

Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

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The Samuel Proctor Oral History Program (SPOHP) was founded by Dr. Samuel Proctor at the University of Florida in 1967. Its original projects were collections centered around Florida history with the purpose of preserving eyewitness accounts of economic, social, political, religious and intellectual life in Florida and the South. In the 45 years since its inception, SPOHP has collected over 5,000 interviews in its archives.

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PCM-020

Interviewee: James Forbes

Interviewer: Amanda Noll

Date: July 2, 2010

N: This is Amanda Noll with the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program on July 2, 2010 and I'm here with -

F: Jim Forbes.

N: And thank you so much Mr. Forbes for coming here to talk to us today. I'd like to begin with your early childhood, some of your family history, anything like that.

F: Okay. My father was on the way to the Columbian oil fields after World War I, about 1920, and he stopped off to see his sister. This is his oldest sister who was the wife of a United States Army engineer who had worked in Hickam Field in Hawaii and then had transferred to build Albrook Field on the Canal Zone. He said he dropped off and stayed for thirty-seven years. I learned from his niece that in fact he jumped ship and if her mother, in other words my father's sister, had not known a judge to get him off, he'd have been in jail. But he ended up actually becoming a police officer there for the first six or seven years and then he transferred to a sanitary inspector – let me get back to that. My mother, in 1929, – my father was from Payette, Idaho, my mother was from Bradford, Pennsylvania – had gone to nurse's training and got her R.N. and this was her first job. She liked to travel - she was quite a lovely lady - and she went to Panama to work at Gorgas Hospital and dad was the blind date the first night that she was in Panama. And he said, well some guy said, come on, hey Ray go [out. He didn't want to,] but he did, and they ended up marrying and living happily ever

after. My father, my earliest memories when he went to the sanitary department I must have been four, five, six years old – no, three or four or five before I went to school – we lived in Peter Miguel, or Pedro Miguel, and I remember going out with him, dark night, and we'd drive these little roads out into the deep jungle. All of the sudden we'd come on a black man sitting on a stool, arm exposed, and he'd have a little vial that had chloroform in it, and when a mosquito would land he'd put the vial over the mosquito and kill it and put it in a little bag. And then they collected these all over the isthmus – my dad and other people – and then they'd take them back to the laboratory and they would find out what mosquitoes were there, and if they had an increase in *Anopheles* or in the *Aedes aegypti*, which [transmit] yellow fever, they'd go and put diesel oil on the little lakes and ponds and that would kill the larva when they put their little snouts up they'd be suffocated. So, I remember that. And my dad, at the end of his career, he was one of the experts on malaria and mosquito control in South America because he'd been at it so long. They used to have tropical medicine conferences and he'd talk to the people, et cetera. But he had no education, I mean, high school but that was it. But, after he was doing whatever this was in Peter Miguel he went into Balboa and moved to Balboa, and we lived on Ridge Road near the administration building. Golly, I left for university from there. They moved to another place. They got better quarters because he had better seniority overlooking Albrook Field. But, during World War II he was in charge of garbage collection, so he had to [supervise] all the garbage trucks. They ran trains out to

Summit where they had a big incinerator and he was in charge of that for seven or eight or nine years. Then at the last of his career, he worked out of the Panama Railroad terminus in Panama City itself in a sanitary inspector. My mother, she nursed for a bit at Gorgas Hospital and then she stopped to make babies, and she had two of those. And when World War II came along she went off to work and she was working out in the jungle, at construction sites. She did this, I don't know, five, six, seven years. Both my parents, I see compared to many Zonians who, I've heard some guy say, I've been down here twenty-five years and don't speak a word of Spanish and I'm proud of it, but they took Spanish and were quite fluent. Dad needed it at his business, but less so than mother. Mother was out with construction workers and most of them only spoke Spanish. There were a lot of Jamaicans and Barbadians but they weren't on these jobs, so mom worked in Spanish for five, six, seven, eight years. Now, in the late 1920s my dad invested ten thousand dollars in a coffee finca up in Chiriquí Province in Cerro Punta and lost his tail because [the coffee finca] was too high – it was about six thousand feet – and it was just too cold to grow a lot of coffee. He'd get a couple of cups of coffee beans and you probably need three hundred cups to make a tree worthwhile. So he lost his money, but I remember mother saying that they would go up to. . . trying to think of the name, it's north of David, [Conception] and they would get on horses and they'd go for seventeen hours on horseback up to Volcan. And apparently, he said, we went through this one area at night, I got in at about midnight and, dad said, she had her arms in

the flour barrel making biscuits for everybody, because she was an industrious lady. But, she said, on the way back we saw that it was a very narrow path and the mules or horses, whichever they would be on, would probably bounce once before they landed in the Chiriquí River. It's so steep. But anyhow, another one of my mother's stories is that there was a fellow who was a fugitive from justice – a murderer – and he came by to their house when she was by herself up in Cerro Punta, and she said she fed him coffee, he was the nicest guy in the whole world, but anyhow, all sorts of lovely stories. We spent a lot of our summers at the [Volcan] - I guess it was about 1943 or [19]44 because we couldn't go to the states - we went up to, a fellow named Pablo Brackney owned a construction business in Panama, a friend of my parents, he had a farm up near Volcan towards the Costa Rican border from El Hato, which is the last real town before you get to the Costa Rican border. We went up there I think 1943, 19[44] and he gave my father a lot and dad built a summer home up there. So we spent a lot of time up in Volcan. Of course, we were expected to speak Spanish and we did pretty well. I mean, we took it in school, et cetera. And I still go back to Mexico and think I've gone home because, you know, we're down here often, there are lots of Spanish speaking people here in Florida. So let's see, I've got to get structure. I was a professor thirty-one years and I understand structure [laughter]. So, I was born at Gorgas Hospital in December 19, 1932. Sister was born there July 13, 1935. Both of us graduated from Balboa High School. I was the class of [19]50 and my sister, the class of 19[53]. Well, some of my parents' friends were

Walter and Jessie Lindsay, and he was the chief of the botanical garden at Summit. And my parents hadn't had a college education and both Walter and Jessie had. They'd gone to Washington State College in Pullman, Washington. When I was in high school, I'm not sure how I got into it, but it ended up that it was associated somewhat with the Baptist church that my parents were quite active with – the Balboa Heights Baptist Church – and there was a missionary radio station. I ended up the last year, two years in high school that I would go down and announce on it and pull records and do all the rest of the stuff that needed, and it was really great fun. So I thought I wanted to get into radio speech and Washington State had both a radio speech program, and I got up there and it wasn't terribly interesting, and I ended up switching to agriculture and got a degree in agriculture. But, the reason I went up there is one, that Walter and Jessie Lindsay had graduated and then Bill Zeamer, who was the swim coach [in Blaboa] —because I was on the swim team and the water polo team - he went up to get a masters degree and several of us went up there, myself, a fellow named Don Conner, who was a really good swimmer, and so we ended up because of that reason. I don't think either Don's [parents] or my parents had been to university. Let's see, what else –

N: Well, maybe you could tell me a little bit more about what school was like there?

F: Okay. Well, my kindergarten teacher was Mrs. Onderdonk [laughter]. I've never forgotten the name, lovely lady –

N: That's a good name [laughter].

F: Well, when I went to school - by that time we'd moved from Peter Miguel into Balboa - we walked to school, and because we walked through the botanical garden in Balboa and the elementary school was just at the end of the walk through the botanical garden, we'd walk up to Ridge Road. And so, we did that. I went through six grades there, and then went to junior high school and then to Balboa High School, still in walking distance. I was in a biology class and really enjoyed all of that. In fact, my poor mother, she's scared to death of snakes, and I think between my second and third year, sophomore and junior year, the biology teacher, Mr. Lee, let me bring two boa constrictors home over summer. I got to keep them. She didn't think I should have these eight foot snakes crawling across my back, but they liked it, it was warm [laughter]. But, she was okay about that. I think my wife wouldn't have done it. My wife really doesn't like snakes, so I may have to choose between this current wife of forty-seven years and snakes, and I think I'd go with the wife, but still, snakes were nice. I think probably they'll hear the oral history. Mr. Fischer was a science teacher and everybody, we were talking in our reunion room yesterday just about what a great teacher he was as well as Mr. Lee in biology. We would go out on field trips to Barro Colorado Island and stay the weekend, and you know, go out with howler monkeys. In fact, I was out there one time - we stayed I think it was only one night, maybe two nights - but there was a fellow, I think he was from the Entomology Department at Harvard, and I went out with him and he was tracing army ants and they move at nighttime so we were out in the middle of the bloody jungle, dark, dark, dark

and he had a head lamp on tracing where the army ants were going because what would happen, they would look to where they'd been and then they'd take squares of dirt and count the microbes and the things in them. And where the army ants had been, there were none, and if you go a little bit to the right, you have thousands of them. But, it was really interesting to watch them. Do you know what they are, army ants?

N: Yes -

F: They go and eat everything in their path. But that was just great, I mean, what a thrill for a young guy that likes science. But you had experiences like that. The fellow, name of Fred Wilder, the Spanish teacher I remember, learned a lot of Spanish from that. We took Spanish and then of course we could practice it. When I was coming down on the plane from Vancouver two days ago we had a book of biographies put together for the fiftieth reunion of the class of [19]50 and the class of [19]49. I went through and read and I knew we had good schooling because almost every professor – or school teacher – had a master's degree, like from Columbia and from one other university, some of the best in the world. And, I didn't realize that this is unique until our kids were going to school, et cetera. But I had looked, and I think something like thirteen or fifteen - of the hundred graduates in my class - of the women got Ph.D.s or D.N.s. Well, in 1950 women did not get these high degrees. You know, what do they do? All they got to do is make babies. It just shows a, the quality of our education but also the quality of the parents. A lot of these parents were upwardly mobile. Like my

parents, they didn't have educations but, by God, we were going to have it. And you just see what happened. I mean, the success ratio out of our hundred students compared to the normal high school is unbelievably high.

N: Do you have any idea what caused that?

F: I think a, the parents, this is what causes most things. It's who the stork brings you to. It's the one of the lotteries of life. You get born to parents that aren't terribly useful and don't want you, it's not much fun. You get the parents that want you and really look after you, that's the big thing. I mean, I taught for thirty-five years, and you can tell this. But, in addition to that, I think that plus the quality of the school education was such that you were expected to go to high school and it was, I think, 60, 70 percent of our class – maybe 50 percent – went on to university, and a normal class here in the states or in Canada, 20, 30 percent. So, a much higher incidence. And a, it's parents, but b, it's also I think the encouragement that one got from the teachers. That's the only thing I know, I mean, might be a lot of behavioral science because I teach marketing. When you look at a lot of this about the family background and what it does to the children. We were just lucky. I got the red stork. Life is good [laughter].

N: You mentioned earlier that your parents were involved in the Baptist Church down in the Canal Zone. Can you talk a little bit about that and church life?

F: Well, I think dad went on sufferance [laughter]. Mother, she fell in love with, I think the preacher's name was Bibi. I never thought very much of him– he beat his wife for one thing, but she wouldn't believe this. It was very much that life in

the Canal Zone revolved around a church group, often is one of the big ones, and the fraternal groups, like the Elks and the Masons, et cetera. And so, we were close to the Baptist Church. My mother had a Christian upbringing stronger than my father. But, he went under sufferance, and she, I think she played the piano a bit. I know that my sister, who became a pianist, she used to play the organ when she was in high school for a lot of the services . . . Other than that, as I get older I get less and less religious and more against religion so I guess I'm not a good person to talk to this about. But a lot of great fun because the kids that I was with in my peer group went to the church. So I don't know, I think that's about all that I can remember.

N: Was your father a part of any other groups? Any fraternal groups?

F: Dad was a Mason, but he never participated very much. Oh well, he had a real love – very, very intelligent guy – he was the president of the Peter Miguel ____ (18:46 elapsed) ____ the Summit golf course. The Peter Miguel Golf Course built on the Peter Miguel locks, on the far side. Right after World War II - I think they were having the canal expansion because they weren't built - they moved to Summit and dad was the president before and then he shepherded the move to Summit. He was the president of the golf course seven, or eight, or ten years. Scratch golfer. I didn't golf until I came to North America. I was a swimmer and so we had other things to do. But he was very involved in that, and that took a lot of his time. I mean, my mother was a golf widow on the weekends. Having said that, he was a good dad. He did lots of things but he played golf on the

weekends – at least on Sunday, I'm not sure what happened on Saturday, that's a long time ago, remember [laughter] that's sixty years plus. A lot of these memories are fading, but that's why you're doing an oral history until we really lose our minds.

N: Exactly. Get a nice record for you guys. Can you talk a little bit maybe about the war experience for your family, [inaudible], and you?

F: Oh yeah. I remember and so does David Robles - who's down here, we were talking last night - December 7 because we had some people from the states who lived in Panama, a young couple were at our house for dinner on the Sunday night, and we heard the news and my dad quickly took them home, mom gave us a bath, and they turned the lights off because they were afraid the Japanese were going to attack that night. So they had no electricity until the next morning. And then it was a great place to be during the war because you had all the soldiers. We used to go out, the camps had little identifying [aircraft] models for the people to identify them, used to get those from soldiers. And I lived near Quarry Heights, which is the control station for all the Panama area and during the war I had a paper route on Quarry Heights. So, I used to deliver papers every day up there. We had air raid shelters and a couple of times you were called out to go to the air raid shelters. I don't remember it being terribly frequent. But I remember – I think the Battle of the Coral Sea - it was the Yorktown or one of the aircraft carriers were just decimated, big holes in the sides, and it came into port and we went down and saw and saw all the big holes in the side of the boat, lots

of people were killed on it, and it was on the way to the East Coast of the United States to get repaired. I remember that happening. I remember hearing about submarine patrols, mainly from the Atlantic side and the Caribbean. I also remember that they used to do ration runs to Jamaica for the various officers' clubs in there and what they'd bring back is a thousand cases of rum [laughter]. I mean, you know, why not? What else? Well, as scouts we would go up to – the names are escaping me – Rio Hato Air Force Base and have a scout week, a week in camp, but it was on the military base. It's about sixty, seventy, eighty miles north of Panama . . . I had a friend over in Albrook Field, I used to go over there all the time and eat and you'd get on the little jitney, the bus, and go over and see him and come back. I guess that's it. Really, so much happening there that the activity was unbelievable and as kids we didn't really realize what was happening. We heard of it, but you don't realize that people are really dying and this type of thing. Much worse than what we had. We had a pretty nice existence.

N: And what did your mother think about going back to work? You said she went back to work around that time?

F: Oh, I think she loved it. She's such a people person. People loved her. She went back to work and then she became – after the war was over – she went to work at the Balboa Dispensary. She was the dispensary nurse there for seven or eight years. Then after I'd left and gone to university, she became the [Balboa High] school nurse from then until I guess 1955, [195]6, or [195]7 when they retired she was school nurse. So, all these people know Mrs. Forbes. She's just a really nice

lady, never met a stranger. Came up British Columbia, little kids were both small. Mother would go out and she says, do you know Mrs. Smith has had a hysterectomy? We didn't even know who the hell Mrs. Smith was, but she'd go down the block – but anyhow, everybody liked her. I think she was really happy, and she loved work. She liked people a lot and they liked her so it was good meld and they used the money and it was good.

N: Did you take vacations to the states?

F: Yes.

N: What was that like being raised in the Canal Zone and coming back to the United States?

F: That's what one did. Well, it's cool compared to Panama. You get up there and get into New York. Normally we'd go in the summertime, but even then the difference in temperature was really quite noticeable. Some friends of ours, fellow name of Hiter, he was the captain of one of the big dredges. He was from Northern New York State, near a town called Parishville and [in] [19]41 he talked my parents into going up to a little lake called Joe Indian Pond, which is near Parishville, and Potsdam, New York. And they had a summer house up there. I think it may have belonged to the family. But anyhow, we went up there and dad bought a pretty rundown summer house and then we couldn't go for three or four years because of war. But in the interim, they won the lottery – I think about three or four thousand dollars – and bought a much better place, sight unseen, but they'd seen it before and so we spent two or three summers up there. I know I

came back from Washington State the summer of [19]51 or [19]52 and was there, but we'd been up there at least one more time. In fact, I went to Harvard Business School in another era and my wife and I came up there with our two children [the summer of 1958] and a couple of mates from Harvard visited us on the way north to Canada to teach tennis. But, we've had very fond memories of Joe Indian Pond, it's a lovely spot. So, when we went up we would also go to Pennsylvania, where my mother was from and visit relatives there, [it] was great, meeting my big cousins, you know were ten, or twelve, or fourteen years older than I. I know two of them had been in the war, been wounded. It was a place called Bradford, Pennsylvania, and it was really a pleasure to go back and see Aunt Sadie and Uncle Art. And Uncle Art was a blacksmith. Have you ever seen Zippo cigarette lighters?

N: Yeah.

F: He made the first dies for Zippo cigarette lighters in the late 1930s at his forge. You know, little vignettes of history that don't matter in the scheme of things [laughter]. But, we wouldn't go to see Aunt Sadie, as we couldn't . . .

N: So how did traveling in the United States compare to the summers you spent in Panama?

F: I don't understand the question.

N: You said you had a summer house in Panama as well?

F: Oh well, yeah, well all we'd do was get in the car and go for eight or nine hours up to Volcan and then we just had a great time in the summer. Dad would get a

month off. The difference in temperature was unbelievable. Some of the nicest climates in the world, the tropical alpine all the way up through Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico. Three, or four, or five thousand feet the humidity drops, it goes down to what, not very cold, you know, fifty degrees, maybe forty-five if you're up really high, at night, and up to sixty-five, seventy, low humidity. Magnificent climate. Actually, in 1975 I had a sabbatical and we took a camper from Vancouver to Panama and back over ten months, and we took our two youngest children - at the time they were six and nine - all the way down and back and we stayed in Volcan for a whole month. The Audubon Society of Florida owned a house there they used for people to go down to stay when they were studying birds, and so I rented that house for a month and just had a spectacular time. I just love the area, and of course speaking Spanish it was no problem this way and we had a nice time all the way down. It's one of the high points I think of my wife and my vacations is doing that. But, let's see if I answered - sort of straying off. Well, once we had the cabin we didn't do anything else but go there. There's no reason to go other places. I think it was only two or three different years we did it before I left, but my parents would go up there. But, I remember I slaughtered hogs [laughter]. Take a degree in animal husbandry. But I came down, I think between my first and second or second and third - it had to be second and third or third and fourth year at Washington State - and I'd taken a course in meats, and I helped a guy slaughter the hog and butcher the hog. It was good. The mozo - I remember his name was Juanelo - really neat

guy, used to travel, we'd travel up in the jungle with him, we'd climb way up near Cerro Punta going and - not sure why he was going up there - but I remember going with him. I remember taking – this is nasty to tell you – I had .22s, and we were shooting orchids that were hanging from the trees, shooting them down as target practice. We didn't realize it was ecologically unfriendly. At that time there were lots of orchids. But, we slaughtered the hogs. That was fun. And I remember we used to either take a horse or walk into El Hato and buy groceries. There's word that I've only seen people use it in Panama, it's called pesuñia. Pesuñia means a little bit you get from the storekeeper if you're buying things for your mother. They give you a little piece of gum or something. We had a great time going with Juanelo to shop, because my parents let me go off with him – he and his wife were just lovely people – and he was just a local laborer but a nice guy. I remember two or three summers when I was up there that I spent a lot of time with Juanelo, and nice people. And my wife and I went back in 2000, and we were there for a month or so. We rented a car and went up to Volcan and then around to Boquete and just had the loveliest time. People, the Panamanian people, I just think are so sweet and so friendly. We just had the loveliest time. We went to a place called Chepo and Chitré – there's a peninsula half the way up there to David, and we went out there, it's off the main road. I'd never been there so we were going to go out and see it. And there is this lovely restaurant, outdoors because it doesn't need to be closed, looking down on the town, and this fellow was serving us – he was forty-five, fifty years old – and he said, I'm

from here but I went to Panama for ten or fifteen years, and then I came back, es *paraíso*, "it's paradise." Well, ok, for him, it was but he just so happened to be back in the hometown, but we had experiences like that all up and down the coast going up there. We spent, I'd say, some time in Volcan, then we went around to Boquete, and thing I liked in Boquete was the coffee. It is so good. We were having five and six cups a day. I used to use milk and cream, [but there used] nothing because it tasted so good. A Boquete coffee, five or six weeks ago, got the highest price for coffee ever paid in the world, 173 dollars a pound. They paid sixty-eight or sixty-six thousand dollars for a big bag of coffee, a Japanese guy, he was on the news some place. Awesome, and I can see why, the stuff is so good. And I don't know if you know, but the high altitude coffees are the ones that have all the bouquet and aromas but they're very expensive. They mix them with the robustas that are grown in the lowland areas like over in Africa or in Brazil, et cetera, and that's normal coffee because you can't afford, most people wouldn't afford, coffee. You can buy it but then - and coffees from the highlands of Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico are a world class thing. It's like the Kenyan coffees and the ones from Hawaii, from Maui, but same thing, same class, same level, very expensive stuff but not 173 dollars a pound. The Japanese do this just so they can show off. But, let's see, I don't know, all sorts of little things. Oh, I remember, I went up to scout camp when they had VJ Day, it was August 1945 and we were at a scout camp and I remember this was in El Hato and a big celebration because the war was finally over. I remember we

walked up on the volcano on a big hiking mission – I dropped out, my dad gave me all this weight and I couldn't handle it. We used to go up there and shoot pigeons. They had very large wood pigeons, just yummy to eat, and we shot those but everybody did. What else . . . Are these interviews always this disjointed?

N: A little bit.

F: Yeah.

N: Memories just keep flowing back, I mean –

F: That's right. It comes out of thin air here.

N: It's great to hear though. That's what we want. Can you talk a little about your experience going to college? Was it difficult going so far away from home?

F: Well, mine was made probably less difficult than others because this fellow Walter Lindsay, who was the head of the botanical garden, his wife had a sister living in Spokane and so my transition was such. My father had one of his sisters – he's one of eleven, I think – lived near Boise, Idaho so I flew up and they met me, and I spent about a week there then I flew up to Pullman when school started and I had to get a job – I worked in student union and other things – but then I went up to see Mac and . . . I forget the name [McCabe], but anyhow she was the sister of Jessie Lindsey and her husband. Lovely, lovely people, and I was their son. But in addition to that, it was relatively easy because my father was from the area and the first Christmas I went down and stayed with, I called her . . . I forget the name [his niece, Grace Powell], she's ninety-nine years old

and doesn't have much mind left and lives down in West Linn, Oregon. But, her second son was born five months before I was so we were the same age and the son had a girlfriend, again within a month or two of his birth, so I went down and the first Christmas they took me skiing. I couldn't believe people in their right minds would go out in the snow, so I skied twice and then I gave it up. That was enough. But, it was easier for me. I don't remember any great pangs of homesickness. There was a lot to do. We'd done a lot of travelling as children, more so than most people would do in North American, so we had a lot of experience travelling. My parents were very supportive of me going to university, so I knew that that's what I was supposed to be doing. I think I found a girlfriend relatively quick, so that helped out. After the first six months, I joined a fraternity, so you had that group as a support group . . . I don't remember it being very difficult. It was new, but I'd been to the states a lot – five, six, seven times over the years – and so the worst part was, cold. I couldn't believe how cold it was going up to swimming practice at eight in the morning, minus twenty-five degrees. I didn't have a scarf so I ended up taking one of the towels and putting it around my head to keep my ears warm. This was tough stuff. I had long johns on and these guys would laugh at me for having on long johns, and well, you're out of your skull, you're freezing to death. I still use them when it gets cold. But I have a daughter who lives where it gets minus fifty – well, she actually died a year and a half ago – but when I go up to visit Sue, went up for the funeral, I had

long johns on because it was minus thirty. It wasn't a tough transition. I'm sure sometimes I was a little bit homesick but not a lot. It was good.

N: Did your sister leave the Canal Zone after she –

F: Yeah, my sister came up actually to Washington State and she left after a year and went to Denver and married a fellow in the Air Force there. Got an R.N. like my mother had. She was homesick or something, I don't know why she went back to Denver, but she did. I don't know, but she came up as well. But actually, we had a number of people, a fellow named Jerry [Ashton] - his dad was the British consul in Guayaquil, Ecuador then became the consul in Panama – and Jerry was on the swimming team, he was a year or two older than us. Jerry went up along with Don Conner and me – I think that was the three of us that went up because Bill Zeamer had gone up there to get his masters – and Jerry was a good backstroker, and so he went up and he got a masters degree of some sort. I've been trying to find him for the last six years. He just dropped out of sight. And I've been in contact with his cousin who is an ambassador from Bolivia to the Netherlands and she's been looking like I have, we've been trying to find him. No trace. Because he and I were very good friends. We did a lot together, both in Panama and up in Pullman. So, there we go. Next [laughter].

N: How long did you parents stay down in the Canal Zone?

F: Until they retired, and I'm trying to think . . . [19]53, [19]54, [19]55, something like [19]56. I'm not quite sure. He retired. He went to Arizona and my mother – I say she's the sparkplug in the family – when she was there as part of mission, there

was a doctor called Dr. Ike who was a surgeon. Every three or four weeks the two of them would fly over to San Blas and hold free clinics for the San Blas Indians. So when they retired, the parents went to Arizona. But then Dr. Ike had retired and went up and opened a practice up in Coalinga, California which is between Los Angeles and Bakersfield or Fresno, and he enticed my mother to go for several years and become his nurse. They were living in a motor home, an Airstream motor home, so they went up and did that. Then after Ike retired, he went back to Sun City, California and my parents went down to Hemet in their motor home. My dad died in 1963 or [19]64 of cancer, and – when he was in Hemet – then my mother moved to Sun City with her aunt by marriage - had married a fellow who was quite a bit younger than her, she had quite a money, she'd been through two husbands and met this fellow, he was a stockbroker, took great care of her, but he said come on back to Bradford and help me because Marie's getting not well. And they had a place in St. Petersburg, so for two years – actually she was there about eighteen months – and Marie died. She was telling everybody how old she was, she died, said she was eighty-five, she ended up being ninety-three or ninety-four. She died and mother stayed with Elsworth until she died. They ___(43:49)___ and then they moved to Sun City, California after that and were there for twenty-one or two years and she died and he died about two or three years later. I think it was a very platonic relationship, we think. I mean, if you knew Elsworth, you'd be sure it was platonic – he was sort of asexual. But, he squired all the ladies around. My mother and all the

ladies, he just loved driving them around places all over Southern California, but they had a very nice life. I think she lived longer with him than she had with my father, twenty-six years and with dad it was only twenty-three or four. But anyhow, so that's what happened to them. I mean, you see this all over, all the people that live here in Florida. There's no longer a Panama Canal Company that people work for here. A lot have migrated here or to California or Arizona – that's where my parents went – or Texas. Ok, next.

N: Was it hard for your parents to leave, do you think, the Canal Zone?

F: I don't think so. You know, they'd been down there, they had a lot of friends, a lot of family up here. Well actually when they left the zone, my grandmother – my mother's mother – came to live with them for the first four or five years before she died. I think that was tough. Dad didn't appreciate it as much, I don't think neither of them liked it, but they couldn't do anything with Angie, so Angie was there. And they would spend the summers up at Joe Indian Lake, up in New York, and then they'd go back, I guess to Arizona or Florida or something. By that time I was married, had a couple of kids, and I couldn't keep track of them. I had enough problems getting food, and my wife's family, and in my family and trying to keep my head above water. I think probably if I went back I could probably try to trace but I'm not sure what happened. I know that I used it in the summer of [1958] when I was between the two years at Harvard Business School. They weren't up there. It was my wife and I and our two young kids. The people that'd gotten us up there, the Hitters, Mr. Hiter had died but Mrs. Hiter was there. A

fellow named Barney Barlow was in charge of either the Pacific locks or all the locks - I think it was just the Pacific locks - he was the main control operator and ended up being in charge. He was in charge of opening up the St. Lawrence Seaway. Between my two years at Harvard, I went up and I worked in the office for Barney Barlow, something to keep us eating. I remember we got up from Harvard and we got there and I had no money, so I went to Mrs. Hiter and borrowed ten bucks until I got my first check from the St. Lawrence S`SEE IF THIS WORKS00:20:32 Real time eaway Authority. I put the first boat through the St. Lawrence Seaway [laughter]. Simply because I was there at night and somebody needed to take a line when they were just starting to fill it, but that was lots of fun. But it is like home. And actually, last November my wife and I took a trip from Ft. Lauderdale to Los Angeles on a ship. It's the first time I transited the canal, we'd been out there, we'd be down there twice and we'd watch the locks, and we were going to stay an hour, and three hours later we were still standing, it's so fascinating, and this time we got to go through the lock. I think it was about nine or ten, twelve hours, and we only went down for lunch. We stayed out the whole time, it was just so fascinating. I'd like to go and do it again, actually. And the new canal was being built, seeing all of that happening. I knew so much about it. I mean, Captain Heider's dredge was over there, we saw it. The big Hercules crane - I'm sure you know what those are, it's one of the largest cranes in the world - was still there, and I'd seen that. And actually the one that was there was one they bought from Germany after the war, but it looked a lot like the

Hercules - or maybe there were two of them. This is massive engineering and living there – I just read, there's a seminal book on the Panama Canal written 1980, 1990, if you ask anybody they'll know what it is, and I read it before I went down, no, no, my wife bought it for me on the boat and I read it after – I'd known about the feats of engineering. Here you have these hundred ton lock gates that literally float, they were designed about 1912 or [19]13, and they still work. They do maintenance on them but it's unbelievable how good the engineers were that thought this through. I'll tell you, when we went down there in 2000, one of the things that I found very interesting – I became a Canadian and I'm not a big fan of America in many respects anymore – I went down and the United States has done everything, weren't they great? What they fail to tell you, over 50 percent of the earth that had to be moved was moved by the French Canal Company before they went bust. Now they did a lot of very positive things, but if you were down there, the French had done nothing. They'd all died from yellow fever, yet if you read the real history – and this is written by an American, it's a beautiful history – of all the things that had happened when de Lesseps instituted the canal, and this is a very interesting thing, I hear some of the people that I went to school with, just complain about Panama and how bad they are blah, blah, blah, blah. We stole it from them fair and square, because in fact Teddy Roosevelt sent gun boats in the Colon Harbor because the government of Columbia wouldn't agree to the treaty they wanted to do, so they ended up taking it away from them. So, they got it back. And one of the things I'm surprised, going back there after the

transition and it was turned over the Panama, heard these dire predictions from all over the rednecks. It's better for tourists than ever before because they've made it a tourist venue so you can get and see what's happening. It seemed to be running very, very well. It didn't die. I just think they've done a great job, God love them. Here's another one, when I was doing this radio station, HOXO, in Panama in high school, we were just across Fourth of July Avenue into Panama from the zone. I remember one night I met a young fellow, older than me, but ended up he'd got a degree in architecture from Tulane. He came back to Panama and tried to get a job. Because he was Panamanian, they would hire him as a colored worker. He'd get [two] hundred dollars a month compared to [six hundred] dollars a month had he been an American. Actually, one of his classmates – this guy was second or third in his class – this was a guy that was down in the middle or lower, he got hired and this fellow wouldn't accept at the price and so he went into private practice in architecture in Panama, was doing quite fine. But he saw how unfair this was. But this was before we had the Civil Rights Movement and all the rest of it, it was ok. But at the time I thought, that's not fair. Of course, my parents were, I think, quite liberal - they didn't even know this, they wouldn't admit to it but they really were. I mean, the types of values they gave to me and passed on, relatively liberal, surely not redneck – there were lots of those.

N: Can you expand maybe on some of the prejudice that you saw there, from Canal Zone workers, people who'd lived there? And also, maybe you had more

interaction with the Panamanians and I don't know if you experienced some of their feelings towards Americans?

F: Trying to structure the answer . . . I always thought when you went to La Boca or Paraíso or Red Tank - these were all black communities – they were nowhere as wealthy as we were. I felt sorry, and I don't know if the whole idea of racism, if I knew the word at the time when I was experiencing it. But you see these people, for example, my mother had a black man who was the dresser, he'd do all the dressings and stuff in the dispensary – I'm trying to think of his name, just an absolutely lovely guy – his son he sent to the states, and he became a physician and he was murdered in New York out of racism. Here's a kid that [his] dad had put through university and I was just heartbroken for this fellow and he's one of the nicest people. Mother just thought, he could dress better than any white man I've ever seen. He was a very tender, gentle fellow. Well, you lived with it, you saw it there, and I didn't think it was fair, but I didn't do much about it. What could I do? I was a kid. I know it was looked down on when, I guess I was still in grade school or the first year of high school, I'd go down to the Balboa Railroad Station and shine shoes, and white guys weren't supposed to do that. Hell, I'd made twenty-five cents, I didn't care. But, it's true, this type of thing. I guess looking back, I'm really impressed with how well the black people who were discriminated against took it. Maybe they just assumed that was their role in life, although I'm sure that's not true, but I mean for five, six years I was a lifeguard at Balboa and the three or four black ladies and a couple of gentleman that worked

there were just the nicest people. They're family and I just thought that was normal. They would be nice to me because I was nice to them, but I was thinking about their station in life was a hell of a lot worse than mine, and I don't know how much I perceived this until afterwards when I look back on it but at the time, that was the way it was. Let me tell you a nice story. At the end of World War II, my parents hired a maid – everybody had maids – this maid's name was Delfina Muñoz and Delfina worked for the family for twenty years or more until she died. She became a member of the family. She was a single mother. Had a daughter by the name of Ana, and Anna and my mother, once mother left the zone, mother and Anna corresponded until Anna died in 2000. So she kept this relationship going. Mother told us, you watch the Atlanta Olympics in 1996, because Ana's daughter Eileen is going to carry the Panamanian flag. She was a fifty meter freestyle swimmer and there she was carrying the Panamanian flag [at 13 years old]. And because of this, Auburn University gave her a scholarship to swim for Auburn. And she has a sister who's two years younger and the sister came up and both – this I learned since – both got degrees. I knew that she was going there. We went down to Panama on this trip last year and Delfina's grandson, who's sixty, and his wife met us when we got off the tenders from the tour boat in Fort Amador. Jimmy! Because we'd visited them in 1975, we came down in the camper from Canada. We were staying out at Tecumen Airport and I called Anna, oh Jimmy, Jimmy, Jimmy. So literally, within a half an hour, forty minutes, she and Pedro, her husband, were there, come, come. So we came and we

parked in their driveway in Panama City and stayed with them for the rest of the two or three weeks we were there. And so we met the sons, the two sons and a daughter were at the point of getting married. One son, Pedro, went to university – I think his brother did, oh no, all three of their children went to university.

Zeomara is the daughter, now lives in Washington D.C. But, Pedro and Lupe had two daughters, these were the ones that went to Auburn. Rolando had three daughters, all those three graduated as engineers. And Zeomara's children are eighteen, nineteen, they're just about ready to go to school some place in Washington D.C. And I think that one of the reasons these kids had all done as well was because of my parents' influence. I don't know if they helped much monetarily, I don't think so, but you know you can do it, you will, and they did.

And it's just such a lovely success story. Coming back around, when we went down to Panama last year, and I made so we'd see Pedro and Pedrito and Lupe, they met us, and I says, how's Pedro, the father, and he says, he's fine, he had his ninety-second birthday two days ago, and he doesn't know you're coming, we're going to surprise him. And we did, had tears in his eyes – I'm having tears in my eyes – it was just lovely. We learned that Eileen had moved to Seattle.

She'd married a fellow from Michigan and they were both working for a cell phone type company in distribution. So the ninth of January, we took she and Drew out to lunch on Lake Washington. Come to find out, she'd gone to the Atlanta Olympics, she'd been at the Sydney Olympics, and the last Olympics was in Athens. Another little point, David Robles, who was one of my classmates, we

had dinner last night, his wife Sylvia said, oh Eileen Coparropa, what a lovely person, she's been appointed some sort of ambassador by Panama, she's twenty-eight or nine, thirty years old, thirty-two years old, and they all knew Eileen because she comes back and she's very, very helpful and all sorts of things relating to education with children, et cetera. It's a very, very nice story. So, it's nice to know that you're related to them.

N: I know that you had already left for school and your parents left in the [1950s] as well, but do you think the American Civil Rights Movement going on, you know, on American territory affected the Canal Zone?

F: I'm sure it did. I mean, there are no longer gold or silver payrolls, I didn't know if they'd stopped that before the turnover. Do you know? I just don't have a clue. I don't know. I'm sure it had, in fact, because then people started going, ah this is not fair. I wasn't there. I don't perceive there was a lot of conflict. Remember, we were gone forty years before that happened. So it continued for a while. I just don't know.

N: Let's see, what was your opinion on the turnover to the Panamanian control over the zone?

F: I loved Jimmy what's his face, for doing it, what's his name?

N: Carter.

F: Look at that. He wasn't the world's best president, but boy he's done so much since he's been out. He's one of the better parts of American foreign policy, that lad. I thought it was fine. I mean, give it back to them, damn it. We took it away

and it's just the imperialism of the United States. But, they're no different than the English or the Germans or the Dutch, but still, it's there and I thought it was just fine. Of course, a lot of my cohorts thought it was terrible. Isn't it nice to live in a free country and have differences of opinion? I don't think it mattered, actually, in the scheme of things.

N: Well, I'm not sure if there's anything else that you would like to cover.

F: I don't know, have we had enough time? What, my goodness, can't read this –

N: We've gone about a little over an hour. Really, is there anything else that you would want to –

F: I don't know . . . our house was not air conditioned. But nobody's was. I used to hate to go down to Panama where they had air conditioning in the movie theaters because it got so bloody cold when went outside again. We went back there in [19]75 once when we took the camper down and then in 2000, and I didn't like the air conditioning. I don't like it here, but I don't want to live without it so there you go.

N: This is something that I just didn't know the answer to, in the Canal Zone, did people vote in United States elections?

F: Don't know. My parents didn't, I don't think. I don't think they were allowed to. One of the reasons we became Canadians - I went up there from UCLA when I got my doctorate – is because they wanted us to lie to be able to vote in California elections. We had to tell them we were coming back to the states, and I didn't know we were. I was disenfranchised, and then I started looking and went

there and once I got there I recognized I was really a Canadian at heart. It's a nicer society.

N: Do you think that American politics played a large role in the Canal Zone? Or were people pretty separated from it?

F: I don't think it played a lot of role because you were working for something that hadn't – you know it affected it a bit, but not a lot. I mean, my dad during the depression, got along fine. They cut their wages 25 percent, but look at what happened to all the unemployed. I think they came out just fine, and I think they thought this. I think I wasn't terribly aware of politics. I don't see it playing a lot of role. Are we done?

N: Yeah, I think so.

F: Thank you, Amanda. That was lots of fun.

N: Yes, thank you so much for giving us your time –

F: Listen to old people reminisce

[End of interview].

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