

MATHESON HISTORICAL CENTER

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE: Lucretia Thomson

INTERVIEWER: Mary Ann Cofrin

TRANSCRIBER: Ruth C. Marston

June 5, 1996

C: My name is Mary Ann Cofrin. I am interviewing Lucretia Thomson for the Oral History Program at the Matheson Historical Center, on June 5, 1996, at her home at 1331 N.W. 21st Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Would you please state your full name and birthdate for the tape, please.

T: I am Laura Lucretia Dorsey Thomson, born in Gainesville on May the 29th, 1901.

C: And you spell Thomson T-h-o-m-s-o-n, and Laura is your first name and Lucretia is the name you go by, and that's spelled L-u-c-r-e-t-i-a. Tell me about your parents.

T: Well, I am the second daughter of W.S. Dorsey, who was one of the original merchants in Gainesville, the Dorsey grocery store.

C: And his wife's name was?

T: Emily Robb Dorsey. She was the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. R.L. Robb.

C: And the Robbs came from where?

T: The Robbs came from Illinois.

C: Both of them?

T: Yes. They both came to Gainesville from Illinois. They were still hunting for the prime place to live.

C: And they were both physicians? Is that right?

T: Well, my grandmother was a nurse to start out with but her husband saw what a good nurse she was and they went over to Germany because she couldn't get enrolled in the United States. There were no openings for women in medical school, so she got her degree over there.

C: What was her full name?

T: Dr. Sarah Lucretia Robb. I was named for her.

C: And we have the obituary. She died in 1937.

T: Yes.

C: We'll attach the obituary to this transcript.

T: Grandmother Robb was said to be the earliest female doctor in this area. She had patients who came from all over. I remember that one time she told me about going down to Clearwater to meet a friend of hers who was a doctor. Those were the only two female doctors in this area of Florida.

C: Dr. Robb was born in 1852 in Newark, N.J., married to Dr. Robert Lee Robb in 1872 in Illinois, and moved to Gainesville in May of 1884. Does that sound right?

T: That's right.

C: They were both practicing physicians. She retired about twenty years before she died, which would have been around 1917.

T: She was a member of the Sons and Daughters of the Pilgrims. Her ancestry goes back to the Manhattan Purchase. The little Trinity Church in New York City. You know they can't sell that little space because all the heirs would have to sell it, so I laughingly say I still own some of Manhattan.

C: You own a piece of New York City. That's wonderful! Your grandmother was a very proud Dutch woman.

T: Yes. She was a member of Sons and Daughters of the Pilgrims. She was very proud of that, besides being a great physician.

C: So her family was Dutch, her ancestry, you think?

T: Oh yes. In the New Jersey records her maiden name was Miller.

C: We will attach the Miller ancestry chart that you gave me. And her husband. Was he from Holland or do you know?

T: He was Scottish, and his family were founders of the Bellfontaine Presbyterian Church in Bellfontaine, Ohio. Well, anyway, I don't pay too much attention to ancestry. I never have. Not my sisters. I let them do it.

C: They did all that research. Well, tell me a little bit about their practice and what you remember about the Robbs.

T: I remember when my grandmother was a practicing physician, one of her patients was a lady named Miss Nona Gracy and I remember sitting on my grandmother's front porch and Miss Nona was so sweet to me I fell in love with her. I must have been five or six years old.

- C: And I can't find out who Miss Nona Gracy is because, of course, that should be some Gracy relative.
- T: I have always thought it was Mr. Gracy's sister.
- C: Well, there were twelve in his family and I never knew any of them. He was the baby in the family.
- T: She was a single lady. I remember they had to come by train to Florida and it was quite an event to come over. She had to spend the night at Grandmother's house when she came.
- C: Well, there were some Gracys that lived around the Lakeland area and down in that area, so it easily could have been one of them. No?
- T: I don't think so, because my grandmother showed me the little station, the Gracy Station.
- C: Oh yes. So it was out there then? It wasn't Gainesville that they came to. Well, there was a railroad siding out there, at Gracy, Florida, so that's where they came. And you remember going to the house at Gracy?
- T: I didn't go into the house. I sat out in the buggy and waited for Grandmother. It took us all day to go out there and get back.
- C: So you went on some of the calls with her? That must have been fascinating.
- T: Oh, I've sat in front of many a house while my grandmother visited patients. I was her favorite grandchild and she used to take me with her a whole lot.
- C: It's a wonder you didn't turn out to be a doctor yourself.
- T: Maybe that's why I didn't want to.
- C: Maybe so. Did you go with your grandfather, too?
- T: No, no. My grandfather died when I was very young.
- C: So she practiced in Gainesville much longer.
- T: Oh, yes. He died when I was just two or three years old. He came to Gainesville with the Odd Fellows to establish a home in Gainesville. I think it was an insurance club at that time. There was a house out in East Gainesville that became the Odd Fellows home.

- C: So he really didn't practice too long in Gainesville.
- T: Oh no. He was a sick man. That was the reason they came here.
- C: And then he died young. But your mother was not the only child of that family, was she?
- T: She had a sister, Mrs. Alston McKinstry, and a half-sister, Mrs. Nettie Robb Gunns. Her half-brother died in Gainesville when they first came here.
- C: Well then, Dr. Robb had been married before he married your grandmother and those were his two children by an earlier marriage?
- T: Oh yes. I don't know anything about his family except that the church, the little Bellfontaine Presbyterian Church in Ohio has all of that down in history. Grandmother graduated from Hahnemann College in Pennsylvania.
- C: Before she went to medical school in Germany?
- T: Yes, it was a while before. Hahnemann College is now a part of Temple.
- C: Temple University.
- T: Hahnemann Hospital is now a part of this.
- C: Oh, yes, I've heard of that. It's a very fine hospital. So after she went to medical school in Germany, she took training in Philadelphia, do you think at this hospital?
- T: No, she practiced in Ohio.
- C: Oh, I see, and practiced at that hospital.
- T: Yes. She and her husband practiced together a good deal.
- C: Well, have you any other unusual memories about traveling around with your grandmother?
- T: I used to tell my husband as we drove around, I said, "I know what this house looks like. I've sat in front of it many a day waiting for Grandmother to come out." Grandmother was very heavy. She had a horse and buggy, and of course she sat on one side and I sat on the other. Since she was so heavy, the slant made it kind of hard for me to stay on my side.
- C: So you traveled around with her for many years.

- T: She was a horse and buggy doctor and horses were our main transportation. I was married in 1921 and Grandmother was still very active when I was married. She had a good many older patients that she took care of.
- C: There weren't many doctors here at that time.
- T: No. There was a Dr. Lassiter and Dr. Lartique.
- C: Dr. Merchant. Was he here?
- T: Yes. There was a Dr. Phillips they talked about, and this Dr. McKinstry. Well, the Robb house has all of that information.
- C: Yes, and Dr. Thomas came later.
- T: Oh, my dear child, when Dr. Thomas came, it was about the time you were born.
- C: He delivered my younger sister. He came after I was born, but very soon after.
- T: He delivered my daughter.
- C: That would have been 1926.
- T: Talking about Grandmother, I remember when Peggy Lu - Margaret Lucretia - was born. I was sitting out in the living room. They didn't have hospitals in those days. Dr. Thomas was delivering Peggy Lu, and when Peggy Lu was born he asked me what was her name and I didn't know, I didn't have a name. He said Margaret Lucretia and Grandmother Robb said, "Margaret Lucretia, that's too long a name for a little girl. She's Peggy Lu."
- C: So she gave her that name right away, and ADoc named her.
- T: They called each other Doctor. He said, "Doctor, I agree with you. Margaret Lucretia's too long a name." So Dr. Thomas and Dr. Robb named Peggy Lu. My grandfather Robb came to Gainesville hunting for a place to build a sanitarium. He was sent by the Odd Fellows. He was going to have a hospital and then as the patients got able to, they could move into a little house around it. That was in East Gainesville. Lincoln High School is on the property now. That was to be the hub of Gainesville. Anyway, he died before that was completed. Now, my father, W.S. Dorsey, came down from Kentucky. They were very proud Kentuckians. He used to say, "Once a Kentuckian, always a Kentuckian." I don't know why he said that! He was a little orphan and his uncle brought him down to Gainesville. He and his mother are buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

C: How old was he?

T: He was sixteen or seventeen years old. He had been shunted around with an older brother for a long time. Well, anyway, he grew up in Gainesville.

C: His name was W.S. What do those initials stand for?

T: It was a Yankee name. William Sheridan Dorsey.

C: Sheridan. S-h-e-r-i-d-a-n. Sheridan was a family name.

T: His name was William Sheridan Dorsey, but we weren't allowed to say anything about the "S" so when his son was born, he named him William Sidney Dorsey because he wasn't going to put that Sheridan name in it. That's awful to say!

C: No, but anyway, so he came to Gainesville as a youngster.

T: Yes. He became a deacon in the church and a very prominent young man. There was a fellow by the name of Mr. Waugh, W-a-u-g-h, who became the Treasurer of the City of Gainesville. I think that everybody who lived here any length of time would know who Mr. Waugh was. Well, my father and Mr. Waugh set up a grocery store together, but some misunderstanding came early and Mr. Waugh sold out and my father brought one of his brothers in. It would be too long to tell you about all of the Dorseys but they've been a pretty prominent family, too. There are two old graves in our Dorsey lot, early 1800's, in our lot that has my great-grandmother, my father's grandmother's grave, and this uncle that brought him to Gainesville.

C: If he came as an orphan, how did his grandmother get here?

T: His grandmother came down from Kentucky later with his uncle, Nelson Smith, and he brought his mother down, my father's grandmother, my great-grandmother.

C: Right. And she lived in Gainesville?

T: You know the Finley lot at the cemetery. You've heard of J.J. Finley.

C: Oh sure.

T: Well, that cemetery lot is just adjoining our lot. That's how long we've been here.

C: That's a long time. We're talking about Evergreen Cemetery?

T: Oh yes. Is there any other one?

C: Yes, there is. People that read this may not know which one we're talking about. So your father met your mother in Gainesville.

T: At the Presbyterian Church, of course.

C: And they got married.

T: My mother was an organist.

C: And they got married in what year?

T: Oh, my dear child. I was born in 1901, so it was about three years before that.

C: In the 1896 or 1897 or something like that.

T: My sister, oldest sister, was born in 1899.

C: So you were not the first child or the only child? The second one. And did they have other children?

T: Oh yes. There were five. Let me count on my fingers.

C: All right. See if you can name them all.

T: There were five girls and one boy.

C: And you were the number two girl.

T: I'm the only one that's lived in Gainesville the whole time.

C: The rest of them scattered after they married.

T: One of my sisters came back to live with me, Mrs. Harry Brinkley. She came back and lived here quite a while. Our sister, Margaret, the baby, stayed here until World War II broke out and she got involved. That's when Gainesville people started moving away. Once a Gainesvillian, always a Gainesvillian until you got something else to do!

C: Where did you first live as a little girl?

T: Well, I was born in what they call the Clark house. It would be behind the Primrose Grill. My grandfather had his office there.

- C: And that was off of University Avenue. The street was called Garden Street.
- T: Yes. We moved down to the house I was raised in.
- C: And where was that?
- T: In those days, it was called Mechanic Street, and it was the last house before you get to Kirby-Smith School, which is now the school administration office.
- C: Yes.
- T: The house I was raised in has been moved. There's a lady named Melanie Barr, who buys good homes, and she bought the house and moved it.
- C: Now is this the little house that was on the creek there across from Kirby-Smith?
- T: No, that was our love cottage.
- C: That's right. That was later. Okay, the house you were raised in was near that area though?
- T: Right. Across the street. My Grandmother Robb was on the corner of Liberty and Myrtle. North of her and one block farther east was our house, the Dorsey house. My father and his brother built Hugh and me a little house across the street. That's where we lived.
- C: On the creek. For people that might read this, this is the street where the Thelma Boltin Recreation Center is at 516 N.E. 2nd Avenue, which was Orange Street.
- T: We were on the first block at University Avenue and it was named Liberty Street when I was a little girl. The next street was Mechanic Street. I'm sure that people who know old Gainesville will know about the Futch family. They lived in the next block.
- C: But that's where you grew up and you lived there and went to Kirby-Smith, I'm sure, to go to school. That was the only school. It was called Gainesville Public School -- from kindergarten to 12.
- T: First I started in kindergarten. Mrs. McCollum -- we called her AAunt Carrie A -- and Miss Ella Hamilton had the kindergarten, and I went to kindergarten under Miss Ella. I remember that very vividly, because later on I taught with her sister. There was only the one school in Gainesville.
- C: And that was Gainesville Public School.

- T: That was the only white public school in Gainesville.
- C: And it went from kindergarten through twelve.
- T: And we had that Miss Tebeau's.
- C: Yes, that was a private school. So you went all twelve grades there.
- T: Oh yes.
- C: Who were your best friends in those days?
- T: Well, I'm probably one of the few living ones. You've been told when Gainesville was such a small town that everybody knew everybody. We had some mighty fine people in those days. This seemed to be a mecca. I remember when the university was built, the first two buildings, but there was a seminary here called East Florida Seminary and it was a mecca for education for the young people in this area. Well my friends -- you asked me who my friends were -- I went to school with Ruth Peeler, who taught later at P.K. Yonge.
- C: First at Gainesville High School.
- T: And Martha Murphree, whose father was one of the first presidents of the University of Florida. She and I were inseparable. She was rather stout and I was very skinny and the kids used to tease us, called her before and after taking like Lydia E. Pinkham's Compound. I would walk up to the Gracy House with Martha and we'd sit on that concrete curb that's around the house in front of it.
- C: It's still there!
- T: And then she would walk back home with me, then I'd walk up there with her, and finally .
- C: One of you would have to separate.
- T: Our parents didn't like it if we didn't get home before dark. Let's see if I can tell you. There was a family named Tucker. One of them married one of the Gainesville Sun Pepper family. Ethel Tucker married a doctor in McIntosh.
- C: Oh, Dr. Strange? I know who you're talking about. She married Dr. Strange that lived in McIntosh.

- T: That's right. Bill Tucker was in the Navy and came back to Gainesville. He died just a few years ago. Well, the reason I remember these people is that there used to be a lot of competition among the children to be the head of the class.
- C: Sure.
- T: Those names I've mentioned are the ones that I had to fight with all my life to beat, so we became very good friends.
- C: Activities in Gainesville were very different in those days. You made your own fun, I guess.
- T: We did as children. Between the Matheson house and University Avenue was an empty lot. Well, I call it an empty lot but it was filled with trees. You couldn't see the Matheson House from University Avenue, but there was a big wooden building called the Tabernacle.
- C: Is that about where the Legion Hall or the Matheson Center is now?
- T: That was called the Chautauqua -- I said before, Gainesville was a group of ambitious people who wanted a good education and if you couldn't get it, you went after it and brought it to Gainesville. They brought the Chautauqua to Gainesville, and all my life I think of the entertainment in that Chautauqua Hall. In front of the Chautauqua was a concrete pavement, I guess it about as large as three or four sidewalks wide, and it went up towards town one block. That was the only place you could skate in Gainesville, so we used to congregate there to skate. Then there was another place where we used to get in our little wagons and coast down the hill. That was at the house just north of Kirby-Smith and the Croms lived there. Eleanor Crom.
- C: I remember that name.
- T: So we used to scoot down the hill. I was such a daredevil that I had somebody give me a strong push and I fell over at the end and I've got a big scar on my head where I fell.
- C: And where did you go swimming? Were there some places to swim in those days?
- T: Well, Magnesia Springs.
- C: Was that open when you were a child?
- T: No, I don't think so. I remember going there before I was married.
- C: Sure, so it was after you were a teenager anyway.

T: There weren't any swimming places in Gainesville that I know of.

C: No, I guess not.

T: Talking about water, that was one of my joys --, Sweetwater Branch that runs in front of the museum . Our houses all bordered on Sweetwater Branch and in those days there were no streets draining into Sweetwater. It was very clear and clean. Way up there where the Thomas Hotel was, was a cow pasture and there were some cows there but they didn't pollute the stream. In those days, syrup came in great big wooden kegs with copper bands around it, and my father gave my brother one of those. We dammed up Sweetwater Branch right down near University Avenue north of the Matheson Center, a lot next to where George Dell had his grocery store. George Dell wasn't there then. We dammed it up and my brother and Alan Haile.

C: Is that the H-a-i-l-e family?

T: They were an old family in Gainesville. Haile Plantation is part of it, you know.

C: Right.

T: We dammed up the Sweetwater Branch and we made quite a nice little pond.

C: I was going to say you had a place to splash around.

T: Well, I don't remember swimming in it but I do remember splashing around, and we built this little pontoon boat. There was a very prominent family -- I won't mention it but he was a dentist, very prominent -- and he had just gotten married to his wife from South Carolina, and he brought her down University Avenue. They didn't live too far from there, and he was talking to her about taking a ride. It was five cents to ride in the boat, so Dr. M gave us the five cents and she got in the boat.

C: This is the boat you and your brother and his friends made?

T: Yes, the boat belonged to everybody. That was the only five cents I remember making, but anyway, I laughingly told the son of this couple about this, and we've always laughed with each other about the first ride his mother had at Gainesville.

C: Your little pontoon boat.

T: Our little boat.

C: It sounds like you had a good time. A good place to grow up.

T: We did. I could tell you about familiar families in the neighborhood. There was the Chesnut family and there was a family called Dursts, the Merchants, the Averys, and the Cubberlys, and all of those with children in the neighborhood. The churches in those days were part of life, and all over Gainesville the churches united. You know Martha Boring. She was a Tison. They belonged to our church.

C: That's right, B-o-r-i-n-g.

T: I'm boring you though.

C: No, you're not. This is all very interesting. Well, tell me how you met your husband, Hugh.

T: Well, I went to Maryville College just south of Knoxville. I was wearing a pin from a fraternity boy at U.T. I got homesick and my daddy let me come home at Christmas time. Usually we'd have to stay there because it took two days to get from Maryville by train and we'd stay up there with friends around Knoxville. I came home and this handsome little fellow from the Navy in his Navy uniform was working at a place called Miller's.

C: The drug store.

T: The drug store. It was the hangout for the University boys, but I thought he was so attractive and I asked Bessie McCormick to introduce me because he was working in that store and in those days, you just didn't meet somebody and start talking. You had formal introductions.

C: Absolutely!

T: So Bessie introduced me to Hugh, and Hugh at that time was living out in North Gainesville near Col. Webster's.

C: I don't know where that is. Where is the Webster's?

T: Angus Merritt lives on the property there. You know where that is.

C: Well, I do. It's off of 16th Avenue and 6th Street.

T: That was North Gainesville because in those days North Gainesville was a different community. You didn't know anything about it. It was just like another little town.

C: Well, you didn't get around too easily!

T: No, we didn't know people. I liked the young man and he asked me for a date and from then on, we had seventy-two years together.

C: How wonderful. Was he a University student?

T: He was in the Navy.

C: He was a Navy man. And this was after World War I?

T: World War I. He was going with one of Angus Merritt's sisters at the time. Angus said that I stole Hugh from his sister. Angus's father and mother lived in North Gainesville. The LaFontisses came down from Canada through New York to Gainesville on their way to settle in Louisiana. They were Catholics and in those days they had Catholic settlements, and Aunt Carrie -- she's not any relation except through marriage -- and her sisters, well, the LaFontisse girls, they lived there, and Angus Merritt's mother and father and the Palmers.

C: All in that area.

T: They were very proud North Gainesville people. And Col. Webster was a very, very proud man. I don't know anything about him. I think Cummer Lumber Company had something to do with him.

C: But anyway, Hugh got out of the Navy and came back to Gainesville. He was not originally from Gainesville, was he?

T: He joined the Navy from Gainesville.

C: Oh, he was a native of Gainesville?

T: He was born and raised here. He went to Gainesville High School, but I didn't know him.

C: He was older than you. And he was enough ahead of you.

T: He wasn't as attractive in high school as he was as a Naval man.

C: He was probably a good bit older. Was he several years older than you?

T: Just two years.

C: But sometimes when you're younger those two years make a big difference in who your friends are. They really do. So did you go back to college after you met Hugh?

T: I went back for a little while but I couldn't take it. I resigned at the end of the semester and came home.

C: Did you finish college there?

T: No, I finished at the University.

C: You went to the University of Florida. You must have been one of the early female students then.

T: Well, there weren't female students except in the summertime.

C: That's right. You went summers to get your degree. So when did you get married? After you finished school or right soon after?

T: September 9, 1921.

C: So you stayed in Gainesville then. Had you finished your training, your University work, by the time you got married?

T: No. I got married first, after I came back from college. I was in love, I tell you! And he was too. We were romantically inclined all of our lives.

C: So you got married. That was great. And then where did you first live with Hugh?

T: At the Winston house. In those days there were two places in Gainesville that you could rent. They didn't have anything like an apartment. Padgett's had rooms and a lady named Mrs. Haile on Main St. next to Mrs. Donald Morrison's house had a couple of rooms she rented out, and Mr. and Mrs. Winston. There was some way or other my father had something to do with it, but I don't know just how, but they said that they would give me two rooms in their house, so at the end of Main Street there used to be two big houses -- The Winstons had one that had big white columns, and next to it was W.S. Cauthen -- all these names don't mean anything to you.

C: Not all of them. The Cauthens don't. This is East Main Street?

T: At the end of East Main Street.

C: Going towards 8th Avenue.

T: Next door to the Charlie Chesnut house. So the Winstons fixed us up with a bathroom and two rooms, and we lived there for two years. They were a very lovely family to do business with, very nice people.

C: So after two years?

T: My family built a little cottage and we lived in it.

C: Tell us about your "love cottage" as you call it. Describe it to us.

T: I hate to, because it doesn't sound like much, yet it meant so much to so many people. We had a son born on our second wedding anniversary, the very day and hour, September 9, 1923. He lived eighteen days.

C: Oh, how sad. So your father wanted you to have a special place close to him for your new baby.

T: This little house was for Hugh and me on his property, and it's down there on the Branch.

C: Down there on the Sweetwater Branch near University Avenue.

T: He built the house and gave it to Hugh and me. We paid for it little by little, but he built it for us.

C: Now this was a wooden house.

T: Yes. A brand new little house with shingles -- the shingled bungalow we called it -- and that's where Peggy Lu was born.

C: It was a precious house.

T: Peggy Lu was born there. So many of my pupils remember it. Of course, their teacher, Mrs. Thomson lived there.

C: So Peggy Lu was born there in 1926?

T: Let's see. Peggy Lu was seventy years old last month.

C: So she was born in April 1926.

T: She's one year younger than the children that she went to school with, because they advanced her when she first started to school. She had been to kindergarten out at the University and she was too advanced for the first grade.

C: So you lived most of your married life in that house and by the time Peggy Lu was born, you had gotten your college degree, I guess?

- T: Oh yes, I didn't start back to the University until after I started teaching school.
- C: Oh I see. You didn't have to have a college degree then.
- T: Prof. Buchholz just gave me that job sight unseen because he knew me as a pupil.
- C: In those days I expect many teachers didn't have college degrees.
- T: You took what you call a teacher's certificate, and I made a pretty good grade on it.
- C: And so you started teaching.
- T: Mrs. Willie Metcalfe was the principal. When the first opening came after I let it be known that I'd be interested in teaching, they gave me the job and I taught for two years. Then I taught a year and a half in the fifth and sixth grades, a combination, and then something happened to the teacher of the third grade and she left, and they advanced me to the third grade. It was an advancement because the pupils in my fifth and sixth grades were kind of the left-behinds.
- T: Mary Ann, didn't you go to P.K. Yonge in the fourth grade?
- C: No, in the fifth grade. I was at Kirby-Smith until then.
- T: You didn't have a full year in my class.
- C: Yes, I did. I was all third grade in your room, and then Miss Patty O'Neal taught me in fourth grade. And then I went to P.K. in the fifth grade. But I don't expect you to remember everybody you taught.
- T: You know, Mary Ann, what got me confused is they're all one little family.
- C: They all bunch together now.
- T: At least a few years. Like Hart Stringfellow and O.B. Ogletree and Frank Spain God bless him. They were a nice class.
- C: We had a good time. We thought you were a wonderful teacher.
- T: Well, I was having a mighty good time.
- C: So you taught third grade from whatever year that was, for how many years? So how many years did you teach third grade at Kirby-Smith. Do you know the answer to that?

T: Not exactly. I can give you round terms. I used to tell everybody I taught for forty years but it was just thirty-eight and a half years, because I was hired in the middle of the term. Hugh used to say, AI made her quit teaching school because she couldn't get out of the third grade.≡ I loved it. I used to watch the children at Kirby-Smith, and then I moved over to J.J. Finley with some Kirby-Smith teachers and I used to say I had my grandchildren. One year I had your son and five other children.

C: It was a whole bunch of them.

T: Jane Reames McKinney often said that when her little boy Steve was in my class, I called him Burt all the time. Burt was his uncle.

C: Right. Steve was in our son's class. Paige and Dixie Cox were in that class, and I can't remember who all the others were but there were several of them, I know, that you remember.

T: I had Mary Helen.

C: Mary Helen another year. Dixie was Paige's age.

T: What was your other son's name?

C: David. But you didn't have David. He had Mattie Lou Pinnell, I think, in third grade at J.J. Finley. Did she teach third?

T: Yes.

C: Did you have any other children besides losing that one son? That was so sad. And then Peggy Lu.

T: That was all.

C: You never had any other children. You had plenty of them as your pupils that you felt like you adopted, I'm sure.

T: I loved my third grade. I don't think there could be any happier relationship than, as I told you, those small, so attractive, highly -- well, I won't say highly educated, but ambitious people. The University, of course, was just starting and Dr. Murphree was the president. At any rate, the families that came to Gainesville and the families that were already here were ambitious. Well, I can't explain it without sounding smug about it, but that's true. For instance, your grandmother and her friends developed the Women's Club and the

Philharmonic Society. The U.D.C. and the D.A.R. were already here. I guess those were the only ones I knew as a child. Of course, Aunt Carrie developed the Women's Club. You know that.

C: Right. And the Junior Welfare League. She helped get the Junior Welfare League started. They supposedly started on her front porch. Who were some of the teachers that taught with you?

T: Well, Ruth Peeler. You mentioned Patty O'Neal.

C: I know one. Etta Cannon.

T: Etta was the second-grade teacher.

C: She taught me second grade. The other second-grade teacher was Elizabeth McClamroch=sister, Jeannette Shaw.

T: Yes. Well, when Gainesville started to grow, there were three new schools -- one here in North Gainesville on 16th Avenue. Miss Metcalfe named all the schools -- J.J. Finley, Sidney Lanier and Stephen Foster.

Fritz Buchholz, who was first at Eastside School and later principal at Westside Elementary and Gainesville High School, was a remarkable principal. He always tried to be the top of everything. I called it German discipline. I don't know what it is, but anyway, he was a loyal friend of mine.

C: Well you've seen a lot of changes in Gainesville, not all for the good.

T: Mary Ann, I hate to say this. There are some good, but most of the changes are not what I would pick out at all. What about you?

C: No, I don't think it's changed for the good. I liked Gainesville when it was a small town and you knew everybody and you never locked your front door.

T: I liked that. You didn't lock the doors. I used to go to New York when I lived in the log house. I used to go to New York without locking a door.

C: And everything was safe.

T: You mention that Gainesville hasn't changed for the better. They call it the ABest City≡. That's because it had such a wonderful nucleus of wonderfully ambitious, God-fearing

people that settled here. You stop and think about the early founders here. They were all fine families.

C: Yes, I think they were. When they give Gainesville the Number One rating in the United States, it's a little surprising. There are still a lot of advantages to Gainesville, but I think we've lost a lot in the fact of it.

T: I can't be happy with Gainesville now as much as I would like to be because I think of it as a wonderful place. It deserves to be the best. Look at the people who have gone on from Gainesville to high positions. I saw in today's paper that Oak Hall had a student. . .

C: Yes, Valedictorian at Princeton. Pretty fine!

T: The President of the Student Body at Harvard was a J.J. Finley student. I had him. He came back to Gainesville to visit his family.

C: What was his name?

T: Reed Ellis. His father died not too long ago. They moved from some town in west Florida to Gainesville, and he was a pupil at J.J. Finley. In those days we had what they called the May Pole, or May Day celebration, before foreign nations made it a dirty word. This little boy was in about the third grade and he brags to me about how I helped him. He was very awkward and I didn't know that he was repeating third grade, so he couldn't do the May Pole to save his life. He couldn't get it. I said, "Reed, all the courts in England had jesters so you be a jester." I made a court jester out of him and he enjoyed being the jester and he stole the show from the May Queen. So he came to Gainesville a few years ago and saw his old teachers over at J.J. Finley and made me stand up while he recited all the things I had done for him, which I didn't even know I had done. It came as second nature. I said, "Well thank you, Reed, now I can go to Evergreen. I've got everything all set." He said that I gave him the confidence to see that he could do anything. That's worth a whole lot to me.

C: That's a wonderful legacy, and I'm sure that with all your students, that has given you a lot of comfort to know that you had a part in helping so many students.

T: I loved it.

C: Did Peggy Lu get married and have children?

T: Oh she's married. She married up in New York. You know she graduated from Tallahassee after three years, Phi Beta Kappa, and went to Columbia University. That tells you how the world has changed. Columbia was not accepting girls from the South if they could help it and they turned her down when she applied. She said, "Mother, I am going to Columbia.

I'm going to go up there and get accepted." I gave her a railroad ticket and \$25.00. So she went to New York City and introduced herself to the Dean of the College of Journalism, who was a Phi Beta Kappa. She gave him the Phi Beta Kappa handshake and that afternoon we got a telegram from Columbia saying that they had an opening for Peggy. She was already in New York, so she got in and got her degree there.

C: Her Master's Degree, I guess.

T: Oh yes.

C: And then she stayed in New York?

T: She stayed in New York always.

C: And she was a writer for "Mademoiselle" and what else?

T: Twenty years with "Mademoiselle" and then she worked for "Bride's Magazine". I don't know what else. I have a room here that has everything in it, some of her things. I call it the Archives Room.

C: Well, you were very proud of her.

T: Gainesville was proud of her.

C: Gainesville was proud of Peggy Lu. We all were. And she married and had children?

T: She has five children. Four girls and one boy.

C: And where do they live?

T: In New York and Massachusetts -- all but one. They are - excuse the expression - they are Yankees. When I was growing up, there were two terms for people. You were either Southern or a Yankee.

C: Right.

T: So I used to tease her and say all her children were Yankees. But there's one that lives in Tampa now, that was born in Gainesville, and Dr. Thomas delivered her, of course. She loved Gainesville so much.

C: Well that's nice to have one of them nearby. Do you have any great-grandchildren?

- T: My oldest granddaughter has two children. None of the rest of them have any children, just this one that lives in Tampa. They all have good jobs. Ina Jo McKenzie went to New York the other day to see her son, John, graduate. At the same time, one of my grandchildren was getting her Master's from the same university. Her job is for New York University at the elementary level. She has a very good job.
- C: That's right. They inherited some of their mother's journalism talent.
- T: Good Gainesville start. They graduated from Gainesville High School.
- C: Peggy Lu's husband was a Yankee, I gather.
- T: No, he was from Tampa.
- C: Oh, he's a Southerner too.
- T: That's how Peggy Lu got acquainted with him. Tommy Fay introduced them.
- C: Yes. He's one of our oral history interviewers.
- T: They both went to the University of Florida and they met in New York where they were all living at the time. He introduced Herman to Peggy Lu.
- C: What's his last name?
- T: Shonbrun. Well, they're separated, you know. It wasn't a very happy marriage even though they have all those children. Peggy Lu often says, "Mother, we must have done something right. Look at your grandchildren."
- C: Now, we haven't talked about Hugh at all. So let's talk about him a little bit.
- T: Well, he was part of Gainesville. We haven't talked about the black population either. We had a very, very strong Mt. Pleasant Methodist Church on Pleasant Street. It was the nucleus for the high society in Gainesville.
- C: Of the black people you mean.
- T: Yes, black people. They were all fine people. You couldn't get better people. They have a black mortician, Charles Chesnut. There was a black doctor named Dr. Ayers. I wish somebody from that community could talk about them.
- C: Tom Fay is interested in interviewing some people from that area because, of course, he lives not very far.

T: He lives on Arredondo, I think.

C: Yes, it's now called 3rd Street. I've been to his house. He lives there with his mother. But he's very interested in that neighborhood and it is something that needs to be done. We've got a lot of people that need to be interviewed. Now, tell me about Hugh. He had something to do with the Post Office?

T: Yes. First, he worked for Martin Glass at the drug store. Then he went down to Ocala and worked on the mapping project that the government was doing. When that folded up, he came back to Gainesville and got a job with the Post Office, where he became Superintendent of Mail. Hugh brought your friend, Ina Jo McKenzie, her letters from her husband, Capt. Chauncey Bennett, who was in Korea.

T: Hugh was like a second father to her. You ask her sometime.

C: She has told me how much her friendship with you and Hugh has meant. Now when you say Hugh worked for Martin Glass, what did he do?

T: Martin Glass bought out Miller.

C: The drug store. You're talking about Miller's Drug Store?

T: Maybe they call it a drug store. Miller's down on the Square.

C: Down on the Square, which is now City Drug.

T: That's how Hugh and I met.

C: That's right. He was working there for Martin.

T: I had to go to the Post Office and my daddy sent me at the same time. My daddy laughed and said how I would look out and see Hugh going by. I was very much interested, so daddy said he'd let me go to the Post Office the same time that Hugh went, so we would go together to the Post Office. I grew up on the Square, working with my daddy.

C: Well, the grocery store was right on the Square then. Which side of the Square?

T: The North side of the Square, between Wilson's and Miller's.

C: And how long was this store there? I don't remember that store as a little girl.

- T: You don't remember. Daddy sold out, I don't remember, but Mary Ann, if you ever get to be ninety-five years old, be ninety-five years old and don't try to be any younger.
- C: No, it's hard for me to remember, but it was in the 20's, sometime in the 20's or early 30's, I guess, when he closed.
- T: Well, it was after I came back from Maryville College in Tennessee. I know that. My father had diabetes. I think that Dr. Lassiter told him that he'd have to give it up.
- C: So he retired. Now your mother -- we didn't talk about your mother -- she was active in the Philharmonic. We know she helped get that started.
- T: Well, Mother was a very loyal, active member of the Presbyterian Church. She was the first organist. She and her sister. When the church was a little wooden building down where the old Post Office was on East Main Street -- the first church built in Gainesville -- the minister was a man by the name of Dr. McCormick. She stayed with that church. Oh, she just loved it. She had a stroke when she was ninety-two. Later, Peggy Lu was the pianist and Margaret Merchant was the organist at the Presbyterian Church on University Avenue and 2nd Street.
- T: Perry Foote and all those. Well, anyway, he was a very quiet man but he was a charter member of the Kiwanis Club in Gainesville. Socially he was very quiet. I can't explain it to you. You know Dorothy (Tison) Fagan.
- C: Yes.
- T: Dorothy called him "Daddy Boy" and she still calls him "Daddy Boy".
- C: I didn't have the privilege of knowing your father and mother very well.
- T: No, you went to the Trinity Episcopal Church.
- C: I was a Methodist. My grandmother was a big Methodist so that's where I went to church.
- T: So you just walked over there to church.
- C: That's right. That's where we went.
- T: I always put you in the Holy Trinity for some reason.
- C: No.
- T: Martha Boring was Presbyterian, and the Chesnuts were Episcopalians.

C: Those were the three main churches. That's for sure: Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian. They were the early ones, I guess.

T: And the Baptists.

C: Oh, don't forget the Baptists. For heaven sake, don't forget the Baptists. We don't want to forget anybody.

T: I didn't tell you that Chris Matheson was a member of the church when I was growing up. He was way up there, a lot older than I am. His wife, Sarah Matheson, was a Hamilton.

C: Right. How old is she?

T: She's my age. She might be a little bit younger - two or three years maybe - but not over two or three years.

Presbyterian summer resort is Montreat, and Chris Matheson met Sarah up there. Sarah's father was a Presbyterian minister and Chris was a bachelor, a big, rare bachelor when he married Sarah. The Hamiltons were about the age of my sisters and brothers so they all played around together, and I stayed at the Hamilton's house part of one summer with Sarah and her sister.

C: So your family would let you go to Montreat with another family, or did they go too?

T: We opened up the gates at Montreat. My father and his brother. My father had two grocery stores, one in Gainesville and one in Jacksonville. His brother that ran the one in Jacksonville went up to Montreat to run the grocery store up there, so my daddy went up there to Montreat to help him. He had retired but in the summertime to help Uncle Charlie out, he would go there.

Billy Graham lives in Montreat now. He=s a Baptist but married a Presbyterian, and has revivals all over the world.

C: Yes, he=s up there. But anyway, you spent your summers up in the mountains for many years.

T: Well, my family spent their summers up there, but I was married. I was married when I was young, so young that the minister couldn't marry us until we got daddy's and mother's permission.

C: Well, of course not.

T: I was only twenty years old at the time.

C: But anyway, you have had some fine summers up in Montreat then.

T: Well, as I said, we opened the gates and stayed all summer. Billy Graham's wife was the daughter of Dr. Bell in Montreat, and of course Sarah Matheson knows him real well. My sisters also knew him personally.

C: Well, she's probably talked about that on her tape. She has been interviewed.

It's been fun talking to you and I know this will be an addition to our oral history interviews down at the Matheson Center, and I want to thank you so much for your time. I've enjoyed it, and I hope you have too.

T: Well, I've enjoyed it because I loved Gainesville and I love to talk about old Gainesville.

C: I do, too.

T: Most people do who've lived here for a while.

C: Well, we'll have this transcribed and we'll give you a chance to edit it. If you think of anything you've forgotten, we'll just write it in. If there's anything you want to change, we'll do that, too.

T: Well, Mary Ann, figure ninety-five years. How can you all get it all into one little tape?

C: I don't think you can. We've made a stab at it anyway, haven't we?

T: Well, it's been a wonderful town to live in.