

**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.

Transcribed interviews are available through SPOHP for use by research scholars, students, journalists, and other interested groups. Material is frequently used for theses, dissertations, articles, books, documentaries, museum displays, and a variety of other public uses. As standard oral history practice dictates, SPOHP recommends that researchers refer to both the transcript and audio of an interview when conducting their work. A selection of interviews are available online here through the UF Digital Collections and the UF Smathers Library system.

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PCM-032

Interviewee: Alwyn Sprague

Interviewer: Candice Ellis

Date of Interview: July 8, 2011

E: This is Candace Ellis and Al Sprague on July 8, 2011 at the Panama Canal reunion in Orlando, talking about life and adventures in the Panama Canal Zone. So, we can start at the very beginning. How did you come to be at the Zone or how did your family find themselves there?

S: My father and mother were in the depression. It was in the [19]30s. And they were so poor that my mom used to make him a banana sandwich and then on the way to work, or after work, he would stop in for a cup of tea, and he'd say, don't put the tea bag in the tea cup. He'd take the tea bag and he'd put it in his pocket, and he'd take the warm water to the table, and he'd put ketchup in it, and have tomato soup. And he'd take the tea bag home, and my mom and him would have tea together. So they didn't have much money, and I have my sister Joni, who's here running around too. She's five years older than me. But they met this couple, Peggy Corigan, who was married to Allan Deleyon, where I got my name, Allan from. It was Peggy Deleyon. They were married. He was up in the United States. He had to spend six months working in the United States to become an American citizen because he was from the West Indies, one of the Dutch islands out there. [Coughing] Excuse me. Anyway, they became friends and they saw the plight of my parents and so Allan got my dad introduced to the Texaco Oil Company in Panama. So my dad borrowed \$500 from my grandmother, and back then it was a lot of money, and he got on the old **Lancon** with my mom,

who was pregnant with me, and they went to Panama, and I was born in Colón, Panama, so that's how I came to be born. I was started in the U.S. and born in Panama. Anyway, he worked for the Mount Hope tank farm of the Texaco Oil Company. They had these tanks of gasoline, whatever, oil. And he worked for them for a year. Then he went over to the Customs Bureau for Banconal, and he got on with Banconal, and he worked with them, and then next thing, he got into the Inspection Bureau, and then from the Inspection Bureau, he went into the accounting branch. My mother told me she used to put all the books on accounting and everything in the bathroom and took all the other books out because that was the only material he'd read, and my dad really got interested in accounting. So he worked his way up to Assistant Chief Auditor of the Panama Canal. They never would let him become Chief because he didn't have a college degree. That'd be a lesson to people who don't want to get their degree. There's still that animosity out there. So from there, we moved over to the Pacific side, and that was before World War II. I was born in [19]38.

E: [19]38. Okay.

S: And I remember Pearl Harbor. I remember everybody running around. I was only three years old.

E: Young.

S: But my dad, I remember him building air raid underneath the house, these old wooden houses. Sand bags. They put sand. Everybody got in together and we

had blackouts. You had to put the screens down and turn off the lights. You used a flashlight at night or something. And you'd actually drive sometimes with just no light in your car, you know. Actually, you know, being a kid in a war, you grew up thinking war, you know, and I can't remember when we weren't in a war, so it's no mystery why we're in a war, I think, as a great country. I would rather be an American than anything. I do have dual citizenship though, and I love being a Panamanian also. Panama is...I just love it.

E: Do you go back often?

S: Yeah, we go back every other year or every year. My wife, she was born down there, and her parents were born down there too. And her father, who came back and lived in Panama, was a torpedo plane pilot in the navy during the Second World War, and he sank three ships. And he was out in the Pacific, and he got the Distinguished Flying Cross, two air medals, and he was in the group that started the Blue Angels. But he got out of the service. He said he had enough of war, so they let him go. But the rest of the guys, his group, they were a war bond tour, and they used to put on performances, and that's how it started. But anyway, see all of the canals would slowly intermingle with each other. It's almost like everybody's related in some way or another, you know? And I feel like I'm related to the Corigans because the Corigans got me down to Panama. Well, Peggy Corigan and Alan Deleyon, but she was a Corigan, so I met all the other Corigans, and my dad met the Corigans, and we were always on best of terms.

I've always been very close with the Corigans. They're a wonderful bunch of Irishmen. They're real Irish too. I was a sickly kid. I had **abscess** ears and, you know, general things kids have tonsillitis and all that. But I liked to keeping in shape, and running, and weight lifting and all that. So I stayed in good shape until I hurt my back. But that's because of all the things I did, you know. I brought it on myself. But is there anything special you want to hear?

E: Sure. So you were born in 1938 in Colón, and you were raised there until when? When did you leave?

S: Well I was three years old when we moved to the Pacific side.

E: Okay. And then when did you ultimately leave? Just trying to give it a time frame.

S: When did I what?

E: When did you leave?

S: Oh. To go to live in the States?

E: Uh-huh.

S: 1989.

E: 1989.

S: But the first time I left was to go to college in 1957. I went to Mississippi Southern College. And I got a year, almost two years in there, and I got kicked out. It's alright. It wasn't all my fault either. I mean, teacher had something to do with it.

But, they kicked me out. Anyway, that just made it good for me to go to another school, a better school—American University in Washington, D.C. And I got a bachelor's and a master's from there in art.

E: In what?

S: In art.

E: Oh, neat. What kind? What medium?

S: Well, everything. Master's of Art in Arts. I mean, sculpture, art history, painting, drawing, you name it. The only thing I haven't done is lithography because I never had a machine where I could do it. But I've done everything else just about.

E: Okay. Well, so from 1938 to 1957, you were in the Zone. So that's a good amount of time. You must have had a lot of different experiences just with schooling. So why don't we start, you know, with your experiences in grade school and high school and what that was like.

S: Well, I remember a lot of fighting. [Laughter]

E: Between the boys, or between everybody?

S: Boys! There's always a bully. There's always a bully waiting for ya. I don't know about girls, but I know guys. I don't know. I used to wonder, How do bullies get out of class so early? Because they're waiting at the door, you know. And there's

somebody in the back door, and you're in class, and they're going like this:

[Slapping sound]. And so, the guy next to me goes...

E: Not me.

S: And I go...

E: He was pointing at you? [Laughs]

S: [Slapping sound]. So I go out and get my black eye or whatever it was, you know, but I mean, that's the way it was, a lot of fighting. Until I got in high school, and then I got bigger, and you know, started to fight back a little. [Laughs].

E: [Laughs]. Which high school did you attend?

S: Balboa High School.

E: Okay

S: Actually, that's why I had to get the master's degree, because the school system was so good down there, we're on New York Regents Tests.

E: Oh, okay. I didn't realize that.

S: And they picked the highest evaluation they could, and the teachers had to have master's degrees to teach down there in high school.

E: Wow.

S: And I don't know about elementary school. Maybe, you know. But anyway, I couldn't go down there and teach school unless I had a master's degree, so I had to stay on longer in the States and get my master's. But I taught four years in Arlington County in the junior high school with my bachelor's, and then I worked after school and summers and in part, you know, whenever I could, and worked on my master's and all that.

E: So you could go back to teach in Panama?

S: Yeah, I wanted to go back. And it's magical. It's magical. But anyway, I actually went back, and I taught in Curundu Junior High School, but I went over and taught in Balboa High School in the same room. I taught art in the same room that I got kicked out of art in.

E: Oh my goodness.

S: I was kind of pain out there.

E: What'd you do to get kicked out of art class?

S: You know, it's hard to remember. I think I made some boy blue by throwing paint on him or something [laughter]. I don't know. Or I kicked the door in. It was just something annoying.

E: Did you have to kick anybody out of art class?

S: Huh? Pardon?

E: Have you ever had to kick anybody out of art class?

S: Well, I had one problem with one guy, who was one of the best of all the artists. I don't know. I'm not mentioning names or anything, but I think it probably had something to do with drugs or something. His brain wasn't functioning right, and I just thought the kid was great, but he just got out of control. I mean, when you can't even talk to anybody without him jumping up and down like a gibbon or something like that, you've got problems.

And then one kid, I allowed them to all come into class and watch this one guy's—I mean all the kids who had study hall or something could come to my classroom this one day and watch the surfing slides that this one guy took and explain things in them. And we're all sitting in there. Of course all the surfers got out of school somehow [laughter]. And they're in there. I walked over to this kid and I said, What's in that glass? He goes, beer. I said, You're gonna get out of here! We're going down to see somebody. I said, that's it kids! I had to. I had to.

E: Yeah.

S: He ruined it for everybody.

E: How old was he, bringing beer to class?

S: I think he was probably seventeen maybe.

E: That is very bold.

S: Yeah, well, you know, he was on something too [laughter].

S: Well, you know, here's the thing. There were the heads and the boozers. The heads were on marijuana. The boozers were on beer or whatever. And they did their thing, okay? Now I see kids that are grown up to have kids. They're doing fine. I can only think of one guy that really messed up his life, but the rest of them, they got away from it, and they did fine.

E: Get over it and grow up a little.

S: Yeah. So, sometimes I think people get a little bit too...you know, certain people, it'll kill 'em. You know, their personality or their mental makeup. But most of the kids, they got through that period of their life and they didn't want that stuff anymore.

E: Yeah. When you were there in high school, was there a lot of hard partying like that?

S: Oh, yeah.

E: Yeah.

S: I mean, not with me. I used to go down to the yacht club and drink beer after school or on Saturdays or something like that.

E: Yeah. Describe an average Saturday night for a high schooler in the Zone.

S: Down there?

E: Yeah.

S: [Laughter] Oh, they'd go out and drink some beers. Actually, when I was in high school, I don't think I even had a girlfriend. Once in a while, I'd take a girl out, but they didn't seem to be too interested in me. I was a little nutty.

S: And I think a lot of that has to do with the way I am, what I make and what I do, and paint, and, you know. I'm probably not normal [laughter].

E: It's good to be that way though.

S: Well, maybe. Maybe.

E: Yeah.

S: I'm bipolar. I'm manic-depressive. I've been like that all my life, and I don't think I remember really a happy day until recently when my wife has gotten me some new medication, and used Abilify. That's a good add for Abilify...the Abilify took the other medications and it made 'em work better.

E: Yeah, I've seen the medications for it. It's kind of a-

S: It's great. Yeah.

E: And you dealt with that all throughout high school?

S: Oh yeah [inaudible 16:00] fruitcake. [laughter].

S: I mean, I still did all the things I wanted to do, you know?

E: Right.

S: And I still was trying to chase a girl here and there, but I just was out of luck, you know? And a lot of it was I didn't conform, and I think girls at that age like more conforming people, more steady in their lives. I think if a woman has been divorced three or four times, maybe they're not so picky, you know? But when I was young, I would do crazy things, you know?

E: Like what? Do you have stories?

S: Well, even when I was teaching school down there, I still liked doing crazy—I wrote a book called A Clear Blue Line, and it's pretty dirty, but it's the way we were when we were in our thirties. And as far as girls, as far as diving. We did a lot of diving. Free diving, where you go down and you just use a snorkel.

E: Yeah.

S: And you either, fish wins or you win, you know? But we'd shoot big fish, you know? And in water you couldn't see the bottom. Now, this isn't going to go into the Pan Canal record, is it, or anything?

E: I mean, I can have it edited out if you'd like, but it's not—

S: Well, no, no. It doesn't matter, but--

E: I know it's a bit unrelated, but if you don't want it in, that's—yeah.

S: No, well it's just that I don't like sounding like I'm tooting my horn.

E: No, I'm interested in it. I do a lot of reading, so I mean, it's all, yeah.

S: Well, let me give you an idea just how crazy we were about it. I had the Hong Kong Flu. It was a bad flu that went around back then. And I coughed so hard that I got a hernia. It popped out, so they were going to have to operate on me, but they said, I don't want you going to work. I said, Well, I have to go to work. I teach school, and I can't just say I'm not going to work for a week, you know? So he said, Well, keep your legs up on a chair and don't do anything. So, that weekend, the water was cold and perfect for fish, and I just put a wetsuit on. A wetsuit's tight, you know? And I put that on. It was cold anyway, so. And it held the hernia in, so I went diving with a bunch of guys. And we went out to Bona Notoki Island, and about twenty-seven miles from Panama. And I shot a, well, we used to call them jewfish, but they call them goliath grouper now. I have to be politically polite, you know. Anyway, I shot him, and he took off and went down, and in this place where I was, it was 100 feet deep. And the line got tangled around me, and I went down with him 100 feet. So, I got untangled when I hit the bottom, and I started up, and I got up about 50 feet, and I had to breathe. You know, I'm a sort of excitable person and all that, but when something happens, I calm down. That part of me shuts down. I said, You gotta get air. One drop of water, you're dead. I said, Where am I going to find air? Where am I going to find air? I was probably going, where am I going to find air? You know. And I said, my mask. So I leaned my head back, and water ran down, whatever water was in the

mask. And I just went [sniffs]. And I sucked through my nose as hard as I could, flattened that mask up against my face. Well, that assuaged the urge to breathe. It didn't give me a lung full of air, but it gave me enough so that I could go on. And I went on, and I got about 25 feet more, and I needed air again. And the mask had decompressed a little bit, so I sniffed again, and I came up just taking it easy. And everybody was laughing, nervous laughter. They said they were dividing my gear up. You know, I get this, I get this. But I was down over five minutes. That's a long time.

E: Oh my goodness.

S: [Laughter] Yeah. I didn't realize how long I was down.

E: Cause what's the record for—?

S: People go diving for—

E: Yeah? I don't know.

S: Some people can dive for twenty minutes. I don't know, but, see, I was trying to breathe through my mask too. First, I had to untangle myself. First, I was down, and then I saw the fish and shot him, and he pulled me down, then I had a hundred feet to get back up. So all of this was going on down there.

E: Did you write about that in your book?

S: Pardon?

E: Did you-

S: Yeah, I wrote that in my book. In fact, the best diver down there, Jerry Coffee, he's dead now, but he was great. He said, You know, I never thought of that. And he's been in situations even worse than that, tangled up with sharks and everything else, you know. But we used to brag about sharks and all that, you know. [Inaudible 21:50] old thing, but there were plenty, and we did some stupid things, you know. Lost at sea, breaking down...Oh, God. Some stories are so funny, but they're bad. They're bad [laughter].

E: Alright. Well, maybe we keep the bad ones off the recorder if they're that bad, but let's see. Just to, I guess, bring it back to the Zone—

S: But what I was telling you there gives you an idea of one of the adventures that we'd done.

E: Yeah.

S: And other guys did just as much as me. And you would try to laugh at it all, but everybody was scared when they did something like that. And that was a way- See, I was [inaudible 22:43] for the military. I volunteered for the draft in 1956 when I graduated high school, and they wouldn't take me because I have asthma and a couple other things. So, I was [inaudible 22:58]. So, that's when I went to college. And later on in my life, after I was teaching a while- And finally, when I

quit teaching and just started working on painting, I had four kids by then. I mean, I didn't have them. My wives had them. I had two wives, not at the same time.

E: [Laughs]

S: Oh, the Army. So I said, you know, all my life, I've seen the military. All my life, seen them go by in trucks. Most of my friends were drafted. Some of them went to war. Some of them didn't come back. So, it was something I think that I missed that I was supposed to do. Down in the Canal Zone, people are very patriotic. We're very, very patriotic. I said, I owe my country. So, I went to General Warner and told him that I wanted to do a series of paintings on the military, on the army and the jungle, or wherever. And he says, how long would it take you to get your gear together? I said, Well, I've got to drive home and get it. I guess about forty-five minutes. He says, I'll have a helicopter waiting for you when you get here. So, I did twenty paintings. Big oils. In fact, they just started showing Philadelphia not long ago, a couple months ago. And they had two of my paintings in it of the military. They were in the Pentagon for a while. And they put one of mine on a banner even.

E: Wow.

S: So, I put everything I had into those. I went with the grunts in the jungle. I had flown every kind of helicopter there was. I just did everything they did, you know? And it was very enlightening to me, and it made me really, really just love the military. You can thank God we have the men we do. Oh geez. I ought to put a

sign on the back of my truck saying—I'm gonna do it too—Because of rednecks, country boys, cowboys, hillbillies, and mountain boys, and tough city kids, America is safe. And that's true. A lot of those guys who are young and they had no job, or maybe they didn't do well in school, or maybe they didn't give a damn, and they went in the military, but they were a team. There's something about Americans. It's wonderful. We have a wonderful country, and we have a great military.

E: Do any experiences with them in particular, when you were with them doing the paintings, stand out? Any stories you'd like to share from that time?

S: Well, when something happened?

E: Yeah. Just any memory you might have doing that with them.

S: Well, I saw two guys, or three guys. I don't know. One guy fell down a hill, and he took another one with him. It was like in the movie *Platoon*. It looked just like it. He took another one with him, and another one, and another one, and they all rolled down the hill, you know. And then one guy broke his leg and they had to evacuate him, so [inaudible 26:49] had to come and fly in on a helicopter, and it started raining inside the helicopter, through the radios and all that, and then, Hi, uh, we got to get back to base [Laughter].

S: And there were probably more than I can remember. You know what I mean? Nothing ever runs on time, and I just don't know how to night fight.

I don't know how to fight in complete darkness. Oh, one time, I was out with a machine gun. This is all practice now. I wasn't in a war. They'd set up the machine gun, and you sleep there. You just sleep in the jungle, you know? And the guy says, Look at all these leaves falling around us! I looked and I said, They're not leaves! They were vampire bats. What they do is they flutter down and they land and then they crawl over to you. And then they find a bare spot of skin or something, like your ankle or something like that, they'll nick it and then they lap the blood. And then they can give you rabies. So, at least one—every time they had a maneuver—at least one guy got hit by a bat. But that's another one. We moved. [Laughter]

E: How long did you do that?

S: I did that for about four or five—then they sent me down to Just Cause when they had the military invasion there. They sent me a month later, but there was still a little bit of stuff going on, not much. And so I did a lot of paintings on that too. So I worked about four to five years on it.

E: Four to five to do the twenty--

S: And they flew me up. Gee! They flew me up, the general's plane. They flew me up. I met the chiefs of staff, Colin Powell, almost everybody. I actually sat at the table with the men the run the wars. It was something, and they gave me a show, and—

E: I'd be star struck.

S: Why?

E: Just talking to the big famous politicians. It'd be nerve-racking.

S: Oh, it wasn't so bad. They were so down to earth. They were. Now, I didn't get involved in politics with them or telling them anything. I just thanked them for whatever they did for me, but nothing to get consumed, especially, don't you ever get nervous about that. You're too pretty.

E: Thank you.

S: And they will be very glad to have you around, so you just be yourself, you know?

E: Alright. So you were actually sent to Panama City in the wake of Just Cause to do some paintings within the city.

S: Yeah, yeah. Well, that's where I'm from so they gave me a car and I borrowed a gun from a guy, so then I had that in my pocket [laughter].

E: For protection. Did you ever have to use it?

S: Oh, no.

E: No.

S: But I'm glad I had it!

E: Yeah.

S: I slept with it right in my nightstand there.

E: What was the city like after that when you were there?

S: Well, I didn't stop for any lights [Laughter]. And the police force, which— See, I knew Noriega. He bought a lot of my paintings.

E: You knew Noriega?

S: Oh yeah.

E: Personally?

S: Oh yeah [laughter]! Yeah. In fact, his cohorts tried to have me shot.

E: What? Why was that?

S: Well, my brother was in Army Intelligence. He was a civilian in Army Intelligence, and Noriega knew that, but Noriega liked my paintings, so he bought a lot of my paintings. He bought around ten. He gave one to Reagan. Yeah, in fact, if you want to verify this, call the Reagan Library, and ask them if they have a painting there by Al Sprague that was presented by President de Espriella. He worked for Noriega I guess. But just say, do you have a painting there by Al Sprague from Panama? You ought to do it.

E: Yeah.

S: And they'll tell you—

E: I'll Google you.

S: Huh?

E: I'll Google you.

S: You'll Google me?

E: I'll Google you. Yeah.

S: Well, I'll give you my email.

E: Okay.

S: Okay?

E: Yeah. 'Cause I'd like to see them. Did Noriega contact you directly to buy your paintings?

S: Yeah. In fact, one time—let me see if I've got anything here. Yeah, I do. My last one. Good.

E: Let's see?

S: That's my card. That's one of my paintings of the canal.

E: Oh, that's gorgeous.

S: But you know, I hate talking about myself [Laughter].

E: I understand, but this oral history is really about—I understand that you feel uncomfortable doing that, but we're interested in hearing your story, so this is really interesting.

S: The bottom line is the website.

E: Okay.

S: But up there, you see [Spradar@aol.com](mailto:Spradar@aol.com)

E: Yeah.

S: That's my email.

E: Okay.

S: Alright?

E: Yeah.

S: If you write, What's your name?

E: Candace.

S: Candace, the interviewer or Canal Zone interviewer or something so I know who it is, because you got all kinds of stuff.

E: Yeah, I do too. Definitely junk mail and stuff like that. But thank you so much. This looks really neat. I like the colors, everything.

S: Pardon?

E: I like the colors. I can hang that up.

S: You like colors?

E: I like the colors in the painting. It's kind of a—

S: Can you turn that off?

[Break in recording]

S: Jimmy Rhinehart. And since then, I knew him in school, and I used to have a couple of- When I quit teaching, I had so many students of mine. We were good friends, and they'd go to my foundry. I always had a foundry. I've been casting bronze for forty years. So, we would go and pour bronzes and have a good time. Well, he was helping me one day, and I've got a crane now 'cause I can't lift that stuff anymore like that. Well, you have a shank. It's a ring. And on one end, it's just a rod, and on the other end, it's a rod with two handles. So, you put the pot in it, and then you have a hanger that comes down and grabs it, and that lifts it up. See? And then you take it over with the crane, and you pour it. Well, what happened is, we had to skim the top, a lot of metal and all that. And when the shank came up with the crane, there was a pot in the middle, there was a little piece of slag that got caught between the ring and the pot, and it tipped the pot over, and it was ninety pounds of 2,000-degree metal on the floor.

E: Oh my gosh.

S: Boy [Laughter]! He went that way and I went this way! But, you know, all kinds of things happen like that.

E: How do you even remove that once it-

S: Pardon?

E: How would you remove it once it's set and dried?

S: You know what I did? It chills.

E: Yeah.

S: It gets cold.

E: Yeah.

S: And we cut it up on the band saw, the pieces, and I melted them again, and we poured it. I got it [Laughter].

E: It's like hot lava.

S: Well, you see, and the method I was using was using is a plaster and sand method. Once you burn out the wax that was in it, if you don't do that, if you do that, you have to pour it within a day or it deteriorates.

E: That'd be terrifying to trying to.

S: Now, I went all over the world just about. I went to Florida, I went to Panama, any place I could find anybody doing anything in Panama. I went to Italy with my wife to learn how to do foundry, so we went all over the place, and that's what I wanted to do.

E: And you mentioned you don't do a lot of selling. It's just really—

S: Well, my wife does, and my daughter. She's here. She's selling. My daughter by my first wife. But I never thought I'd end up with a couple of wives. But you know, [laughter] it's a strange life.

E: Did you meet both of them in the Zone?

S: No. I met my first wife in the United States. Very good woman, and very wonderful person, and things didn't work out. But we had three children, two boys and a girl. And the girl's up here selling now with her daughter and her husband. And then, my second wife, we had a little girl who's going to be thirty next year. But they're all pretty brilliant and they've done well for themselves except for my son, Michael, who I worry about him, because I want him to be able to—You know, he's doing what he wants to do though. He's got the education. I'm his father. I worry about him, you know?

E: That's just what you're going to do. Can't escape it.

S: Don't your folks worry about you?

E: I hope they don't, but I'm sure they do.

S: Yeah. Are you the only one?

E: I have a younger brother.

S: Younger brother?

E: Uh-huh. And he's doing well.

S: Okay. [Inaudible 36:58] How old are you?

E: I worry about him. Twenty-two.

S: Twenty-two. Oh, they're worried about you.

E: Yeah. [Laughs]

S: Oh, oh.

E: I hope they don't worry too much.

S: Well, you can't help it. You can't help it. Especially the mother [Laughter]. Are you good friends with your mom?

E: Yeah.

S: Yeah.

E: Really close. Well, so your experience as an artist sound like they—I mean, you've had a lot of really interesting opportunities to interact. I mean, Noriega buying your paintings. That's crazy.

S: Well, when I went to see him, I was in a dentist chair. And the dentist got a call, a Panamanian. Hey Sprague, I don't know what you did, but the big man wants to see you. I said, What do you mean? He said, Noriega wants to see you. You'd better get going. So he packed his stuff up, and I went out of there and went home and changed into a [inaudible 37:44]. I got pictures of all this too.

E: Yeah, I'd love to see them.

S: But they're not here.

E: Yeah.

S: I can send them over to the Internet.

E: That'd be great to see.

S: Anyway, I went upstairs to his [inaudible 37:59], and he wasn't a very tall guy. I was a lot taller. I lost four inches with my spine, but I knew that he wouldn't speak English. He could speak English, but he spoke Spanish as a matter of pride.

E: Right.

S: He would only speak Spanish. So I said, how am I going to do this? because my Spanish is terrible, you know. So I said, [inaudible 38:35] mucho gusto and then I started fumbling around with my Spanish. He says, Sprague! We'll speak English [laughter]. I knew my Spanish was bad! He says, I want you to know, you should

be very proud that Panama likes your work this much, he said. But Panama is very proud to have your work too.

E: Did you ever paint anything just for him?

S: Well, he just liked my paintings. [Inaudible 39:19] He really was a patron of mine in a way. I didn't ask him to buy them. You couldn't. He was a dictator, you know? I never had any dealings with them or any kind of dealings with him. Just met him there face to face that one time. Then he said that he gave paintings to Mitterrand in France, president of Mexico, president of Spain, but he just went on and on and on all these people that he gave- He says, but the one I was so proud to give a painting to was Anthony Quinn. You ever heard of him? He was an actor. He got the Academy Award and all that. Have you ever seen the movie, "Zorba the Greek"?

E: No.

S: Well, he was in that. You know, old actor, like old me. But what happened is I had a show in November just a month before Just Cause, and a friend of mine who was a bodyguard of Noriega's. He was a bodyguard to the ambassador to Japan, Albert Calvo, who I went to Balboa high school with, who should be in our class, but he's been very sick. But anyway, Mariel, he was a great big black guy. You couldn't help but like this guy. He was magnetic. He was full of pep. He'd drive a car and just, Aaw God! I don't know how he got out of some of those things [laughter]. And one night, we were coming back from the airport, and he

gave me the pictures that they took of Noriega and me at the airport. He met me and drove me back to my house. I had my kids with me too. Not my little one, but the three other ones and my wife's cousin. All the kids. They'd come back and in the summer, I'd take them all out fishing. I had a big boat that I built and I'd put them on the boat and we'd go. But there was an outbreak halfway back from the airport, and they were turning cars over and burning them, and throwing rocks and they were shooting, and you know, everything was going- all that nice stuff to make you feel calm. Well, we finally get up, and we turn up this road. He's driving. He's trying to dodge. This is not going to burn my car. And he pulls up into this road, and it's blocked off with a burning car and guys coming at us with torches, and we were blocked off from behind. So, this guy comes up, walks up to the car, maliante, and he puts his head in the car, and Mariel reaches behind and gets his nickel-plated or stainless steel .357 Magnum and goes, MBOW! Just like in the movies. He cracks his head so hard, it could sound like a coconut. The guy went, BLOOMP, down. Then he got out with the gun, and it was dark, and I heard a couple shots. I don't know if he shot anybody or what, but torches went up in the air, and he got back in the car, and we drove off. It took us an hour to get out of that. And anyway, he was faithful to the regime though, you know? Well, when I went down there in [19]89 for a show, November [19]89. See, in December [19]89 was when they hit Noriega. When I went down there, after the show, he came up to me and he says, Hey Al. I'd go anywhere with you, you know. He says, Hey Al. Come on. Let's take a ride. So I go, Okay. So, we go for

a ride, and he says, Hey Al. They're going to kill you, man. I said, what? He says, yeah. Noriega wants you dead. Actually, it wasn't Noriega. It was one of his under-wings who didn't like me, and he thought I was a spy because my brother was in intelligence. I never told my brother a thing. I got all my information from the maid. I knew that my phone was bugged and I only said good things, you know. I shut my mouth. I know how to do that. So, he says, but he used Noriega. He used the name, you know? And finally, later on, he admitted, I was trying to make you say something against Noriega so I'd have something to—anyway, so he starts driving the car and I said, oh, come on Mariel. Quit joking with me. So, he gases the car. And we're going down the little road, almost a single. It was double, but you had to kind of go off on the grass to kind of let the other guy by. People were jumping off the side of the road and everything. He was going so fast. Finally, I said, Jesus! We must have been doing ninety miles an hour. I said, Mario, God, man! Don't kill me! You're going to kill me! And he goes, Eeerrrrr, pulls out that gun, cocks it, and puts it up to my head, and says, I'll kill you right now! And I'll tell you, it's like pin pricks all over my brain and body, you know? And you're looking death right in there. He got a gun. I don't know what he was going to do. He says, I'll tell you. You'd better listen to me. He says, I'm going to take you back to where you are in the Zone. And you stay there, and you get the hell out of Panama. You can't go out by the airport. You go out by the airport, they're going to get ya. He says, the only way—you go get your general friend or whoever you can, to get you out, military. And he says, I swear, Al. They're going

to get you and they're going to put you in jail with [inaudible], the guy that was already in jail, or they're going to kill you. One or the other. They think you're a spy. I said, Oh man. I said, Okay! [Laughs] I promise! You know? So he drove me home, and my brother helped me get a—and I got General Max Thurman—he got me on a plane. And what was funny was when I got to the airport, that Howard Air Force Base, when we had it in Panama, I went up and had a beard and [inaudible] clothes, and this little Air Force guy- you know how- you know how to- now I do that, but he says to me, What's your name? What do you want? I said, well, I'm on the plane. On the manifest. He says, what's your name? Sprague. Al Sprague. So he, No Sprague on the manifest. I said, well, you got to have a Sprague on there. They told me I was on the manifest to fly out on this plane. No Sprague. I said, well, let me have that phone near you please. I want to call a general. I had his number too. He says, The only Sprague we have on— How common is Sprague?—He says, the only Sprague we have here is a Captain Sprague. I said, that's me! I'm Captain Sprague! I didn't know they were going to put me down as a captain, you know? But I went along with it. I'm Captain Sprague! You know? I'm Captain America! What the hell. No, I said, I'm Captain Sprague! He says, boy, they have all kinds of spooks running around here now. [Laughs] Anyway, I got out, so.

E: Was it hard to transition, move to the States after?

S: Oh, no. I miss Panama a little, and I miss it a little, but, you know, I like living where I am. I get to make all those things. I cast bronze. I meet all kinds of people. I'm getting there in the end. You know. I know that. I mean, maybe I've got ten years. Who knows? If I'm lucky, maybe. But we all know we're going to go as long as the big guy tells us, you know? And then we're slipping off into another realm.

E: Another new adventure.

S: It is! It is. It's definitely. How pompous of man to feel that this is it, that they're the brightest of everything and then they'll be no more. Not very smart. [Laughs]

E: Well, I mean, that was an incredible story. I'm just trying to get the names straight. Was Mario the bodyguard to the—

S: He was the bodyguard to Albert Calvo, who was the ambassador to Japan.

E: Okay. Alright.

S: Under Noriega.

E: Okay.

S: And Calvo bought a lot of paintings from me. He was a great guy. He was a bridge champion, the world over. [Inaudible 49:17] one of the world's best bridge champions.

E: Did you guys ever play a game?

S: Oh, I can't play cards.

E: No?

S: I don't have the patience to play five minutes—fish [Laughter]. Do you ever play fish?

E: Yeah, and it's about the only thing I can do with cards too, I think.

S: I don't like games.

E: Yeah.

S: I like to make things.

E: I don't have any patience I don't think for any of the games.

S: Really?

E: I don't like waiting my turn or anything.

S: What do you like to do?

E: I read a lot, and I do a lot of writing for school, but reading, I think that cons—

S: Do a lot of editing?

E: Writing, just for school.

S: Writing? That's great.

E: But I think reading and that kind of consumes most of my free time.

S: You're like my daughter, Dagny.

E: Yeah?

S: Her and I just wrote a book together. Well, I wrote the book back in 1966 for my seventh grade class, and we've got copies of it here. Not here. But I wrote the book, and what I did was, I was teaching English and I wanted to give the kids something extra, so I wrote a story in my own time that I read to them if they were good. I read them a chapter. Or not a chapter, but as far as I had done on Friday, and then I show them whatever illustrations I did. There are kids that are adults now—Well, I'm selling the book over at the—

E: The vendors' area?

S: Yeah. The vendors. If you go over there, I'll slip you one. I'll give you one [laughter].

S: But the kids that are now, they're in their forties, fifties, something, you know, they're- But anyway, Dagny edited it. That's my little girl. She edited the book, and she did a beautiful job. She's brilliant. I'm sure you're just like her. Eleven years of age, she edited some of my filthiest stories [laughter]. But they weren't all that bad. They were just bad. That's all. But I did the illustrations, and it got published by a publisher, and it was a finalist in some kind of award or something. So, it didn't get the award, but it was of the ten books that they chose, you know? So that was kind of nice for a first time.

E: Yeah [laughter]. How much have you published besides that? 'Cause I know that you mentioned [inaudible 52:02]

S: That's about it. But I'm working on another book and—Excuse my speed.

E: No, it's okay.

S: I always draw wherever I go, or I get ideas. I have books like—

E: Oh, wow.

S: You know, I write, put down stuff for casting bronze, you know, and making different things, machines that I need, and we've got a fishing lure business in Panama. We're making fishing lures from the lures that I invent.

E: And are they produced and sold in Panama?

S: Yeah.

E: Oh, wow.

S: Yeah. They are, but we're going to get them in the States too, if we can. In fact, I'm taking some to Alaska with my daughter, Cassie. We're going to go to Alaska and try them out on the salmon and on the halibut. But this buddy of mine and I, Bob Hummer. And I'm Willie Deal and he's Bob Hummer. Now, he's Bob Hunter in this book. Anyway, it's called *Windswept*, and these guys get blown out to sea in their sailboat, which happen to us, and it capsizes and everything. They end up on a log, floating out at sea. A big tree, and which we see all the time out

there. Big trees wash down the rivers and they drift around, and all the dolphin and- becomes the center for life out there. And then, there's a guy petting a whale shark and then he slips in. And then, the two of them end up on the back of the whale shark [laughter]. And then here they are diving off the log when it hit a reef. And there's this tiger shark that followed him. So the tiger shark gets after him. And both of us have been in the water with some big tiger sharks in our life, and—

E: Oh.

S: We're still here [laughter]. But here's the tiger shark and all. And then the shark likes to have his nose scratched. And then they get on an island. There are feral dogs and everything. And then the sharks and Oh God, and then they find a little puppy in a coconut shell. And then here he is scratching the- he's on his floating log and they just cut away the water. He's scratching the nose of the whale shark, you know. And then there's fishing boards, and fishing boards, and as I go on, I- And then this is-

E: He is scratching it.

S: You know a pianist, if they're going to be a good pianist, they practice every day. Well, everywhere I go, I bring my sketchbook.

E: Wow.

S: If you want to look through it, you can.

E: Yeah, definitely. So you guys are actually-

S: I made the book by the way too. I taught myself how to make books.

E: Book binding.

S: Book binding. Do you ever do that?

E: I haven't, but there was a high school class that offered that.

S: You ought to do it. You ought to do it. Really. Because you can take your own writings and bind them, and you can make some neat stuff.

E: It'd be neat to do. So this free diving and going out, that was kind of a big social, kind of cultural thing in Panama? Were a lot of people into that?

S: No, not a lot. I would say a very small percentage of the Gringos and Panamanians did it. Panamanians were- some of them were excellent! They were good divers, but they kill everything! BLAH BUM BUM BUM! [Laughter]

E: How did people really get along with native Panamanians? Everybody-

S: Oh my God! A lot of the Panamanians went to American schools if they could pay the tuition!

E: Right.

S: They're close friends! And some Americans- they go to Panama to go into Panama. They don't have any ties with the Zone.

E: Right.

S: So, Panama and the Canal Zone are a lot closer, I mean American time. Now, granted you had some Americans who only went into Panama to buy a lottery ticket, and they only had lousy stuff to say about Panama, but most of your Americans got along fine with Panamanians. My family, my dad, some of his best friends were in Panama.

E: Did you have a lot of Panamanian students at the school where you taught?

S: Yeah! Yeah. We had quite a few. And there was intermarriage too. You know, girls would marry a Panamanian guy, or a guy, an American would marry a Panamanian girl. We're married! We're married to each other, Panama and America.

E: What about for children? You know, 'cause children can be cruel. Were Panamanian kids picked on or teased or anything like that as far as you saw?

S: No, no, no. I'll tell you, the best fighters were Panamanian and Gringo. A mixture-mother Panamanian, father Gringo, or vice versa. They had that Spanish temper and American size. They beat the [laughter] out of anybody, you know?

E: What about intermixing? 'Cause I know there was a West Indian presence too.

S: Oh! That was my first language. I hear that when I two years old. My mama give me to the maid. Her name **Lynmon** and Lynmon take me all over the place and show all her friends this little white boy, and then she rub blonde hair, you know,

and they touch me hair and kiss me face. They kiss me face all over and I come back, and my mother say, what [inaudible 58:19] different kiss marks on his face there. Lipstick all over them. I see purple and pink and blue [laughter]. They'll all kiss me up. They were—I learned how to talk that.

E: Can you give me the name of that?

S: Well, we call it Bajan.

E: Yeah.

S: In the Canal Zone, people call it Bajan, but a lot of people call it Creole. Bajan comes from Barbados. Most of the workers who dug the Canal were Jamaican.

E: Right.

S: If it wasn't for the black man, that canal would not have been dug, because they were the ones that could take it. They took the disease, they took the accidents, and they were strong. And they needed the money. And then they brought over their families, or they met a wife and they raised a family. The woman that worked for us, that raised me from the time I was eleven, her husband dug on the canal. He was one of the diggers. He was a little older than her, about twenty years older I think.

E: Yeah. I was doing the math in my head, 'cause I know they completed construction I think in 1914.

S: In 1914. Yeah.

E: Right. So.

S: But I said, Well Louise, I can see you love your children. She says, I love all my children and all these children too [Laughter].

E: Did the maids live in house?

S: No, they lived at home in Panama. We just lived on government pay.

E: Yeah, 'cause I know it was government housing in multiple family.

S: But no, no. Some of them came from men who worked for the canal, but a lot of them came just from Panama, and like I said, her husband was retired from the canal or they came from Panama. But when you hire a maid, you must watch out for the wife, 'cause if you hire them too pretty, they gone [laughter]. I had a friend that hired three women in one day, and his wife got rid of every one of them.

E: Said no because they were too pretty?

S: She came home, [inaudible 1:00:47], and finally hired a real ugly one. She stayed with her family for a hundred years [laughter].

E: How did the process work for hiring maids? Did they—

S: Well, they just come to your house.

E: They come and—okay.

S: But, you know, I hated to call them maids, but what the heck, that's what they say. You need a maid? I'd be a good maid. I can do this. I can cook. My dad and Louise, they were both about the same age. They're both dead now, but anyway, Louise and my dad would cook every Saturday together. My ma or my mom was selling insurance or encyclopedias. She put me through college- my mom did. But my dad and Louise cookin' all day Saturday. Sat-ril-day. That's what they call it. Saturday. Sat-ril-day. And shrimp is strimps.

E: I bet it was good cooking.

S: Ah, my dad was a good cook, but he taught Louise how to cook.

E: Okay.

S: And she put the Jamaican cooking weird [inaudible 1:01:50 ], back and forth.

E: Were there any dishes favored by the Canal Zone? I'm trying to recall the name of, maybe it's a Netti or something.

S: Oh, the greatest favorite was Johnny Marzetti.

E: Johnny Marzetti! That's what it is. Okay.

S: Yeah. And it was made with Alfredo sauce. Salsa Alfredo or something like that, but when you'd have a big party, they'd have Johnny Marzetti and that was a big deal. And the good Canal Zone parties were great, but they, [Laughter] they were wild.

E: Did they get a little too crazy?

S: They got crazy, you know [laughter]. Lot of men and women there, you know.

Yeah, they got kind of wild. I remember one time I was—I haven't had a drink for thirty-five years, but when I was back in my drinking days, I was young and we were having parties and all—I was going to a friend's party, and I see the party, you know, so I think, I'm going to pull up and park in his lawn, you know? Because there were cars all over. So, I pull up and it'd been raining, and I pull up a little too fast on the lawn, I hit my brake, and I skidded- and all the houses are up on stilts, you know?- I skidded right through the bushes into the party. I didn't hit anybody. Thank God. It wasn't even his party! So I stayed [laughter]! I met new friends.

E: Oh my goodness [laughter].

S: But Zonies, were—oh God—they still are. They all talk Bajan. You talk to them, they, "Hey what you doing man!? What you doing!?" You know, and in this book, the character, Olman, he was a real character, he used to take me fishing. He was a black kid. He was about five years older than me. And we'd go out and get sea worms and all kinds—you know, adventures. Aw, I was only ten or eleven years old [laughter].

E: And you were allowed to just go out? 'Cause I know it's really safe.

S: Yeah! Don't come back. Yeah. Yeah. It was pretty safe, you know. What wasn't safe is what we did. You didn't worry about, you know, some molester or something like that. Anyway, we were such devious kids that I pity any molester who tried anything on us. We'd find some way to get him [laughter]! We did some bad things.

E: Does anything stand out in particular?

S: Well, we were throwing firecrackers at people one time in the car. You know, those cherry bombs. They've got them with the wick in the middle. They're M-80 is what they call them. The military use them. I threw one out, and his car was packed with about eight guys in the car. You know? And it hit the top of the window, and it bounced back in the car, and everybody was trying to find it [laughter]. BOOM!

E: Oh my goodness.

S: But one time, we went down to, the tuna boats used to come in and they'd dock along the dock, they'd refuel and resupply. And we used to go down there. And this was the old tuna fisherman. They used live sardines and anchoveta, and they had bait wells on the tuna boat, and they were about a hundred feet long, maybe, the tuna boat. And they had racks that they'd put over to the side. And the men would stand in the racks. And the guy up at the bait tank, he would throw sardines out, a net full here and a net full there, and the tuna would come in. And then these guys are outside these poles with a hook on them, and you

know, and they, Nnnn, while they're pulling this big tuna. And sometimes they had one pole, two pole, three pole, four pole tuna. Four guys pulling a tuna this big. If you want to write down what it looked like, write down, Tribute to Tuna. You'll get that on computer. I don't know if you can watch it for free or what. A Tribute to Tuna. That will show you just what—We knew those guys! They say, We come into Balboa Harbor to resupply. But we go down there and use their live sardines for bait, right on the boat. We'd catch big snapper and mackerel, and we caught big fish! Aw, man. I remember trying to sell them and one night, we got shot at and everything. But anyway, anyway.

E: Somebody shot at you for trying to sell tuna?

S: Yeah, yeah. No, no. I don't know if I should tell you this. We caught a bunch of Corvina, a buddy of mine and I, and we went downtown to sell the Corvina, and everybody was closed. Corvina's the prized fish down there. So on the way back, he was speeding. We didn't know! We're talking about where we're going to sell the fish. And we passed this checkpoint. Ju! Cop, Bshbshbsh, blows his whistle. And we just goosed it you know? He went, Vroom, BOW, BOW! Took two shots at us, and one went in the trunk of the car, and the other one across the top, creasing the top. But we stayed in a car that night, and we slept in the car and waited for the YMCA to open up the next day. And the man there, Harry Chan, he ran the restaurant. Probably the nicest man in the world. His daughter comes here- Bev. Bev Williams. [Inaudible 1:07:57] All of her family comes. Harry was

Chinese, and he was just wonderful. You'd come in and sell fish or something, you know, and he'd say, you boys look hungry! Go on back and get something to eat. He was just a good man. And he said, Well, I give you seventeen [inaudible 1:08:16] pound for your corvina, you know. So anyway, we waited the next day and sold the corvina to him. They were still good. We had them on ice and everything. But we had this bullet that went through the trunk, you know? So, he says to us one day, "Hey what you gots those fish with? Explain bullet in fish! [Laughter] I think those fish saved our lives.

E: Yeah. Oh my gosh.

S: And then, one time we went down there, and they were, tuna boats and they said, We're going to leave, but we have a bunch of undersize tuna we have to get rid of. Do you guys want 'em? Do we want 'em? Well, it's not like we took advantage of the West Indians living in the [inaudible1:09:07] because we gave them a fair deal and these tuna were fresh. We sold them for two tuna for a quarter. And the tuna were this big! You know, I don't really know if they were to feed two families in one tuna, you know? So we sold them two for a quarter. And we just put them in the trunk, filled the trunk up, and it was a borrowed car. I wrote this down. Anyway, we go into La Boca and we open the trunk and start selling fish. And we made so much money so fast that, man, we went back to the tuna boat, you know? So, this time, the guy says, Man, we're pulling out. This is it. We're pulling out. You know? But you've got about twenty minutes and we're

gone. So they took the tuna, and they filled up the trunk, and we put them in the car. It wasn't our car. [Laughter] And they roll up the windows, and we're stuffing 'em through the windows. We had the car, and one guy was in the back. He says, Hey. I'm suffocating! I'm freezing to death! You know? [Laughter] And so, every time he'd turn a corner, all those tunas would slide up and bury him. And BLAAAARR! He's screaming, you know? So, we went and we opened up the car.

E: And tuna--

S: And we sold all them. And we got out of there, and we pulled up next to a light to get this car back, you know? And we pulled up next to the light, and this car pulled up next to us, a guy in a sports car with a girl with him. And he looks over at us and we look over at him. We had fish guts all over us and everything, and slime. What are you—What's with you guys? It's fish, tuna. And the girl goes, Bllrgrngmrggm. He pulled out of there in the light. [Laughter] So we got the car home, and this poor guy, the guy that he borrowed a car from, was there waiting for him. He was a solider, and he liked his sister or something, and they had some kind of a fight or something. I don't know. But, he saw his car, and man, what a chase that was. He left the car in run, and old Bob ran through the swamp for about two days. [Laughter] This guy wanted to kill him!

E: Yeah. How old were you?

S: I was sixteen, something like that.

- E: If somebody brought my car back full of fish guts, I don't know how I'd react.
- S: Oh, we wouldn't have done that to a girl. [Laughter]
- E: Did a lot of kids have their own cars?
- S: Oh, I destroyed three of my dad's.
- E: Alright, so.
- S: You know. It was the same. Hey, can I have the car? You know. Same thing. And I mostly walked, but I didn't have a car in high school, only when I got out.
- E: Was everything compact enough to where it was easy to get around maybe on foot or with a bike or something like that?
- S: Oh, yeah. We used to walk to school every day, and it was about a mile. Yeah. It wasn't far. Even when I was little, you know, there's the school! And it was about probably a half a mile down the road, and it was a straight walk to school. You'd walk to school, and you'd run back with all the bullies after you after school.
- [Laughter]
- E: It sounds like it was a really amazing life and a great experience.
- S: Oh, it was always something happening.
- E: Yeah.
- S: We used to crawl underneath the piers. We used to crawl underneath the piers. Slimy, barnacles, you know. The tides would go to eighteen feet. We'd climb

under there and we'd get a spear gun. I remember this buddy of mine and I, the same guy. We had more fun together. And we had one spear gun between us. We both owned it. [Laughter] And I'd take a shot at a fish, and you know, get a fish, and put him up on the side of the pier, you know, underneath the pier's slope. So, put him up there, and you go back, and then he got a shot, and then I got a shot. Well, he's looking around there, and we're way out underneath the pier, almost to the front of the pier, 'cause he knew how to climb around all the pilings and all that.

E: Yeah.

S: And no human being would want to be underneath there, you know? I mean, it had rats under there, all kinds of lizards, big lizards, like those black lizards. Anyway, he's looking and I look like, Wow! I see this great big grouper. Just huge! If we'd have shot it, we would have lost the gun anyway, you know. But that doesn't go on in your head as a sixteen-year-old kid.

E: You want that fish!

S: Yeah! I was so excited, I couldn't talk. You know, I just grabbed the gun, and he grabbed the—and we're fighting over a loaded gun! [Laughter] And BSHOO! The thing goes off. It ricochets up. It's just going off all over under the pier, and we're like gonna get killed with that thing. And then the grouper went down. And that was it.

E: Not today.

S: But we did stuff. We used to walk on the piling. The **camels**, they were this thick in moss and you had to walk a certain way. I'm good at walking across slippery floors if I know they're slippery. You know, you've got to learn how to walk. Everything is very deliberate, you know. And I've caught fish on my fishing rod and gone skidding all the way down there with the fish pulling me. And Hummer was always a big guy. He'd grab me by the scruff of the neck. Well you see, that's another thing is, I went for the adventure part. Like I said, I was a little kooky, so I didn't have the romance in my younger years. You know, I get a lot of these guys went steady with a girl and all that.

E: That costs a lot of money and takes a lot of time. Lot of effort into that kind of stuff.

S: Yeah. Well, I would have loved to have a girlfriend I think, but you have to spend time. You know, you can't go fishing all the time.

E: She would say no to that. No, you're spending time with me.

S: But there used to be so much fish, you could kick 'em up on the beach sometimes. It was amazing.

E: So, I mean, you've had some pretty incredible experiences there, and must have emotional attachments to it, so when you hear the news that it was being turned back over to the Panamanians, how did you take that?

S: I don't care for Carter. I didn't care for him for anything he did. There's one of my paintings in his library though. The Panamanians bought it from me and gave it to Carter. So, they did think enough of me to do that- of my painting anyway. But I'm glad that they have it now. I think they're doing a very good job. They're doing fine, and I think they'll continue to do so. They have glitches now and then, but so do we. No, they'll do fine. But old Big Brother USA is keeping eye on it too though. If anybody tries to mess around with it, we're in there. And that's the deal because it's vital to the world.

E: Yeah, absolutely.

S: Because if you can't get through the canal, you've got to go around the horn, and if you've ever read any books on the horn, that is horrible.

E: Difficult to navigate.

S: Hundred-foot seas, one after another. They call them gray beards. They lost many a lives there. Or you could go through the Suez Canal, but the Suez, you see, they're always having trouble over there, so that's not a stable place either. So, you'd better keep the Panama Canal open now.

E: It's important, an asset, yeah. When you relocated, you mentioned you missed it but it wasn't, you know—

S: Well, I miss it, but you know what I did? I said to myself, Look Al. There's nothing you can do about it. Miss it, but look for the good things here.

E: Yeah. Did you continue to teach up here?

S: No, I quit when I was down there too.

E: Okay.

S: Yeah.

E: Well, I'm trying to think of what we haven't covered yet.

S: Oh, we've about covered everything I think.

E: It's been a great interview. Thank you so much for your time. Do you have anything you'd like to add? Any closing remarks?

S: Well, my brother say, man is man and woman is woman. If them don't that, then what them is. [Laughter]

E: I like that. I've got to make it down to Panama some time.

[End of Interview]

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