on a pair of mules for additional security. When September come, well, I couldn't pay that. I talked him out of taking my mules at that time and taking possession, but then later on, after the wedding, the date come around for me to do something with Mr. Tate and I was just as broke as a **hehant** in hell. And I go to—which I have always made a practice of

doing—go to my creditors before the due date, and make some restoration before the due date and he says, well Ralph, there's nothing I can do except—I hate to do it—but I'll have to replace, repossess the car. I said, well I understand that Mr. Tate, you've been very gracious to me, and such as that. I says what about the pair of mules? He said, well that was our trade, wasn't it? I said yes sir. He says, yeah, I'll have to get those, too. He begin talking about the day that he'd come get the car, and I says, no sir. You ain't coming to get my car because I'm gone bring my car to you. And so I took that car and that pair of mules and I carried them to Mr. Tate and I thanked him for his graciousness and I come home the best way I could, and that's the way that Gertrude and myself started, right down at the bottom. If there was anything lower than the bottom, well, we was there. And I, in order to buy groceries then . . . You didn't have no money, so you could shell a little corn, take a few potatoes, and a little bit of meat, and go to the store and trade them for the absolute necessities that you had to have and then that guy—the man that run the store—would trade those commodities to the guy that supplied him with his groceries, and that's the way that we all got along at that day and time because it wasn't no welfare and no social security and all of that stuff then. And in order to live I got a job with the Gulf Life Insurance Company, and they sent me to Ocala, and in that meantime Gertrude had become pregnant and she had that baby while we was living in Ocala. And I worked that Gulf Life Insurance debit down there on a salary and the commission that I made—which I didn't make any commissions because I didn't do no business—I did good to collect my debit.

SC: What year was it that you lived in Ocala?

RC: 1934.

SC: And what year was Ralph Jr. born?

RC: 1934.

SC: And one thing we don't have on this tape is the year you were married.

RC: April the 24<sup>th</sup>, 1932.

SC: And your wife's full name?

RC: My wife's full name: Gertrude Gay Cellon.

SC: When you say you were in Ocala and you had to work "the debit," what does that mean?

RC: That means that the Gulf Life Insurance Company had an office there in Ocala with about four men working out of that office, and each one of us had a certain amount of customers to collect from weekly. We would start off and I had a certain area that I went on Monday, and a certain area I went on Tuesday, and a certain area I went on Wednesday, and on Thursday we come into the office and made up our report, and then Friday, then we got out and tried to sell new business. And on Saturday, Sunday, we could do what we wanted.

SC: Is that the way you made it through the Depression? In this insurance job?

RC: I made groceries, and I made a little bit of arrangements about my baby, along and along. Dr. Maines didn't charge us but \$50 for delivering that baby and taking care of it for two or three months and the hospital stay, I think was \$48.

SC: Goodness.

RC: And for, for ten days, because God, she was laying flat on her back for a week before she could ever get up, they snatch them up now next day. But anyway, I paid for that doctor and hospital bill with \$8 a ton for corn. Sold it to Mr. Pettit that run a mill in Alachua.

SC: Now were you selling insurance at the same time?

RC: No, I had already made this crop of corn before I went to Ocala, and that money I put up for this purpose.

SC: For the baby.

RC: And \$8 a ton for corn and three cents a pound for hogs. How quick do you think a man could get rich that way?