

Samuel Proctor Oral History Program
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-October 2013

PCM-022

Interviewee: Sharon, Dennis Tully (and Gail Tully?)

Interviewer: Amanda Noll

Date: July 3, 2010

N: This is Amanda Noll with the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program from the University of Florida. It's July 3, 2010, and I'm here with—

DT: Dennis Tully.

N: And—

ST: Sharon Tully.

N: Well, thank you so much for you guys being here and agreeing to talk to us. I'd like to get started just by you telling about your family and how you guys got involved in the Canal Zone.

DT: It goes back to, actually, my grandfather, Robert Randall. Robert Lee Randall. He was in Panama, and I'm not sure if he was in on the construction or not—I'm checking on that—but they were down there and my mother was down there. My father went there in 1941 and he was in the Army Air Corps. He got out of the Army Air Corps and became a Canal Zone policeman. I found out later, on his deathbed, that he was actually never out of the service. He was a commander in the Navy and he was also a spy, because the Canal Zone had all these cables and stuff running through the jungles that they had to keep track of. That's what he did. So, it was interesting. I was born in Margarita, Canal Zone and there's a church now where my hospital was. Sharon, she was born in Colón, and my

other sister, Gail, was born in Colón. So, we are Zonians and we do have the dual citizenship there. We loved it down there. I mean, we lived in several—it's a small-knit community. If you ever want to know what a socialistic society was like, that was a success story, because they provided your housing and everything. So we just, as kids, we knew each other; knew everybody. We're from the Atlantic side, the good side. [Laughter] Balboa is the drinking side. That wasn't our side. [Laughter] You will hear that referred to.

N: Oh, I have.

GT: The other side.

DT: The other side.

GT: They didn't share that last year, though. They shared a hospitality house. That's the first time in history that the two have gotten along together. [Laughter]

DT: Yes, we did. We shared—

ST: And we did. We got along quite well. [Laughter]

DT: Yes, we shared a hospitality house last year with the other side.

ST: They even let them drink their alcohol. We were very friendly.

DT: Yeah, we got along great, finally. You know? But life down there was . . .

ST: Idyllic. Paradise.

DT: Yeah, it was nice. I mean, you could walk around and not have to worry. You had your doors open; you never had to worry about anybody breaking in. You had Colón, where we were at—even back then, it was funny because you could go around. But if you went into Colón, the women could not wear shorts or they would get arrested. That was just the way the place was.

N: Uh-huh. And that was outside of the Zone?

DT: That was outside of the Zone, right. If they went into Colón, outside of the Zone, in shorts, they would be arrested.

ST: Plus, on the Army base there, Fort Gulick, they were not allowed to wear shorts either on the base. The MPs would stop them and make them go back to their house. So, when I went to visit my friends for the weekend, I could not wear any shorts. I had to have a skirt on. I don't even remember if we could wear slacks on the Army base, but shorts were a no-no. They would really—they would pick you up, as a kid. No one could wear shorts on any of the Army bases.

DT: We got our first TV in 1953, I believe.

ST: No, [19]56.

DT: No . . .

ST: Elvis just came out. Pat Boone and—we were in Margarita, just come back from the United States visiting Grandma.

DT: But it was a metal case and all. That was pretty . . . but we didn't watch much TV. We watched wrestling. We had a cat that liked to watch wrestling with us.
[Laughter]

GT: Tiger.

DT: It was the weirdest cat in the world, because it wouldn't watch any TV. You put wrestling on, he'd walk up, sit in front of the TV and watch it. When the ads come on, he'd walk off. When the wrestling came back on, he'd walk back and sit and watch the TV.

GT: His head would go back and forth like this. He'd be . . . watching them like that.
[Laughter]

ST: I wish we had a video.

DT: Most of the homes, now, in Old Cristobal and New Cristobal, most of the homes, there was no jungle there. Panama pretty much has thick jungles. But, when we lived in Margarita and France Field, it was jungle. You walk out your door and, fifty feet, you're in the jungle. As kids, we played games. We didn't watch TV, we didn't know—the government service had control over the TV until, like, six or seven o'clock. Then shows came on. But, as kids, we were never—we didn't care about TV. We played games, we played football, baseball; we were in the jungle. Ring-a-levio was a famous game, you hid and had to have teams and

catch each other. I spent most of my time in the jungle. I mean, even weekdays, I'd be out in the jungle.

ST: We weren't supposed to be, but we did go. I thought we weren't supposed to be in there. [Laughter]

DT: It is always a cross breeze, because the isthmus is only fifty miles wide. So, you always have a wind; a breeze. The only place air-conditioned in Panama when we lived there was the clubhouse, the commissary, and the movie theater. That was it.

ST: And that wasn't till later. Coco Solo got it before Margarita did. [Laughter]

DT: So, we didn't have . . . you didn't need air-conditioning. It's just pleasant, you know. But we could get soaked, walk in and get something to eat in the cold and dry off and walk back out and get soaked again. You never caught colds. But it was just a lot of fun down there. The schools were great. When I came to this country, I was a year and a half ahead of where I was here. They wouldn't let me go ahead; they made me stay back. I had to take everything all over again. It was the most boring thing in the world to do. [Laughter] So . . . but, what else do you?

N: Well, can you tell me a little bit about your mother? Did she work down there, or ?

DT: No. My mom, she was involved in—what was that?

ST: She was in—

DT: The women's club or something.

ST: I see the ring, the star.

GT: Mason?

DT: No, she wasn't—

ST: It's the other one, the females.

DT: Yeah, she was involved in that. She was involved in the women's club.

GT: A lot to do with the Elks Club.

DT: Elks Club. My dad was, you know, the one that worked. So, she didn't have to. Most of the women down there didn't have to work. But she was home, but she was gone a lot because of all the organizations she belonged to. Now, in Panama—

ST: Eastern Star.

GT: There, I knew it was a star. [Laughter]

DT: In Panama, they had maids. Now, the Panamanians loved to be a maid because they got a lot more money than what they'd get over there. Louise was ours. She was our maid since we were born.

ST: You were. I was two.

DT: She was family. She wasn't really—we didn't consider her a maid. She was there every day.

ST: A nanny.

DT: She helped raise us. She raised us, and I learned how to cook with her. But she was there every day, working. Like I said, she was family.

ST: She was Jamaican.

DT: We tried to bring her to the United States with us, but she didn't want to come, because . . . but, my mom, she mostly did that. I didn't see much of her during the day because I was never home. [Laughter] I mean, I was gone. Like I said, TV—I couldn't tell you, because I didn't watch it. We didn't watch TV. We didn't have the customs they have up here. Life down there was just different. The high school, the grade schools and all, we learned—the Panamanian school learned English from the time they started school as their second language. Our schools, the American schools, learned Spanish from the time you started school. That way, you both had the two languages, and that way you knew them. So, it was really nice that way. During the summer, the coach—several, but—we had programs: volleyball, basketball, archery. I used to teach archery. But we'd go across the isthmus and play basketball against Gamboa, Balboa, Diablo Heights. All during the summer, they had a summer program for us, whereas up here, you have to invent your own or join the Y or something. Down there, it was just there

for the kids. So, it was a lot of fun that way. Then, we took vacations every other year, because my father got—a month a year? One month, or . . . ?

ST: Two. Almost three.

DT: So he'd take a vacation every other year, and then we'd almost spend three months up here with my parents at Drew Park in Tampa.

N: Okay.

DT: Which, you know, I come over here and McDonald's hamburgers for, what? Eleven cents, was it, back then? [Laughter]

ST: Yeah, I think McDonald's was eleven cents and—no, fifteen. Fifteen and the fries were eleven cents. Back then, the Whoppers were—they were this big, and you couldn't finish it. It was forty-nine cents for the fish, and I couldn't even finish it. They're not even as big as what they are. They're tiny, now, compared to back then. The first Whopper we had was in St. Petersburg on US-19. It's no longer there. [Laughter]

DT: Even though you lived in a small community, but you moved. I don't know the reason behind it, but we lived in Old Cristobal. Then we moved to New Cristobal. Then we moved from New Cristobal to Margarita, and then from Margarita to France Field when my dad got hurt. They have chivas down there, they call them chivas. It's homemade busses. They can make a bus out of anything. [Laughter]

Cars, anything. My dad had a motorcycle with a sidecar on it because he used to take me to grade school. Used to love that. He'd take me to grade school in a sidecar. But a chiva ran the stop sign and hit the sidecar and crushed his leg. Eventually, it got so bad that they retired him medically in 1961. That's why we came to this country then. We had an option of moving to Panama, into the Panamanian Zone, or coming to the states. My father, later on, said he regretted not asking us what we wanted to do. All three of us would have said, move to Panamanian Zone, because we didn't want to come here. At all.

GT: Right. All our friends were there. We didn't want to leave our friends. My best friend, her mom, Lita, grew up with my mom. And they were best friends. Then we became—when we moved to Margarita, we became best friends. I know the one reason we moved from Old Cristobal, and that's when he fell and the wagon, and chipped his tooth. I was cutting an apple and I didn't want to wake my parents, so I walked over to my grandparents before they left—in [19]50, my granddad retired. I walked over. They lived on 3rd Street, and I walked over to their house because I knew I'd get in trouble for cutting my—getting an apple and slicing my thumb almost off. But I still got in trouble because, of course, they had to tell my parents what I did. I got in trouble because I walked all that distance. It was [19]49, so, I was about five years old when I did that. [Laughter] We moved over there because they had lived on that street. I remember the house they lived in and all. It was near the Union Church, like he said. At Union Church, I was

baptized there. We went there. There was a church next door to us, but we'd always went to the Union Church. Right where the Union Church was, right on the next street, that was Colón. That was the . . . then, we were right here. Down the road was our high school, Cristobal High School, before it went to Coco Solo. I went to seventh and eighth grade there. Then, when it moved, I went to the one in Coco Solo. But we used to sneak in there on weekends at night. Because I was skinny then, I'd fit right through the bars. [Laughter] So, we'd sneak in or climb the fence and go over there. They would have jellyfish all over the beach. I got stung by a jellyfish and, limping home, a policeman picked me up and took me home. [Laughter] We had brig water that went all the way out. You had the blue water holes, so you had to be careful where you walked, because all of a sudden you'd fall. [Laughter] My mom, when my granddad went down there, she was twelve years old. They lived on the Pacific side. She graduated from Balboa High School.

DT: Yeah. We won't go there. [Laughter]

GT: Well, one of the places they lived in was Diablo; Diablo Heights, I think that's where they lived. One of the places. One time, she was skating at Gorgas Hospital down the hill—and it's a big hill—and she fell and broke her arm. When she went back to the hospital and have the cast taken off, what'd she do? Skate the same place and fell and broke her arm, had to go back to the hospital and get her arm done again. [Laughter]

DT: Yeah. Our cousins . . . yeah, our cousins lived on the same side we did, at first, Terry and Randy—

ST: Yeah. They lived in Gatún and they moved to Margarita up in Snob Hill, and then they moved over to—

DT: To Diablo Heights.

ST: The other side.

DT: The other side. [Laughter] So, I'd go over and visit them.

ST: And my dad, he met my mom through his cousin, Wally Wydell, who was down there as a police officer. And he met my mom through him. And got married in [19]42 and had me and had Dennis and had Gail. [Laughter] Like he said, Louise, she spanked us, disciplined us. When it got time for me, she taught me how to iron, which I was grateful for because, when I joined the service, it's a good thing I knew how to iron because you had to iron your uniforms. The guys got to take theirs out, but all the females had to do their own. She taught me to iron, do the dishes. I would try to be snippy and say, I'm going to leave them for her. Well, when I came home, those dishes were in the sink, and she goes, Sharon, you got to do these dishes. She taught me how to mop, how to sweep. A lot of people came to the States, they didn't have to do that. Like you said, all we had to do was just play; play and have fun. I watched my mom, I'd watch her how to cook, that's how I learned how to cook. I watched Louise cook and learned

how to cook her food. One year, she made . . . fruitcake. If you don't like fruitcake, you would have fell in love with hers, because she had a big jar and she'd keep adding rum to it, letting it ferment. [Laughter] By the time that cake was ready, we were eating the cake, and Mom's going, why are the kids getting funny? She'd taste it and she goes, you can't put that much rum in it. [Laughter] We were like oh, oh.

DT: That's the same with the eggnog. They made their own eggnog, and my mom made her own eggnog and I drank it and I went, ooh, I like this stuff. [Laughter] We weren't allowed to have too much of that, though.

GT: My godmother made it. No. She caught me taking my godmother's—Mrs. Apple, I couldn't call her that. Pat, Pat Apple. Even though she was my godmother, I had to call her Mrs. Apple. Back then, you didn't call anyone by their first name. If they were an adult, it was Mrs. or Miss or Mr. No first-name basis. She gave me some eggnog. My mom told her off. [Laughter] Big give-away right here, my little mustache. [Laughter] But Dad was Grand Exalted Ruler of the Elks Club. First, he was Secretary; then, he was Grand Exalted Ruler.

DT: Then he was Secretary again.

GT: 15—Elks Club, Number 1542. They had the best food there. The Knights of Columbus had the best hamburgers. We could get two hamburgers and all for twenty-five cents. When they gave us lunch money, we usually had to walk home

for lunch, because they didn't have lunch programs at the school back then. We had to either walk home but, when they gave us money for lunch, we mostly went to Knights of Columbus because you got the better deal than going to clubhouse.

DT: Well, we used to do dishes and get a quarter a week. But a quarter would last—because you went to a matinee, you could go to the matinee and get a big bag of popcorn and a coke for a quarter.

GT: Movie was a dime back then. Then it went up to fifteen cents, but it used to be a dime. Fifteen cents, though, for a double feature. You saw two movies Saturdays for fifteen cents.

DT: I was very mischievous. That's why I was known as Dennis the Menace. Most people knew me as Dennis the Menace. Anybody, you mention my name, most of them know me. I was—my best friend was Terry and, unfortunately, he passed away a long time ago, but he was Terry the Terror. And Dennis the Menace. I mean, one time, his mother asked us to take down the Christmas tree. Her mistake, because we had a vacuum cleaner, and we didn't know. So, we just sucked the bulbs off with the vacuum cleaner. We got in trouble over that.
[Laughter] Then his father bought him a chemistry set one year for Christmas—

ST: Oh, I remember that. [Laughter]

DT: We're in there trying to figure out what to do and all, and we had it on the stove. Something boiling. We added an ingredient, and it started really smoking bad.

So, we made it outside before it exploded. [Laughter] We got in trouble over that.

He took the chemistry set away from us.

GT: Big boom. You could feel it. [Laughter] Everybody said, what happened?

DT: But you made your own—we had roller skates back then, and you roller skated everywhere.

GT: The old-fashioned kind, with the key.

DT: Old kind, with the metal and the key.

GT: It kept falling off and you'd go, oh.

DT: Then you made your own little—

GT: Slide to go down the hill, out of palm fronds.

DT: Slide, yeah. Or a box, wax the box. Then you took baby buggy wheels and made a flat cart you could go down and steer it. We played death-defying things, because it was chicken.

ST: Yes. [Laughter]

DT: The only way you could stop this thing was run off in the grass. When you ran off that grass, it stopped; you didn't. [Laughter] So . . .

ST: He's coming down the hill—I did that a few times on the box. The box would stop and I wouldn't stop. That hill was steep, and you'd go, oh, oh, oh. You'd get bruised up; grass everywhere. [Laughter]

DT: But I learned how to iron down there and everything, also, because I wanted a pair of pants. I was getting demanding to Louise, and my mom says, hold on. She says, come with me. She took me out, there's the ironing board, there's the iron, and here's the pants. You iron them, you want them. I did iron them and I said I wanted them, I learned to iron. She says, she doesn't work—she'll iron them when she gets the chance, but if you want something, you iron them. [Laughter]

ST: My granddad, Granddaddy Randall, he worked at the dry docks. I don't know what he did when he was in Balboa, but I know when he came to the Atlantic side, he worked at the dry docks at Mount Hope. I went a couple times with him. You go down into this steep area—great big, huge machines, and it was so loud. You couldn't even hear yourself. It was the just the roar of it. I'm not too sure what he did, but I remember the big machinery down there. I know he had to go down some steep things to get down there. I know it was the dry docks, I just don't remember—and I wish I would have asked. If I did, I don't remember, because that was so far back that . . . like he said, I was trying to find out information on that. Vaudie, one of her cousins—we have the same cousins, even though we're not related—and she did a history of it, so they would have

information on my grandma and my granddad. They were also Randy and Terry, that was it- my mom and his mom were sisters. I'd be able to get more information, so I'm going to get it that way, through her.

DT: One of the biggest things we had that was a lot of fun was Christmas tree burns after Christmas. We'd form . . . I don't want to say gangs, but yeah, I guess we did—

GT: Almost like it, yeah, because we'd steal trees. [Laughter]

DT: Yeah. We'd go asking people for their Christmas trees, because whoever had the most Christmas trees, that's why we had a contest. So . . . we would do that. Then, the first of the year, they had a big Christmas tree burning. Well, when I was in France Field, I went around asking for Christmas trees. This one girl that—Beth Lewis—she says, you know, you can't have my tree. I said, well, I can always come and take it. She says, you can't get my tree. I said, okay. So, I said, where is it? She told me. It was right by the door, where you could see in. They'd be eating in there. I said, okay. I says, come out at seven o'clock. Your tree will be gone. I could be right here and you could be right there, and you would never know I'm standing right here in the jungle, because we were that good and we were that quiet. We got to do it real well. So, I wore all black and I went in the jungle up by Jeff's house and went down there. I crawled out of the jungle, Jeff and I did. We watched them eating; we were watching them eating supper, and we took the tree. She came to my mother the next day, crying, and she says,

give her back her tree. I says, why? [Laughter] It's ours now. No, you give her back her tree. [Laughter] I said, that ain't fair. So, we went into the—I guess that's the major room or whatever it's called. I gave her her tree. That's not our tree. I says, tough. It's your tree now. I said, I'm giving you back your tree. But that's how we'd be. We'd be real . . . [Laughter]

ST: You'd go to people's places, we'd find out where they had their trees stashed and they would try to find out where everybody else had theirs. We'd drive around talking about that in the Zone, everybody going trying to steal trees from each other. [Laughter] You have a big bonfire and roast the marshmallows and s'mores. Oh, so good. [Laughter] And sit around telling scary stories and singing songs. My dad was umpire. He would coach the Little League.

DT: I got kicked off Little League.

GT: He got kicked off Little League.

DT: I was on my father's team. It was the police athletic league, and he wouldn't play me, so I went up the hill and slid down the hill, having fun. I figured, what the heck. He told me I had to sit on the bench. I said, why? I wouldn't sit on the bench, so he fired me. [Laughter]

GT: You should have got in trouble for asking why.

DT: That's Danielle.

[Laughter]

ST: My dad, you did—you didn't question. He said do this, you didn't say, why, Dad? You usually just did it. Mom, you could get away with it. But if Dad said, empty the trash, you didn't say, later, Dad.

DT: Oh, no.

ST: That wasn't in his vocabulary. It just wasn't. Both my parents hated lies. One day, we had gone to the jungle out there. We saw a farmer and two dogs—

DT: Andy.

ST: Andy. The two dogs that he took for us, Teddy and . . . Teddy and, great. I forgot the other dog's name.

DT: There was two T's, I know that.

ST: Right. [Laughter] Tammy—no, it wasn't Tammy. Tammy was the other dog. But, when Dad got home from work, he asked me, Sharon, what did you do today? And I just knew. Something told me, he knows what I did. So I said, I was in the jungle. He said, good thing you said that, because I was in the jungle and saw so-and-so and Andy, and he told me he saw Dennis and you on his farm. I go, dang, to myself. Jungle's huge. How in the world did my dad go to this one little spot in this big jungle? Like catching a needle in a haystack, and find us there. I got in trouble, I got punished. I don't know if you got punished, but I know I got

punished. I spent more time in my room in Margarita; I was counting tiles and everything. I spent the weekend with my girlfriend, Josephine, in Gatún. We decided to go to Balboa. We had enough money to get there, but not enough money to get back. We figured, oh, we'll get money from somebody over there. So, we get on the train and we did get some money from some soldier over there but, meanwhile, someone had seen me and called my dad. And called the police station. They had to go out, notify my dad that his daughter was over in the other side, where I wasn't supposed to be. I was supposed to be in Gatún. So, we're coming back and the train pulls into Gatún. Who's standing there at the railroad station? My dad, in full uniform. I looked and him and my heart goes, bing, bing, bing. I'm saying to myself, I didn't want to get off the train. I knew I was in deep trouble. I said, well, I'm going to go to Cristóbal and get off there. I said, well if I go to Cristóbal he's got to go in his motorcycle and go—then I'll be in worse trouble, because then I can't go anywhere. Once you're there, you can't go any further. So, I got off the train. My heart went blah, blah, blah. He got me in his motorcycle; we went to Josephine's house, got my stuff, took me back home, and I was punished for a whole month. Josephine didn't even get in trouble. Wasn't that . . . back in the room for. Another time, back in Margarita—month in the bedroom on the third floor, and I loved slamming doors back then—I banged the door. Dad comes upstairs. You slam that door, it'll be two more months. They were going to the movie.

DT: No matter where you were, everybody knew you. If you weren't where you were supposed to be, your parents knew about it.

ST: They told.

DT: I mean, she's out there on the roof and I'm out there with her. Somebody saw us on the roof, three floors up on the roof—they had the long roofs, metal. We were out, and somebody called them and told them where we were.

ST: That was a police officer. I saw him eating his soup, and it went like this—he looked up and he stopped. I said, oh, no, he saw. So, I went inside and waited for my dad to come home. Sure enough, there comes my dad. Another month.

[Laughter]

DT: So. But, it was just . . .

ST: It was fun, because you got to play. You got—you had to be home by the time the streetlights came on. If Dad whistled—and you could hear his whistle all over sixth street—once in it, you had to be home and you couldn't say you didn't hear it, because everybody heard it. So, they'd say, oh, yeah, they heard it.

DT: But we could camp out in the jungle. Us, we could—she wasn't allowed to. But Jeff and I were out there one night and we got hungry. So, we came home; it's, like, three in the morning. We're in the kitchen and I turn around, and there's my father standing with a gun. [Laughter] Scared the tar out of me. [Laughter] You

know? He says, next time, he says, let me know you're here. I said, yeah.

[Laughter] You know? Because he thought somebody had broke in.

ST: The same thing happened to me. That was in Panama City. I was trying to surprise, him and I just got in from Lackland Air Force Base. I was going to surprise him. I'm fiddling with the key, trying to get in. Tammy starts barking up a storm, and he opens the door with a gun. I about dropped dead right there.

[Laughter] I was just trying to surprise you. He thought someone was trying to break in. I didn't try to surprise him after that. I said, oh, no. [Laughter]

DT: But, we had places down there called the Clubhouse. That's where you could go and there was a pool table and bingo upstairs. My mom loved bingo. She played cards. I don't how she played cards, but—

GT: Sometimes more.

DT: That's back when they had little tiddlywink things to cover the cards with, so, you had to be quick. It's not like blotting them out.

GT: And they were small, too, they weren't big.

DT: You go in there and you have a soda fountain. You could get the old soda fountain with syrup in it, and then the soda water. Then there was a part over here where you could eat; a restaurant right there. Then, a movie theater—

GT: Barber shop.

DT: Barber shop. I mean, you'd get comic books. We'd go in and read the comic books.

GT: Yeah. To your right was a little section, like a little convenience store. They had little things in there that the commissary, it was close to—

DT: Candy bars for a nickel.

GT: Yep.

DT: [Laughter]

GT: Ice cream cones were a nickel.

DT: The commissary—yeah. The commissary is where you got all your food items and stuff.

GT: Kool-Aid was a penny a pack. We'd go in the commissary, get a penny pack of Kool-Aid, go to the clubhouse, open it up; put sugar in it, and we'd go inside the movie theater and use it and come out with a red tongue, green tongue, whatever you would get. We used to take the lemons and make our own lemonade. But, once they got onto us, they put the lemonades back behind the counter so we couldn't do that anymore. [Laughter]

DT: The lemons.

GT: So, you had to ask for the lemons. But they had the best—before I forget it- they had the best sticky buns. Everybody got them. Five cents. Oh, they were so good.

DT: I forget the real name that's for . . .

GT: And the donuts, the twisted donuts. They were the best twisted donuts . . .

DT: My mom would drop Dad off at work in Cristóbal at the police station. We'd go down in Colón and they had a bakery there. They did everything in a brick oven, and they'd have meches—it's like French bread, little breads. They'd bring them out of the brick oven fresh, and they'd just melt in your mouth. They were so good.

N: Did you guys travel outside of the Zone a lot?

DT: Yeah. We went to El Valle, Santa Clara. We'd go spend time up in Santa Clara in the summertime, we'd go up there. My uncle had—well, we didn't go with him. We had a cottage we stayed at, or we'd go up there with my uncle and my cousins and stay up there. The beach was beautiful in that. You could ride horses, and we went to El Valle, El Volcan.

GT: Some other places.

DT: They made their own ice cream. You could get, you know, ice cream there. The oranges, the navel oranges they had there were gorgeous.

GT: Guava, and they had mango ice cream. Papaya ice cream, before it became popular. It was so, so good.

DT: Coconut ice cream.

GT: And big, big, big cookies. I can't think of the name of them now, but they were real thick and they were hard as a rock. Best thing you had to do was dunk them, because if you . . . if you did, well, they lasted you all day long. We'd get one cookie and we'd have it all day long, because we didn't have anything to dunk it in. But they were good cookies.

DT: But, yeah, we'd do that. Then they had Fort San Lorenzo, where Morgan used to be and stuff. We'd go there and we'd go to the Chagres River. If you lived in Panama, you had to drink from the Chagres River. That was a must. I can say that I have drank from the Chagres River. But, you travel all over the place and do different things. But the biggest things we used to do is, like I said, up in El Valle, El Volcan, Santa Clara. But, that's a long trip.

GT: It was a long trip, and plus, the beach—I remember the steep stairs going down. The wooden stairs going down from the place? I wouldn't do that now because I'm afraid of heights. But I did it back then, but I wouldn't go now—if I looked at those steps now, I'd say, there ain't no way you're going to get me down from here to there. [Laughter] But we had to watch out for the scorpions, because when you in the shower there'd be scorpions in there. Those little babies, they

get aggressive. Their tail comes up and they're coming to attack you. You had to check your shoes all the time and tap them, otherwise you'd have a scorpion in there with you, so you always checked your shoes.

DT: We had a wonderful train back then. [Laughter] It's not like that now, but the train ride was fifty cents across the isthmus. But they had straw—not straw—

GT: I thought it was twenty-five cents at one time.

DT: It might have been, but, straw seats. If you lean back—even a guy—if you lean back and have hair and go forward, it would catch your hair and pull your hair out. No AC in that, of course.

GT: You'd get the soot would all come in because of the coal from it. You keep the windows open because there's no AC. But it was fun riding the train, because you go through the tunnels and you get to see all the Gatún Lake and all the little villages.

DT: One of the train station stops in Gatún was a village where they would get on with their animals; their pig or rooster or chickens, and people went, huh? [Laughter] That's . . . how they travelled, so. But, my dad patrolled Gatún Lake and I'd go out on patrol with him to the villages out there and all. To patrol Gatún Lake, it took six months to traverse the whole lake. Then you start all over again.

GT: Yeah. You had two boats: one for regular patrol and one for dignitaries, a big boat when dignitaries came down, to show them. The comfortable boat, his regular boat was just a patrol boat, a work boat. We'd ask him some questions—he didn't always tell us, because we always asked him things. He wouldn't tell us everything because we bugged him sometimes about, did you kill anybody? He never told us that. He would never tell us that. He did tell us that—the worst thing he had to take from the water was dead bodies, because they would just fall from the hands. You pick them up. He said that was the worst part of his job.

DT: Now, the animals down there, we loved them. I used to have snakes all the time. I'd take them to school with me, boa constrictor or a vine snake. The only difference between a vine snake and a viper is, a viper's poisonous, but you had to catch them to know that. [Laughter] Once you caught him, you'd squeeze the neck and if they had fangs, you just tossed them away and found another one. But we were . . . I mean, I'd scare the tar out of teachers and stuff, I had that snake around me. Or we'd go catch a lizard and go back to school with a lizard on our shoulder.

GT: Yeah, I used to do that. I don't do it now.

DT: Duh. The teachers would have a—[Laughter] My best friend Terry, this is how bad we were. I don't say bad to the point where you have a juvenile—it's just—

GT: Mischievous.

ST: Mm-hm.

DT: In Panama, when we grew up down there, some of the mischievous things we did, we'd probably get arrested for in the states. But, down there, kids would be kids. You know? But, Terry and I were in the same class up to the fifth grade. Fifth grade, they actually had two teachers; sixth grade had two teachers. But, we went in the fifth grade and we were in the same class. We're sitting there and the teacher walks in—and it's a lady teacher, I can't remember her name, but I remember the first words out of her mouth. She saw both of us sitting there. She says, oh, hell, no. You two aren't being in my class. She says, Dennis, you go stand outside. Terry, you come with me. [Laughter] So, she took Terry to the principal's office and she come back. I stayed in her class and Terry went to the other one. Our reputation had proceeded us. [Laughter] That's how bad we were.

ST: When I was in seventh grade, our history teacher—I can't think of his name right now—but he had a ruler and he would bang it if you were bad or if you were talking. He'd sneak up on you and scare the daylights, but I was his pet. Even though he hollered at me and threatened to this and he'd send everybody else to the office, but he threatened to send me, he just moved me all over the classroom. I'd sit in so many seats. Towards the end of the year, he goes, Sharon, he says, do you have any brothers or sisters coming next year? I go, yeah, I got a brother. He says, I won't be here next year if you got a brother—if relatives. I said, my brother's coming. We came back next year, he wasn't there

and everybody blamed me for the teacher going. [Laughter] Because one of his friends said, Sharon was so quiet. Dennis said, you don't know my sister.

[Laughter]

DT: Yeah because Mr. Spitzer was our math teacher, and he had her. Then I came in the next year, and oh, he did not like that. [Laughter] So I says, don't judge me by my sister. He says, I don't have to. He says, I know your reputation. I suppose.

[Laughter]

ST: Mm-hm. I guess I had two sides to me. Some people thought, oh, she's just a quiet thing. She doesn't really—oh, just some trouble. My friends that knew me really well said, oh, no, she wasn't that quiet.

DT: Paul Beck was our principal. I got to know him real well, personally. [Laughter]

ST: Oh, yeah. [Laughter]

DT: I'd walk in the office and tell the girl in the there. He says, I already know you're coming, Dennis. I go, okay. [Laughter] But, is there anything else you'd like to know?

N: Oh, sure. There's lots of things. [Laughter] During some of your travels throughout Panama or in Zone or some of your dad's experiences, was there ever any anti-American sentiments that you guys felt?

DT: No, not at the time. Eisenhower started it, but it really wasn't bad. I mean, one time before we left, they wanted to come out and take the American flag down and put the Panamanian flag up.

N: And what year was that in?

DT: That was . . . [19]60 . . .

GT: Either was [19]61 in the summer or [19]60 the year before, one of them.

DT: Yeah.

GT: Because they did have that riot in Balboa that Dad went to.

DT: Yeah. They found out about it, and we told them that wasn't going to happen, so they didn't do it. But that was the only time. I mean, I know stuff happened after we left, and I know the riots had happened. Now, I remember one time we were down there, and in Panama City, they had a problem. La Guardia—the police, La Guardia back then, they're not there now; it's Policia Nacional now—the La Guardia was feared. I mean, feared by the Panamanians. You just didn't mess with them. They were an elite police force and they were stupid. But they set up machine gun nests during the riots, and they actually killed I don't know how many Panamanians. Of course, that really didn't make the newspaper or anything. That was squashed by the then-president and all. But they did kill about twenty, twenty of them or something like that. Once they did that, then it was

really, oh, what are you doing? But, then they had the riots after we left and Hotel Tivoli got all shot up and everything. But La Guardia arrested my mother. I was with her. A little kid ran out and hit our car. She was going maybe five miles an hour.

N: And where was this?

DT: In Colón. And he bounced off and he was fine; he took off. The mother was there, said, he's fine—because all he did was bounce off and he didn't get hurt. But La Guardia saw it and arrested my mother. Of course, I'm with her, so . . . I remember being at the police station in Colón and my dad come walking in. They knew my dad real well; he was very well-known. I remember the sergeant at the desk saying, Hello, George. He said, Hello, Mr. Tully, what can I do for you? He says, you have my wife locked up. He says, we what? He says, yeah, she—because they don't let you know. I mean, they lock you up. Unless somebody . . . and he says, she's locked up? He said, yes. He says, just a moment. He went and got her. He found out who had arrested her and all, and put him in jail, because it just was a no-no to do that. But that was the La Guardia back then. They were very . . . now, the economy is bad down there and the Policia Nacional, you want to get on the police because you get paid. You're only allowed to work until you're forty—what'd he say? Forty-five years old, or . . .

GT: If that.

DT: They can't work a real long time; twenty years, tops. So, if you get on when you're eighteen, thirty-eight, you've got to retire.

N: Wow.

DT: But that's them, and then the president has his own police, which is somewhat like what the La Guardia is. They're afraid of them. But they're well-trained. The old Albrook Air Force Base is where they train those policemen. But we didn't have the malls like they do down there now. We went to the Albrook Mall and you could probably be there two weeks and not do the whole mall. It's that big. It's three stories. I mean, it's huge. But we just had the . . . I mean, one time, Patty Seaman and I, we ran away from home when we were four years old.

ST: Yeah, you were young. About five, I guess. [Laughter]

DT: We ran away. We got in the elevator where the eastern—

ST: YMCA.

DT: Masonic Star is and that—

ST: Masonic Temple is there.

DT: We got in the elevator because it opened, but we were too small to hit the buttons. So, we're in the elevator and we're just standing there, holding hands. We stood in that elevator—they had everybody looking for us. We were in there probably a good two hours.

ST: About four.

DT: Four hours?

ST: About four hours.

DT: Okay. Finally, somebody hit the elevator to go upstairs, and we're standing right there. You know? We weren't crying or nothing, we were just waiting, waiting for somebody to open the elevator. That's how they found us. I didn't get in trouble, thank God for that. They were so worried. [Laughter] I walked over to my Grandma. She taught me how to do that, because when she went over to her grandparents' house, I went over there when I was, like, three years old. Disappeared from our house and walked over to her house.

ST: Mm-hm. I'd disappear from my grandma, too. She'd be talking to one of her friends and I would just decide, this is my time. [Laughter] I was in my underwear and I just took off and looked through Colón. Walked through all the seedy area and I get almost down to the police station. They're hunting for me, having a fit, and somebody pulls over and gets me in the car. They were . . . [Laughter] I'm surprised I got that far. I mean, my little underwear and just my little legs. [Laughter] Probably about three years old when I did this. Said, where are you going? I said, I'm going to go see my daddy. [Laughter] I had everybody worried.

DT: Well, Sharon was famous, too, because she was probably the first child to fly to Tampa at the age of five.

ST: Eight months.

DT: I went eight months, too, but I also went by myself.

DT: Yeah, that's what I'm saying, by yourself.

ST: Oh, yeah.

DT: You were about five years old, she flew by herself.

ST: Oh, yeah. I got in trouble, too.

DT: Up to Tampa, and she was, you know—they put her on the plane and all. She made the papers and all.

ST: In Miami, I got away and I missed my flight. They were looking for me and I disappeared, and I'm walking all over the airport in Miami, having a ball. They finally found me, and I remember the benches—they got me a big hamburger, and another flight. Meanwhile, my grandmother and granddad were waiting for me in Tampa, and that's when the airport was a wooden building. It was Tampa International but it was just a wooden shack.

DT: Yeah, clattered.

ST: [Laughter] They called Miami and said, well, she said had disappeared. But we found her, and we're going to put her on the next flight. [Laughter]

DT: Yeah. Drew Park, back then, that's where the airport was—in Drew Park.

ST: Yeah. It didn't have all those shady things in there; wasn't none of that XXX stuff back there at that time. It was more residential then.

DT: But we went a lot of places in Panama, different places. I mean, most of the time, we'd walk. If you were walking, somebody would stop and give you a ride, because they knew. Where are you going? We'd tell them, said, okay, we'll give you a ride.

ST: The one time we got in trouble, we, Kenny—he was a Navy officers', and we lived in a cottage, place on Sixth Street. For some reason, three o'clock in the morning, we decided we were going to Gatún. So, all three of us snuck out of the house and we're walking up on the road to go to Gatún. A car picked us up and dropped us off where all the army place were—you went right by the Chinese garden.

DT: Third cut.

ST: Third cut. They had an army, bug white pole. And on there they had their little hammocks that were screened in, and we were in there talking to them. They heard a police car drive up and hit us, because they were looking for us. We'd been there a long time. I think it was daylight, then, when they showed up. They said, no, they hadn't seen us. We were hiding. So, the police car left and we went walking. Then we went and found this big tower, and we climbed up the tower. Well, this MP was being a smart jerk, and he told us to come down. He took his

gun out and aimed it at us, so we shut the doors, so he wouldn't shoot us. We thought he would shoot the gun because he had it out and pointed up at us.

DT: Trying to scare us out of there, but—

ST: Yeah, trying to scare us.

DT: All we did was shut the door and say, you can't shoot through that.

ST: And we didn't come down, so they had to—the regular police came. And he got shipped back to the states, because he wasn't—

DT: The MP did, yeah.

ST: You don't point guns at kids.

GT: Mm-hm.

ST: Of course, we got in—I don't know if you got in trouble, but I got punished again.

DT: Oh, I got in big trouble over that one, yeah. [Laughter] Yeah, well, they had a Chinese garden there. That was really neat. You could get—

ST: Ginnups.

DT: Ginnups, Chinese plums. If you didn't know, and we did—it was fun. It wasn't fun for them. But, you get a kid from the United States come down there, and we'd take them to the Chinese garden. Ginnups are real sour. You can see their faces. The Chinese plums were really . . . and your face would really pucker. But

Kenny, Kenny when he first come down, I used to eat red peppers right off the bush. Now, to show you how bad they are, I told Kenny they're good to eat. He wanted to eat one. I said, go ahead and have one. Well, he had blisters on his lip for about two weeks. They were that hot. Of course, I got in trouble for that. I said, I didn't tell him to eat it. I didn't force him to eat it. [Laughter]

GT: Well, you were egging him on, basically. I mean, daring him. [Laughter]

ST: You just touch that, though—I would accidentally touch it on the way to school. By the time I got to school, my eye would be swollen shut, and the person with me had to hold my hand to lead me, because I couldn't see when we almost go there. I had to call my mom; I had to go home. [Laughter] Because, sometimes, you forget. You just go along, touching things, and I had forgot I had touched it and rubbed my eye. Boy, that was it. My eye—

DT: But, you had a lot of places like Front Street in Panama when the ships came in. That's where they would go buy souvenirs and stuff. As kids, we'd go down there. If we wanted extra money when a ship came in, we'd tell the tourists that, if they wanted something, to let us know and we could get it for them for a good price. You know? If they were willing to give us, like, five dollars. Five dollars back then was, like, a fortune to us. [Laughter] But, they would go in, and we'd go in and buy it for them. The shop people finally told our—called the police and all and told, would you please keep your children out of here when the ships are in so we can make more money? Because they're killing our business. [Laughter]

So, we were banned from coming and going down Front Street when there was tourist ships in.

ST: We'd go down there. We had shoes called squeakers. The louder they squeaked, the better they were. We paid, like, one or two dollars for them. They were made out of—I don't know if it was some sort of wood stuff, and woven sandals were the back part to it. You try them on and walk around the store to make sure, because you wanted a pair that really squeaked. The tourists, they'd charge them, like, twenty bucks for them, but we could get it for one or two bucks. [Laughter] I had a pair, one time, up here, but they haven't had it since. I'd love to have some more squeakers. You could get perfume there real cheap, and people pay eighty dollars; you could get it for five bucks on Front Street.

DT: Now, the fishing down there was wonderful. There's a fish down there called Corvina. It's all white meat, and it's—

ST: A ceviche.

DT: It's delicious. Even my wife can tell you because she's had it. It's . . . when I took her down here—

ST: My mom used to make it all the time.

DT: But it's good. We used to fish a lot. We'd go, we'd be fishing at two in the morning, off the sea wall or whatever. You can fish off the Chagres River, the

Caribbean—or Caribbean, however you want to pronounce it—Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. You had all those places to fish.

ST: Pina Beach was good to fish, too.

DT: Places to fish. It was all salt water or brackish, but it was good fishing. How many people can say, within two hours, you can be fishing in the Pacific Ocean? You know, because that's all it took to cross the isthmus, was two hours. But, now, to go into the interior, where we went and stuff, that took a long time.

ST: Mm-hm. We did that one time, went on a picnic. We used to go a lot on picnics after Sunday church. We went way up, Pina Beach, somewhere around there. You had to cross the bridge; that was a feat, to go across the locks. You look up and see the huge locks and go across this small bridge, and then go way up in the interior. We'd get all the way up there, my mom had forgot the chicken. [Laughter] We couldn't go back because it was too far to go back, so we ate what she had. Then, when we got back home, then we— But that one pier out there at Pina Beach. It was deep water, not like the beaches up here. You walk out a few feet and boom, you're down. You can catch some big fish at that pier: huge fish.

DT: Yeah. Mr. Brewer would be out there in his wooden boat—back then, wooden boats were popular. But, when you went across the locks in Gatún, there was a bridge to go across the lock. If you happen to be on that bridge and there's a ship, it would open up, and you're stuck on it. Now, I can be as close from you to

me to the ship. I could actually walk out and touch the ship, if I wanted to, because that's how close it was to you. It was huge, of course, because you're at the bottom part of the ship looking up. But, I mean, it was neat to see that. Never went through the locks, the whole time I was down there.

ST: Yeah, me neither.

DT: But . . . you know, you had the yacht clubs you could eat at; Cristobal Yacht Club, Balboa Yacht Club.

ST: Gatún had a Yacht Club. I don't know if they did it after we left, but I think they do it for the tourists, but . . .

DT: Yeah. There were so many different places you could go to. After church on a Sunday, we'd drive over to Panama City. They had a Grand China restaurant, or we'd go to Hotel Tivoli that had a buffet.

ST: The best food.

DT: The food was just so good.

ST: Man, all kinds of meats; all kinds of vegetables; all kinds of desserts.

DT: Fruits. And everything grew wild. If you went in the jungle, I didn't have opt take anything in there, because I had sugarcane, I had pineapple, I had coconuts. We had mangos, we had rose apples.

ST: Guava.

DT: And guava.

St: Ice cream bean.

DT: An assortment of food, so you never had to worry about eating. Now, when you went in the jungle, as far as us went: you went with two things, a Bowie knife and a machete.

ST: We never took either one. Bobby and I would just walk. [Laughter]

DT: Yeah. The coconuts there, they grew wild. Of course, if you got thirsty, we knew how to climb the coconut trees. You just had string with you and climb the tree and get a green coconut. You cut the top off and you had juice. If you get the brown coconuts, you crack them open, and then you had coconut that you could eat.

ST: Yeah, I liked those.

DT: So, but that's how we . . . and bananas grew wild down there. So, like I said, everything grew wild whereas, up here, no.

ST: They even had those little—I don't know what they're called, but around the palm trees, they have a long leaf, skinny one. At the bottom was a brown thing, and you cracked it open, inside was a white thing and you ate that. We ate a lot of stuff. We could have been dead, because we didn't know. And it was good.

[Laughter] We ate that too. In Margarita, where Kenny, that place he lived—
behind him—they had a guava tree that overhung the cliff. And guava trees are
slippery. I would climb that tree to get the guava. If I had fell, I would have been
as dead as a doornail. [Laughter]

DT: That seemed like a thirty-foot drop.

ST: It was stupid. I just climbed out there—

DT: But I go out there in the rain to get it and anything. The rain.

ST: I never told my parents I did that, because they probably would have chopped
the tree down. [Laughter] I climbed trees a lot back then.

DT: But we had Snake Road. What we called it, I don't remember—

ST: It's still—yeah, I don't know the name of it.

DT: It's still there, because we were on Snake Road with Allen, and I saw myself.
Because, after forty-nine years, I went back there. Every house that we lived in is
still standing, is still there. A lot of them aren't there anymore, whereas every one
that we lived in was still there.

N: Wow.

DT: So, it was amazing. It was a fun trip, going back. I wish I'd gone back sooner, but
I got to take Anita with me, and she got to see where I used to live and all, and

then she could understand more. But the climate down there, it was rainy season nine months out of the year. That rained every day. Dry season: three months out of the year, it rained every other day. But it rained a lot. It wasn't that long—you could have maybe a half-hour shower, and that's it, but it would rain every day.

GT: Sometimes all day, though. It would rain on the tin roof. The rain sounded so good, you'd lay in bed and read your comic books. There was no such thing as not—a lot of times, you get off the school bus, you had to walk home in the rain because they dropped you off at the end of the street. Then, you had to walk home. Of course, you hit every puddle, so you're even wetter by the time you get home. Now, we lived in France Field, he dropped us right off at the house, which was nice.

DT: Yeah, but they didn't used to do that at first. [Laughter]

GT: No.

DT: You had to walk all the way down to the end of the road. Finally, our parents said, no, you need to come up here and get them.

GT: But, another fun thing we did was, since Dad was with the Elks Club and a police officer, every year for the Easter egg hunt, we had two of them: one at the police range, they hid eggs, and then the Elks Club also did it. So, we made out like a bandit for Easter. For Christmas, because we had the Santa Claus at the police

range. And, at the Elks Club we would have Santa Claus. They would have fish fries—I loved the fish fries. Friday night, there'd be a fish fry at the Elks Club. We'd go to that. Then, we'd also have them at the police range, and we'd go there and have it. And the golf club; they had a golf range all the way down this one—what was the road called? All the way down, the police range was on that range, too, but you had to go further for the golf course. I remember walking with my dad doing it, and they had the restaurant there, too, and people ate there, too.

DT: Yeah. Playing golf, I learned to play golf in the jungle. That was interesting, because if you had a hook or a slice, your ball was gone. Because, if it went in the jungle, you weren't going to find it. You might find somebody else's while you're looking for yours, but . . . it's that thick of a growth. I mean, you had to really concentrate on hitting that ball, because, like I said, you would just lose it. So, it was interesting learning to play golf down there. But, the last time Anita and I went back, we played on a golf course at Summit, near Gamboa, and Teddy Roosevelt played on that course at the Radisson Hotel, which bought all that property and is redoing it. It's beautiful.

GT: Now, Granddad, he rode with Teddy Roosevelt. He was with him.

DT: Yeah, the Rough Riders in Cuba.

GT: Rough Riders. He was a Rough Rider in Cuba.

DT: But there's different—there were so many different places to go and see and do. Even in Panama City, they had tailors down there to go to the book, the tailor of Panama and stuff that people write about and all. My wife has tried to encourage me to write my memoirs and that I would—you know. Because it was an interesting life.

GT: I started it, but I didn't finish there, but in the Zone, we're waiting for my next—I have up to eight chapters so far, and I kept them. Everybody was waiting for the next chapter, and I just never did the next chapter. [Laughter] I need to print it out and start doing it again. I think Granddad probably did have something to do with the canal, because since he did ride with Teddy and knew Teddy Roosevelt, that's probably one reason why he went to Panama.

N: Yeah.

GT: Because Teddy started that.

DT: But a lot of the families down there helped build the—their family helped build the canal, which are Roosevelt medal owners and stuff.

GT: I think we're entitled to it.

DT: It went that way until—and, actually, Panama, when we were in Panama we actually gave them their independence from Colombia, which, that was all Colombian territory. We actually told Colombia that they couldn't come in there

anymore. They signed a treaty—a perpetual treaty with Panama. I think that most people don't know what perpetual means, especially Jimmy Carter, who gave the canal back to them. I mean, that's fine that he did it and all, but he did it all illegally, because a perpetual treaty is never-ending. You can't break it, but, he took it upon himself because he was president to break it and give it back to Panama. And they've done great. I mean, they've done great with it down there. So, I mean, they still have . . . there was a canal authority, a Panama Canal Authority—but ACP is how they have it, Authority Canal of Panama, because in Spanish, things are backwards. But the ACP is still down there. They take care of a lot of it down there. If they didn't do that, it wouldn't look as good. If you go to Gamboa down there, it's got potholes. Anything that the ACP has control over and all that, it's nice. The roads are nice and everything. Once you get out of that area, they're not.

GT: The Chinese took over a lot. I think if we had been there, they wouldn't have—Panamanians should have more control than the Chinese do. I don't think that's fair.

DT: But it's really gotten big down there. I didn't go to Panama City a lot; I mean, I went with my cousins. We would go over there and, like I said, up in the interior, we went for summers and stuff like that. But there's just a lot to do. There's never nothing not to do. So, I mean, is there anything else you . . . ?

N: Well, I'd love to hear about when you moved back to the states, and kind of that transition for you guys.

ST: That was hard.

DT: I didn't like it. I didn't want to leave Panama.

GT: Yeah, I didn't want to leave it either. People in the States were just nasty, and it was different atmosphere. They weren't nice like they were in Panama, and they were so prejudiced. When we came up, they had the colored fountain and the white fountain, and I wasn't used to that. I'm looking at it and I wondered—I was looking for water and I finally found, and it said, colored. I said, why does it say color? I thought it was going to be blue water, green water. I'm sitting there saying, well, I'm thirsty. I'm going to drink it anyway. Whatever color it is, I'm drinking the water. And it came out normal. I said, oh, good. It's normal water. Some white guy sees me and he goes, you can't from there; that's for colored people. I said, it's water. He goes, yes. I said, well, then, I'm going to drink it. [Laughter] I wasn't used to it. I would it there and talk to a black woman. She said, you shouldn't be sitting here. I said, why, you don't want to talk to me? She says, no, but everybody's going to be staring at you and talking. I said, I don't care. Let them. I said, I enjoy my conversation with you. The busses—we had to sit in the back, and I'd sit in the back. He goes, you're not supposed to sit back there. I said, why? I've paid my fare. He said, that's for colored folks. I said, I

don't—I paid my fare. I'm sitting back here because that's where I want to sit.

[Laughter] I wasn't used to that part.

DT: I just wasn't used to the part—

GT: When he said that the school system, that he almost got expelled out of school the first day he was there from all the rules at Chamberlain High School.

DT: I had cleats on. Horseshoe cleats, and the guy told me I'm not allowed to have them. I said, why? He says, because it's rules. I said, all right, I'll make sure I don't wear them tomorrow. He says, no, you'll take them off now. I said, I'll what? You know? He actually gave me a screwdriver and actually—I said, you know, if you ruin this heel, you'll be buying me new shoes. Not only did I have take off my—then he gives me demerits, because if you got so many demerits, you got expelled. I said, demerits for what? I said, I didn't know about this rule and you're doing this? It was just, I did not like the—people distrust teenagers. Down in Panama, you didn't have that. Up here, you did. It was a totally different society. Really, I didn't adjust well at all. The fact that I had to take everything over again in school—you know. It just didn't go well at first, because...it was just like night and day. Even in Panama, like she was saying, we'd go down to Colón where Louise lived, and you had to walk. It was funny: you walked through alleyways and you had to go up on the stairs, and you're walking through boards. They lived down there, and you're walking on boards. Then we got to her house and she'd have food for us. We'd eat with her daughter and son. We thought nothing

of it and all. Up here, it was totally different. But, we graduated from Dixie Hollins High School here, and there was some black kids there at the time. None of us had a problem with 'em. I don't know what the big to-do was, but...there was no problem. If we associated with them, they didn't want to associate with us. I said, that's your problem, not mine. But the transition was even hard for my father. I mean, he had to retire and come up here. And for my mom. My mom did go to work up here. Back then, when we moved to St. Pete, Webb City was prominent. That was a big, like, four- or five-story building.

ST: Five, I think. Five or six.

DT: Yeah. It had a lot of stuff there. It was a mall all in one. Back then, you didn't have malls. But, Webb City, every floor had something different on it. The top floor had the mermaids, so we always went down to look at the mermaids.

GT: The rooster or the chicken was up there. [Laughter]

DT: Yeah. They had a rooster or chicken that you'd put money in and he'd peck to get his food and all. He'd know what to do. [Laughter] Yeah. I'm sure that, after being born down there and coming up here, yeah, it was difficult. It just wasn't the same.

GT: True. We didn't have our friends; you had to make new friends. At first, they'd make fun of you. I gave a speech that I had to give in my speech class, and I said, well, I'll talk about Panama; the different things. I'll talk about the bugs and

the roaches—well, we do have big roaches down there. There are some cockroaches and jungle roaches that are twelve inches. [Laughter] And they fly. Well, they didn't believe me. One kid made a complete jerk of himself in a speech, and I said, they need to go—then they asked me if we swung through the trees like Tarzan to go to school. I said, no, we have yellow school buses like you do here in the states. Or rowboat to school? Do you have toilet paper down there? [Laughter] Man, we had everything down there: running water, hot and cold.

DT: Now, I did used to tease the kids when I come up here on vacation. They'd say, how do you get to school? I said, well, we swing through the jungle, vines and stuff. I said, well, our school is across the bay, so we take a canoe. They actually believed me. I'm sitting there...[Laughter]

ST: One of my friends, when she came to the States, she went to a Laundromat and she had no idea what to do. Because she didn't have washing machines; the maids did with the washboard and get the clothes and wrung them out and hung them up. She had to ask somebody how to operate the washing machines and dryers, 'cause she had no idea. My thing was the pay telephone. I was at Webb City and I had to call home. I put a quarter in, expecting change. And I called the operator back, and I said, I didn't get any change. She probably said, I got some dumb—[Laughter] She goes, gee. I said, yeah, I said, I put my quarter in but I didn't get any change back. She said, you don't get change. I said, why not?

[Laughter] They sent me the change in the mail. But I didn't know. She probably still tells that story today. Some kid called me. [Laughter]

N: So, what was it like going back to Panama?

DT: When I went back to Panama for me, and I told my wife, Anita—I don't know when I told her, prior to, or—to me, it was a healing process because I had been gone so long and I had such a chip on my shoulder about leaving when I was in high school there and all. I really, thoroughly enjoyed myself. We had a gentleman, Allen Hawkins, who lives down there. He gave us a tour of the Atlantic side, and I didn't know it—and he was taking pictures of me taking pictures of everything, where I used to live. I was so excited, trying to explain everything and all. [Laughter] I was just having a ball. It was a lot of fun. It's still the same, just different buildings now. And, of course, the roads are rough—some of them. Everything, like I said, was still there. It was a very enjoyable trip; it just wasn't long enough. So, I definitely need to go back. I love the country. It's just so nice down there. And you don't have to use air conditioning. [Laughter]

ST: Yeah. We didn't have it till [19]69. My parents finally got A/C in 1969.

DT: Yeah. After we all graduated and moved out, then they get air conditioning in the house. [Laughter]

ST: Well, they got it for my son, Frank, who was just born at the time. They had to get A/C for him. I said, what about for me? [Laughter] My mom never bought sodas

in Panama. We didn't have sodas unless we went to a friend's house that had them or the clubhouse. She got fruit juices, Kool-Aid. The grandchildren, she had a whole cabinet of sodas. I said, Mom, we weren't allowed. Grandkids. And then she had a freezer full of ice cream sandwiches, popsicles, the whole nine yards. We didn't have that. [Laughter]

DT: We had Fizzies, though. Fizzies were fun.

ST: Yeah, we had the Fizzies, which is neat. Pop, pop. Fizz, fizz. [Laughter] Coke Ones—the root beers were the best.

DT: Yeah, root bear Fizzies were the best.

ST: But Dad, the reason he got to Panama, he was on an army transport ship. I wish I knew the name of the ship. They were going through the Panama Canal, and they had a list of guys to get off for Albrook Air Field, and Dad was on the list. He was headed for Hickam Air Field in Hawaii. So, if he'd gone there we wouldn't have been born. So, there was a reason why his name was on the list to get off, and he got off. I guess, I don't know—

DT: But he was in the Army Air Corps. He flew.

ST: Wally was a cop on the Atlantic/Pacific side, and then he transferred over.

DT: Dad was on the Pacific side first. He was a motorcycle cop.

ST: Oh, that's what I was going to say. George, I think he died, didn't he? George recently died? Or is he still alive? George Chevrolet or whatever he's—

DT: No, he recently died. Yeah.

ST: Okay. He was talking on the Zone link about this police officer who was taking this—it was a liver, or I don't know what he was taking across, from Colón to probably Gorgas Hospital. He made it in record time. I forget what he said, and everybody has tried to beat the record since and never did. He said, that police officer was George Tully. I go, George Tully! Reading the e-mail. I didn't know that about Dad. So I go, doo, doo, doo, that was my dad! I said, thank you, I didn't know that. But no one was able to beat his record. George, I couldn't find that e-mail, and George couldn't find the e-mail because he had moved and he was trying to look up everything. He said once he found it he would send it to me, but he died before he could find it. I know it's there somewhere. [Laughter] But Dad—I'd like to be able to find that information; when he did it, what actually occurred and how long it did take. I don't remember now, because that was back in [19]98 or [19]99, when he wrote that e-mail.

N: Well, it's been really great talking to you guys. Do you have anything else to add?

ST: No. I just enjoyed—I was glad I was born in Panama and got to live there for almost eighteen years. My mom, of course, she was lucky. She got to live there longer. Knew, like I said—

DT: Mom and Dad, yeah. [Laughter]

ST: Yeah. She knew so many people, and Dad knew so many. They knew everybody from the Pacific side and the Atlantic side, so they knew everybody.

DT: Everybody knew everybody, so you couldn't get away with anything as kids.

ST: Especially our side.

DT: I'd have a policeman come up to me and he said, Dennis, you know anything about the explosion in the old building over there? The airplane hangar-like thing? I said, no. We heard it; we were at the clubhouse eating. What we'd done, we turned the fire extinguisher on—it was a big, tall one, and we couldn't shut it off. [Laughter] So we left. He said, you know, somebody thought they saw you going in there. I said, no, it wasn't us, because we were over at the clubhouse eating. [Laughter] I says, why, what happened? He says, well, this fire extinguisher blew up, and it blew the steel doors right off the building out into the field. I says, man. Good thing everybody was at lunch. He said, yeah, it's a good thing for you everybody was at lunch. I says, what are you talking about? He says, I know it had to be you, Dennis. [Laughter] He says, I can't prove it, but he says, I'll keep watching you. I says, okay. Keep watching me. [Laughter] Oh, we were very mischievous.

ST: Yeah. We were throwing rocks and pebbles at the theater when people were inside the—

DT: Yeah, the tin roof. So, we'd buy the Boston baked beans and throw the Boston baked beans up there.

ST: And rocks and stuff. Police officer—we heard a voice go, ahem, ahem.

DT: We went to throw and, yeah. He coughed and I turn around, here's Mr. Delap. He says, I don't think you really want to be doing that, do you? [Laughter] I says, ah, no. [Laughter] But, yeah, it was a lot of fun. It was just different.

ST: Halloween was just a trip. We loved Halloween because you went out and you came home—we had candy from Halloween to April, to Easter. [Laughter]

DT: We knew all the places, and we knew where the money street was. So, everybody knew that. I trick-or-treated at the fire station. I think Sharon was with me that night in Margarita, and we kept trick-or-treating. Finally, they hollered down, get out of here. [Laughter]

ST: We'd go home, we'd get a big bag, take it home and we'd come back out again. We had four or five bags, and just—

DT: And you could trick-or-treat all over the place down there. You can't do that up here. Safe neighborhoods.

ST: Big candy bars—no. They give us apples, bring us in and give us food and drink. If they didn't have a treat, they'd feed us. Some would make us do a trick. They

says, it says trick-or-treat. You're going to do a trick before I give you a treat. So, we'd have to do something.

DT: But Halloween was a fun time.

ST: It was. It was fun...And every Sunday, everybody went to church. After church, you could go to the clubhouse. Everyone wants to go to the clubhouse and have their breakfast there, or their lunch. They had a salad—the best salad in the world: had papaya and mangos, bananas. It was the best fruit salad, for twenty-five cents. Big bowl. [Laughter]

DT: But we could go on and on forever. [Laughter]

ST: Yes.

GT: That's the one thing I liked about Panama, is we went to the grocery stores and did our own cooking. You could eat so cheap. I mean, the prices there are just wonderful.

DT: Well, yeah. We got corvina, and I got a whole slab of corvina for fifty-five cents.

N: Wow.

DT: Yeah. So . . . [Laughter]

GT: If you wanted to fish, it would be nothing. [Laughter] You could do it all by yourself.

ST: Like he was telling you about the monkey plums, the Chinese plums, I used to eat the monkey plums like crazy until one of my mom's friends said, Sharon, we got to watch out for the little worms in 'em. I wish she hadn't told me that, because then I stopped eating the monkey plums. I still ate the Chinese plums and genips—and monkey plum jam. If you ever get ahold of monkey plum, it is the best jam. Guava jam, that is so good. Even papaya jam. Mango jam is good, mango salsa. You want to eat that, because it is fabulous. They do have a mango salsa. Man, it's good. But, the Chinese—the monkey plums, once she told me about the little worms, I said, no, I'm not going to eat anymore. I didn't touch another one after that. I wish she hadn't told me that. [Laughter] All you had to do was just walk anywhere and just pick it. And the ice cream bean tree—oh, what's an ice cream bean? [Laughter] It's a big pod.

GT: Have you ever been to Panama?

N: No, I've never been. But, yeah, all these stories, it just sounds wonderful.

DT: Yes. I know you're from the other college, too. You have the other side; you're from the other college, also. [Laughter] I'm sorry, I just had to mention that.

ST: You're the one off of Florida—off of Fletcher?

DT: No, she's from the University of Florida.

N: Actually, I go to FSU.

DT: Oh, well. Very good. [Laughter]

N: I grew up in Gainesville, but I go to FSU.

DT: Okay. [Laughter]

ST: Things happen for a reason.

N: But this is a UF program, so. [Laughter]

ST: It's a good program. I'm glad they married. He was talking about that at the meeting yesterday. It was so funny how he was saying about the wedding took place, and that was so cute.

N: Oh, yes. With the museum and UF. Yeah, it's really great that we can continue this.

DT: Yes, it's great.

ST: Yes, because we're a dying breed. Once we go—so we're trying to get the kids interested. So, I think what we're going to do is, once I get money, I'm going to get them to join. After that, they can join themselves. Because my son has come with me, and both my daughters have come with me. Charlotte would have liked to come this year, but she had to go to Myrtle Beach with her family. I told her, maybe next year you can come, because she hasn't been to one since—I think the last one she came to, we were in Tampa. That's when we got kicked out of that one. [Laughter]

DT: It's their own fault.

ST: But it was the fault of the hotel, because the Zonians told 'em how much alcohol to get. They didn't believe it, so they didn't get enough. They ran out the first day, and there was a big—

DT: On Sunday, back then, you couldn't buy alcohol so they wouldn't give us any.

ST: It was a riot.

DT: They got rowdy, and . . .

ST: Mm-hm. They were upset.

DT: Told us not to come back. [Laughter] We told them we wouldn't come back anyways.

ST: You run out of alcohol on the first day, they're gonna have a rebellion on their hands with them folks. [Laughter] Because they drink. They like the rum.

DT: I need to go.

ST: Okay.

N: [Laughter] Well, thank you so much, again.

ST: I appreciate it.

N: It's been wonderful, hearing your guys' story.

ST: Thank you.

DT: No problem.

[End of interview]

Transcribed by: Diana Dombrowski, February 4, 2014

Audit Edit by: Liz Gray, February 5, 2014